

Productive causative in Kaytag Dargwa and the (im)possibility of causative recursion¹

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Introduction. There has been a long debate on whether causative can in principle be recursive. Most notably, Key (2013) claims that apparent double causatives do not in fact instantiate syntactic recursion of causing events. Rather, they merely involve morphological reduplication of the causative morpheme, see also (Svenonius 2005) for typological data showing that there exists a strong crosslinguistic prohibition against multiple productive morphological causatives.

The opposite position is (sometimes implicitly, cf. Miyagawa 1998; Harley 2008 a.m.o) held by the majority of linguists and is recently defended in (Nie 2022), where it is suggested that only those causatives may allow recursion that involve stacking of both argument- and event-introducing heads – Voice and *v*/Caus, respectively. If causative involves only adding of the Voice head (Nie 2020), recursion is expected to be prohibited.

In this talk, I discuss the productive causative construction in Kaytag Dargwa (< Nakh-Daghestanian) and show that (i) it is Voice-selecting in the terminology of (Pylkkänen 2008); (ii) it involves a syntactically represented causing event, and (iii) it is not recursive.

Structure. Amongst productive causative constructions, Pylkkänen (2008) distinguishes verb-selecting causatives from phase-selecting (or Voice-selecting) causatives. These two types are distinguished mainly with respect to properties of the causee, particularly whether it patterns like a subject (in which case we have a Voice-selecting causative) or not (in which case we have a verb-selecting causative). One of the most popular tests for the subjecthood of the causee in causative constructions is agent-oriented modification. Subjects can be associated with such adverbial expressions as ‘intentionally’, ‘grumpily’ and so on. In Kaytag Dargwa, as exemplified in (1), causee can be the target of agent-oriented modifier *barhu-barhul* ‘on purpose’.

- (1) mutaj-li musa-c:i barhu-barhul mat:rat b-elq'-uχ-un
 PN-ERG PN-INTER on.purpose plate.ABS N-break.PFV-CAUS-AOR
 i. ‘Mutai on purpose made Musa break the plate.’
 ii. ‘Mutai made Musa break the plate on purpose.’

Reflexive-binding possibilities can also be employed to establish the subjecthood of causees in productive causative constructions. In both (2a) and (2b) the only available binder for the complex reflexive pronoun is the causee. Importantly, in (2b) the causee can bind the pronoun even though there is an apparent case mismatch between the inter-lative causee and the ergative marked first component of the complex reflexive.

- (2) a. pat'ima-li tuχtur-c:i_j [cine-c:i ca]_j/*_i ʔa^h w-ar-iχ-iw
 PN-ERG doctor-INTER REFL.OBL-INTER REFL.ABS good M-LV.PFV-CAUS-AOR
 ‘Patimat made the doctor cure herself.’

 b. pat'ima-li tuχtur-c:i_j [cin-ni ca]_j/*_i ʔa^h w-ar-iχ-iw
 PN-ERG doctor-INTER REFL-ERG REFL.ABS good M-LV.PFV-CAUS-AOR
 ‘Patimat made the doctor cure herself.’

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(3) rasul-li ižel mutal duc' Ø-ič'-uχ-u-l=di
 PN-ERG today PN.ABS run M-LV.IPFV-CAUS-PROG-CVB=PST
 i. 'Today Rasul made Mutal run.'
 ii. 'Rasul made Mutal run today.'

(4) [_{VoiceP} CAUSER [_{VoiceP} [_{CausP} [_{VoiceP} CAUSEE [[_{VP} ...] Voice]] Caus] Voice]]

(5) a. *učitel^j-li rasul-c:i musa duc' Ø-ič'-uχ-u-l ca
 teacher-ERG PN-INTER PN.ABS run M-LV.IPFV-CAUS-CAUS-PROG-CVB COP
 Exp.: 'Teacher asks Rasul to make Musa run.'

b. učitel^j-li rasul-c:i musa duc' Ø-ič'-uχ-u-l ca
 teacher-ERG PN-INTER PN.ABS run M-LV.IPFV-CAUS-PROG-CVB COP
 'Teacher asks Rasul to make Musa run.'

(6) ʔaʕli-l musa-c:i barhu-barhul rasul-c:i kiniga b-elč'-uχ-un
 PN-ERG PN-INTER on.purpose PN-INTER book.ABS N-read.PFV-CAUS-AOR
 'Ali asked Musa to make Rasul read the book on purpose.'
 i. on purpose CAUS > CAUS > V
 ii. # CAUS > on purpose CAUS > V
 iii. CAUS > CAUS > on purpose V

Outlook. Kaytag Dargwa data may pose a challenge for (Nie 2022), according to which recursion should be allowed if the causative involves adding a new *v/Caus* head, responsible for the introduction of a separate thematic domain. On the other hand, the data may be considered to argue in support for an approach as in (Key 2013), which completely prohibits causative recursion and postulates some fixed universal functional hierarchy. However, if Turkish is the language that allows genuine causative recursion, as Nie (2022) suggests using the same diagnostics that were employed here, then her approach turns out to be more appropriate, as, all other things being equal, overgeneration is to be preferred over undergeneration. I will present

available data from some other Nakh-Daghestanian languages and suggest that selection and, possibly, bundling are the key in constraining Nie's approach.

Selected References: • Key, G. (2013). The Morphosyntax of the Turkish Causative Construction. PhD dissertation, University of Arizona. • Kuroda, S.-Y. (1993). Lexical and Productive Causatives in Japanese: An Examination of the Theory of Paradigmatic Structure. *Journal of Japanese Linguistics* 15:1–82. • Nie, Y. (2020). Morphological Causatives are Voice over Voice. *Word Structure*, 13(1):102–126. • Nie, Y. (2022). Turkish Causatives are Recursive: A Response to Key 2013. *Linguistic Inquiry*, pages 1–14. • Pylkkänen, L. (2008). *Introducing Arguments*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. • Svenonius, P. (2005). Two Domains of Causatives. Available at: <http://www.hum.uit.no/a/svenonius/papers/Svenonius05TwoDomains.pdf>.



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SinFonJA 18

1 ПИСЬМО

OpenReview <notifications@openreview.net>

30 июня 2025 г. в 12:20

Ответить: sinfonja18@proton.me

Кому: kalyakin.iv@gmail.com

Dear colleague Ivan Kalyakin,

We are glad to inform you that your paper proposal has been accepted for an ORAL presentation at the SinFonJA 18 Conference (September 26-27, 2025).

(<https://mf.ukim.mk/sinfonja-18/>)

The abstract has undergone a blind review process, and it has been assessed that some further clarification might be needed in order to fully meet the requirements of the Call for Papers.

Your topic and research are indeed valuable; however, the reviewers have addressed the following issues which you may find useful while preparing your presentation:

Reviewer 1:

Review:

This abstract situates itself in the middle of a debate about whether causatives can be morphosyntactically and semantically recursive. Some linguists argue that stacking causatives is impossible, even when two causative morphemes appear; others allow for stacking of causatives under limited circumstances (i.e., when causatives introduce both Voice and v/Caus). Although Kaytag Dagwa causatives (a) introduce both an argument and an event, and (b) select for a Voice projection that also introduces the causee subject, they are nonetheless not recursive, suggesting that the typology proposed by Nie (2022) is not correct.

The author does a fairly job at establishing the basic facts: Kaytag Dagwa causatives contain both a subject-like causee and a separate event. While I understand space is limited in an abstract, it would be nice to see the proposed location of the adverbs such that they capture the ambiguity: how can "on purpose" and "today" scope over the matrix verb? Can you put a second time adverb into (3) such that the two subevents occur at different times? If not, why not? Regarding these examples, I am also unclear what the difference in meaning between (2a) and (2b) is, and why a case mismatch would be expected to prevent binding.

(5) and (6) show that semantic double causatives are possible, but these are not syntactic double causatives: only one causative morpheme appears, and the higher causee, despite appearing in the same case as the lower causee, does not pass the test for subjecthood—thus, the lack of a second causative morpheme cannot be due to a surface-level constraint. While this point is well-made, it yields a major unsolved question: how is the higher causee represented syntactically? Why does it have the same case as the lower causee (and, I suppose, how is this case assigned at all)? Is it essentially a PP-like adjunct? How can we tell that there is a third event here, can time adverbs target the intermediate causing event?

The author seems to settle on the idea, following Key, that the double causative is represented semantically but not syntactically. However, this needs to be made more explicit. I am intrigued to learn more about how Nie's proposal can be limited in relevant ways and hope the author will also consider whether the ability of non-syntactic introduction of causative events (as proposed) interacts with lack of syntactic causative recursion when it should otherwise be available.

Pros:

- Introduces a theoretically interesting problem and relevant, novel data from an understudied language addressing it
- Engages with the literature
- Generally well-organized

Cons:

- Some data underexplained or lacking relevant contrasts
- Proposal not concrete enough

Rating: 8: Top 50% of accepted papers, clear accept

Confidence: 4: The reviewer is confident but not absolutely certain that the evaluation is correct

Reviewer 2:

Review:

This abstract presents a promising analysis of the causative construction in a highly understudied language, but several aspects would benefit from further clarification and development.

The example in (3) would support the Author's argument more convincingly if it demonstrated that the two types of modification can co-occur, as in 'Yesterday Rasul made Mutal run today.' This would help rule out the possibility that the observed effect is merely inferential rather than syntactic.

The analysis of (6) is currently underdeveloped and would benefit from further elaboration. On the syntactic side, it