



International Journal of
MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

ISSN: (Print) ISSN 1987-9601

(Online) E ISSN 1512-3146

Journal homepage: <http://multilingualeducation.org/>

**Expressing volition, imposition and latency
through causatives**

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To cite this article: Mariam Orkodashvili (2021) Expressing volition, imposition and latency through causatives:

International Journal of Multilingual Education, #19, pp. 195-207.

DOI: 10.22333/ijme.2021.190023

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.22333/ijme.2021.190023>

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Expressing volition, imposition and latency through causatives

ABSTRACT

The present study analyzes the different ways in which causative structures in these languages express the ideas of causation, volition vs imposition, and temporal sequencing of actions. The examples have been gathered from media discourse (written and spoken examples of news reports, articles or discussions from electronic media), and informal conversations with the native speakers of the languages during interviews and discussions. The forms of expressing the concepts of *desire*, *wish*, *will* on the one hand, and the forms of *expressing imposition*, *request*, *incentive*, *order* or *involuntary action*, on the other, differ across languages from purely syntactic structures to morphological, or lexical-semantic means.

Latent causation is yet further interesting issue raised in the paper.

Keywords: *causative, causation, volition, imposition, latency*

Aims and research goals

The present research investigates the concept of causation and its expression in Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages on the examples of Georgian (non Indo-European), English, German and Russian (Indo-European) languages.

Causation is expressed through morphological affixation in the Georgian language and is constructed through syntax in most Indo-European languages, for instance, in German and English.

The forms of expressing the concepts of *desire*, *wish*, *will* on the one hand, and the forms of *expressing imposition*, *request*, *incentive*, *order* or *involuntary action*, on the other, differ across languages from purely syntactic structures to morphological, or lexical-semantic means.

Theoretical framework

Is there a presence of choice in causative actions? And if there is, then to what extent is its presence demonstrated through language? Does language present a material embodiment of our intentions, attitudes and desires that cause certain consequences? To what extent do linguistic units and structures convey the meanings of causality across languages? How transferrable is the idea of causation from one language to another?

Is willingness a conscious content that is prospectively causal of the subsequent motion? Or is it only retrospectively causal of motion? Or could a feeling that one causes a motor act be merely *an illusion of agency*? Is willingness the conscious feeling of being about to move? Or is it rather intending to move, or having an urge or desire to move? Is it a feeling that an imminent motion is agentially authored by oneself? And how are all these actions expressed through language? Moreover, how are causative actions transferred from one language to another language?

The list of questions could go endlessly further and could engender even more questions than answers due to the mysterious, dialectical, nebulous, controversial, and seemingly metaphysical nature of the issue of *causality* and *causation*. The problem has been raised by numerous scientists, philosophers and scholars in various fields of study. However, the questions have remained mainly unanswered or partially answered with many *buts* and *howevers* following (Chilton, 2014; Jackendoff, 2009; Parikh, 2010; Pearl, 2009).

Expressing causation across languages presents manifold interests from morphological, syntactic and typological standpoints. In grammar, the concept that is expressed through morphological derivation in one language (Georgian), can be expressed through syntactic structure in others (English). From semantic-pragmatic perspective, the interplay of precise semantic meaning of causation and pragmatic shades of meaning of imposition, request, incentive, voluntary or involuntary actions presents yet further points of interest.

Starting by speculative and explanatory realm, throughout the centuries, causatives moved to the empirical stance of explaining how things happened, and entered the responsibility sharing mode in the modern life. Therefore, the *why* approach changed into

the *how* approach and gradually entered the *whose responsibility* stance. David Hume argued that the *why* attitude was not the deep enough approach and offered the *how* approach instead. And since causal connections are the products of observations, we come to the epistemic, and not speculative, nature of causation.

And finally, as Judea Pearl very wittingly puts it, ‘explanations (*i.e. finding causes of actions*) are used exclusively for passing responsibilities’ (Pearl, 1999: 402), and ‘...the very essence of causation (is) the ability to predict the consequences of abnormal eventualities and new manipulations’ (Pearl, 1999, p. 415).

Methodology

The main methodology used in the research is cross linguistic and typological analysis. Constructing and conveying the ideas of causation and causatives in different languages are the research issues that yield noteworthy findings in language typology, linguistic psychology, and cognitive processes involved in language acquisition. Hence, causatives present an interesting psycholinguistic and typological topic to be researched.

Georgian language, for instance, offers complex verbal forms and affixation for expressing the concept of causation, while English has a specific syntactic structure for stating the same idea, and German and Russian offer further specific syntactic constructions for expressing the same concept.

Hence, causation bears one more testimony to the typological difference between analytic and agglutinative languages.

Data

The present study analyzes the different ways in which causative structures in these languages express the ideas of causation, volition vs imposition, and temporal sequencing of actions. The examples have been gathered from media discourse (written and spoken examples of news reports, articles or discussions from electronic media), and informal conversations with the native speakers of the languages during interviews and discussions.

Empirical study and findings

The most common English causative structures are: *have something done; get something done; have someone do something; get someone to do something* [the corresponding syntactic structures are: *have/get + DObj + V; have + IObj + V + DObj; get + IObj + to + Verb + DObj*]. These structures are used when a speaker gives another person responsibility to handle the task for him, i.e. causes certain action, state or condition through delegating responsibility, giving instructions, requesting, ordering, incentivizing, encouraging, inspiring, convincing, etc., for instance: *I had my car fixed; please, have your teacher send the forms to us; I got the letter finally published; I got her to finish the job*. It should be noted that the structures with *get* imply the meanings of additional effort, or persuasion from the speaker to cause the doer perform the task.

Causatives can also be expressed through the verb phrases with *make* or *let*, such as, *made him do something; let him do something* [the corresponding syntactic structures are: *make + IObj + V + (DObj); let + IObj + V + (DObj)*].

When we cause something to happen by force, we usually use the verb *make*, which means that another person has no say in the matter, since he is forced to do what he is told to. There is no choice or alternative, and hence, no free will. Moreover, the structure usually expresses the situation when a person does not want to do what he is made to do. Therefore, the verb structures imply the causation of the acts through coercion or imposition. The usual examples are: *she made me do the task; or the weather made us cancel the event*.

As for *let*, it expresses permission, in which case the performer of the action has more freedom of choice by receiving permission from the speaker. The end-result is the causation of a certain action, state or condition through granting permission to the performer of an action, e.g. *She let us go home; he let us take the books with us*.

In Georgian, there is a suffix expressing causative: *-ობ (-in)* გავაკეთებ-ობ-ე [gavak'eteb-in-e] (I made him/her do something; I had him/her do something). The interesting point is that the same suffix *-ობ (-in)* can express the ideas of imposition, coercion (*akin* to English: *made*), delegation of responsibility, request, order,

encouragement, convincing (as expressed through *have/get* structures of English) and permission (*akin* to English *let, allow permit*). Therefore, the Georgian suffix *-ობ (-in)* is one more evidence to the fact that imposition (coercion, forceful obligation) and permission (freedom of choice, free will) are the two flip sides of one coin, i.e. in this case, causation.

Following are some examples of causative structures:

Such a beautiful landscape made me write a song.

His enthusiasm makes me work harder.

We are encouraged to go on with the project.

It is well-known that causation entails in itself the primary meaning of imposition, responsibility, agency, and volition.

Examples:

a) *I had the car repaired.*

b) *She had the letter published.*

However, there are cases when involuntary causation occurs. This latter form is mainly expressed morphologically in synthetic and agglutinative languages (e.g. Georgian) and is transferred syntactically in analytical languages (e.g. English, German).

Example:

c) *ნამცხვარი მემომეჭამა.*

[Namcxvari šemomech'ama].

[I ate the entire cake without realizing it].

It literally means: *the cake was so delicious it made me eat it up without realizing the fact* (or, *I only realized it upon the completion of the eating process*).

One interesting case of causation is the verb *methinks* (Georgian *mepikreba*), which is no longer used in modern English and which is mostly used in Shakespeare's works. It expresses the involuntary mental or cognitive activity that makes an experiencer feel or think in a certain way. A rough analogy in modern English would be so-called tentative thought process expressed in the following way: *I should think (methinks), it will rain today.*

However, in Georgian such verbs that express involuntary mental or cognitive activity are in abundance, e.g.:

- d) *მეეჭვება* [*meech'veba*] [*I doubt it*; literal meaning: *it makes me doubt*];
- e) *მეადვილებს* [*meadvileba*] [*it is easy for me*; literal meaning: *it makes me feel that it is easy*];
- f) *მეწერინება* [*mec'erineba*] [*I write it*, literal meaning: *either inspiration or circumstances or my condition make me write something, say, a poem or a story*];
- g) *მეჩვენება* [*mechveneba*] [*it seems to me*, literal meaning: *I might be seeing or feeling things*].

The complex affixation system of the Georgian language makes it possible to express the involuntary causation in one single word. The preverb *me-* in such verbs presents a particular interest for morpho-semantic analysis, in which the first-person singular is expressed. Other points of interest are the suffixes *-in* and *-eb* express the meaning of involuntary causation.

The same idea in Russian and German are expressed through dative cases:

- h) Mn'e dumaets'a
- i) Mn'e nnavitsa
- j) Mir gefällt.

Besides, periphrastic causative constructions present a specially interesting case (I'll have you know – *č'k'vas gasc'avli*, causative also conveys the idea of threat). !!! It is noteworthy that while in English the structure is causative, Georgian corresponding translation offers an ordinary active voice version.

Another interesting case is of a double causative. The verbs like *მიგვზავნებო* [*migegzavnebi*], meaning: *I will go and talk to him instead of you*, could be named as *double causatives*, since they entail *double agency*, and hence, engender *double causation*. Here, doubling of agency happens as a result of one agent (the speaker) offering another agent (the listener) to perform the action in his stead (to go and talk to a third person), as if it was the second agent (the listener) asking the first agent (the speaker) to go and talk to the third

person on his behalf (for different reasons, e.g. being shy to talk to the third person himself, not being on the appropriate terms of talking with him, or not having enough competence, ability or will to talk to him). Therefore, the first agent (the speaker) is performing here the roles of both *a causer* and *a causee*. The interesting point here is that while in English the action could be expressed and explained by several syntactic structures, the Georgian complex affixation system makes it possible to accommodate the meanings if all the agents, patients and accompanying emotive (shyness, inability, social distance) *sememes* in one linguistic unit.

Another interesting quasi-causative form that the Georgian morphology can produce is *შემოგვედირექტორის* [*šemogvedirekt'ora*] (*behaved himself/herself in such a bossy way that gradually took the position of a director or any such kind of a bossy manager, without others realizing how it all happened, i.e. when others realized what had happened the agent had already acquired the managerial, directorial position*). The interesting *sememe* (giving additional shade of meaning to the verb) that the word entails is that the agent liked giving orders and instructing others so much that this bossy feature of his/her character caused him/her attain the managerial position, where people regarded him/her a director or manager, and hence, nobody noticed how all this happened till the end-result came about as a natural consequence.

The interesting questions that rise in this case are: how much volition, intention, purpose and how much unintended/involuntary action can be traced in this verb? How much of a causation is implied in it? Did the agent behave in a bossy manner intentionally to cause the result or did his/her natural bossy character brought about the result, as a natural consequence?

These types of complex morphological structures in synthetic languages, like Georgian, make it possible to produce the linguistic units that are interesting not only from structural-morphological viewpoint, but yield rich and manifold semantic-pragmatic interpretations as well. Besides, they are also interesting for the purposes of transferring the ideas of causation and volition from language to language. As the above definitions showed, the transfer of such complex morphological structures from Georgian into Indo-European

analytical language, such as English, requires several syntactic structures to fully explain and convey the expressed and implied shades of meanings entailed in the verb.

Causatives and inchoatives

Let us now consider the following prefixes and suffixes.

Causative prefixes: *be*-friend, *en*-rich, *em*-power, *en*-slave.

Causative suffixes: dark-*en*, soft-*en*, sharp-*en*; length-*en*; memor-*ize*; liber-*ate*

He dark-*en*-ed the room.

All the above suffixes and prefixes in one way or another express the idea of causation, whether through delegation of power or responsibility, through imposition or coercion, through physical or mental activity or effort that all engender certain results, and hence, cause certain condition, state or effect.

It should be noted that *-en* presents an interesting case, since it can be both causative and inchoative suffix. Compare the causative suffix *-en* in 'I dark-*en*-ed the room' with an inchoative suffix which does not imply causation but rather a natural phenomenon:

The room dark-en-ed (when it drew closer to night).

Causative frequencies

Douglas Biber present the usage frequencies of causative verbs: *help*, *let*, *allow* and *require*, per million words across four different registers: conversation, fiction, news and academic discourse. According to their corpus findings, *help* has the highest usage frequency in the news (media discourse), which is over 500 per million words; *let* is most frequent in conversations and fiction, with over 500 occurrences per million words in each; *allow* and *require* are most frequent in academic discourse with over 300 and 500 occurrences per million words respectively (Biber et al., 1999).

Besides, as already indicated above, there are verbs expressing causation: *affect*, *cause*, *enable*, *ensure*, *force*, *prevent* (with over 50 occurrences per million), and *assist*, *guarantee*, *influence*, *permit* (over 20 occurrences per million) (Biber, et al, 1999).

Let us now look at some German examples:

Ich lass mir ein Haus bauen.

Ich habe den Wagen reparieren lassen.

Sie lässt ihrem Wagen reparieren.

Man lässt uns gehen.

Die Beamtin hat mich nicht reden lassen.

Die Tür lässt sich öffnen. (Die Tür kann geöffnet werden).

Die Frau lässt es zu, daß man sie trägt.

Er lässt sich vom Friseur rasieren.

Ich lasse mir einen Mantel (von einem guten Schneider) nähen.

Er lässt sich von niemandem befehlen.

Die schwere Tür lässt sich von einem Kind nicht öffnen.

Der Junge bekommt ein Fahrrad von seinem Eltern geschenkt.

Unser Handeln muß sich dabei von dem Bewußtsein leiten lassen, daß wir für lange Zeit auf den jetzt studierenden und wissenschaftlich qualifizierenden Nachwuchs angewiesen sein werden.

As it can be observed from the above examples, the verb *lassen* expresses the meanings of both permission and causation, i.e. by permitting something to happen or to be done, the agent causes certain activities, states and results. Being an Indo-European language, German relies on syntactic means for constructing sentences to express causation.

As already noted, the cases with *let*, *lassen*, present an interesting case for causation, where the permission plays the so-called *agentive* role in engendering causation, implying that by letting something happen or letting someone have their own way, a speaker engenders (i.e. causes) certain actions, conditions or states. Therefore, as state, permission (let, allow, permit, lassen) present a flip side of imposition in one coin of causation.

Expressing causation through ergativity

Another interesting feature of the Georgian language is the presence of ergative constructions. The ergative case (or literally, the Narrative case, as it is referred to in

Georgian) presents a particularly interesting instance for cross linguistic comparative and typological analysis.

For instance, an interesting case of ergative construct triggering causation meaning is demonstrated in the following causative structure, where the additional meanings volition/involition are intertwined:

k) შიშმა გადაამწყვეტინა [*šišma gadamac'q'vet'ina*], [*fear has made me make this decision*].

The present research makes a conjecture that not only do the ergative constructions denote the agent of the action but semantically they add extra shades of meaning of responsibility, intentionality, intentionality and in certain cases, causality to the entire statement.

Is the real causative power in latency?

Are the accompanying attitudes, actions (inactivities), emotions, mental activities, latent variables in causation? If yes, then, to what extent do they contribute to causality? Or do they rather contribute to the strength of causality? How much latency is hidden in the intentionality factor? To what extent do the attitudes, dispositions, emotions, mental activities form causality bonds with the consequential actions, states or events? And after all, do causatives always entail the meaning of causality in language and linguistic units?

As already mentioned, one widely spread assumption regarding causation in statistics is that there is no causation without manipulation. However, language structures are much more intricate and subtle both in their forms (phonology, morphology, syntax) and meanings (semantics, pragmatic) to limit their usage solely to manipulation. Unlike AI language, human language can produce more varied, creative and original structures that could tacitly imply meanings of causation, imposition or volition that indirectly bring about consequential states or conditions.

The latent nature of causation calls for the need to analyze the concept of fifth-dimensional *holographic memes* and *memeplexes* that are invisibly utilized in modern social media discourse and have the nature of widely spreading and affecting individuals,

communities and societies around the world. In the analogy of genes, *memes* and *memeplexes* can be constructed, engineered, changed, manipulated and effectively spread across the globe in a matter of minutes thanks to modern day possibilities of information technologies.

Therefore, the hidden idea or meaning of causation (in the disguise of seemingly free will and choice) can be constructed through various linguistic or extralinguistic means and can be spread through world communities.

Distractors and latent quasi-causatives

The following cases can be regarded as distractors, since they do not convey the meaning of causation, or rather convey hidden latent indirect quasi-causation, and hence, the meaning of involuntary action (as discussed earlier the case of eating the whole cake up without realizing it) that is expressed through the complex affixation system in Georgian.

The following is another interesting case of latent or quasi-causative: *შემოგვაღამდა* [*šemogvayamda*], meaning we did not notice how it started to get dark (compare with the inchoative structure, in which the speakers notice the process of getting dark). However, the interesting fact about this verb in Georgian is that the complex affixation system makes the verb structure analogous to that of [*šemogveč'ama*] *შემოგვეჭამა* (*having eaten up the whole cake without realizing it*), which adds the hidden latent agency, and hence, causation to the semantic structure of the verb (which, like morphological structure, is also complex). The hidden causation of the verb implies that the agents, having worked hard throughout the day or having walked all through the day, did not notice how it started to get dark. Hence, their working or walking all through the day is a kind of another latent agent that made them work or walk till twilight.

Similarly, the verb *დაგვათეხდა* [*dagvatenda*], expresses the involuntary natural phenomenon of daybreak, i.e. we did not notice the daybreak (how the morning approached), but the interesting fact in this case is again the hidden (latent) seemingly-causative meaning that we intentionally did not go to sleep and worked all through the

night or walked all through the night, so that by the end of our activity it was already early morning. Therefore, our activity of working or walking is a kind of latent agent that made us stay awake till daybreak.

Concluding remarks

Individuals have symbolic consciousness. Causation is closely associated with symbolic consciousness of individuals. It is one of the strongest activators of conscious and subconscious symbols in a human mind. Moreover, causation is one of the strongest indicators and reflectors of mindset, attitude and disposition of a person. In this respect, the language reveals not only its communicative and expressive functions, but it also displays cognitive function and close links to brain. This latter case relates a person's linguistic performance to his / her mental disposition, and is an important part of understanding a thought process through linguistic analysis.

Furthermore, the analysis of causation also provides a window on interaction between grammar and meaning. In addition, it reveals how grammatical and structural processes interact with meaning (semantics) and human interaction processes (pragmatics).

Hence, constructing and conveying the ideas of causation and causatives in different languages and their comparative analysis of the relevant corpora are the research issues that could yield interesting findings in language typology, linguistic psychology, and cognitive processes involved in language acquisition, language usage and language research. Hence, causatives present an interesting psycholinguistic and typological topic to be researched.

In addition, comparative linguistics research and analysis of causative morphosyntactic forms could facilitate the compilation of significant volume of data reflecting this linguistic and psychological phenomenon across languages.

Therefore, the concept of causation requires further research in the fields of linguistics, linguistic typology, psycholinguistics, morphosyntax, semantics and corpus studies.

Finally, the cognitive aspect of understanding, interpreting and inferencing causative structures would add further asset to the studies and investigations in the field of cognitive linguistics.

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