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THE PROCESS OF CAUSATIVISATION IN MAITHILI: A MORPHO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the process of causativisation in Maithili, presenting a morpho-semantic analysis that unveils the mechanisms governing the formation of various causative forms. Building upon the work of linguists like Comrie, Dixon, and Shibatani, the study explores the interplay between morphological and semantic elements in creating causative constructions. The analysis classifies distinct patterns observed in intransitive, transitive, and ditransitive verbs, with a comparison to Hindi. The paper provides explanation for the verbs in Maithili that cannot be causativised morphologically, and also discusses the formation of false causatives in Maithili with regard to the default form of causative verbs.

Keywords: Causativisation, Maithili, Morphosemantics

1. Introduction

There have been various attempts to categorize the process of causative formation in terms of valency, transitivity, theta roles, syntactic structure, etc. However, it appears as though the debate has settled down to the fact that the above-mentioned factors are not sufficient to understand an overall picture with regard to the types that the processes of causativisation create across the semantic-classes of verbs and thus these factors seem to have no relevance when discussed in isolation. It is widely agreed upon that a causative situation involves two components – the event, and the cause of the event (Comrie 1989) (Shibatani 1976: 1). For example,

1. mohən ək^{h}bɑr pərḍ^{h}əyı č^{h}e
   Mohan.NOM newspaper.ACC read.PROG PRS

Mohan is reading the newspaper

2. mɑ mohən-ke ək^{h}bɑr pərḍ^{h}ɑbəyı č^{h}e
   Mother.NOM Mohan-DAT newspaper.ACC read.CAUS.PROG PRS

Mother is making Mohan read the newspaper

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Here, we have the event of Mohan reading the newspaper, but this event is brought on by the mother making Mohan read the newspaper, which becomes the cause of the event. Dixon (2000) presents a different kind of characterization – "a causative construction involves the specification of an additional argument, a causer, onto a basic clause." In the above example, the addition of the argument 'ma' characterizes causativisation.

The primary objective of this study is to unravel the mechanisms underlying causativisation in Maithili, with a focus on how morphological and semantic elements interact to create different causative forms.

According to Yadav (1996), the analysis for causative constructions in Maithili must be able to:

"(i) readjustment of grammatical relations (e. g., subject, direct object, indirect object, oblique object, etc.) in view of the presence of an extra noun phrase (causer) in the corresponding causative sentence; and (ii) determining the case of the causee(s)." This perspective aligns for a need to perform a morpho-semantic analysis of the causative in Maithili.

The following section provides a comprehensive literature review on the morpho-semantic analyses of causativisation that examines the many theoretical approaches that have been pursued to undertake various studies on causativisation. Section 3 discusses the classification of the types of causatives in Maithili, and section 4 delves into a deeper evaluation for the rationale behind the classification.

2. Literature Review:

Comrie (1989) emphasizes the existence of two component situations within any causative scenario, distinguishing the cause and its effect or result. He also discusses the characteristics of prototypical morphological causatives, highlighting their productivity and the limitations on iterativity in the causative process. Furthermore, Comrie addresses the semantic parameters of direct and indirect causation, drawing attention to the agency's role in controlling the realization of the effect.

Dixon's (2000) perspective adds an alternative characterization, focusing on the specification of an additional argument, the causer, in causative constructions. This perspective challenges the traditional 'two events' description, proposing a shift in how we conceptualize causative constructions.

Shibatani (2002) probes two important questions on the nature of causativisation, firstly, what are the types of event that are more likely to be lexicalized as an atomic unit, and secondly, how are these verbs related to other types of verbs morphologically and semantically. Shibatani also points out that inactive predicates are more likely to be

causativised than active predicates. This is because an event that has a patient as a subject is easier to causativise morphologically. Based on Shibatani (2002) findings, Launey (2002) offers an explanation for the '–tia' and '–l-tia' causativisation in classical Nahuatl. According to their analysis, since the agent slot is empty, causativisation can easily introduce a new agent argument, and when the agent slot is already filled, an extra step is needed to accommodate a new agent in the case of active and transitive verbs.

Schafer (2009)'s work on causative alternation provides a framework for us to analyze the actual base of a causativised verb. The question that needs to be answered is in a causative alternation, which one is the lexical base, and which is the derived base. It also imperative to answer where does this derivation occur in our grammar. In Maithili, there are a number of verbs that appear to be the derived causative form, but as we shall see later in our discussion further, those verbs are actually the lexical forms.

Shibatani's (2002) claim is found to be supported by Hasplemath (1993) by stating that the most important condition on ability of verbs to participate in a causative alternation is the absence of agent-oriented meaning component. Since the verb does not have an agent, it cannot contain agent oriented semantic elements. Verbs like these are classified as inactive, or unaccusative verbs, and as already mentioned before, this criteria does not hold true for Maithili. Therefore, a new approach towards the analysis of causative constructions in Maithili is needed.

Das and Choi (2007) delve into the semantics and morphology of causative verbs in Hindi, dissecting them based on their contextual functions. Through this comprehensive analysis, they introduce a systematic four-way classification for causative verbs in Hindi. Notably, they introduce two new terms to facilitate a clearer understanding of the causativization process: "de-transitivized verbs" and "pseudo-ditransitive verbs." These terms serve to categorize the causative verbs in Hindi, providing a more structured and insightful framework for understanding their usage and behavior within the language.

Saksena (1983) challenges the prevailing notion of causativisation as a merely agent insertion mechanisms, and instead views it as a foregrounding and backgrounding mechanism. This provides a comprehensive account for causativisation in languages where it manifests as subject contrast, and in those where it takes the form of an additional agent contrast.

Saksena (1982) underscores the limitations of the existing notions of first vs. second causative, and causative vs. non-causative, and instead makes generalizations based on direct and indirect causation, which is a largely semantic explanation. A causative paradigm is established where the number and types of permissible contrasts can be presented. In essence, the proposed model becomes indispensable

for achieving explanatory adequacy in our descriptions of causatives. By departing from relative notions like causative vs. non-causative or First vs. Second causative, which lack constant semantic values, and advocating for the use of a model with absolute semantic parameters, this paper argues for a more comprehensive and universally applicable framework for understanding causative semantics.

3. Classification

Verbs in Maithili causativised in the following manner

3.1 Intransitives

The intransitive verbs take on the '–(y)e' marker to form direct causatives, and '–be' marker to form indirect causatives.

For example,

3. bəčča kʰəsle
   Child.NOM fall.PST
   The child fell.
4. ram bəčča-ke kʰəselke
   Ram.NOM child-DAT fall.CAUS.PST
   Ram made the child fall
5. ram mohən-sə bəčča-ke kʰəsbelke
   Ram.NOM Mohan-INSTR child-DAT fall.CAUS2.PST
   Ram made Mohan to fall the child*

In (4), the –e marker indicates the causer of the event is someone else (Ram), and not the subject of the verb, that is bəčča. Similarly, in example (5), the causer of the event is Ram indirectly, and Mohan directly. All intransitive verbs that can form causatives, have been observed to make both forms, C1 and C2[1]. This is similar to Hindi intransitive verb forms. Almost all intransitive verbs in hindi can be causativised morphologically, and have both C1 and C2 forms.

However, there are some intransitive verbs in Maithili that cannot be causativised at all. Some of these verbs are – 'məhıra' (wither), 'kʰokʰiya' (cough), 'kə̃pəyı' (shiver), 'həra' (lose), 'məsəl' (crush).

3.2 Transitive

Transitive verbs with valency two are shown to causativise in three ways. The first are verbs that can show both direct and indirect causation. Verbs in this class include 'paṛʰəyı' (read), 'kʰayı' (eat), 'sunəyı' (hear), etc. For example,

6. ram əkʰbar pəṛʰəyı čʰe
   Ram.NOM newspaper.ACC read.PROG PRS
   Ram is reading a newspaper

[1] C1 means Causative form one (i.e. direct causative from) and C2 means Causative from two (i.e. indirect causative form.

7. mɑ rɑm-ke əkʰbɑr paɻʰɑbəyı čʰe
   mother. NOM Ram-DAT newspaper.ACC
   read.CAUS1.PROG PRS

   Mother is making Ram read the newspaper

8. mɑ rɑm-ke rəmes-sə əkʰbɑr paɻʰbɑbəyı čʰe
   mother.NOM Ram-DAT Ramesh-Instr newspaper.ACC
   read.CAUS2.PROG PRS

Mother is making Ramesh read the newspaper to Ram

In the above examples, (6) has two arguments by virtue of read being a transitive verb. In (7), the verb is causativised, and is presented with an additional dative argument. In (8), with the addition of a new participant in the instrumental role, we have the indirect causative form of the verb.

Next, there are the forms which have only one causative form, apart from the base form.

9. həm borɖ mıṭelıye
   1SG.NOM board.DAT erase.PST
   I erased the board

10. həm borɖ rɑm-sə mıṭbelıye
    1SG.NOM board.DAT Ram-Instr
    erase.CAUS2.PST
    I made Ram erase the board

Then, there are transitive verbs which appear to create both causative forms, however, the first form is more often than not synonymous with the second form. For example

11. həm kəpɽɑ kɑṭəlıye
    1SG.NOM cloth.ACC cut.PST.PRF
    I cut the cloth

12. həm kəpɽɑ dərjı-sə kəṭelıye
    1SG.NOM cloth.ACC tailor-INSTR
    cut.CAUS1.PST.PRF
    I made the tailor cut the cloth

13. həm kəpɽɑ dərjı-sə kəṭbelıye
    1SG.NOM cloth.ACC tailor-INSTR
    cut.CAUS1.PST.PRF
    I made the tailor cut the cloth

The sentence in (12) is synonymous with the sentence in (13), since there is no difference in the actual meaning of the sentences. Speakers can either say ‘kəṭelıye’ or ‘kəṭbelıye’ and there will be no difference in the meaning between both the sentences. Das (2017) calls these types of constructions in Hindi as false friends. A similar phenomenon can be seen in Hindi with verbs like ‘kɑṭnɑ’ (to cut), ‘toɽnɑ’ (to break), ‘pʰoɽnɑ’ (to smash), ‘bɑ̃ṭnɑ’ (to distribute). They

have two physical forms of causatives that mean the same, and occur in similar contexts.

3.3 Ditransitive

The ditransitive verbs show a regular pattern in Maithili. None of the ditransitive verbs form the direct causative, and the addition of an extra participant can only be done through the addition of an instrumental object, since the roles of the direct and indirect object are already fulfilled. However, in Hindi, we find that even the ditransitive verbs appear to create both C1 and C2 form, but all these C1 forms are false causatives. As stated in Das(2017), the verb 'denɑ' (to give) can be causativised in two forms – 'dılanɑ' (C1) and 'dılwanɑ' (C2). However, both these verbs essentially mean the same, since they have the same valency. Maithili makes it impossible for verbs to have a fake causative form for ditransitive verbs:

14. həm okrɑ kıčʰ kəhəlıye
    1SG.NOM 3SG.DAT something say.PST
    I told him something
15. *həm okrɑ mohən-sə kıčʰ kəhelıye
    1SG.NOM 3SG.DAT Mohan-INSTR
    something say.CAUS1.PST

    I made Mohan tell him something

16. həm okrɑ mohən-sə kıčʰ kəhbelıye
    1SG.NOM 3SG.DAT Mohan-INSTR something
    say.CAUS2.PST
    I made Mohan tell him something

4. Analysis:

This section shall deal with an in-depth analysis for the categorization proposed above.

4.1 Intransitives

When it comes to intransitive verbs, most of these verbs can be systematically accounted for. The morphological causativisation of intransitive verbs seems to be a regular productive phenomenon in Maithili, since these verbs have a low valency, and are more susceptible to an increase in valency. The empty space for participants to be added makes it easier for intransitive verbs to be causativised. However, there seem to be some exceptions to this description. There are some intransitive verbs that can be causativised periphrastically, but not morphologically. Some examples are 'məhırɑ' (wither), 'kʰokʰiyɑ' (cough), 'kə̃pəyı' (shiver), 'hərɑ' (lost)

It has been observed by Shibatani (2002) that intransitives show variation when it comes to undergoing morphological causativisation. He refers to Perlmutter's (1978) unaccusative hypothesis to state that the 'active intransitives' (unergative) are less susceptible to causative conversion, as compared to the 'inactive predicates' (unaccusative).

These unaccusative verbs are the ones who have a theme or a patient in place of an agentive subject.

According to Shibatani (2002)'s analysis, verbs that have a subject performing the role of a patient, or an agentless subject, would be easier to causativise since the space for an agent would be empty, that would be then added by the causative form of the verb. It is also observed that in active transitives, since the slot of the agent is already covered, it would require an extra step, to remove the old agent, move it to a patient position, and add a new agent.

However, when we observe evidences from Maithili we find that the opposite of Shibatani's analysis is true. Verbs like 'məhɪɾɑ' (wither), 'kʰokʰiyɑ' (cough), 'kə̃pəyɪ' (shiver), 'həɾɑ' (lost), which don't include an agent in their semantic structure, do not get causativised morphologically. The only way to causativise these verbs is by adding a clause that essentially means X caused Y to happen.

For example

17. həm kə̃pəyɪ čʰɪ
    1SG.NOM shiver PRS
    I am shivering

18. həm ʈʰənɖɑ dwɑɾe kə̃pəyɪ čʰɪ
    1SG.NOM cold cause shiver PRS
    I am shivering due to cold

19. pʰul məhɪɾæl čʰɪ
    flower.NOM wither.PRF PRS
    The flowers have been withered

20. gərmɪ dwɑɾe pʰul məhɪɾæl čʰɪ
    heat cause flower wither.PRF PRS
    The heat has caused flowers to wither

As opposed to Shibatani (2002), when it comes to the active intransitives, the ones who already have an agent, it is almost always possible to causativise them. These include verbs like cry, sleep, laugh, etc.

For example, cry

21. həm kɑnəlɪye
    1SG.NOM cry.PST.PRF
    I cried

22. rɑm həmrɑ kənelke
    Ram.NOM 1SG.DAT cry.CAUS1.PST.PRF
    Ram made me cry

23. rɑm bəčča-ke həmrɑ-sə kənbelke Ram.NOM
    child-ACC 1SG.DAT-INSTR cry.CAUS2. PST.PRF

    Ram made me make the child cry (?)

An explanation for this can be based on Schaffer (2009), where he divides English unaccusatives into two: pure unaccusatives, and alternating unaccusatives. The later are able to undergo causative alternation, that is they can be used as both transitive and intransitive verbs without a change of form. For example

The vase broke

John broke the vase

The verb 'broke' in the first sentence has a patient subject (making it unaccusative), and has then been causativised in the second sentence, to take an agent subject 'John', as well as a direct object 'vase'.

The pure unaccusatives are the ones which cannot participate in causative alternation, for example the verb 'fell' in English

The vase fell

*He fell the vase

This is because, as proposed by Schaffer (2009), causative alternation requires for the verb to participate in a change of state. The verbs that fall under the category of pure unaccusatives are the ones that do not express a change of state.

The intransitive verbs in Maithili that do not undergo morphological causativisation appear to fall under the pure unaccusative type.

A possible explanation for this is the semantic structuring of these verbs. The verbs that need an agent for the action to be performed, can add another agent to it which initiates the action indirectly. However, verbs like 'to cough', or 'to wither', that have patients as the subject of the sentence, cannot add an agent. Since, these verbs do not have a place for an agent to be added in their semantic framework in the first place.

4.2 Transitive Verbs

Transitive verbs have two arguments, the subject and the object. When they undergo a causative construction, the number of participants increases, and we have the subject, direct object, indirect object, and in some cases, an oblique object. For example

24. mohən kɪtɑb pəɽʰəyɪ čʰe
    Mohan.NOM book.ACC read PRS
    Mohan is reading a book

25. mohən bhyɑ -ke kɪtɑb pəɽʰɑbəyɪ čʰe
    Mohan.NOM brother-DAT book.ACC
    read.CAUS2 PRS
    Mohan is making brother read a book

26. mɑ mohən -sə bhyɑ-ke kɪtɑb pəɽʰbɑbəyɪ čʰe
    Mother.NOM Mohan-INST brother-DAT
    book.ACC read.CAUS2 PRS

    Mother is making brother read the book through Mohan

'pəɽʰəyı' (read) goes through both direct and indirect causativisation. In the direct form, it adds a dative participant, and in the indirect form, it adds and instrumental participant.

However, this is not true for all transitive verbs. There are two other classes of transitive verbs – one that have only the indirect causative form, such as 'jəlɑbəyı' (burn), 'bənɑbəyı' (make), 'sʊ̃kʰɑbəyı' (dry), and one that appear to have both forms, but both forms actually mean the same, for example 'kɑṭəyı' (cut), 'toṛəyı' (break), 'pʰoṛəyı' (smash)

The verb cut, can have the following forms

27. həm peṛ kɑṭəlıye
    1SG.NOM tree.ACC cut.PRF
    I cut the tree

28. həm mohən-sə peṛ kəṭelıye 1SG.NOM
    Mohan-INSTR tree.ACC cut.CAUS1.PRF
    I made Mohan cut the tree

29. həm mohən-sə peṛ kəṭbelıye 1SG.NOM
    Mohan-INSTR tree.ACC cut.CAUS2.PRF
    I made Mohan cut the tree

30. əı sɑl bəḍ peṛ kəṭle
    This year many tree cut.PRF
    This year many trees were cut

(27) is straightforward. We have an agent subject, and a patient object. (28) and (29) have been described in the literature as the direct and indirect causative respectively. However, upon a closer look on the verbs, we see that the so called direct and indirect form of the verbs actually mean the same thing. They lack the distinction that a direct and indirect form of causatives must have – the number of participants. In the first example, we have a nominative subject and an accusative object. However, in the second and third example, we have a causee, an instrumental participant, and an affected participant.

Drawing parallels with the transitive verbs that undergo a regular causative formation such as 'to read' –

31. mohən kıtɑb pəɽʰəyı čʰe
    Mohan.NOM book.ACC read PRS
    Mohan is reading a book

32. mohən bhyɑ-ke kıtɑb pəɽʰɑbəyı čʰe
    Mohan.NOM brother-DAT book.ACC
    read.CAUS2 PRS

    Mohan is making brother read a book

33. mɑ mohən-sə bhyɑ-ke kıtɑb pəɽʰbɑbəyı čʰe
    mother.NOM Mohan-INST brother-DAT
    book.ACC read.CAUS2 PRS

    mother is making brother read the book through Mohan

Here, the direct causative verb in (32) has a dative participant, and the indirect causative form in (33) has an additional instrumental participant, along with the dative participant. This is followed for other verbs in the category such as 'kʰenɑyı' (eat). However, the verb 'kɑṭəyı' (cut) cannot take a dative participant, as seen in (28), which tells us that the form kəṭelıye is actually a false causative form. Here, 'cut' can only take an additional instrumental participant, and this establishes that 'kəṭbelıye' is the only true causative. However, both these forms are used interchangeably by speakers. This holds true for many verbs of the type, such as 'bə̃ṭəlıye'/'bəṭelıye' (to say), 'kʰoləlıye'/'kʰulelıye' (to open). A similar phenomenon can be seen in Hindi too, where the direct and indirect forms of some transitive verbs are used interchangeably.

The proposed reason for the creation of these false causatives is the presence of a phonological space in these verbs, and the speakers tend to overgeneralise the morphological rules of causativisation. The long vowel in the first syllable is shortened, and the second vowel is lengthened. The set of verbs that do not create a false causative such as 'bənelıye' (to make), do not have that empty space needed for the direct causative marker to be added, since the vowel is already present there. However, we also need to establish that 'bənelıye' is indeed the default lexicon, and not 'bəın'.

The verb 'to make' can take the following forms in Maithili

34. kʰenɑı bənəı čʰe
    food.NOM make PRS

    Food is being made

35. mohən kʰenɑı bənɑbəı čʰe
    Mohan.NOM food.ACC make PRS
    Mohan is making the food

36. mohən sonu-sə kʰenɑı bənbɑbəı čʰe
    Mohan.NOM Sonu-INSTR food.ACC
    make.CAUS2 PRS
    Mohan is making Sonu cook the food

According to the evidences provided by Rheinhart (2005) and Chiercha (1989), we propose that the verb 'bənəı' in (34) is formed through a process of morphological reduction. The actual verb stored in our lexicon is 'bənɑbəı' (35), the transitive verb. It undergoes a process of de-transitivisation to reduce the number of participants, and for removal of the agent from the semantic structure of the verb.

So here, we have a structure as follows –

Intransitive ← Transitive verb → indirect causative

Similarly, in examples (27) and (28), we can conclude that (28) is the default form of the form, and (27) is derived from it.

4.3 Ditransitive

Ditransitive verbs, as explained above, have only the indirect form of causative. Since the verb already has a valency of three, the

process of causativisation is able to add only one more participant through an oblique case. This is seen uniformly throughout the language. The way transitive verbs create false forms of direct causatives is not applicable here, since most of these ditransitive verbs are not able to support the direct causative morphology due to the structure of the sounds, as in the case of transitive verb 'bənelıye' (to make). For example, the verbs like 'pəʈʰelıye' (to send), 'delıye' (to give), 'kəhəlıye' (to say), etc, will not be able to support the direct causative morpheme. Therefore, neither the semantic framework of these verbs, and nor the phonetic form of these words, allow them to create a direct form of the causative.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has delved into the intricate mechanics of causativization in Maithili, focusing on the interplay of morphological and semantic elements in generating diverse causative forms. It is widely acknowledged that causative situations entail two crucial components: the event itself and the cause that precipitates it. Various scholars, including Comrie, Dixon, and Shibatani, have contributed differing yet complementary viewpoints to elucidate the underlying principles governing causativization.

The morphological causativization of intransitive verbs in Maithili demonstrates a systematic and productive phenomenon, primarily due to their lower valency, leaving room for additional participants. However, exceptions do exist, such as the inability of verbs like 'məhıɾɑ' (wither), 'kʰokʰiyɑ' (cough), 'kə̃pəyı' (shiver), 'həɾɑ' (lost), to be causativized morphologically, which raises intriguing questions about the interplay of valency and causativization. Contrary to the analyses by Shibatani (2002), active intransitive verbs in Maithili, those already possessing an agent, are generally amenable to causativization, as they can easily accommodate another agent.

Transitive verbs in Maithili exhibit a diversity of causative formations, including both direct and indirect causative forms. However, a closer examination reveals that some verbs, like 'to cut' produce a false causative, as the direct and indirect forms effectively convey the same meaning, establishing the same semantic structure. Additionally, the presence of false causatives in some transitive verbs suggests the influence of phonological factors and overgeneralization in the morphological rules governing causativization.

As we delve into the complexities of this language's causative constructions, we enhance our understanding of the broader field of linguistics and the intricate mechanisms that underlie the creation and transformation of linguistic structures. Further research and exploration in this area promise to shed more light on the nature of causative processes, not only in Maithili but in language systems more broadly.

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