Between causation and intention: semantic bleaching of causatives in Kalmyck dependent clauses

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1. The study is focused on the syntax and semantics of causative verbs in Kalmyck, a Mongolic language spoken in the steppes to the North-West of the Caspian Sea. The data were collected during an expedition organized by the Saint-Petersburg State University in the summer of 2006.

2. Like other Mongolic languages, Kalmyck enjoys extensive use of causative morphology on verbs. There are several causative morphemes in Kalmyck, the choice between which is usually lexically patterned, although in some cases there are two causatives derived from one and the same non-causative verb. The S-argument of the "underlying" intransitive verb is coded in the position of the direct object of the causative verb (1-2), while in causatives derived from transitives the "underlying" A-argument is usually demoted to an oblique position coded by Instrumental or Dative (3-4):

(1)   *giich-nər   tarə-v*
        guest-PL   go.away-PST
        'The guests went away'.

(2)   *Badma   giich-nər-igə   tar-a-chkə-v*
        B.   guest-PL-ACC go.away-CAUS-PRF.TR-PST
        a. 'Badma has driven his guests out (of his home)'.
        b. (less natural without contextual support) 'Badma made his guests go away.' (e.g. ordered them to do so).

(3)   *bi   lekc   umsh-u-v*
        I   lecture   read-PST-1SG
        'I gave a lecture'.

(4)   *tedn   namar   lekc   umsh-ul-v*
        they   I.INSTR   lecture   read-CAUS-PST
        'They made me give a lecture' (≈ 'they arranged a lecture to be delivered by me').

While some causatives, especially those derived from intransitives, are "normally" interpreted as direct causatives (2a), most causative verbs allow for non-direct or permissive reading (2b, 4). When used in the main clause, the causative may lack the property of intentionality and can thus receive a force reading:

(5)   *kiitn salykən /   *emchə   namagə   xanya-lqə-v*
        cold   wind /   doctor   I.ACC   cough-CAUS-PST
        'The cold wind / *the doctor made me cough'.

The participant coded as the subject in (5) is thus not a prototypical Agent in that it has the property of actual bringing about the event, but lacks the ability of control and intentionality.

3. Causatives are systematically employed in dependent adverbial clauses of purpose. In order to illustrate that, let us first examine the usual non-causative purpose clauses. In Kalmyck, there are two basic strategies of coding the purpose event; the first strategy is used in same-subject configurations:

(6)   *bi   [unt-xar]   tedn-igə   xär-ül-ck-ü-v.*
        I   [sleep-CV.PURP]   they-ACC   send.back-PRF.TR-PST-1SG
        'I have sent them back home in order **for me** to sleep'.

The converb in *-xar* is a dedicated "purpose converb"; it is etymologically analysed as the Instrumental form of the future tense / irrealis participle. However, this strategy is not possible if the subject of the main event is not coreferent with the subject of the dependent purpose event. One strategy that can be used in this latter case is illustrated in (7):

(7)   *bi   [tedn-igə   unt-txa   giqäd]   xärül-chk-ü-v.*
        I   [they-ACC   sleep-TXA   GIQÄD]   send.back-PRF.TR-PST-1SG
        'I have sent them back home in order **for them** to sleep'.

The conjunction-like word *giqäd* in (7) is a grammaticalised converb of the verb *gi-xə* 'to say' and the verb in the dependent clause is in an optative-like mood. Thus, the most literal translation of (7) would be 'I have sent them back home saying "let you sleep"'.

4. However, an alternative to (7) that is central for further discussion is represented in (8):

(8)   *bi   [tedn-igə   unt-ul-xar]   xärül-chk-ü-v.*
        I   [they-ACC   sleep-CAUS-CV.PURP]   send.back-PRF.TR-PST-1SG

'I have sent them back home in order **for them** to sleep'.

Here the same-subject constraint is not violated, since the dependent verb is causativized, which makes the A-participant of the main event also the subject of the embedded clause. Thus syntactically, causativization in these contexts is a mechanism that introduces a new argument to the embedded verb, which is semantically external to the event itself (the sleeping of 'them' in (8)). It is crucial that out of this context, the normal reading of the causative verb *unt-ul-xə* would imply a direct causation ('to lull to sleep'). Thus, the A-participant of the embedded clause in (8) is not a prototypical Agent. It is volitional, like a prototypical Agent, but lacks implication of actual bringing about the event caused.

5. The semantic modification of causative verbs just described is all the more evident in two more types of syntactic contexts, namely in the desiderative construction and in sentential complements of several verbs that have a volitional component in their semantics. The non-causative uses of these two constructions are illustrated in (9) and (10) correspondingly:

(9) *bi* *shkol-də* *sur-xar* *bää-nä-v.*
    I school-DAT study-CV.PURP be-PRS-1SG
    'I want to go to school.'

(10) *bi* [*shkol-də* *surquly-an* *säänär* *sur-xar*] *sed-nä-v*
    I [school-DAT studies-P.REFL well study-CV.PURP] try-PRS-1SG
    'I try / want to study well at the school'.

These constructions involving the purpose converb in *–xar* are similar to adverbial purpose clauses in that they show the same-subject constraint. Not unexpectedly, these constructions, too, often employ causativization of the embedded verb if the "underlying" subjects are not coreferent:

(11) *bi* [*küükt-än* *shkol-də* *sur-q-kar*] *bää-nä-v.*
    I children-P.REFL school-DAT study-CAUS-CV.PURP be-PRS-1SG
    a.'I want that my children study at school'; b. 'I want to teach my children at school'.

NB: despite the fact that the causative verb *sur-q-xə* is normally interpreted as 'to teach' in the independent clause, the subject of (11) is not necessarily bringing about the desired event himself, as shown by the grammaticality of (12):

(12) *bi* [*shkol-də* *küükt-än* *uxa-ta* *bagsh-ar*
    I [school-DAT children-P.REFL brains-with teacher-INSTR
    sur-q-kar] *bää-nä-v.*
    study-CAUS-CV.PURP] be-PRS-1SG
    'I want that my children be taught by an intelligent teacher at the school.'

For some verbs there is no ambiguity of the type illustrated in (11):

(13) [*chamagə* *edg-ül-xär*] *bi* *sed-dhä-nä-v.*
    you.ACC recover-CAUS-CV.PURP I want-PROG-PRS-1SG
    'I want that you recover (from illness).'

Note that (13) is not natural in the meaning 'I want to heal you', for which meaning another causative *edg-ä-xə* is reserved.

Finally, in the constructions discussed, the event that is desired can belong to the type of events that are not possibly brought about by human beings ('I want that the sun rise early tomorrow morning'), and still, the causative is found in its place on the embedded verb.

6. It may be concluded that if somewhat informally the semantics of 'A causes P' can generally have two semantic components: i) 'A has the intention that the event P takes place' and ii) 'some activity on the part of A brings about the event P', then

> ➢ in the independent use of Kalmyck causatives, it is the latter component that is most prominent (hence availability of force readings of causative constructions);
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> ➢ in the embedded causatives of the types discussed, it is the former component that is most prominent. Of course, the force reading is not attested in causative purpose clauses and in complements of desiderative predicates.

The Kalmyck data will be discussed in the light of typological data on semantic/syntactic co-opting of argument-determined constructions. The emergence of partially desemanticized syntactic uses of argument-determined constructions is widely discussed with respect to passives and antipassives, while for causatives this kind of apparent syntacticization is arguably less commonly attested in the languages of the world.