

Causatives in Iraqi Arabic: A First Phase Syntactic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the syntax and semantics of causation in Iraqi Arabic with reference to First Phase Syntax (Ramchand, 2008). The study contributes to the debate on the lexical vs. syntactic nature of verbal meaning. The research explores causatives and their lexical, periphrastic, and morphological varieties in a unified framework of event structure. The study employs a qualitative, theory-driven analysis based on a number of examples from Iraqi Arabic. These are explained in terms of the threefold structure of initP (initiation), procP (process) and resP (result), which is responsible for the distribution of participant roles including Initiator, Undergoer and Resultee. The analysis shows that although there are different types of causatives in terms of their surface expression, structurally, they all have a similar underlying structure, in which causation is expressed syntactically, rather than lexically. Morphological causatives have integrated event structures; periphrastic causatives have event embedding and lexical causatives show compact realization of causation in single verbal. In all of these cases, argument roles are structurally determined. This work contributes new data from Iraqi Arabic to the discussion of interaction of syntax and lexicon and the explanatory nature of syntactic analyses of event structure and causation.

Keywords: First Phase Syntax, Causative Constructions, Event Structure, Iraqi Arabic, Argument Structure

1. Introduction

The connection between the lexicon and syntax is the primary question of the theoretical linguistics, especially in the study of the structure of the argument and description of the events. This problem is particularly acute with the study of causative constructions, when one externality causes a change in another entity. One point of doubt is whether such causative sense is part of the lexical properties of the verb, as postulated by old lexicalist theories, or is syntactically derived, as argued by more recent theories of generative syntax.

In this paper, (FPS) provides a powerful model whereby verbal meaning is syntactically projected by the use of syntactic projections. Event structure in this model is broken down into three sub-eventual layers of initiation (initP), process (procP), and result (resP). The contribution of each layer is to introduce a particular participant role: Initiator, Undergoer, and Resultee, which are characterized by structural position and not by semantic meaning.

Causative constructions are especially important field of research due to the fact that it entails an open relationship between causer and causee. These constructions allow one to see how causation is represented in syntactic structure and how argument roles can be allocated to the various subevents.

Ramchand (2008) introduces the understanding that in verbal meaning, syntax plays a central role. This is based on the concept of first phase structures that make every phase structure an event component: initP for the beginning part; procP as processing unit; and resP with output functions. For example, in her view argument roles such as Initiator and Undergoer are not fixed by a word's meaning but by the connection between vocabulary and grammar. In particular, how the analysis of argument structure as well as event representation are studied syntactically or lexically is one of the focal issues of the contemporary linguistic theory. The biggest problem is whether the verbal meaning is not simply encoded in words at all but rather mostly produced by structure (as most of the traditional lexicalist theories hold) or whether it is wholly dependent on syntax (a supposition challenged by more recent syntactic models).

This work makes a contribution to theoretical linguistics by providing both a theoretical and empirical basis for analyzing the causative constructions. Theoretically, it illustrates, albeit conceptually, the degree to which FPS accounts for the input to causal constructions, mediated between the projection of syntactic by the interaction of syntactic projections with lexical roots. The encoding of initiators, the affected entities and the processes, shows that the FPS model successfully incorporates the dependency among the causal factors. That's, it is capable of modeling why one aspect of an event must correlate with another one. In an empirical contribution to this discussion, this paper uses data from Iraqi Arabic, a dialect previously inaccessible to formal syntactic description to confirm this research adds new data to the empirically established range of FPS,

extends FPS analysis of causative constructions to a previously unexamined language family and displays how causation can be systematic in the context of this largely undocumented Arabic dialect. Iraqi Arabic is a system of spoken dialects, with a rich diversity in morphosyntax and prolific verbal derivation system especially in the sphere of causative constructions. In spite of its language complexity and topicality, however, Iraqi Arabic has been not well represented in formal syntax studies, particularly in generative syntax models such as First Phase Syntax. Its causative system that comprises of lexical, morphological as well as periphrastic formations offers a good testing ground to investigate how event structure and argument realization are encoded across different structural configurations. Iraqi Arabic, therefore, provides valuable empirical data on the status of the extent to which verbal meaning is determined by syntactic structure, as opposed to the specification of verbal meaning by lexical means.

2 .The Present Research

This paper tries to answer the following question:

How does FPS account for the relationship between the lexicon and syntax in causative constructions in Iraqi Arabic?

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate how causative constructions in Iraqi Arabic are analyzed within the framework of FPS, with particular attention paid to how the interaction between lexical roots and syntactic projections (initP, procP, and resP) influences event structure and argument roles.

Although causative constructions in the Iraqi Arabic are theoretically significant, little effort has been made to tackle them in the framework of the FPS. The majority of past research has centred on MSA or other Arabic dialects, and there has been a knowledge gap in the study of Iraqi Arabic variety in decompositional terms. It follows that, the present paper examines the causative constructions in the Iraqi Arabic to support the syntax-lexicon interface within the theoretical framework of FPS.

In particular, it tries to demonstrate how the syntactic configuration of Iraqi Arabic causative constructions breaks down into event structure, and how roles in arguments are determined as a result of syntactic structure, instead of being given in the lexicon.

3 .Literature Review

3.1 Causative Constructions: definition and Classification

Causative constructions have long been identified as a central domain in linguistic theory, referring to the connection between a cause event and resulting state. Early work by (Shibatani,1976: 1-9) confirmed that causation is a universal category of grammar, a view later reinforced in his typological research, which shows that every language possesses systematic means of expressing causation. Within this framework, causatives are realized in three forms: lexical, morphological, and periphrastic. Lexical causatives express causation within a single verb, like "John killed the snake", where the causing event and the result are encoded into one lexical unit. In contrast, morphological causatives express causation through modifications to the verb itself, usually through the addition of a causative marker, and have meanings such as "cause to run" or "make someone eat," where the causative meaning is part of the verb itself rather than the use of another verb. On the other hand, periphrastic causatives encode causation in terms of a separate predicate, like "John forced Bill to leave", where the causing and caused events are more explicitly separated.

A key contribution to the syntactic approaches to causation is (Ramchand, 2008: 50), who proposes that causation is structurally derived by decomposing events. In her approach, differences between "The glass broke" and "John broke the glass" result from the presence or absence of an initiating subevent in the syntax, rather than lexical meaning. This means that the cause is introduced with the addition of an external argument in the syntax, rather than the verb. Overall, these approaches show an evolution in the thinking about causation, from lexical classification to structural explanation, and demonstrate that the meaning of causation is an interaction between lexical items and syntax.

3.2 The Structure of Arguments and Events

Lexicalists focus strongly on verbs as the central locus of information regarding the structure of events and their participants. In this view, verbs represent events structured according to patterns and patterns of argument realization arise from differences in those underlying lexical semantic properties. This view is strongly defended by (Levin & Hovav, 2005:1), who claim that argument realization is very closely related to meaning, and that the semantics of the verb determine the morphosyntactic features of the verb.

Recent attempts to update generativism and generate arguments and argument structure through syntax make lexicalism a weak or refuted claim. According to (Pylkkänen, 2008: 7), the arguments

of a lexical item don't necessarily reflect the set of arguments that the verb can take. For Pykkänen, functional heads are the heads that introduce arguments, whether they be of causation (e.g. make, cause) or not. In this perspective, the introduction and selection of arguments of a verb happens through syntax. The most detailed description of an account that generates arguments through syntax is provided in Ramchand on the FPS model of the verb in Travis (2005, 2010) and Travis & Ramchand (2012). In her account, the verb's meaning is described as an event decomposed into three parts or subeventual projections: *initP*, *procP* and *resP*. Each projection is associated with a participant: the initiator, the undergoer and the resultee. Participant roles in FPS are defined by the position occupied within the syntax, not by lexical definition.

4. Data Analysis

In this section causative constructions in Iraqi Arabic are analyzed using FPS where verbal meaning is decomposed into three fundamental layers of event structure: *initP* (initiation), *procP* (process) and *resP* (result). These projections correspond respectively to the causer, the doing and the resultant state. The structure of arguments and the event interpretation follows from the interaction of lexical roots with these syntactic projections.

1. الهوى سد الباب

Al -hawa	sadd	al-bab
DEF-wind	close.PST.3MSG	DEF-door

The wind closed the door.

Sentence in (1) can be analyzed within Ramchand's (2008) FPS as a decomposed event consisting of three subevents: initiation, process, and result. The DP "الهوى" "al-hawa" (the wind) is introduced in *Spec-initP* as an Initiator, representing the causal source of the event, this Initiator is non-agentive, as it lacks intentionality.

The verb "سد" "sadd" (close) is mainly lexicalizes a complex event structure which has a process and result component of the event and also encodes the change which the object undergoes. The result of the state is not included overtly but represents within *resP* structurally and it is implied (the door closed) in the result eventually. This provides support for the idea that result meaning is derived compositionally and syntax-internally rather than being fully determined at the level of the lexical semantics of the verb.

The internal argument that "الباب" "al-bab" (the door) is itself involved with in the event structure on multiple levels. The DP serves as Undergoer in *procP*, which closes, and as Resultee in *resP*, where it is interpreted to carry the resulting state. This also supports Ramchand (2008) who claims that argument structure is not lexically assigned, but is computed from the syntactic decomposition within subevents.

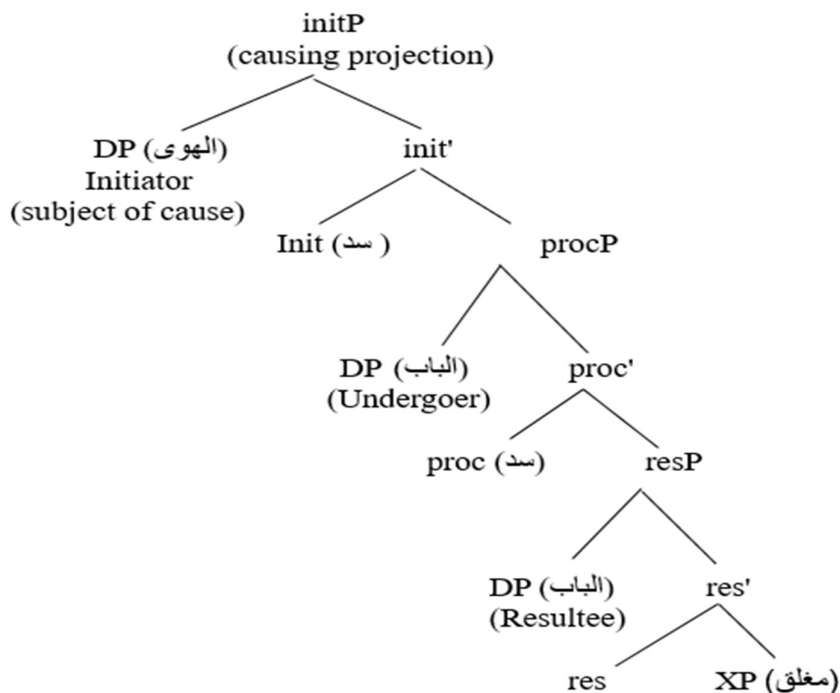
The construction is a lexical causative, and, it exemplifies a particular, non-agentive type of causation, where the cause of the event is direct and the Initiator causes the event directly rather than through volitional control.

This analysis supports the view that argument structure is structurally determined rather than lexically fixed. The DP "الباب" "al-bab" (the door) receives multiple interpretations across the structure: as an Undergoer in *procP* and as a Resultee in *res*, "الهوى" "al-hawa" (the wind) introduced as an Initiator in *initP*, capturing causation without agentivity. This demonstrates that participant roles emerge from syntactic configuration and are distributed across different subevents.

It also exemplifies the principle of event composition in FPS, where subevents are linked through a causal dependency relation. The Initiator introduces a causal force (*init*), which triggers the process (*proc*), and this process in turn leads to a resulting state (*res*), this can be represented as:

$init \rightarrow proc \rightarrow res$

This interaction reflects Ramchand's view that event meaning is built compositionally through the hierarchical organization of syntactic structure, as shown in the following tree diagram:



2. خَلَيْتَ الْطِفْلَ يَشْرَبُ الدَّوَاءَ

"khalīlēt al-ṭifl yishrab al-dawā"
 let.PST.1SG DEF-child IPFV- drink.3MSG DEF-medicine

I let the child drink the medicine.

This construction involves a higher causing event and embedded process event; its highest layer is the verb "خلى" "khalla" (let) which introduces an initiation projection (initP) to represent causing subevents. the selective subject implicit (I) is merged in Spec-initP and functions as initiator, which is volitional and agentive, however, the verb alone cannot stand as single event but requires its embedding in another in order to form a complete event. This establishes hierarchical dependencies among first- and second-level subevents.

The embedded clause constitutes the caused event and minimally projects a process projection (procP). The process of drinking is lexicalized by the verb, "يشرب" "yishrab" (drink) describing dynamic activity. The DP "الدواء" "al-dawā" (the medicine) functions as the Undergoer, having this process done to it.

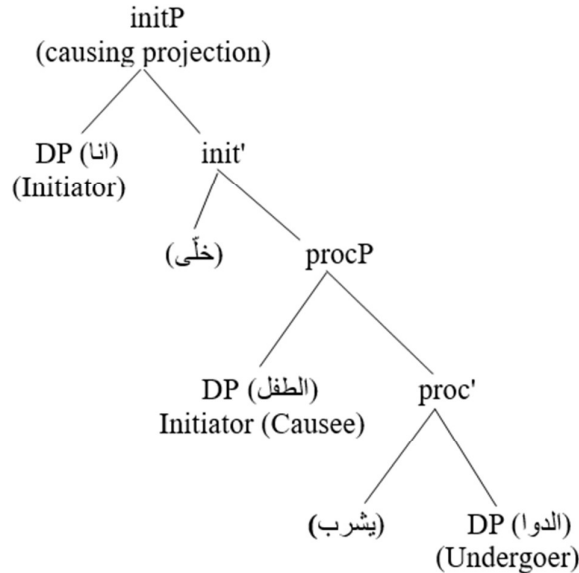
The DP "الطفل" "al-ṭifl" (the child) introduced within the embedded event, and is the Initiator of the lower event. However, this position is not fully independent; it is instead understood as a dependent Initiator (Causee), licensed to participate by the higher causative structure. This follows Ramchand's idea of event underassociation, where the event subject embedded within another is structurally lower than its Initiator at a higher level.

As for resultativity, the construction does not necessarily project a result phrase (resP), since verbs can have only initiation and process subevents without a result layer. Although the event may be interpreted as leading to drinking the medicine, this result is not structurally encoded as a resP, but comes from contextual interpretation.

The higher initP in this construction is a causing event, while the lower procP it embeds and licenses compiles a hierarchical causal configuration.

In the construction, the implicit DP (I) is the Initiator of the bringing-about event. The higher initP introducing the causing event clause which embeds the lower procP acts as Initiator (cause) with respect to higher causation factor. DP "الطفل" "al-ṭifl" (the child) functions as the Initiator in the predicate and is at the same time a Causee. The Undergoer of the process is expressed by the DP "الدواء" "al-dawā" (the medicine).

The division of these roles shows that argument structure is not derived from the lexicon but how things go in syntax during sub-event. The construction illustrates Ramchand's view that complex event meaning is built upon multiple projections interacting within the syntactic structure, where causation is conceived of in event embedding and hierarchical dependency, as shown in the following tree diagram:



3. "نيمت الطفل بسرعة"

"nayyamt al-□ifl bi-sur' a"
sleep.CAUS.PST.1SG DEF-child with-speed

I put the child to sleep quickly.

Sentence (3) can be analyzed within (FPS) as a morphological causative construction, in which causation is encoded within the verbal morphology rather than introduced by an independent syntactic head.

The verb "نيم" "nayyam" (put to sleep lexicalizes as a complex event structure that spans the three subevents: (init), (proc), and (res). It introduces a causing subevent, encodes the dynamic process of the child entering a sleep state, and entails a resulting state in which the child is asleep. This indicates that the causative meaning is incorporated in the verb itself, as opposed to being embedded in syntax.

Spec-initP alters the external argument the implicit "انا" (I) which acts as an Initiator, having direct control of the event. The DP "الطفل" "al-□ifl" (the child) is defined as the Undergoer of procP and as the Resultee of resP.

The adverb "بسرعة" "bi-sur' a" (quickly) follows the process and defines the method or the speed of the occurrence of the process but never adds to the major event structure or influences the realization of the argument.

This indicates a relation of direct causation in which the Initiator immediately and directly produces the result, without involving the participation of an independent embedded event.

The event structure is built from subevents (init, proc, res), which are linked through causal relations. The verb realizes all three subevents within a single lexical item, forming a tightly integrated causal chain:

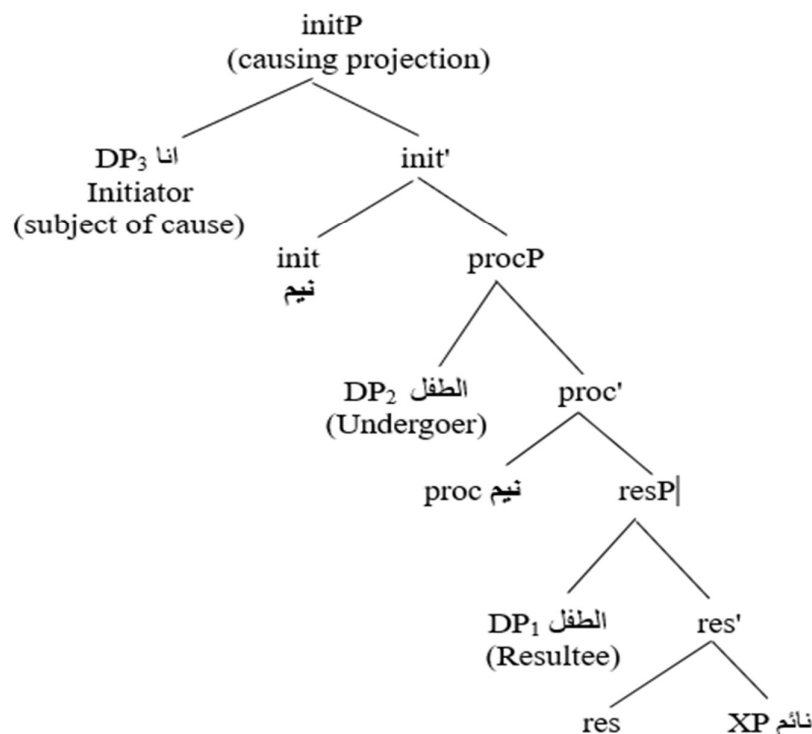
init → proc → res

The DP "انا" is function as the Initiator in initP, introducing the causing event. The DP "الطفل" "al-□ifl" (the child) interpreted across multiple structural positions: as an Undergoer in procP and as a

Resultee in resP. This shows that a single argument can receive multiple thematic interpretations depending on its position within the syntactic structure.

The adverb "بسرعة" "bi-sur' a" (quickly) is external to the central argument structure and modifies the process, without affecting the assignment of thematic roles.

The argument structure follows a syntactic one, but is relevant for argument semantics. The meaning of complex events arises when subevents share a single structure instead of each subevent's having a different one, as shown in the following tree diagram:



5. Results and Discussion

In analysis of causative constructions in Iraqi Arabic, interaction between syntactic structure and event interpretation occurs systematically in FPS (FPS). Verbal meaning is understood as not being contained within verb lexemes but derived compositionally from hierarchic structure in which they are embedded.

In this study, various types of causative constructions show different structural realizations while adhering to a unified underlying event structure. Periphrastic causative construction like "خلّيت" involve a higher causing event that embeds a lower process event. In this case, causation is introduced syntactically through initP, and the embedded subject functions as a dependent Initiator Causee, reflecting a clear case of event embedding.

Conversely, lexical causatives "الهوا سدّ الباب" have a more integrated form that has the lexicalization of the process and the outcome as well as an obligatory causation where the Initiator introduces a causal force without controlling its effect. The internal argument is involved in more than one level and as an Undergoer and Resultee which benefit the argument roles are structurally determined.

The most compact of causation realizations are morphological causatives, which are referred to as "نيمت الطفل بسرعة". The verb has the complete structure of the event (init → proc → res) in one lexical form in this type of construction. This is indicative of direct causation without syntactic embedding, and shows a close correlation between the causal event and the consequent state.

These results confirm the argument by Ramchand (2008) that the event structure is the process of decomposition into subevents and that argument roles are based on syntactic structures. Differences in causative verb structure do not indicate that the structure is different, but rather it will be a different instantiation of the identical conceptual structure .

The analyzed data obviously show the interdependence of syntax and the lexicon as shown by the distribution of causative constructions in Iraqi Arabic. Although there may be variations in how they are surface-realized, periphrastic, lexical, and morphological causatives construction all exhibit the same underlying event structure, with argument roles (such as Initiator, Undergoer, and Resultee) systematically determined by syntactic configuration rather than by lexical properties alone.

Moreover, as shown in Iraqi Arabic causative constructions in the above discussion, event-structure composition is supported with substantial and empirical evidence.

6. Conclusion

One of the central problems in modern linguistic theory is the investigation of the relationship between vocabulary and grammar, especially how argument structure analysis as well as event representation should be studied syntactically or lexically. A major issue here is whether verbal meaning is not inherently encoded in words at all but largely constructed by structure, as most traditional lexicalist theories assume, or instead if it is entirely dependent upon syntax, an assumption that newer syntactic models call into question.

This study showed how to deal with causative construction sentences in Iraqi Arabic in (FPS). Furthermore, this work showed that lexical predicates not only are semantically restricted but are semantically determined compositionally out of their syntactic representation.

Analyzing causative verbs into the distinct categories of periphrastic causatives, lexical causatives and morphological causatives are important because they are distinct, but a single event structure type of cause is shared among them. The grammatical representation differs. Periphrastic causatives require a higher level of syntactic embedding, while lexical causatives feature a higher degree of semantic integration. Morphological causatives possess a tight structure, in these cases, the events comprising the underlying sequence, the causative event and the resultative event are condensed within the semantic meaning of a single lexical verb .

Across all constructions, argument role terminology like Initiator Undergoer, and Resultee are shown to be structurally assigned rather than lexically fixed. This justifies FPS according to which event structure is broken down to (init, proc, res) and argument interpretation results out of syntactic configuration.

The interplay between syntax and the lexicon is also highlighted in the study. Although lexical roots do provide conceptual content, the syntactic structure that forms coherent readings of events is formed by the syntactic arrangement. This verifies that Iraqi Arabic does not encode causation in the same way, but instead it is represented in various syntactic forms constructed out of the same underlying framework.

Lastly, the study is relevant to the wider discipline of theoretical linguistics, in that it completely generalizes the use of FPS to the Arabic variety of Iraq, which is not yet fully discussed in the literature .

The findings present empirical support for the compositional nature of event structure and show that syntactic approaches can be powerful in accounting for argument realization phenomena

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