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# Causative constructions in Tuvinian: towards a typology of transitivity

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## **Introductory remarks**

The present paper deals with an interesting peculiarity of Tuvinian causative constructions. The feature on which I shall focus is not only important for an adequate description of Tuvinian syntactic patterns, but also has some theoretical implications for the typology of transitive constructions.

Before I proceed to the description of the Tuvinian causative derivation, some introductory remarks on the general typology of causative constructions are necessary.

One of the crucial problems in describing the typology of causative constructions consists in determining the properties of the embedded subject, or causee. In general, a causative verb is expected to have one more noun phrase argument than its non-causative counterpart, since in addition to the subject and objects, if any, of that verb, there is a noun phrase expressing the person or thing that causes the action. The causer is the first candidate for the subject of the causative sentence. Being ousted by the causer which usurps the subject position, the causee is demoted to the status of object. The syntactic position of the causee depends on some properties of the underlying clause and varies across languages. Thus, the main problem may be formulated as follows:

- (1) How to predict the syntactic position of the causee (direct object, indirect object, oblique object) in a causative sentence?

Often this question may be reduced to a simpler one:

- (2) How to predict the case of the causee?

Many theories claim to predict the grammatical encoding of the causee, specifically, its case marking. Since a complete survey of all relevant syntactic theories is beyond the scope of this paper, I shall focus only on one of the most widespread theories, as sketched by B. Comrie (1976).

According to Comrie's theory, the case of the causee is determined by the hierarchy of syntactic positions:

(3) Subject > direct object > indirect object > oblique object .

In terms of this hierarchy, the following rule may be formulated to describe the syntactic properties of the embedded subject (causee) in a causative sentence:

(4) In this hierarchy the causee is shifted to the leftmost position that is not already occupied.

Thus, if the embedded verb has no direct object, the causee appears as direct object; if it has a direct object but no indirect object, then the causee appears as indirect object. Finally, if the embedded verb is bitransitive, i.e. has both a direct and an indirect object, then the embedded subject appears as one of the other oblique cases.

### The common Turkic pattern

Turkic material perfectly conforms to Comrie's hypothesis. Cf. the following Turkish examples adopted from Comrie (1976: 263) (in each sentence, the causee is in italics):

(5) Ali *Hasan-ı* öl-dür-dü.  
Ali Hasan-ACC die-CAUS-PAST  
'Ali killed Hasan.'

(6) Dişçi mektub-u *müdür-e* imzala-t-tı.  
dentist letter-ACC director-DAT sign-CAUS-PAST  
'The dentist made the director sign the letter.'

(7) Dişçi Hasan-a mektub-u *müdür tarafından* göster-t-ti.  
dentist Hasan-DAT letter-ACC director by show-CAUS-PAST  
'The dentist made the director show the letter to Hasan.'

Thus, the causee appears as direct object in the accusative, as indirect object in the dative, or as oblique object with the postposition *tarafından*, respectively.

This syntactic pattern of causative derivation, as exemplified by Turkish, is widely attested in most Turkic languages. However, several Turkic languages display some interesting peculiarities of causative constructions,

requiring important modifications in Comrie's hypothesis. This is the case with Tuvinian, a Turkic language spoken in South Siberia.<sup>1</sup>

### Tuvinian data: an exception to Comrie's rule?

At first glance, Comrie's rule holds true for Tuvinian. Cf.:

- (8) a. Ool doŋ-gan. →  
 boy:NOM freeze-PAST  
 'The boy froze.'
- b. Ašak ool-du doŋ-ur-gan.  
 old man:NOM boy-ACC freeze-CAUS-PAST  
 'The old man made the boy freeze.'
- (9) a. Ašak ool-du ette-en. →  
 old man:NOM boy-ACC hit-PAST  
 'The old man hit the boy.'
- b. Bayir ašak-ka ool-du ette-t-ken.  
 Bayir:NOM old man-DAT boy-ACC hit-CAUS-PAST  
 'Bayir made the old man hit the boy.'
- (10) a. Bayir ool-ga bižek-ti ber-gen. →  
 Bayir:NOM boy-DAT knife-ACC give-PAST  
 'Bayir gave the boy a knife.'
- b. Ašak Bayir-dan ool-ga bižek-ti ber-gis-ken.  
 old man:NOM Bayir-ABL boy-DAT knife-ACC give-CAUS-PAST  
 'The old man made Bayir give a knife to the boy.'

(Kulikov 1986)

Thus, the causee appears as direct object in the accusative, as indirect object in the dative, and as oblique object in the ablative, depending on whether the embedded verb is intransitive, transitive, or bitransitive, respectively.

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed description of Tuvinian causative constructions, see Kulikov 1986. The Tuvinian material was collected by the author during a linguistic field trip to the Tuvinian Republic in 1986. The expedition under the guidance of Prof. A. E. Kibrik was funded by a grant from Moscow State University.

Nevertheless, for a causative sentence with the transitive embedded clause, an alternative case marking is possible, cf.:

- (11) a. Bayir inek-ti oorla-an.  
 Bayir:NOM cow-ACC steal-PAST  
 'Bayir stole the cow.'

This non-causative sentence has two causative counterparts:

- (11) b. Ašak Bayir-ga inek-ti oorla-t-kan.  
 old man Bayir-DAT cow-ACC steal-CAUS-PAST

Or, alternatively:

- (11) c. Ašak Bayir-ni inek-ti oorla-t-kan.  
 old man:NOM Bayir-ACC cow-ACC steal-CAUS-PAST  
 'The old man made Bayir steal the cow.'

The first alternative (with the causee in the dative) is in accordance with Comrie's predictions while the second (with the causee in the accusative) is not. Indeed, the accusative marking of the causee is qualified by most native speakers as less acceptable. Perhaps it can be accounted for by the influence of Russian periphrastic causatives with *zastavljat'* 'cause', which are constructed with two accusative noun phrases in Russian, cf. the Russian translation of (11b-c):

- (12) Starik zastavil Bayira ukrast' korovu.  
 old man:NOM cause:PAST Bayir:ACC steal:INF cow:ACC

A thorough analysis will probably demonstrate that the doubling in examples like (11c) is illusory, since accusative noun phrases in such sentences are not two identical direct objects.<sup>2</sup> However, it is worth emphasizing that such constructions with two accusatives are not appropriate for Tuvinian nor for many other Turkic languages.

Nevertheless, the accusative marking of the causee becomes preferable (or even obligatory) in a special situation, namely when the embedded di-

<sup>2</sup> This problem has been recently discussed by Kozinsky & Polinsky (1993), who demonstrated that such noun phrases, albeit not distinguished by any overt marking, bear distinct grammatical relations.

rect object appears in the so-called non-marked accusative form, which is associated with indefinite, non-specific objects,<sup>3</sup> cf.:

- (13) a. Bayir            inek    oorla-an.    →  
           Bayir:NOM cow    steal-PAST  
           'Bayir stole a cow.'
- b. Ašak                    Bayir-ni    inek    oorla-t-kan.  
           old man:NOM    Bayir-ACC cow    steal-CAUS-PAST  
           'The old man made Bayir steal a cow.'

### A tentative explanation of the above phenomenon and its theoretical implications

At first glance, examples like (13b) appear to be an exception to rule (4). However, they may also be incorporated into Comrie's theory of causativization if some basic notions, such as that of the direct object (DO), are re-evaluated. One may assume that the referential properties of a noun phrase are highly relevant for determining its DO status in Tuvinian and probably in some other Turkic languages. A noun phrase encoded with the non-marked accusative case denotes a non-individuated object, thus lacking one of the important DO features. In a sense, such a noun phrase displays a closer affinity with incorporated nouns, so that these constructions might be interpreted as an example of analytical incorporation (for a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see Muravyova 1992; Muravyova in press). Thus, a non-specific noun phrase, appearing in the non-marked accusative form, is to be treated as a *pseudo-DO* due to the lack of certain important DO properties. This means that the direct object position in such sentences is in fact free which makes possible the accusative encoding of the causee.

It is worth mentioning that constructions like (13b) might serve as an additional explanation for sentences like (11c). Causative constructions with an accusative causee, derived from a transitive clause, albeit less acceptable than those with a dative causee, might arise in analogy with constructions with an embedded pseudo-DO, where the accusative marking of the causee is much more acceptable.

<sup>3</sup> The function of this non-marked form has been much discussed, in particular, in a series of articles by L. Johanson (cf. Johanson 1977) providing us with a detailed analysis of this grammatical phenomenon, so I will not deal with this problem here.

The case of Tuvinian is important from the point of view of the general typology of transitivity. It provides further evidence for treating transitivity as a property of the clause as a whole, not just of the verb, since it depends not only on the presence or absence of the object but also on some of its properties, such as definiteness and specificity, as well as on other characteristics of the clause. This idea was formulated recently in general form by some typologists (P. J. Hopper & S. A. Thompson; T. Tsunoda). In particular, Hopper & Thompson (1980: 256-259) have demonstrated that a specially marked definite object is one of the features indicating a higher degree of transitivity in its clause as compared with less individuated (and often nonmarked) object noun phrases. For instance, in Chukchee, a non-referential object is incorporated into the verb, which in this case takes an intransitive suffix. In Tongan a non-referential object is also incorporated into the verb, although without phonological bonding, unlike Chukchee (analytical incorporation), whereas the case-marking of the subject switches from ergative to absolutive, as in an intransitive clause.

The Tuvinian data provide further evidence for the importance of this parameter for determining the degree of transitivity. As the above discussion of syntactic peculiarities of causative sentences demonstrates, a transitive verb constructed with a non-specific non-marked direct object reveals a closer relationship to intransitive clauses than to (canonical) transitive clauses.

It is worth emphasizing that the relevance of this transitivity scale may be different for different languages and different types of constructions. Even in Turkish, which seems to be close to Tuvinian in syntactic properties, the situation is different. Cf.:

- (14) a. Hırsız inek çal-dı. →  
 thief cow steal-PAST  
 'The thief stole a cow.'
- b. Hasan *hırsız-a* inek çal-dırt-tı .  
 Hasan thief-DAT cow steal-CAUS-PAST  
 'Hasan made the thief steal a cow.'

Thus, a causee appears as a dative noun phrase in causative constructions with an indefinite embedded object. The accusative marking seems to be unacceptable for many native speakers:

- (14) c. \*Hasan *hırsız-ı* inek çal-dırt-tı.  
 Hasan thief-ACC cow steal-CAUS-PAST

## Abbreviations

ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
CAUS	causative
DAT	dative
DO	direct object
INF	infinitive
NOM	nominative

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