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Unintentional Agents vs. Unintentional Causers in Polish*

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1. Introduction

In this paper, we examine the constructions illustrated in (1a) and (2a), and argue that they differ in syntax and semantics.

- (1) a. *Jankowi czytało się tę książkę z przyjemnością.*
 John.Dat read.Neut Refl this book.Acc with pleasure
 “John read this book with pleasure.”
- b. [AppP DAT [VoiceP się v [VP V ACC]]].
- (2) a. *Jankowi niechcący złamały się okulary.*
 John.Dat involuntarily Pf.broken.Fem.Pl Refl glasses.Nom.Fem.Pl
 “John broke the glasses involuntarily.”
- b. [AppP DAT [CauseP się v [VP V NOM]]].

On the one hand, the pattern in (1a), dubbed Involuntary State Construction (**ISC**) from now on, has the rough syntactic skeleton in (1b). It combines a dative logical subject as Unintentional Agent in an Applicative Phrase, and a reflexive clitic in a Voice Phrase (Kratzer 1996) or vP (Chomsky 1995). On the other hand, the pattern in (2a) dubbed Dative Anticausative Construction (**DAC**) corresponds to the rough syntactic skeleton in (2b), which combines a dative logical subject as Unintentional Causer in an Applicative Phrase, with a reflexive clitic in a Cause Phrase.

ISCs of type (1) are possible with many verbs, including those denoting activities such as read, or changes of state such as break illustrated later. Rivero (2003), and Rivero & Sheppard (2003) note syntactic and semantic variation in Slavic ISCs, which are constructions without counterparts in Romance. Let us illustrate semantic variation in Slavic ISCs, by considering Slovenian (3) as a case in point.

- (3) *Janezu se je pilo vodo.* Slovenian
 J.Dat Refl be.3sg drunk.Neut water.Fem.Acc

“John felt like drinking water.”

Slovenian (3) displays the same morphology and syntax as Polish (1a), but differs in meaning. That is, the above Polish and Slovenian ISCs contain similar (a) dative logical subjects, (b) obligatory reflexive clitics, (c) activity verbs with neuter morphology, and (d) accusative objects, but crucially contrast in truth conditions. On the one hand, Polish (1a) asserts or entails a past reading activity on the part of John, so can be called a past eventuality. Thus, if the Polish sentence is equipped with a continuation such as “but he did not read it at all”, the result is a contradiction. Languages that have ISCs with the semantic characteristics of Polish include Russian, Czech, and Slovak. By contrast with Polish (1a), Slovenian (3) denotes a past disposition, not a past eventuality, so does not assert/entail a past water drinking activity on the part of John. Thus the Slovenian ISC can be continued without contradiction with “but he did not drink any water at all “. South Slavic languages have ISCs with the semantic characteristics of Slovenian. Thus, we can conclude that dative subjects in Polish ISCs have agentive properties, justifying the Agent label, while datives in Slovenian ISCs are not agentive. In Slavic ISCs, syntactic variation resides in case marking on objects. With the exception of Polish and Slovenian, objects of transitive verbs in ISCs must agree with the verb and be marked nominative, not accusative. Thus Polish ISCs occupy a unique position within Slavic. On the one hand, regarding semantics, Polish resembles Russian, Czech, and Slovak but not Slovenian. On the other hand, regarding syntax Polish resembles Slovenian but not the other Slavic languages.

By contrast with Polish ISCs, DACs of the type in (2a) are more common typologically. Such constructions, which are restricted to change-of-state verbs that participate in the anticausative alternation such as break or burn, have close syntactic and semantic equivalents in at least Albanian, Greek, Slovenian and Spanish (Cuervo 2003, Kallulli 2006, Rivero 2003, Rivero & Sheppard 2003, 2008, Schäfer 2007, a.o.). Taking Slovenian as a case in point, the comparison of (4) to (2a) shows that DACs are similar in the two languages.

- (4) *Janezu so se zlomila očala.* Slovenian
 J.Dat be.3Pl Refl Pf.broken.Fem.Pl glasses.Nom.Fem.Pl

“John broke the glasses (involuntarily).”

On the morphosyntactic side, (2a) and (4) contain parallel dative logical subjects, reflexive clitics, and nominative logical objects that agree with the verb. On the semantic side, both sentences count as past eventualities denoting a change of state caused by an individual, so show no difference in truth conditions in contrast with ISCs such as (1a) vs. (3).

Both ISCs and DACs contain reflexive clitics, but with a different function, as the skeletons in (1b) and (2b) indicate. On the one hand, the formal core of ISCs such as (1a) is the indefinite/impersonal construction in (5). Such a core consists of an impersonal *się* corresponding to “one” or “people”, a V *czytało* that is Neuter and does not agree with its internal argument, and the internal argument *książkę*, which is Accusative.

- (5) *Czytało* *się* *tę* *książkę*.
 Read.Neu Refl this book.Acc
 “People/one read this book.”

On the other hand, the formal core of DACs such as (2a) is the anticausative/inchoative construction in (6). In this instance, the verb *złamały* agrees in Gender and Number with the Nominative internal argument *okulary*. *Się* is an anticausative reflexive because present Polish lacks passive *się*.

- (6) *Złamały* *się* *okulary*.
 Pf.broken.Fem.Pl Refl glasses.Nom.Fem.Pl
 “The glasses broke.”

Morphological differences between the Polish constructions in (1a) and (2a), then, are clearly undeniable, but our argument is that ISCs and DACs differ in syntax and semantics, with the first containing Unintentional Agents and the second Unintentional Causers. Let us begin by examining ISCs.

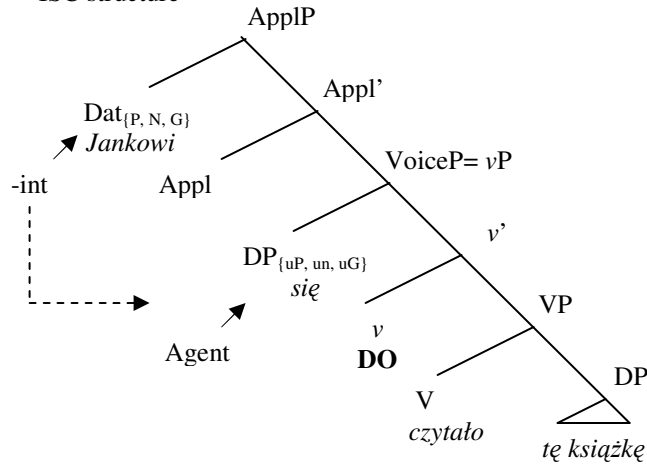
2. Unintentional Agents and ISCs.

We propose that ISCs of type (1) have the structure in (7), whose main components we introduce next.

- a) Updating (Rivero 2003, Rivero & Sheppard 2003), we locate the logical subject of ISCs in a High Applicative Phrase (AppIP), as in (Pylkkänen 2002). High Applicatives are external to VP, and denote a semantic relation between an individual and an event. In ISCs, the individual is denoted by the dative, and the event corresponds to the complement of the Applicative notated VoiceP =_vP in (7).

- b) The Applicative Phrase of ISCs has inherent case: dative.
- c) We propose that this Applicative bears the restricted semantics associated with oblique / “quirky” subjects, and does not contribute an independent canonical thematic role. A characteristic of oblique subjects is lack of control (Bhaskarao & Subbarao 2004, Kallulli 2006, Rivero 2004, Verma & Mohanan 1991, a.o). We assume that dative subjects in ISCs share this semantic property, which for ease of exposition we notate with the feature [-int], suggesting lack of intention or control. The feature [-int] in oblique subjects, then, is the source of the Involuntary label we append to logical subjects in ISCs.
- d) In ISCs, the complement of the Applicative is an agentive construction, so a Voice Phrase in the sense of (Kratzer 1996), or a nondefective vP in the sense of (Chomsky 1995), which for our purposes are notational variants. In the analysis in (7), the reflexive clitic is merged in the specifier of VoiceP/vP, and functions as a resumptive pronoun for the dative (Rivero 2003, Rivero & Sheppard 2003). Since the reflexive is part of an agentive construction, it bears the external theta role of the verb, and thus counts as the Agent. The formal core of ISCs, then, justifies the Agent label we assign to logical subjects in ISCs. In sum, ISCs such as (1a) contain an Applicative with an [-Int] feature indicative of an oblique subject, which combined with the usual agentive feature of a VoiceP/vP with the morphological marking of an ordinary transitive structure including an object in the Accusative results in an Unintentional Agent reading for the dative.
- e) VoiceP /vP in (7) is an agentive construction, as just stated. Thus, it may take a transitive VP with an internal argument complement as in (1a). In that situation, Voice /v values structural Accusative case on the internal argument *tę książkę*.
- f) A prominent proposal in the literature is that *v* can have different flavors (Davis & Demirdache 2000, Folli & Harley 2005, Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer 2006, a.o.). We just proposed that ISCs consist of a High Applicative Phrase with an agentive construction as complement, so it follows that such a complement must be headed by the agentive type of little *v* identified as vDO in the literature.

(7) ISC structure



A last dimension of ISCs relevant for our proposals is that they are not aspectually restricted. They are often imperfective, as illustrated in (8a), but they can also be perfective, as in (8b). Note that the ISCs in (8a-b) contain verbs that can participate in the anticausative alternation: break and close. However, they should nevertheless be kept apart from DACs such as (2a). The objects of ISCs are marked accusative not nominative, and we have taken this feature as a clue for a construction that involves an agentive dimension. By contrast in DACs such as (2a), objects are nominative, which can be taken as a sign that they lack the agentive dimension found in ISCs.

- (8) a. *Jankowi łamało się tę gałązkę nieświadomie.*
 John.Dat broke.Neu Refl this branch.Acc unconsciously
 “John was breaking this branch unconsciously.”
- b. *Jankowi zamknęło się pudełka niestarannie.*
 John.Dat Pf.closed.Neu Refl boxes.Acc clumsily
 “John closed the boxes clumsily.”

Another important difference between ISCs and DACs discussed in §3 is that DACs are aspectually restricted.

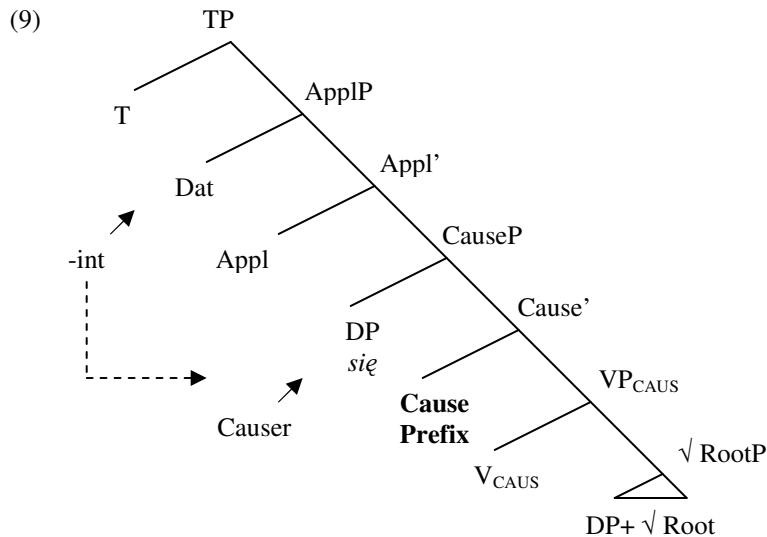
3. Unintentional Causers and DACs.

This section examines causative structures. We begin by specifying the general properties of ISCs in §3.1, and continue with a look at aspectual restrictions in causative structures in §3.2.

3.1. The properties of DACs.

Having taken a look at ISCs in the previous section, we now examine DACs. We propose that DACs have the syntactic structure in (9), and model their properties on those of ISCs, which helps to identify similarities and differences between the two constructions.

- a) DACs contain High Applicatives with the characteristics of those in ISCs.
- b) Thus, High Applicatives in DACs have inherent dative case.
- c) They also have a restricted semantic content encoded in [-Int], and do not contribute an independent thematic role to the construction.
- d) The crucial structural difference between ISCs and DACs resides in the nature of the complement of the Applicative, which is a Cause Phrase, not a Voice Phrase /agentive vP.
- e) Thus, ISCs and DACs differ as to the specific little *v* they contain: DACs in (9) hold v_{CAUSE} (Rivero and Savchenko 2005, Schäfer 2007), while we saw in §2 that ISCs in (7) contain v_{DO} with agentive characteristics.
- f) Similar to ISCs, in DACs reflexive *się* functions as a resumptive pronoun for the dative. However, as a constituent of a Cause Phrase, it bears the theta role of a Causer not of an Agent.
- g) The combination of [-Int] on the High Applicative and the Cause role on *się* results in the Unintentional Causer interpretation assigned to the dative. Namely, as reported in the literature, this is an individual who caused a change of state involuntarily.



An additional constituent not yet discussed is the item called Prefix located under Cause in (9), which has no counterpart in the ISC structure in (7). Recall that ISCs can be imperfective or perfective, so are aspectually unrestricted, as we illustrated in (8a-b). Since aspect does not play a fundamental role in ISCs, it is not represented as a necessary ingredient of (7). By contrast, DACs are aspectually restricted, because they must be perfective and cannot be imperfective, as illustrated in (10a-b) (also Kallulli 2006 on Albanian), so they require an aspect marker, as depicted in (9).

- (10)
- | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|
| a. | <i>Paulinie</i> | <i>(niechcący)</i> | <i>zamoczył</i> | <i>się</i> | <i>zegarek.</i> |
| | Paula.Dat | (involuntarily) | Pf.soaked.Masc | Refl | watch.Nom |
| I. | “Paula’s watch got soaked.” | | | | |
| II. | “Paula got the watch soaked.” | | | | |
-
- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---------------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|
| b. | <i>Paulinie</i> | <i>(*niechcący)</i> | <i>moczył</i> | <i>się</i> | <i>zegarek.</i> |
| | Paula.Dat | (*involuntarily) | soaked.Masc | Refl | watch.Nom |
| I. | OK: “Paula’s watch was getting soaked.” | | | | |
| II. | NO: “*Paula was getting the watch soaked.” | | | | |

Sentence (10a) with a perfective verb has two readings. The reading notated I is with Paula as owner of the watch, and does not correspond to a DAC with an overt Causer. The other reading notated II is with Paula responsible for the watch getting soaked. This is a DAC with the syntactic structure in (9), and a dative subject in the High Applicative combined with the reflexive for the Causer reading. By contrast with (10a), (10b) has an imperfective verb and is limited to the first reading with Paula as owner of the watch, not a

Causer. Since sentence (10b) does not represent a DAC, we conclude that DACs require some form of perfectivity. In other words, DACs involve an aspectual component that is not required in ISCs, which is a first empirical reason to justify the aspectual marker under Cause in the structure in (9). We return to the contrast between (10a) and (10b) in §3.2, once we discuss in general terms the role of Polish aspectual prefixes in constructions with a causer component.

3.2. Polish Prefixes and CauseP

Let us introduce the role we assign to the aspectual marker in (9), drawing inspiration from (Folli and Harley 2005). We propose that in the general case, the complement of CauseP must be a state. To meet such a stative requirement, VPs must be equipped with certain lexical prefixes, which are merged as verbal heads or *vs*. Our proposal thus amounts to the idea that Polish prefixes that function as telicity markers are light verbs / *vs* and stativizers. The stativizer function we assign to Polish prefixes makes them parallel to both Italian inchoative *si* and to English particles in the analysis proposed by Folli & Harley (2005). Folli and Harley argue that Italian inchoative *si* in (11a) signals the Cause flavor of *v*. The clitic selects a state complement encoding the final state, hence the predicate becomes telic. Similar to other telic predicates in Italian, constructions with inchoative *si* appear with auxiliary *essere* (10a), and (10b) without clitic and *avere* is ungrammatical. Regarding English, Folli and Harley argue that the inanimate subject in (10c-d) requires a verb with a particle because the particle functions as a light verb and telicity marker.

- (11) a. *Il mare si è mangiato la spiaggia.* (Folli & Harley 2005)
 The sea Refl is eaten the beach
 “The sea ate away the beach.”
- b. **Il mare ha mangiato la spiaggia.*
 The sea has eaten the beach.
- c. *The sea ate away the beach.*
- d. **The sea ate the beach.*

Folli and Harley establish a correlation between external arguments and complements. On the one hand, if a Causer is allowed in the subject position of *v*, then the complement of *v* must be a small clause. On the

other hand, if *v* exclusively requires Agent as its external argument, then the complement of *v* may be either nominal or a small clause. In their terms, the first type of *v* has DO flavor, and the second has CAUSE flavor. The correlation is shown in the table in (12).

(12)

Flavor of <i>v</i>	Specifier	Complement
v_{DO}	Agent	Nominal or small clause
v_{CAUSE}	Causer or agent	Small clause

Recall that our hypothesis is that some Polish prefixes have a stativizing function, and are merged under *v*, so they are reminiscent of Italian *si* and of English particles in Folli and Harley's approach. Our hypothesis receives support from transitive sentences with a Causer external argument (in the nominative) that are felicitous only if they contain perfective prefixes. To this effect, compare (13a) and (14a) with (13b) and (14b). In the first pair, the verbs appear without prefixes and only animate subjects are possible, as in (13c) and (14c) (note that a generic operator such as *zawsze* "always" in (13a') makes the sentence grammatical, so has the same effect as the aspectual marker in (13b)). In the b examples, prefixes are present, and the Causer external argument is felicitous in both sentences.

- (13) a. **Silny* *wiatr* *budził* *Tomka*.
 Strong wind.Nom.Masc Imp.woke.Masc Tom.Acc
 "*The strong wind was waking up Tom."
- a.' *Silny* *wiatr* *zawsze budził* *Tomka*.
 "The strong wind always woke up Tom."
- b. *Silny* *wiatr* *o-budził* *Tomka*.
 Strong wind.Nom.Masc Pf.woke.Masc Tom.Acc
 "The strong wind woke up Tom."
- c. *Marek* *budził* *Tomka*.
 Mark.Nom Imp.woke Tom.Acc
 "Mark was waking up Tom."

- (14) a. **Sztorm* *topił* *statek*.
 Storm.Nom.Masc Imp.sank.Masc ship.Acc
 “*The storm was making the ship sink.”
- b. *Sztorm* *za-topił* *statek*
 Storm.Nom.Masc Pf.sank.Masc ship.Acc
 “The storm made the ship sink.”
- c. *Piraci* *topili* *statek*.
 Pirates.Nom.Masc sank.Masc ship.Acc
 “The pirates were making the ship sink.”

To account for the above situation, we assume that the prefixes in (13-14) represent Inner/Lexical Aspect. If analyzed as in (Svenonius 2004), they alter argument structure in *vP* by providing a secondary predicate requiring a resultative phrase as complement (Ramchand 2001). They mark telicity independently of the internal argument of the verb (see MacDonald’s (2006) on prefixes in Russian). Since the prefixes in (13b) and (14b) license inanimate subjects and require small clauses as complements, following Folli and Harley we propose that they signal a CAUSE flavor in *v*. In our view, then, *v*_{CAUSE} characterizes both the causative variants in (13b) and (14b), and the anticausative in (6) partially repeated as (15).

- (15) *Złamały się okulary*.
 “The glasses broke.”

Other than anticausatives with prefixes such as (15), Polish also displays anticausatives with unprefixes verbs, as shown in (16). To account for this doubly faceted situation we propose to distinguish between two syntactic types of anticausative structures in Polish: the type that comes equipped with a Prefix contains CauseP, and the type that is prefixless does not contain CauseP.

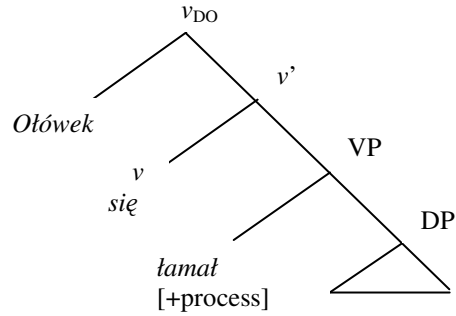
So let us introduce our analysis of anticausatives without CauseP, which are those that carry no prefixes and thus fall under the primary imperfective label. Polish primary imperfective inchoatives, namely those without overt markers for aspectuality or imperfective by default, can be associated with two readings: 1) an iterative reading as in (16) and (17), which we consider telic, and 2) an imperfective/ongoing reading as in (18). They can also be uninterpretable as in (19b) and (20b). These should be contrasted with (19a) and (20a), which are unproblematic.

- (16) *Ołówek się łamał.* telic
 Pencil.Nom.Masc Refl broken.Sg.Masc
 “The pencil broke more than once.”
- (17) *Peruki się gubiły.*
 Wig.Nom.Pl.Fem Refl lost.Pl.Fem
 “The wigs got lost (over and over).”
- (18) *Kiedy rozbudzony Jan ponownie spojrzał na scenę, pod aktorem łamał się stół.*
 When awaken John again looked at stage, under actor.Inst
 Imp.broken.Sg.Masc Refl stool.Nom.Masc
 “After being awaken, when John looked at the stage again, a stool was getting broken under an actor.” *imperfective/atelic*
- (19) a. *Baron von Lerchenau gubił perukę.*
 B. von Lerchenau.Nom Imp.lost. Sg. wig.Acc.Fem
 “Baron von Lerchenau lost his wig more than once.”
 b. *#Peruka się gubiła.*
 Wig.Nom.Fem Refl lost.Sg.Fem
 “The wig was getting lost.”
- (20) a. *Octavian thukł kieliszek.*
 Octavian.Nom Imp.broken.Sg. glass.Acc
 “Octavian broke the glass more than once.”
 b. *#Kieliszek się thukł.*
 Glass.Nom.Masc Refl broken.Sg.Masc
 “The glass was getting broken.”

When Verbs are not equipped with prefixes, as in (16), we propose that the construction contains v_{DO} in a transitive frame, not v_{CAUSE} . Consequently, this type of construction disallows a Causer external argument.

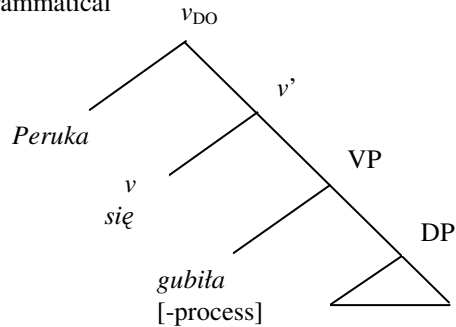
Verbs without prefixes lack CauseP / v_{CAUSE} , then, and we propose that they participate in syntactic structures of type (21).

(21) Grammatical



There are two characteristics to note in the structure in (21). One of them is that the reflexive clitic merges as the head of *v*, that is, in the same position as the Prefix in the syntactic structure of DACs in (9). We propose that in (21) the reflexive is not a pronoun or variable resuming the dative, but an expletive (Schäfer 2007). The reflexive clitic in (21), then, does not bear a theta role, and in this way differs from reflexive *się* in both ISCs and DACs. Recall that reflexive clitics in ISCs stand for Agents, and in DACs they stand for Causers. The other characteristic to note in (21) is a restriction due to the absence of CauseP, which is that the skeleton is limited to verbs with a [+process] feature. If the verb is marked [-process], *się* becomes a reflexivizer, making the Specifier of *v* identical to the complement of *V*, which results in an illicit structure, as illustrated in (19b) above. The syntactic skeleton corresponding to (19b) is shown in (22).

(22) Ungrammatical



Now we are ready to reexamine and give an account for the aspectual restriction in DACs noted in (10a-b), which are now repeated as (23a-b).

- (23) a. *Paulinie (niechcący) zamoczył się zegarek.*
 Paula.Dat (involuntarily) Pf.soaked.Masc Refl watch.Nom
 I. “Paula’s watch got soaked.”
 II. “Paula got the watch soaked.”

- b. *Paulinie* (**niechcący*) *moczył* *się* *zegarek*.
 Paula.Dat (*involuntarily) soaked.Masc Refl watch.Nom
- I. OK: “Paula’s watch was getting soaked.”
- II. NO: “*Paula was getting the watch soaked.”

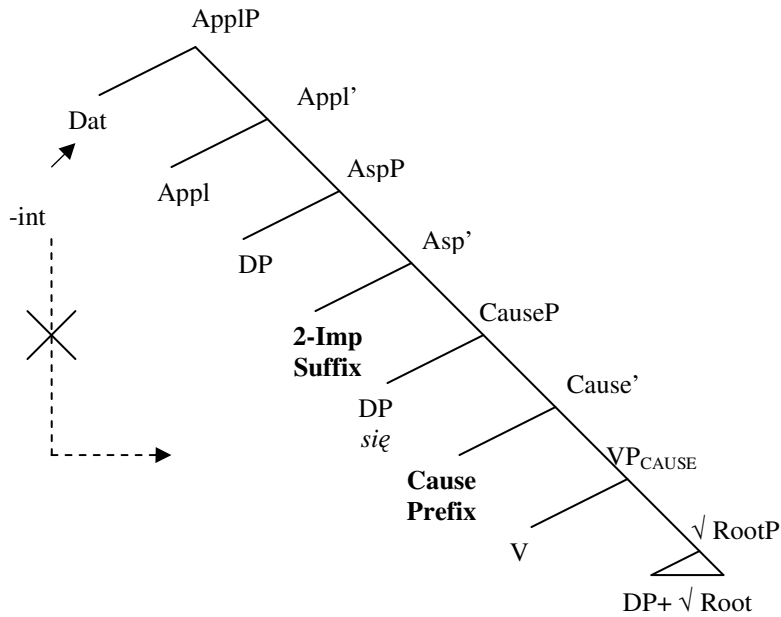
Let us first recall the restriction. On the one hand, perfective (23a) has two readings, and the one with Paula responsible for the watch getting soaked corresponds to a DAC. By contrast, imperfective (23b) is limited to a reading with Paula as owner of the watch, suggesting that it is not a DAC. Let us now give a reason why (23b) is not a DAC, based on our proposals on the role of prefixes in causative structures. Namely, (23b) lacks CauseP, since it contains no Prefix. On this view, (23b) contains a non-thematic reflexive, which means that the High Applicative dative does not have a Causer role to modify. In such a situation, the dative can only function as a Low Applicative in the sense of (Pylkkänen 2002). Low Applicatives sit within VP, and establish a relation between two entities, not between an individual and an event. The affectedness or possessor reading depicted in (23b) is very characteristic of Low Applicatives. Thus, we can now understand why DACs are aspectually restricted in the way depicted in (23a-b). Namely, they must contain an aspectual marker in order to have a licit CauseP providing a Causer for the dative Applicative to link to.

We conclude by noting a second aspectual restriction affecting ordinary anticausatives, and DACs. In a very tentative tone, we sketch a possible account within the framework of this paper and relate it to the Prefix marker in (9). Secondary Imperfectivization (2-Imp) is not easily tolerated by ordinary anticausatives or by DACs. Thus, (24a) with a 2-Imp V is deviant on the relevant Unintentional Causer reading, in contrast with (24b).

- (24) a. **Paulinie* *niechcący* *zapalał* *się* *papier*.
 Paula.Dat involuntarily Pf.burned.2-Imp Refl paper.Nom
 “*Paula was setting (the) paper on fire involuntarily.”
- b. *Paulinie* *niechcący* *zapalił* *się* *papier*.
 Paula.Dat involuntarily Pf.burned Refl paper.Nom
 “Paula set (the) paper on fire involuntarily.”

If we adopt the view that 2-Imp represents Outer/ Viewpoint Aspect in the sense of (Smith 1991) (see Borer 2005), and assign to such an aspectual item some of the properties of the English Progressive operator in (Dowty 1991), we can account for the above restriction. We know that the English Progressive neutralizes telicity, making perfective/telic descriptions imperfective/atelic. This is known as the Imperfective Paradox, and is responsible for the contrast between John crossed the street and John was crossing the street. Thus, if we place 2-Imp in the inflectional layer of the clause above νP , just like the English Progressive, then the Slavic marker would scope over the Prefix inside νP in the syntactic structure of the DAC in (9). Thus 2-Imp could prevent the Prefix from licensing VP as a state, much like the English Progressive voids telicity. On that view, (24a) cannot be a DAC, as depicted in (25).

(25) Anticausative with Secondary Imperfectivization:



4. Conclusions

In this paper, we argued that ISCs as in (1a), and DACs as in (2b) differ not only in case and inflectional morphology, but in syntax and semantics, supporting a novel dichotomy between **Unintentional Agents** related to VoiceP/ νP with ν DO, and **Unintentional Causers** related to CauseP/ νP with ν CAUSE. Our proposals are summarized in the chart in (26).

(26)

	<i>v</i>	Reflexive	High Applicative
Involuntary State	DO	Resumptive pronoun	Unintentional Agent
DAC: Anticausative, Perfective	CAUSE	Resumptive pronoun	Unintentional Causer
Anticausative, Primary Imperfective	DO	Expletive	N/A

Note

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