

Causativization in Khasi: Syntactic and semantic issues

*Gracious Mary Temsen
Anish Koshy*

Introduction: In Khasi morphology, causativization is indicated with the use of morphological markers *pin-* or *p^haʔ-* as ‘first causatives’, and *p^haʔ-pin-* as ‘second causative’ prefixed to the verb, thereby increasing the valence of the verb by one or two respectively. Apart from the altering of conceptual representations by the causatives, our paper would deal with syntactic issues such as alterations of overt-case marking of the arguments and the possibility of creating a valence in lexical items which are inherently without valence. The aim of this paper therefore is to explain and provide a syntactic and semantic perspective of causativization in the language.

Khasi is a Mon-Khmer language spoken in Meghalaya, INDIA. Even though Khasi exhibits a rich morphological system, very little research has been carried out in this area. In general, the work on the Khasian branch of Mon-Khmer in the field of morphology has been largely sporadic. This paper aims to throw light on one aspect of morphology in Khasi, namely morphological causativization, taking into account the valency of the verb in the process. Our discussion is divided into six sections.

Section-2 gives a general view of the nature of causitvization in the language, followed by a discussion on valency and the formal syntactic issues like case marking involved in causative constructions in section-3, a brief discussion on the role of the causative morpheme *pin-* in section-4. In section-5, we provide a glimpse of the importance of considering other semantic issues for a better understanding of causativization in the language in particular, which might hold for other languages as well. Section-6 is a conclusion of our observations and analysis.

Causativization in Khasi: Causative constructions found in languages of the world can generally be classified into: *analytic, morphological* and/or *lexical*. It is interesting to note that whereas in most of the languages of the world, one finds to some extent the possibility of more than one strategy for forming causatives, in Khasi, there exists only one strategy, that is, by morphological derivation. Probably this explains why in Khasi morphological causativization operates without exception as one of the most productive morphological derivations in the language.

Khasi is a head medial language and therefore would only allow for prefixation or infixation in its morphology. In Khasi morphology, causativization is indicated with the use of morphological markers *pin-* or *p^haʔ-* as ‘first degree causatives’ and *p^haʔ-pin-* as ‘second degree causative’¹. In the use of *pin-* the responsibility for the execution of the action rests wholly with the causer. This is the prototypical instance of **direct causation**. *p^haʔ-* on the other hand, carries the additional semantic load of being a forced action on the causee, where the causee is primarily responsible for the execution of the action. Hence *p^haʔ-* is not a prototypical direct causation as the primary responsibility of execution of the action is not with the causer but with the causee.

The use of any of the first degree causatives increases the valence of any verb by one. Examples 2 and 3 below are illustrative of the use of *pin-* and *p^haʔ-* as causatives morphemes.

- 1 *i-k^hilluŋ* *i-t^hyaʔ*
n-child 3n-sleep

‘The child slept.’

- 2 *u-jɔn* *u-pin-t^hyaʔ* *ya-i-k^hilluŋ*

m-John 3ms-caus-sleep acc-n-child

'John made the child sleep.

3 *u-jɔn u-p^haʔ-t^hyaʔ ya-i-k^hɪlluŋ*
m-John 3ms-caus-sleep acc-n-child

'John made the child sleep'.

Also, note that the examples in (2) and (3) above show that these two causative morphemes are not allomorphs either. Of the two first-degree causatives, *p^haʔ-* is a grammaticalized form of the lexical verb *p^haʔ* 'send'. There is however synchronically no form in the language to which *pin-* can be associated with or derived from.

The 'second degree causative' *p^haʔ-pin-* is a combination of the two 'first degree causatives', prefixed to the verb, and increases the valence of the verb by two as shown in (4). The **load of initiation** of the action rests on the newly introduced argument syntactically occupying the subject position (**the first causer**, the initiator of the act) and **the load of execution** of the action rests on the other newly introduced argument (**the second causer**, the executor of the act). This is the prototypical instance of indirect causation.

4 *u-jɔn u-p^haʔ-pin-t^hyaʔ ya-i-k^hɪlluŋ ha-u-bil*
m-John 3ms-caus-caus-sleep acc-n-child dat-m-Bill

'John made Bill to sleep the child'.

Comrie (1981) recognizes and underlines the importance of exploring causativization in any language with two distinct and important dimensions in focus, one the syntactic dimension and the other the role played by the inherent semantics of the verb. We hope to undertake such a study here.

Valency and the Grammatical Encoding of the Causee in Causativization: Typological studies point to a majority of languages having some marking of valence on the verbs (Bybee, 1985). Valence has been understood as a semantic notion as well as a syntactic notion, as it deals with the relationship between grammatical relations and semantic roles. The relationship between semantic roles and grammatical relations

has been observed to be adjustable in most languages with the help of operations, which can be broadly called ‘*valence-changing operations*’. Valence changing operations become important syntactically as they carry with them the potential to alternate case-marking patterns, verbal affixation patterns and/or constituent order. Valence operations being both semantically and syntactically relevant in a language are seen to alter the conceptual representations of things and events in the message world and the linguistic organization of elements in a sentence (Comrie, 1974, 1985, 1989; Payne, 1990; Croft 1990; Kulikov et al 2006; amongst others).

Khasi verbs are of a zero, one, two or three valency. Verbs like *slap* ‘rain’ is zero valence, *yap* ‘die’ is one valence, *ba:m* ‘eat’ is two-valence, and *p^ha?* ‘send’ is three valence. All verbs in Khasi can be causativized and the use of any of the causative morphemes will result in the increase of valency of any verb by one or two as the case may be.

Zero Valence Verbs : Zero Valence Verbs especially ‘weather’ verbs like *jit* ‘hot’, *k^hryat* ‘cold’, *jit l^hɔp* ‘humid’, *slap* ‘rain’, *l^her* ‘windy’ etc., **only allow for first degree causation** with the help of the causative marker *pin-* as in (18) and not *p^ha?*- as can be seen from the ungrammaticality of (19). This restriction can be explained by the semantic criteria for their use discussed earlier, i.e., it can neither be an action forced upon the causee nor is the resultant weather phenomenon a “**natural**” occurrence.

17. *la?*-*slap*
perf-rain

‘(It) rained.’

18. *u-nɔŋkɲa u-la?*-*pin-slap*
m-shaman 3ms-perf-caus-sleep

‘The shaman caused the rain.’

*19. *u-nɔŋkɲa u-la?*-*p^ha?*-*slap*
m-shaman 3ms-perf-caus-sleep

‘The shaman caused the rain.’

These verbs also do not allow second degree causation. An exception here would be with the verb *slap* 'rain' which allows the construction *p^haʔ -pin-slap* as in (20) below.

20. *u-ban u-laʔ - p^haʔ-pin-slap ha-u-nɔŋkɔa*
 m-Ban 3ms-perf-caus-sleep dat-m-shaman

'John made the shaman cause the rain.'

The valency of a zero valence verb, therefore would be increased by one with the use of *pin-* as in (18). Such verbs cannot have a causee and the causer is in the subject position and remains unmarked for case. For exceptional cases like the verb *slap* 'rain', as in (20) above, whose valency can be increased by two using *p^haʔ-pin-*, the causee is in the dative case and never in the accusative case. If the causee is in the accusative case, the role of the causee would be changed from that of the executor of the action to the recipient of the action.

One Valence Verbs: The valency of a one valence verb would increase by one by using *pin-* or *p^haʔ-* as in (6) and (8) below. The causee in such constructions is in the accusative case. However, note that, sentence (7) below is ungrammatical due to the fact that, as mentioned earlier, *p^haʔ-* carries the additional semantic load of the causee being primarily responsible for the execution of the action.

5. *u-jɔn u-laʔ-yap*
 m-John 3ms-die

'John died.'

6. *u-san u-laʔ-pin-yap ya-u-jɔn*
 m-San 3ms-caus-die acc-m-John

'San killed John.'

- *7. *u-san u-p^haʔ-yap ya-u-jɔn*
 m-San 3ms-caus-sleep acc-m-John

'San made John die'.

8. *u-jɔn u-p^haʔ-t^hyaʔ ya-i-k^hilluŋ*
 m-John 3ms-caus-sleep acc-n-child

‘John made the child sleep.’

With *p^haʔ-pin-* as in (9) below, the valency of the verb is increased by two. In such cases, the causee is in the accusative case and the executor is in the dative case.

9. *u-san u-p^haʔ-pin-yaʔ ya-u-jɔn ha-u-bil*
 m-San 3ms-caus-caus-die acc-m-child dat-m-Bill

‘San made Bill to kill John.’

Two Valence Verbs: Using *pin-* or *p^haʔ-* with two valence verbs would increase its valency by one as in (11-12) below, and the causee is in the dative case.

10. *u-bil u-ba:m ya-u-sɔʔpe:ŋ*
 m-Bill 3ms-eat acc-m-mango

‘Bill ate the mango.’

11. *u-jɔn u-pin-ba:m ya-u-sɔʔpe:ŋ ha-u-bil*
 m-John 3ms-caus-eat acc-m-mango dat-m-Bill

‘John made Bill to eat the mango’.

‘John caused the mango to be eaten by Bill.’

12. *u-jɔn u-p^haʔ-ba:m ya-u-sɔʔpe:ŋ ha-u-bil*
 m-John 3ms-caus-eat acc-m-mango dat-m-Bill

‘John made Bill to eat the mango’.

‘John caused the mango to be eaten by Bill.’

With *p^haʔ-pin-* as in (13) below, the valency of such verbs is increased by two. The following operations are also observed:

- The causee is in the dative case;
- The causer is in the subject position;

- Since the potential number of arguments is four, i.e., including the other two arguments (the **DO** (which is accusative case-marked) and the **real executor of the action**).

13. *u-jɔn u-p^haʔ-pin-ba:m ya-u-sɔʔpe:ŋ ha-u-bil*
 m-John 3ms-caus-caus-give acc-m-mango dat-m-Bill

‘John got someone to make Bill eat the mango’.
 ‘John caused the mango to be eaten by Bill.’

In mono-clausal structures, the **executor of the action** is **omitted**. The only way to overtly include the executor is by using a bi-clausal structure as in (14).

14. *u-jɔn u-p^haʔ ya-u-peter ban p^haʔ-pin-ba:m*
 m-John 3ms-send acc-m-Peter comp caus-caus-give

ya-u-sɔʔpe:ŋ ha-u-bil
 acc-m-mango dat-m-Bill

‘John got/sent Peter to make Bill eat the mango’.

Three Valence Verbs: When the valence of the three-valence verbs is increased by one using *pin-*, the causee is in the nominative case (unmarked), since the causer is usually omitted, as in (16). The latter can only be introduced by having a bi-clausal structure as shown in (17).

15. *u-jɔn u-a:i ya-ka-kɔt ha-u-bil*
 m-John 3ms-give acc-f-book dat-m-Bill

‘John gave the book to Bill.’

16. *u-jɔn u-pin-a:i ya-ka-kɔt ha-u-bil*
 m-John 3ms-caus-give acc-f-book dat-m-Bill

‘John was made to give the book to Bill (by John himself).’
 (John is the causee; the causer is omitted)

17. *ka-lin ka-ɔŋ ya-u-jɔn ban pin-a:i ya-ka-kɔt ha-u-bil*

f-Lin 3f-say acc-m-John comp caus-give acc-f-book dat-m-Bill

‘Lin told John to give the book to Bill (by John himself).’
(John is the cause)

On the other hand, when the valence is increased by one using *p^haʔ-* as in (18), the causer cannot be dropped. Due to the overt introduction of the causer into the clause in the subject position, the giver and the recipient are distinguished by the case markings they take. The causee takes the dative, and the recipient takes the accusative. Both the causee and the recipient can be dropped in such structures, but NEVER together at the same time.

18. *u-man u-p^haʔ-a:i ya-ka-kɔt ya-u-bil ha-u-jɔn*
m-Man 3ms-caus-give acc-f-book acc-m-Bill dat-m-John

‘Man caused the book to be given to Bill (through John).’

When a three-valence verb (in this case *a:i* ‘give’) is causativized by using the morpheme *p^haʔ-*, the following changes are also observed:

- The causee is in the dative;
- Both the DO and the IO are in the accusative case.

Interestingly, while object incorporation into the verb results in the IO taking the case marking that would have appeared with the DO, in the instance of any of the two – the causee or the recipient – being dropped, there is NO change in the case marking of the undropped argument as exemplified by the grammaticality of both (19) and (20) below.

19. *u-man u-p^haʔ-a:i-kɔt ya-u-bil*
m-Man 3ms-caus-give-book acc-m-Bill

‘Man caused the book to be given to Bill (through somebody).’

20. *u-man u-p^haʔ-a:i-kɔt ha-u-jɔn*
m-Man 3ms-caus-give-book dat-m-John

‘Man caused the book to be given (to somebody) through John.’

The increase in valency by **two** with *p^haʔ-pin-* as in (21) would mean that the verb has to have FIVE arguments – the causer (the initiator), the executor, the causee, the DO and the recipient. In such structures, **both the causee and the causer can be dropped**, leaving the executor of the action in the subject position and the DO and the IO as the other two arguments, where the IO takes the dative and the DO takes the accusative. It is also possible to introduce the causee into the structure. In that case, **the causee is introduced right after the verb and has the same case marking as the recipient** – the dative marker, as in (22). The position of the causee's insertion is by and large rigidly fixed, so as to avoid any confusion with the recipient. The only way to introduce all the five arguments is by using a bi-clausal structure as in (23).

21. *u-jɔn u-p^haʔ-pin-a:i ya-ka-kɔt ha-u-bil*
 m-John 3ms-caus-caus-give acc-f-book dat-m-Bill

'John gave the book to Bill.'

(John is the executor & both the causer and the causee are omitted.)

22. *u-anish u-p^haʔ-pin-a:i ha-u-jɔn ya-ka-kɔt ha-u-bil*
 m-Anish 3ms-caus-caus-give dat-m-John acc-f-book dat-m-Bill

'Anish made John give the book to Bill.'

(Anish is the executor & the initiator is omitted.)

23. *ka-shida ka-ɔŋ ya-u-anish ban p^haʔ-pin-a:i ha-u-jɔn*
 f-Shida 3f-say acc-m-Anish comp caus-caus-give dat-m-John

ya-ka-kɔt ha-u-bil
 acc-f-book dat-m-Bill

'Shida told Anish to make John give a book to Bill.'

It is very interesting to note that the language tries to accommodate all the arguments² (even those that result from the increase in valence due to causativization) using the structural case marking, though there also exists a possibility of marking some of these arguments using prepositions like *linba*

'through', *na-ka-binta* 'for the sake of' etc., which we have not dealt with in this paper.

***pin-* as a Transitive:** In Khasi one encounters many verbs which resist the use of the first degree causative *p^haʔ-*, while they appear with the other first degree causative *pin-* with felicity. These forms appear to be inherently lexicalized causatives. A comprehensive list of such forms is given in the table in Appendix – 1. In the table we show the *pin-* forms, the meaning of the lexicalized form, and the meaning of the base to which *pin-* is attached. A careful look at the list provides us with another insight into the whole nature of causativization in Khasi. i.e., that there are many forms in the table which are a pair of transitive-intransitive roots, for the sake of symmetry of generalization, we may extend the assumption and say that the table is a list of items which differ only in terms of their transitivity, and hence one may also assign *pin-* the role of a *transitivizer*. That *pin-* is no more treated in these forms as a result of the productive process of causativization is also attested by the fact that these forms do not submit themselves to a replacement of *pin-* with *p^haʔ-* for the formation of causatives as other verbs in Khasi do. The only way to causativize these forms is by the use of the second degree causative morpheme *p^haʔ-pin-*.

Semantic Issues: Most of the studies on causation reported in the literature usually focus on formal issues of causation like alteration of overt case marking, encoding of the causee, transitivity and valency of the verb, verb classes, and the like. Often, the semantic dimension involved in the permissibility and non-permissibility of such constructions are either ignored or not highlighted because of the problems they pose to neat explanations.

While dealing with the syntactic issues of causativization, we are led to wonder if it is enough to talk of Causation (even morphological causation) just in terms of what the valency of the verb was before and after the operation, what arguments are introduced and which ones are demoted or promoted. What will explain the fact that certain transitive verbs are very felicitous with the morphological operation while others, with the same morphological operation are at best ill-formed?

In our study we have tried to answer some of these questions and find out the semantic dimensions of these constructions and we found out that unlike Fillmore's (1970) classification of such verbs into the semantics of *Change-of-state* and *Surface-contact*, Khasi causatives verbs, are of two types: those that allow both *pin-* and *p^haʔ-* as first degree causatives and those that only allow for *pin-*.

Using Levin's (1993) verb classes, and other classification of verb classes not included in her work like the *Inherently reciprocal verbs*, *Contact Verbs* and *Verbs of perception*, we observe that even those verbs that are shown to belong to the same class in Levin's classification, would not fall under the same class by our classification. For instance,

- *Verbs of sound emission, Verbs with inherently directed motion, Verbs of manner of motion, Verbs of Existence, Verbs of Spatial Configuration, Breaking Verbs, Verbs of cooking, Inherently reciprocal verbs* and *Contact Verbs* allow both **pin-** and **p^haʔ-** as first degree causatives, whereas
- *Verbs of light emission, Verbs of smell emission, Verbs of occurrence, Disappearance verbs, Bend Verbs, Change of state verbs*, only allow **pin-** and not **p^haʔ-** as first degree causatives.
- Some of the *Verbs of substance emission* class and *Verbs of perception* class allow both **pin-** and **p^haʔ-** as first degree causatives and others only allow **pin-** as shown below, which lead us to believe that classification of causative verbs, for a better understanding, also have to be looked at from the point of view of volitionality and control.

The following table shows the acceptability of various verb-types causativized using **pin-** and **p^haʔ-** in Khasi.

LEVIN's CLASSIFICATION		pin-	p^haʔ-
Verbs of Emission	sound	Y	Y
	light	Y	N
	smell	Y	N
	substance	Y	Y/N
Verbs with inherently directed motion		Y	Y
Verbs of manner of motion		Y	Y
Verbs of Existence and appearance	Existence	Y	Y
	occurrence	Y	N
Verbs of Spatial Configuration		Y	Y
Verbs of Disappearance		Y	N
Externally caused verbs of Change of state	Break	Y	Y
	Cooking	Y	Y
	Bend	Y	N

Internally caused verbs of Change of state		Y	N
OTHER VERBS CLASSIFICATION			
Inherently reciprocal verbs		Y	N
Contact Verbs		Y	N
Verbs of perception		Y	Y/N

Conclusion: In this paper, we have briefly attempted an analysis of Khasi causativization taking a wholistic perspective of understanding the phenomenon, both in its morphological and its semantic dimension. The paper is also a pointer to the growing realization in formal studies on language on the importance of the role of semantics in the determination of formal choices in language. We have shown that in Khasi, the study of causativization would be incomplete without taking into account the classes of verbs, the semantics of the two formal markers *pin-* and *p^haʔ-*, and the resultant incompatibilities that might arise due to incompatibilities in meaning between the formal markers and the verb meaning, even when there are no formal restrictions on the use of either of the two markers.

Appendix – 1

	<i>pin-</i> forms	Gloss	Meaning of the part without <i>pin-</i>
1	pɪnba:m	feed	Eat
2	pɪnbo:d	imitate	follow/pursue
3	pɪnbt ^h ɛi	explode [+tr]	Explode [-tr]
4	pɪndait	fix	well-fitting
5	pɪndɛi	touch [+tr]	come in contact [-tr]
6	pɪndɛp	complete/finish [+tr]	be done with [-tr]
7	pɪndoʔ	destroy	lose sth in such a manner that it is someone else's gain
8	pɪnhyar	lower	Descend
9	pɪni	show	See
1	pɪnja:u	drop in droplets [+tr]	drop in droplets [-tr]
1	pɪnjaʔ	lose	Disappear
1	pɪnjɔt	destroy	be torn
1	pɪnkɔr	bend [+tr]	bend [-tr]
1	pɪnk ^h ɛ:iŋ	break [+tr]	break [-tr]
1	pɪnk ^h i:lɛm	Fell [+tr]	Fall [-tr]
1	pɪnksan	justify/vindicate [+tr]	justify/vindicate [-tr]
1	pɪnlait	release/free [+tr]	be free [-tr]

1	p̄inlaŋ	gather [+tr]	gather [-tr]
1	p̄inlaʔ	enable	be able
2	p̄inləŋ	create/organize/constitute	be/being
2	p̄inlut	Expend [+tr]	be over with [-tr]
2	p̄inpayt	break [+tr] (brittle)	break [-tr]
2	p̄inp ^h o:ʔ	beautify/adorn	Bloom
2	p̄inpra	disperse	break into pieces
2	p̄inrɛm	defeat [+tr]	Lose[-tr], be defeated
2	p̄inroi	flourish [+tr]	Flourish [-tr]
2	p̄inslem	delay	Late
2	p̄insŋout ^h oʔ	explain	Understand
2	p̄int ^h ut	obstruct	Disturb
3	p̄intip	inform	Know
3	p̄into:yd	flow [+tr]	flow [-tr]
3	p̄inwai	conclude	End
3	p̄inya:id	manage	Walk
3	p̄inyap	kill	Die

Abbreviations:

ACC-accusative case; caus-causative marker; comp-complementizer;

DAT-dative case; DO-direct object; f-feminine;

IO-indirect object; m-masculine; n-neuter;

NOM-nominative case; perf-perfective aspect; Sg-singular;

[+tr]-transitive; [-tr]-intransitive;

1, 2, 3,-first, second and third persons;

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