

Introduction

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Causatives in Minimalism

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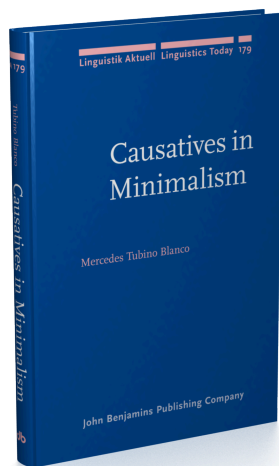
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Introduction

This book investigates the syntax of causatives with a main focus on the construction in Spanish, English, and Hiaki.¹ The research questions behind this investigation are the following:

1. Research questions

- a. What are the ‘pieces’ of causation?
- b. Are the ‘pieces’ of causation the same in all languages?
- c. How are different types of causatives (i.e. lexical vs. productive) syntactically encoded? Do they involve the same ‘pieces’?
- d. How does the general internal architecture of languages contribute to the linguistic expression of causation?
- e. What determines crosslinguistic variation in the expression of causation? Are the ‘pieces’ of causation encoded differently across languages or are they constant while variation is contributed by elements external to causation itself?

These are all questions of minimalist concern, that is, they are formulated by following some of the assumptions about language discussed in Chomsky’s (1995) Minimalist Program and further developed by numerous generative linguists to-date. For example, the questions in (1) make the minimalist assumption that the linguistic encoding of causation is located in a (e.g. linguistic) ‘piece’ (or perhaps in a set of ‘pieces’). That is, they assume that all (intra- and crosslinguistic) variation regarding the linguistic expression of causation is located in a grammatical ‘piece’ (most likely, a functional head). As Baker (2008) points out regarding the generative idea of ‘parameter’ as the only source for linguistic variation, there has been a shift in the understanding of ‘parameter’ in the generative literature. The Government and Binding theorists (Chomsky 1981 and related work) worked with what Baker terms macroparameters. Macroparameters are ‘language settings or options’ that stem from some identified central property of grammars. They tend

1. Hiaki is part of the Uto-Aztecan family, spoken in North America, from the Great Basin of the United States (Utah, Oregon, Ohio, Montana, California, Nevada and Arizona) through Mexico (Sonora, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Zacatecas, Durango, Michoacán, Guerrero, and Jalisco). It is spoken in parts of Arizona and parts of Sonora. It is becoming endangered in Arizona. The variety included in this book is mostly the Arizona variety.

to have a strong impact on the overall (e.g. syntactic) structure of languages. For instance, the pro-drop parameter (Chomsky 1981; Rizzi 1982) explains contrasts between languages like Spanish and English involving the fact that only the former allows null subjects. The setting of this parameter has been identified to have a domino (i.e. clustering) effect. For instance, besides allowing null subjects pro-drop languages do not exhibit expletive pronouns (e.g. Spanish *llueve* vs. English *it rains*) or tend to observe *that*-trace effect (e.g. Spanish *¿Quién_i dijiste **que** t_i vino?* vs. English **Who_i did you say that t_i came?*), whereas non pro-drop languages like English (shown in the two examples) do.

Minimalist research, in contrast (see, for instance, Kayne (2000, 2005)), is more concerned with what Baker terms 'microparameters'. Microparameters are no longer seen as language settings in terms of general grammatical phenomena, but they appeal to the local and the specific. That is, the microparameters investigated by minimalist researchers tend to be localized on specific (functional) heads (e.g. Baker's Borer-Chomsky Conjecture). The parameterization of functional heads may have a bigger or lesser impact on the general structure of a language with respect to other languages. Nonetheless, their study has led to numerous findings within the minimalist literature regarding specific contrasts between identified languages, or localized differences between dialects of the same language. Lately, they have also explained structural differences regarding the same phenomenon within one language. This book is minimalist in that it adopts this second idea of 'parameter'.

In order to answer the questions in (1), I adopt, as a departure point, the minimalist model for causatives recently proposed by Pykkänen (2002, 2008), in which she accounts for specific patterns of variation that may be observed in the formation of lexical and morphological causatives in a number of languages. For this author, variation in causatives essentially originates in the 'pieces' of causation themselves. She argues that the central piece of causation, the functional element Cause, is parameterized. Pykkänen uses the idea of 'parameter' in the minimalist sense of lexical parameterization (Chomsky 1995; Borer 1984). As just discussed, instead of adopting the idea of 'macro-parameters' embraced by the scholars in the GB tradition, Pykkänen treats parameters as more specific factors of variation located in lexical (functional) heads, the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture (Baker 2008). Thus, semantically, the head Cause is a functional element that contributes linguistic structures with the meaning of causation; syntactically, different instances of Cause involve contrasted properties across languages and, presumably, also within languages, in the expression of different types of causation (e.g. lexical vs. productive). This is, according to Pykkänen, what explains the observed variation in the linguistic expression of causation both across and within languages.

Pykkänen's model makes a very important contribution to the study of variation in causative structures by making straightforward predictions about the

behavior and properties of the elements participating in causatives in a number of languages. For this reason, her account was chosen as a departure point for a broader look at causatives that also includes periphrastic structures as part of the study. However, Pylkkänen's model needs to be complemented with other studies to fully account for causatives across languages. This task is extensively and carefully done throughout this book. Theoretically, too, Pylkkänen's account requires a closer look regarding some issues. It is ambiguous at times, which creates confusion in its application, and it appears to make wrong predictions (e.g. it overgenerates, predicting attested ungrammatical structures as grammatical, and it undergenerates, not predicting attested grammatical structures as ungrammatical).

In this book, I use Pylkkänen's account as a reference minimalist model of causatives, pointing out the points that appear to be ambiguous or problematic, offering solutions to them. I mostly offer old and novel data from familiar Indo-European (Spanish and English) as well as the Amerindian language Hiaki (Uto-Aztecan) to illustrate the theoretical points. In the second half of this book, I focus on the syntax of productive causatives, which are not specifically treated by Pylkkänen, and which may be expressed periphrastically (e.g. Spanish or English) or morphologically (e.g. Hiaki or Japanese). With Pylkkänen (and other scholars like Harley (1995), Folli & Harley (2003 and subsequent work), Schäfer (2008), among many), I place the focus of syntactic causation on the functional head *v*(Cause). I depart from Pylkkänen regarding specific (albeit important) details, such as the bundling of the functional heads Voice and Cause (see Chapter 2), because such bundling is not only difficult to test but unnecessary to invoke in periphrastic environments.

The book is structured as follows. In Chapter 1, I introduce two notions crucial to the main topic of this book, the concept of variation in the causative domain. First, I discuss examples of variation involving the traditionally termed lexical causatives (e.g. the causative-inchoative alternation). Second, I introduce the concept of variation in productive causatives.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical framework I adopt in my analysis as a reference model, Pylkkänen's (2002, 2008). In this chapter, I describe Pylkkänen's predictions and I point out potential problems with the framework, especially regarding those predictions that appear to be too strong.

In Chapter 3, I use data from English, Spanish and Hiaki lexical causatives in order to test Pylkkänen's framework. I show that some constructions found in these languages cannot be explained by Pylkkänen's model (or by Pylkkänen's model alone). For instance, I show that Pylkkänen's predictions alone fail to explain why verbs such as English *arrive* disallow lexical causatives across family languages (e.g. Hiaki *yep̄sa* 'arrive' also lacks a causative counterpart). I also question Pylkkänen's proposed parameter regarding the bundling of the agentive head Voice with Cause in some languages but not in other languages. I suggest that this parameter makes wrong predictions and it is based on unclear evidence from

Japanese, which weakens the proposal. This chapter discusses this and other questions regarding the contrast of lexical causatives in the languages discussed here.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6 I develop an analysis of English, Hiaki, and Spanish productive causatives (respectively), based on Pykkänen's model. I conclude that the model successfully predicts the core structure of productive causatives regarding the parameterization of Cause for Selection only, since the Voice-bundling parameter doesn't appear to play a role or make any relevant predictions in the syntax of productive causatives. Productive causatives involve the addition of layers of syntactic structure, as compared with the (mainly lexical) causatives studied by Pykkänen. Because of this, language-proper mechanisms independent of causation itself become a major source of variation in the linguistic realization of productive causatives across languages.

This is particularly true of Indo-European languages, such as English and Spanish. In Chapters 4 and 6 I provide an account of productive causatives in these two languages, respectively, discussing theoretical topics such as phase-theory and Agree, both relevant to the syntax of productive causatives in these two languages. Because of their theoretical complexity, I devote most of Chapter 4 to the study of English passives of causatives and English causative passives. In Chapter 6 I mainly focus on the dative case of the causee argument, which has been an important matter of concern in the study of the Spanish (and Romance) causative (e.g. Villalba (1992), Treviño (1994), Torrego (1998, 2010), Folli & Harley (2003, 2007), Ordóñez (2008)). I argue against current applicative analysis of the construction with evidence showing that the dative causee of Spanish periphrastic causatives behaves like other external arguments. In the last part of the chapter I discuss a Spanish construction never treated before, involving Spanish agent-less productive causatives involving *hacer*. I argue that, in this case, the dative argument that appears in the construction should be analyzed as an applicative. I offer arguments in favor of this position. In Chapter 5, I show novel data regarding productive causatives in the Uto-Aztecan language Hiaki. The study of productive causatives in this language is particularly interesting because of their morphological nature, which is contrasted with the other two languages under investigation here. In this chapter, I focus on how the use of two morphologically contrasted causative suffixes (direct causative *-tua* and indirect causative *-tevo*) has an impact on the overall syntactic structure and semantic interpretation of the causatives in terms of their argument realization. The chapter deals with other issues stemming from the construction, such as the impact that the stacking of causative suffixes has in the overall structure, both morphological and syntactic.

Although this book has a strong formal (generative) focus, it includes novel data from both Spanish and a relatively understudied language, Hiaki, which may make it potentially attractive to linguists with typological or descriptive interests also.