An RRG approach to case assignment in Altaic causative constructions

Valeria Generalova
generalova@phil.hhu.de

Heinrich Heine University of Dusseldorf
TreeGraSP

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Overview

Altaic languages

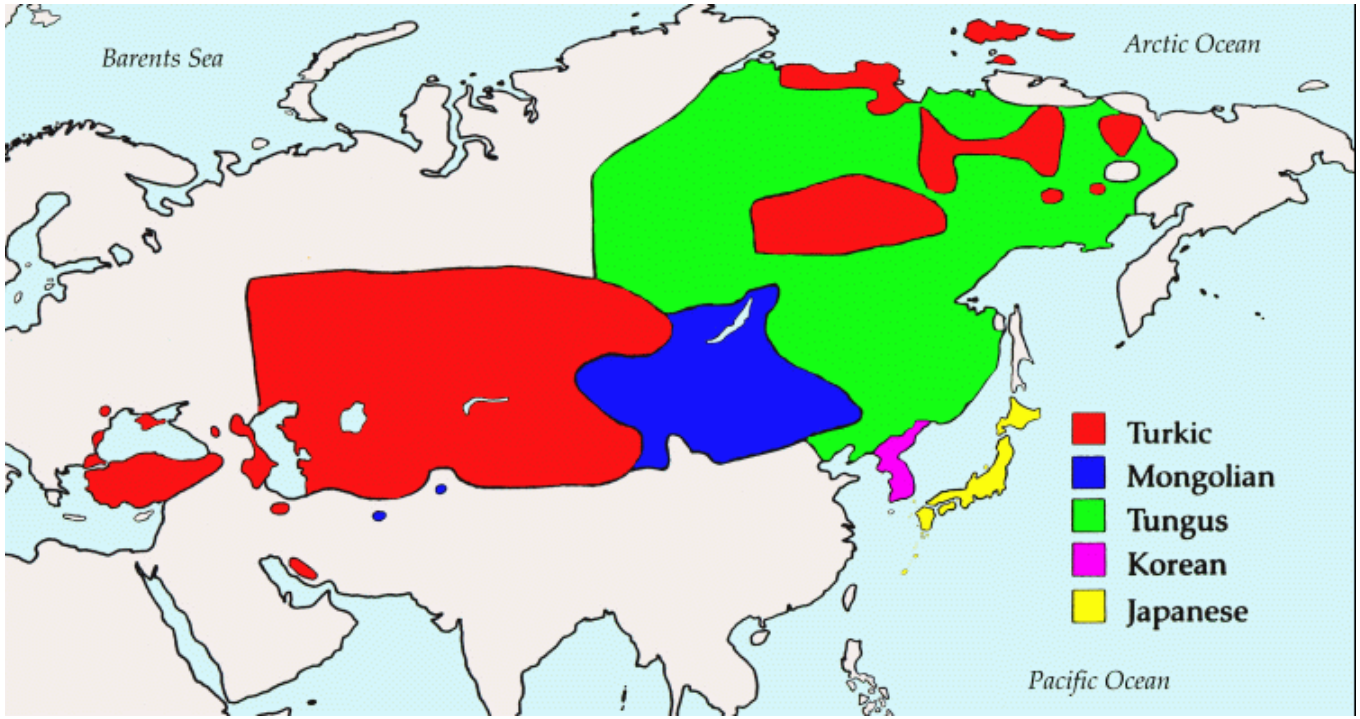

Figure 1: Map of Altaic languages

- agglutinative, dependent-marking, accusative, SOV
- today: focus on Kalmyk (Mongolian) and Bashkir (Turkic) with references to some other languages and dialects

Causative constructions

Narrowing the scope

The present talk deals only with morphological causative constructions derived from transitive verbs

These constructions must include

- a transitive verb with a specific CAUS marker
- the Causer – a participant that intends the situation to happen
- the Causee – a participant that is caused to act
- the Theme – a participant that is influenced by the action

Predicted strategy

Comrie's rule

The Causee occupies the highmost syntactic position according to the hierarchy:
SUBJECT > DIRECT OBJECT > INDIRECT OBJECT > OBLIQUE OBJECT

These constructions must include

- a transitive verb with a specific CAUS marker
- the Causer – a participant that intends the situation to happen
- the Causee – a participant that is caused to act
- the Theme – a participant to which the action happens

(1) TURKISH
Dišči mektub-u müdür-e imzala-t-tı
dentist letter-ACC boss-DAT sign-CAUS-PST
'The dentist made the boss sign the letter.' (Comrie 1976)

RRG in general

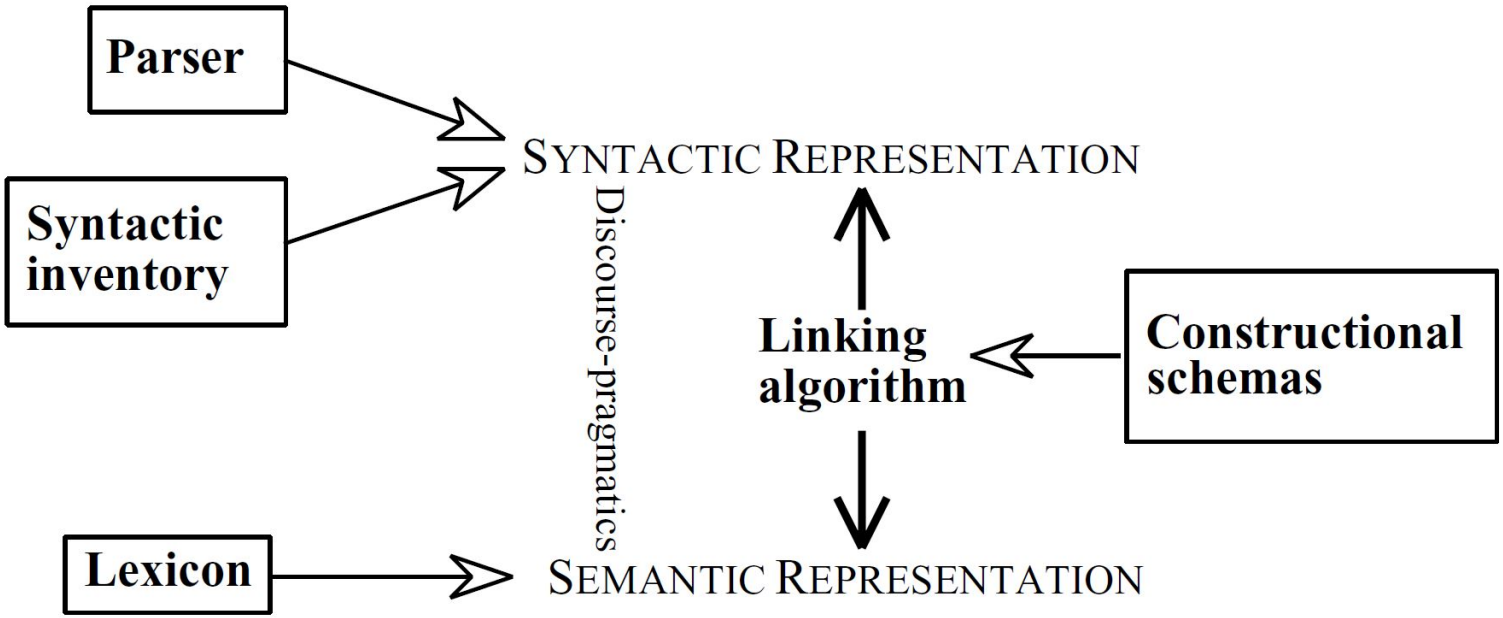

Figure 2: Organization of Role and Reference Grammar (Van Valin 2005, Fig. 5.4)

Semantic representations

STATE	**predicate**′(x) or (x, y)
ACTIVITY	**do**′(x, [**predicate**′(x) or (x, y)])
ACHIEVEMENT	INGR **predicate**′(x) or (x, y) or INGR **do**′(x, [**predicate**′(x) or (x, y)])
SEMELFACTIVE	SEML **predicate**′(x) or (x, y) or SEML **do**′(x, [**predicate**′(x) or (x, y)])
ACCOMPLISHMENT	BECOME **predicate**′(x) or (x, y) or BECOME **do**′(x, [**predicate**′(x) or (x, y)])
ACTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT	**do**′(x, [**predicate**$'_1$(x) or (x, y)]) & INGR **predicate**$'_2$(x) or (x, y)
CAUSATIVE	α CAUSE β, where α and β are logical structures of any type

Table 2: Representations of verb classes (reproduced from Van Valin 2005, Tab. 2.3)

Linking: Semantic macroroles

(2) a. John gave a book to Mary.
Actor **Undergoer** **NMR**

b. A book was given to Mary by John.
Undergoer **NMR** **Actor**

(3) a. John gave Mary a book.
Actor **Undergoer** **NMR**

b. Mary was given a book by John.
Undergoer **NMR** **Actor**

Linking: Syntactic functions

(4) Privileged syntactic argument selection hierarchy
(Van Valin 2005, ex. 4.14)

arg. of DO > 1^{st} arg. of **do′** > 1^{st} arg. of **predicate′**(x, y) > 2^{nd} arg. of **predicate′**(x, y) > arg. of **predicate′**(x)

(5) Case assignment rules for accusative constructions
(Van Valin 2005, ex. 4.25)

a. Assign nominative case to the highest ranking macrorole argument (in terms of (4.14)).
b. Assign accusative case to the other macrorole argument.

(6) Non-macrorole case assignment rules (Van Valin 2007, ex. 12)

a. Assign INS to non-MR *b* argument if, given two arguments, *a* and *b*, in a logical structure, with (1) both as possible candidates for a particular macrorole and (2) *a* is equal or higher on the AUH, *b* is not selected as that macrorole.
b. Assign DAT to non-MR direct core arguments (default).

Problem statement

Challenges

- not all Altaic languages behave like Turkish
- in some Altaic languages there are several concurring strategies

Goals

- show an RRG analysis of the constructions in question
- compare it to purely functional explanations
- demonstrate more interesting and challenging phenomena

Strategy 1: Causative like passive

(7) Kalmyk

a. *üüdə-n* *Badm-ar* *sekə-gdə-v*
door-EXT Badma-INS open-PASS-PST
'The door was opened by Badma.'
(Vydrina 2009)

b. *ezə-n* *ködəlməšč-är* *xö* *al-ulə-v*
master-EXT servant-INS ram kill-CAUS-PST
'The master made the servant kill the ram.'
(Say 2009)

Strategy2: Dative

(8) Kalmyk (Say 2009)

a. *ekə ürə-n-d-än xašə id-ül-ǯä-nä*
mother child-EXT-DAT-POSS.REFL porridge eat-CAUS-PROG-PRS
'The mother feeds the child with porridge'.

b. *Badma gerg-n-ännj zurəg nan-də üz-ülə-v*
Badma wife-EXT-GEN.POSS.3 image me-DAT see-CAUS-PST
'Badma showed me a photo of his wife'.

(9) Bashkir (Perekhval'skaya 2017)

a. *Bala besäj-gä höt-tö es-er-ä*
child cat-DAT milk-ACC drink-CAUS-IPFV
'The child feeds the cat with the milk.'

b. *Dilä beð-gä üð-e-neŋ kejäw jeget-e-neŋ foto-hə-n*
Dila we-DAT he-POSS.3-GEN mate boy-POSS.3-GEN photo-POSS.3-ACC
kür-hät-te
see-CAUS-PST
'Dila showed us the photo of her boyfriend.'

Concurrence between the two strategies

(10) Bashkir (Perekhval'skaya 2017)

a. *Babaj* *ul-ə-nan* *xat-tə* *uqə-t-tər-a*
old.man son-POSS.3-ABL letter-ACC read-CAUS-CAUS-IPFV
'The old man asks his son to read the letter.'

b. *Babaj* *ul-ə-na* *xat-tə* *uqə-t-tər-a*
old.man son-POSS.3-DAT letter-ACC read-CAUS-CAUS-IPFV
'The old man lets his son to read the letter.'

The choice of the case is not determined by the verb

The difference explained

- "What we are talking about is that the Causer's goal in these cases is not the change of state of the participant coded as direct object, but a certain impact on the Causee. It is especially obvious for verbs of mental sphere – it is clear, for example, that in (8a) the photo does not undergo any change during the causing event, there is only the change of state of the participant to whom it is shown. In (8b) the porridge, of course, undergoes significant change, but the idea of the causation is not in making the porridge vanish by means of the child, but to feed the child, i. e. make him not hungry." (Say 2009, p. 407)
- "Similar for the situation in (10a), when the old man discovers the contents of the letter by means of the son (e. g. he comes up with this solution, because he has forgotten his glasses). The letter is most probably read aloud in presence of the old man. In (10b) the son is interested in discovering the contents of the letter. He may read it on his own, in a place or time different from the situation of causation." (Perekhval'skaya 2017, p. 245)

Double accusative strategy

(11) Kalmyk

bagšə **madn-igə** *škol-də* **kögʒmə** *soŋs-ul-na*
teacher **we-ACC** school-DAT **music** listen-CAUS-PRS
'At school, the teacher made us listen to music.'

(12) Khakas

Maša **Vas'a-ny** **sok** *iz-irt-če.*
Masha **Vasja-ACC** **juice** drink-CAUS-PRS
'Masha gives Vasja juice to drink.'

(13) Tuvinian

Ašak **Bayïr-nï** **inek** *oorla-t-kan.*
old.man **Bayir-ACC** **cow** steal-CAUS-PST
'The old man made Bayir steal a cow.'

Explanations: weak argument properties (Say 2009), non referential object (Letuchiy 2006; Kulikov et al. 1998), light-verb constructions, (quasi)incorporation...

Kannada < Dravidian (Foley and Van Valin 1984, p. 384)

(14) a. *Avanu-∅ nana-ge bisket-annu tinn-is-id-anu*
3SG-NOM 1SG-DAT biscuit-ACC eat-CAUS-PST-3SG.M
'He fed me a biscuit,' or 'He made me eat a biscuit.'

b. *Avanu-∅ nann-inda bisket-annu tinn-is-id-anu*
3SG-NOM 1SG-INS biscuit-ACC eat-CAUS-PST-3SG.M
'He had me eat a biscuit.'

- DAT codes a less volitional Causee; the Causer is interested in affecting the Causee
- INS codes a more volitional Causee (similar to a demoted actor); the Causer is interested in having the action completed

However...

- in Altaic languages, INS is the default strategy
- there is a continuum of mono-/biclausal features

Test for the Undergoer assignment

(15) *täw-ðä* *unəŋ* *urən-ə* *Bäläkäj* *Boɣaðaq* *kül-e*
first-LOC that.GEN place-POSS.3 small Bugodak lake-POSS.3
buj-ə-nda *kür-hät-el-gän* *inde*
length-POSS.3-LOC see-CAUS-PASS-PTCP.PST yet
'Then its place was shown near the lake Small Bugodak.'
(Ovsjannikova et al. 2019)

Logical structure

α CAUSE β

α : **do**′(x, $\varnothing$)
β : **predicate**′(y, z)
β' : **predicate**$'_{tr}$(y, z) & BECOME **predicate**$'_{intr}$(z)

According to Perekhval'skaya 2017 and Bonch-Osmolovskaja 2007, contrastive construction is not possible with the INS/ABL strategy. In other words,

- α CAUSE β $\Longrightarrow$DAT strategy
- α CAUSE β' $\Longrightarrow$INS/ABL strategy

How to formulate?

- **Syntax To Semantics**:
  If the Causee is encoded in the same way as the demoted actor in passive constructions, the logical structure to which the syntactic construction is linked, comprises an additional Accomplishment part.
- **Semantics To Syntax**:
  If the speaker's pragmatic intention within the given discourse context is to present the action as an accomplishment, the compound logical structure is used and the Causee is encoded in the same way as the demoted actor in passive constructions.

The fact that the passive-like strategy is selected as default can be explained by "the tendency to keep the speaker's perspective" (Say 2009); in RRG terms – "switch-function reference-tracking system" (Foley and Van Valin 1984).

Causatives in discourse (Smetina 2016)

Trends affecting the coding of arguments in causative constructions:

1. the topicality of the Causer
2. a relationship (within 5 clauses) between the syntactic position occupied by the participant in the causative clause and the syntactic position occupied by the same referential expression when it was previously mentioned
3. a relationship between the explicitness of the Causee and the syntactic position occupied by the same referential expression when it was previously mentioned

Not a conclusion

What we still need to investigate

- ABL-INS continuum
- interference of CAUS with PASS
- implicit argument realization in discourse
- mono- and biclausal properties of morphological causatives

What we can already say

- causative constructions with INS/ABL and DAT are semantically very different
- linking different syntactic constructions to different logical structures is in line with discourse preferences in these languages
- language-specific rules are applied at a higher level and override default rules

Thank you!

Your feedback is very welcome:
generalova@phil.hhu.de

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Glossary

1	first person
3	third person
ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
CAUS	causative
DAT	dative
EXT	non-semantic stem extension
GEN	genitive
INS	instrumental
IPFV	imperfective
LOC	locative
M	masculine
NOM	nominative
PASS	passive
POSS	possessive
PROG	progressive
PRS	present
PST	past
PTCP	participle
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular