

Causation in Semantics and Grammatical Structure

Response for Week 8

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Due by: November 28, 2019

You can submit the response by email to `prerna.nadathur@phil.hhu.de`, hand it in in class next week, or turn in a paper copy to my mailbox in the Linguistics department office (24.53.00.86).

Assigned reading:

1. DeLancey, S. 1984. Notes on agentivity and causation. *Studies in Language* 8, 181–213.

There is a lot of data in this week's paper, and we will go through it more carefully in class. For the response, you might focus on just one of the languages DeLancey talks about, and think about addressing the following questions (again, you can use them to help you structure your response, but you don't need to provide direct answers):

1. Overall (in the introduction), what types of properties are relevant to whether an argument is coded as an agent or not?
2. For this particular language, what features of a subject, object, or transitive description does the encoding of agency seem to care about?
3. What phenomena show that this is a relevant distinction?
 - for instance, if you're looking at the Hare data, one thing you might think about is what features govern whether an instrument can appear as a transitive subject or not, and what the uses of the *k'e* morpheme are
 - alternatively, in the Newari data, what does the *-yana* marker do? How does this affect what can appear as a subject, or what we infer about the role of the subject?
4. What parallels or differences does DeLancey point out with English data?
5. Does DeLancey think it's possible to clearly define an agent?