

Direct and Indirect Causation in Hindi

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1. Introduction: One of the most prominent questions in the recent literature on causativization/transitivization concerns the issue of the direction of the derivation: is causative formation ‘structure building’, or are we dealing with productive detransitivization processes? Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, Chierchia 2004, and Reinhart 2002 all claim the latter for English and Romance. The first aim of this paper is to argue directly against a detransitivization approach for the morphological alternations in Hindi, and so, indirectly, to cast doubt on a detransitivization analysis for the English causative/inchoative alternation as well. The second aim of the paper is to provide an analysis for the difference between ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ causation in Hindi/Urdu. Many languages exhibit a distinction between two types of morphological causative constructions (cf. e.g. Shibatani 1976), sometimes referred to as ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ causatives. Inner causatives are like transitivizers and yield direct causation (direct involvement of the causer in the event). Outer causatives are more like periphrastic causative constructions, often giving a sense of indirect causation (or permission or assistance in some languages). The question is whether this regular alternation, as found in Hindi/Urdu should be analysed in terms of ‘lexical’ vs. ‘syntactic’ processes, or some syntactic version of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ involving recursion of a causative head.

2. Hindi/Urdu *-aa* and *-vaa*: Consider the examples from Hindi/Urdu below. The *-aa* morpheme attaches to an intransitive root to give a transitive form involving ‘direct’ causation, as in (1a); the *-vaa* morpheme attaches to the same intransitive root to give a transitive form that seems to embody ‘indirect’ causation (1b). Note that in the (b) example, an instrumental-marked causee is made possible.

- (1) a. Anjum-ne makaan ban-aa-yaa.
Anjum-ERG house make-I.CAUS-PERF
‘Anjum built a house’
- b. Anjum-ne (mazdurō-se) makaan ban-vaa-yaa.
Anjum-ERG laborers-INSTR house make-O.CAUS-PERF
‘Anjum had a house built (by the laborers)’
(ERG = ergative, PERF = perfective, INSTR = instrumental).

However, it can be shown that the Hindi/Urdu *-vaa* is not an outer causative (agreeing in several essential respects with Saksena 1982). Strikingly, the *-vaa* suffix shows no difference in distribution compared to the *-aa* form— it attaches to essentially the same roots that the *-aa* suffix does. In particular, both forms attach to unaccusatives, unergatives and transitives. For some transitives attachment of a causative suffix increases the valency (the so-called ‘ingestive’ class), whereas for others, the valency is not increased. The point here is that with respect to these distributional patterns, *-aa* and *-vaa* causativization behave identically. Moreover, comparing the forms created by attaching the *-vaa* suffix and the *-aa* suffix to the same root, we show from entailment properties that the former does not semantically embed the latter (cf. also Saksena 1982). Both suffixed forms are equally opaque with respect to subsequent syntactic operations and embeddings (i.e. they both act like underived verbal forms), and they both give rise to verbal forms with idiomatic flavours and/or idiosyncratic selectional restrictions. Thus, the two forms do not seem to differ with respect to ‘lexicality’ or ‘productivity’, nor can the one be analysed as embedding the other. The striking differences in their semantics remain however:

- The ‘indirect’ causative always licenses the presence of an instrumental marked causee. The ‘direct’ causative only sometimes does, depending on the type of root it attaches to.
- The ‘indirect’ causative allows only subjects that are active, volitional instigators. The ‘direct’ causative tolerates abstract causes in subject position.

3. The Analysis:

The heart of the analysis is a generalization of the causative relation as the principled semantic means by which subevents are put together in the syntax. In previous accounts, the

existence of two ‘causers’ as in the classic outer causative seems to require a recursion of *vP*, (an embedding of one complete functional complex within another). Under a more fine-grained decomposition of the *vP*, I argue that the subevental components of initiation, process and result are all linked by event causation. A so-called ‘causative’ morpheme can then in principle link either ‘initiation’ and ‘process’ or ‘process’ and ‘result’. I argue that the case of Hindi/Urdu *-aa* vs. *-vaa* is direct morphological evidence for this view.

Under the analysis, the *-aa* (direct causative) morpheme is an initiational head (essentially little *v*) which expresses a causative relation between the initiational state and the subsequent process (cf. also Hale and Keyser 2002, Harley 1995 inter alia). The verbal root lexicalizes the process component of the event in this case and the two form a complex event description. The *-v* (indirect causative) morpheme on the other hand, is a processual head that expresses a causative relation between the process and a subsequent result state. In this case, the root lexicalizes only the result. This argues for a decomposed *vP*, which contains three hierarchically ordered heads: *v* (initiation), *V* (process/transition) and *res* (result).

The immediate advantages of this analysis over previous accounts are as follows: (i) both *-aa* and *-vaa* causatives are complex events formed at the *vP* level with no difference with respect to monoclausality or ability to be idiomatized; (ii) We can decompose *-vaa* into *-v* (the process head) and *-aa* (which is just the ‘direct’ causal head (iii) the very same underspecified roots can be input to causative formation for each type, and *-vaa* causation never embeds *-aa* causation.

At the same time, the differences between *-aa* and *vaa* causatives are also captured on this kind of decomposition. Indirect causation with *-vaa* follows from the fact that two distinct potentially non-overlapping subevents are involved in the complex macroevent so formed. Thus, the effect of indirect causation comes about *not* because the *-v* morpheme in Hindi/Urdu is an outer causative (it is actually lower in the structure than *i-aa*, under this analysis), but because it disrupts the relationship between the initiating subevent and the result of that initiation. (A similar distinction between direct and indirect resultatives has been proposed by Levin and Rappaport-Hovav 1999). While the subjects of *-aa* causatives can be stative causers, subjects of *-vaa* causatives have to be actors who are actually involved in the process described, a fact that I account for because the argument introduced by the *-vaa* morpheme must be the specifier of both process and initiation, while the argument introduced by *-aa* is a pure (potentially stative) initiator.

4. Conclusion: The analysis of direct vs. indirect causation turns out to provide evidence for a tripartite decomposition of verbal meaning, where causation is not just associated with the uppermost head within the *vP*, but is the semantic relation that links all three subevents. The paper shows that a structure building account of causative formation is both possible, and necessary in the case of the morphosyntactic facts from Hindi. With this analysis in hand, I reexamine the arguments in favour of de-causativization accounts of the English causative-inchoative alternation and show that they disappear under an explicitly constructionalist approach.