Covert generic causatives in Korean as dispositional ascriptions

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1. Overview

- This paper introduces a rarely discussed type of causative in Korean, i.e., **covert generic causatives**.
- The construction consists of:
  - a sole **causer** subject which is strictly **non-agentive** (*agentive subject, (1a))
  - a verb which is strictly **non-causative** (*causative verb, (1b))

(1) a. {*chong*/*holangi*}-*(n)un cwuk-e.*   b. * *chong-un cwuk-y-e.*
      gun/tiger-TOP   die-DECL   gun-TOP   die-CAUS-DECL
      'Guns/Tigers kill e.g., people'   'Guns kill e.g., people.'

- These causatives describe a dispositional causative property of the subject that brings about a result state described by the verb.

Proposal
- The verb undergoes **covert causativization** (i.e., Ø-causativization, e.g., *The sun melts* vs. *The snow melts*), taking a non-agentive causer subject.
  - This causativizing strategy is unexpected in two ways:
  - **(i) Typologically** unexpected: covert causativization shows a restriction on one semantic domain, namely non-agentive causers.
  - **(ii)** **Locally** unexpected: Korean already has an overt causativizing strategy.
- Covert generic causatives fill in a paradigmatic gap for **non-agentive causers**, since overt causative requires agentive causer.
- Covert generic causatives are a type of **dispositional middles** (e.g., *This bread cuts easily*), extending the typology of middles.

2. Syntax

Alternative analysis
- Previous research analyzes the causer DP as topic, pragmatically interpreted as a causer (Ahn, Kim & Lee 1992).
- Possibility?: the construction consists of an overt topic, perhaps with a null patient subject.

Subjecthood of the causer/absence of a null patient
1. A *PRO* in a subject-control phrase, e.g., *-ttay* 'when'-clause, can refer to the causer, but not to the patient.

(2) a. *ppang$_i$-un* [*PRO$_i$ sinsenha-l* **ttay**] *salccy-e.*
      bread-TOP   fresh-COMP when become.fat-DECL
      'Bread$_i$ fattens when PRO$_i$ fresh.'

   b. * *swul$_i$-un*   [*PRO$_j$ manhi masi-l*   **ttay**] *ppalka-ycy-e.*
      alcohol-TOP   much drink-COM when red-become-DECL
      'Alcohol$_i$ reddens (e.g., people$_j$) when PRO$_j$ drinking a lot.'

2. Subject-oriented adverbs which can appear sentence-initially can ascribe a property to the causer, but not to the patient.

(3) a. *hwahakcekulo ppang-un salccy-e.*
      chemically   bread-TOP become.fat-DECL
      'Chemically, bread fattens people.'   [the adverb is oriented toward 'bread']

   b. * *kepwukhakey ppang-un salccy-e.*
      uncomfortably bread-TOP become.fat-DECL
      'Uncomfortably, bread fattens people.'   [the adverb is oriented toward 'people']

3. Honored subjects, even when *pro*-dropped, must show referent honorific agreement on a verb (i.e., *-si/-sy*). The unacceptability of *si-* marking in (4) shows that the patient is not the subject.

(4) *khal-un   tachi(*-**sy**)-e.*   c.f., (4') * *elusin-tul-un   tachi(-**sy**)-e.*
      knife-TOP get.hurt-HON-DECL   elder.HON-PL-TOP   get.hurt-HON.REF-DECL
      'Knives get people (HON) hurt.'   Intended: 'Elders (HON) get people hurt.'

- All together, this suggests that **the sole DP is the subject,** and not a topic, and furthermore there is **no underlying null patient** in covert generic causatives.

3. Semantics & covert causativization

- Covert generic causatives show two main semantic properties:
  - (i) They always give rise to **direct causation**.
  - (ii) They only take **non-agentive** causer subjects.

Starting point: "overt" causativization (later extended for covert generic causatives)
- I adopt previous analyses on causativization (Jo 2021, p. 147); it suggests that this conjoins a direct causer to the meaning of the base predicate.

(5) $[\![Caus]\!] = \lambda P \lambda e \exists v[P(v) \ \& \ cause'(e,v)]$ (where v indicates e 'event' or s 'state')

-- I argue that how *cause'* is interpreted depends on the thematic role already assigned by the underlying predicate.

<u>1. Uniqueness of participants</u>
- Morphological causatives are derived via overt causativization using *-i/hi/li/ki/wu/kwu/chwu*.
- Previously, they have been observed to give rise either to direct or sociative causation.
  - **Direct** vs. indirect causation: direct causation is not compatible with intermediate cause (Bittner 1999).
  - **Sociative** vs. (in)direct causation: the causer is neither direct nor indirect, but plays a sociative role, e.g., supervising or helping an event.

(6)   *sensayngnim-i   haksayngtul-ul yek-kkaci kel-**ly**-ess-ta.*
      teacher.HON-NOM students-ACC station-to walk-CAUS-PST-IND
      'The teacher walked (marched) the students to the station.'   (sociative causation)

- I argue that when causativized:
  - **(i) patient-subject verbs** (i.e., stative, inchoative) give rise to **direct causation**.
  - **(ii) Agent-subject verbs** (i.e., activity, causative) give rise to **sociative causation**.

- This can be neatly explained by the property *uniqueness of participants* (Krifka 1998): a participant cannot be added when a participant of the same thematic role already exists in the meaning.
  - When there is no agent (i.e., patient-subject verbs), causativization adds a **direct causer**.
  - When an agent is already present (i.e., agent-subject verbs), it adds a **sociative causer**.

<u>2. Agentivity constraint</u>
- Overt causatives, either lexical or morphological, require their subject to be strictly agentive.
  - Compare: e.g., *John/The hammer/The wind broke the vase.* (English)

(7)   *sala-ka/*mangchi-ka/*palam-i   elum-ul el-**ly**-ess-ta.*
      Sarah-NOM/hammer-NOM/wind-NOM ice-ACC froze-CAUS-PST-DECL
      Intended: 'Sarah/The hammer/The wind froze the ice.'

Explanation for the properties of covert generic causatives
- The **non-agentive** condition: It is a paradigmatic alternative causative form to overt causatives.
  - Otherwise, overt and covert causativizations are the same type of process.
- The **direct causation** reading: The non-agentivity of an added causer directly contradicts with the property of sociative causers who are agentive in nature.
  - This further explains why the verbs of this construction is never an agent-subject verb.

General causativization paradigm in Korean that encompasses both morphological causatives and covert generic causatives.

(8)

	overt causativization (adds agentive causer)	covert causativization (adds non-agentive causer)
patient-subject verbs	direct causation	direct causation
agent-subject verbs	sociative causation	∅

4. Typology of middles & dispositonal ascription analysis of covert generic causatives

Covert generic causatives as a type of dispositional middles
- Crucially, despite the difference in what their dispositional description is about (i.e., patient vs. causer), covert generic causatives show **key properties** of dispositional middles:
  (i) Are generic
  (ii) Are intransitive
  (iii) Involve causative semantics
  (iv) Involve an unexpressed argument in their meaning

Proposal: dispositional ascription analysis (proposed for dispositional middles, Lekakou 2004)
- Dispositional ascriptions are argued to be restricted to be **subject-oriented**, following the accessibility relation proposed by Brennan (1993).
  - "dispositional (readings of) generic sentences are subject oriented"
  - e.g., ??*Bread is disposed to turn into gold when touched by Midas.*
- I suggest this property explains why covert generic causatives are **always generic**.
  - Dispositional ascription allows non-agentive causers to appear in a subject position.

(9)   *sala-ka   yucin-ul   **chong-ulo** cwuk-y-ess-e.*
      Sarah-NOM Eugene-ACC gun-with   die-CAUS-PST-DECL
      'Sarah killed Eugene with a gun.'   [episodic, non-agentive causer as an adjunct]

Putting all the pieces together:

- Covert generic causatives are a type of causative that not only fit into a causativization paradigm, but also adds a non-agentive puzzle piece into the paradigm.

- This construction is also a type of middles formed through the process of dispositional ascription.

- Thus, this construction extends a typological understanding of both causatives and middles.

5. Theoretical implications

- Covert generic causatives represent two new constructions of typological interest:
  (i) Causatives with non-agentive causers
  (ii) Middles with causer subjects

Selected References

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