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A Note on English Causatives*

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In a recent article in this journal J. A. Fodor (1970) puts forward reasons for not deriving *kill* from *cause to die.* Implicit in his criticism of this analysis is the belief that syntactic structure and semantic structure are, at least to some extent, autonomous, and that any attempt to account for both simultaneously leads to loss of generalization. In this case, giving primacy to semantic facts (i.e. the intuitively obvious relation between *kill* and *die*) involves unacceptable syntactic consequences. It is not my intention to dispute Fodor's conclusions. However, it seems to me that the derivation of *kill* from *cause to die*, as well as related proposals, is also vulnerable to attack on the grounds of semantic inadequacy.

Sentences (1a) and (1b) are declared by G. Lakoff (1970, 42) to be synonymous:

(1) a. John opened the door.
b. John brought it about that the door opened.

There appears to be no significance in the choice of *bring about* rather than *cause* in (1b) (cf. Lakoff 1970, 42). Langendoen labels (2a) and (2b) "virtually synonymous" (1969, 104):

(2) a. The boy shook the tree.
b. The boy caused the tree to shake.

Fodor himself seems to regard (3a) and (3b) as synonymous (see Fodor 1970, footnote 3):

(3) a. Floyd melted the glass.
b. Floyd caused the glass to melt.

It is clear that the presumed synonymity of these pairs constitutes an important part of the motivation for proposals to derive the (a) forms from the (b) forms (or both from the same deep structure). But, as Partee has pointed out (1971, 7), such pairs in general are by no means synonymous. I should like to substantiate this claim in some detail, since it seems to me that too many of the proposals made within the framework of generative semantics are vitiated by insufficient attention to the bare semantic facts. In the discussion which follows, I shall refer to sentences of the form of (3a)

* I wish to thank W. Haas for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

as "covert" causative constructions, and those like (3b) as "overt" causatives. It so happens that not only can we readily show that corresponding covert and overt causatives are not synonymous, but we can go some way towards specifying what the differences between them are. These differences are not completely idiosyncratic, but seem to correlate with certain general semantic features carried by the surface object of the covert causative (or the subject of the dependent clause in the overt causative).

Let us consider, first of all, cases where the object of the covert causative is agentive. The following are some examples:

(4) John galloped the horse around the field.
(5) John flew the falcon.
(6) John worked the men hard.
(7) John marched the prisoners.

All these sentences involve a similar type of causation: a human or hominoid causer transmits his will to an obedient, but independent agent. Explicit or implicit contradiction of any component of this characterization yields a deviant sentence in the context of a covert causative, but not in the context of an overt causative:

(i) *Nonhuman causer*
(8) a. *The floods marched the army further north.
b. The floods caused the army to march further north.

(ii) *Defective transmission of will of causer*
(9) a. ?John marched the prisoners, who did not understand any of his commands, across the prison yard.
b. John caused the prisoners, who did not understand any of his commands, to march across the prison yard.

(iii) *Object not obedient*
(10) a. ?John galloped the horse, which was being totally unresponsive to his wishes, around the field.
b. John caused the horse, which was being totally unresponsive to his wishes, to gallop around the field.

(iv) *Nonagentive object*
(11) a. *John flew the sparks.
b. John caused the sparks to fly.

(9b) and (10b) allow us to avoid a contradiction by concluding that what happened was contrary to John's wishes;

(9a) and (10a) do not allow this. I shall henceforward refer to the type of causation exhibited by the verbs in this group as "causation by command".

Second, let us consider sentences in which the object of the covert causative is Objective (in Fillmore's sense). The following are typical examples:

(12) John moved the box.
(13) John turned the picture.
(14) John opened the door.
(15) John broke the vase.
(16) John melted the butter.

All these sentences involve causation by means of direct physical action. There seems to be no other way of accounting for the difference between the overt and covert causatives in (17) and (18):

(17) a. *John moved the reflection.
b. John caused the reflection to move.
(18) a. *John turned the shadow.
b. John caused the shadow to turn.

Shadows and reflections are immaterial things, not susceptible of gross physical manipulation. The feature of "direct physical action" also explains why abstract noun phrases are not possible as subjects of covert causatives with verbs of this group: they are not capable of exerting a physical force. As causers in overt causative constructions, abstract noun phrases give rise to no abnormality:

(19) a. *The power failure melted the ice.
b. The power failure caused the ice to melt.

The presence of a feature of directness in sentences such as (12) through (16) has been disputed by Lakoff (1970, 41). His argument rests on the normality of examples like (20):

(20) John opened the door by increasing the air pressure in the room to 200 atmospheres.

However, without a feature of directness, it is difficult to see how the difference in normality between (21a) and (21b) can be explained:

(21) a. *John opened the door by persuading Bill to turn the handle and push.
b. John brought it about that the door opened by persuading Bill to turn the handle and push.

It appears that in discussing covert causatives we must understand "direct" to mean that no agent intervenes in the chain of causation between the causer (represented by

the subject of the verb) and the sufferer of the effect (represented by the object). By this criterion Lakoff's example (sentence (20) above) exemplifies direct action, and thus does not constitute a counterexample to our claim regarding the presence of directness. Even if an intermediate agent (or agents) is merely implied, the covert causative is rendered abnormal:

(22) a. *By shouting "Fire!" John opened all the doors in the street.
b. By shouting "Fire!" John brought it about that all the doors in the street opened.

I shall refer to this second type of causation as "causation by direct physical action".

Third, let us look at certain causative sentences in which what is caused is an emotional state. (25) and (26) exemplify a slightly different type of causative from those we have been considering. There are no (surface) intransitive verbs corresponding to the covert causatives: their place in the overt causative construction is taken by an inchoative construction consisting of *become* plus an adjective. Once again, however, overt and covert causatives are not synonymous:

(23) a. The doctor frightened Mary by giving her an injection of the new drug.
b. The doctor caused Mary to become afraid by giving her an injection of the new drug.
(24) a. The doctor annoyed Mary by giving her an injection of the new drug.
b. The doctor caused Mary to become annoyed by giving her an injection of the new drug.

Many similar pairs could be devised. Putting aside for the moment considerations of pharmacological plausibility, it is clear that only in the case of the overt causative can Mary's emotional state be attributed to the action of the drug. I am unable, at present, to offer a convincing explanation of this difference. One thing, however, seems clear: neither causation by command nor causation by direct physical action is involved. We must therefore recognize in (23a) and (24a) a third type of causation, which will be referred to simply as "causation of emotion".

One defense against the above line of criticism is to claim that the element CAUSE which appears in the deep structure of covert causatives is not synonymous with the surface lexical item *cause*, but differs from it in whatever ways are necessary to account for the differences between overt and covert causatives. However, our results so far have shown that at least three distinct abstract elements

CAUSE would be necessary—to account, that is, for causation by command, causation by direct physical action, and causation of emotion. Partee (1971, 8) considers that, in the absence of a principled account of the relation between the lexical item *cause* and the abstract pro-verb CAUSE, the case for the generative-semantic analysis of covert causatives is weak. The necessity for three (or more) abstract causative pro-verbs renders it even weaker.

So far we have dealt only with the derivation of two-place covert causatives. Some linguists, however, would extend this principle, and derive verbs like *teach*, *show*, and *explain* from *cause to learn*, *cause to see*, and *cause to understand*, respectively. (See, for instance, Lyons 1968.) I shall now attempt to show, through a detailed consideration of *teach*, that, in addition to the sort already encountered, problems of quite a different order are raised by this extension.

The verb *teach* is more complex than is commonly supposed, and we shall need to distinguish five separate meanings. I shall proceed by assuming initially that the derivation of *teach* from *cause to learn* is valid. The meaning of *teach* which can be paraphrased 'engage in institutionalized pedagogical activity' has not been included in the following discussion, since its relation to *learn* appears not to be a straightforward causative one.

teach$_1$: This may be paraphrased 'impart a skill or technique', and is exemplified in (25):

(25) John taught Bill (how) to ride a bicycle.

(25) entails (26), and we can therefore postulate an underlying structure something like (27) (considerably simplified):

(26) Bill learned how to ride a bicycle.
(27) John CAUSE (Bill learned how to ride a bicycle).

However, if we are to push the principle of the decomposition of lexical items into semantic primitives to its logical conclusion, we must further analyse *learn*, since it, too, is semantically complex. It is a process verb, and can be analyzed into a feature "inchoative" (roughly paraphrasable as 'become'), and the stative verb *know*. (See Lakoff 1970 for a detailed discussion of inchoative verbs.) I shall indicate the inchoative feature thus: BECOME. We can now represent the deep structure of (25) as follows:

(28) John CAUSE ((Bill know how to ride a bicycle) BECOME)

But let us look a little more closely at *learn*: it, like *teach* is polysemous. (29) is ambiguous:

(29) Bill learned how to ride a bicycle.

Both meanings are inchoatively related to *know*:

(30) Bill knew how to ride a bicycle.

but they have different causatives:

(31) John taught Bill how to ride a bicycle.
(32) John told Bill how to ride a bicycle.

It is reasonable to suppose that the ambiguity of (29) is due to the existence of two different meanings of *know*. That this is so is clear from the fact that the *know* involved in (31) is practically synonymous with *can*. Thus (31) but not (32) entails (33):

(33) Bill could ride a bicycle.

The two meanings of *know* are clearly related to the distinction made by Ryle (1963, 29) between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. A more accurate representation of the deep structure of (25) would therefore be:

(34) John CAUSE ((Bill can ride a bicycle) BECOME)

teach$_2$: A rough paraphrase of this might be 'inculcate a habit'. It is exemplified in (35):

(35) John taught Bill always to be polite to his elders.

(35) entails (36) but not (37):

(36) Bill learned always to be polite to his elders.
(37) Bill knew always to be polite to his elders.

The latter contains an element of deliberate calculation which is absent from (35); hence the oddness of (38) when compared with (39):

(38) ?Bill knew always to be polite to his elders without thinking about it.
(39) John taught Bill always to be polite to his elders without thinking about it.

However, (35) does entail (40):

(40) Bill was always polite to his elders.

So we can represent the deep structure of (35) as follows:

(41) John CAUSE ((Bill be always polite to his elders) BECOME)

teach$_3$: This may be paraphrased 'impart knowledge', and it is exemplified in (42):

(42) John taught Bill the names of the flowers.

This one is a little more difficult to analyse. (42) entails both (43) and (44):

(43) Bill learned the names of the flowers.
(44) Bill knew the names of the flowers.

However, these are also entailed by (45):

(45) John told Bill the names of the flowers.

This is not quite the same situation that we observed with *teach*$_1$, since although (43) is ambiguous (between learning by being taught and learning by being told), (44), intuitively, is not. How, then, do we distinguish the deep structures of (42) and (45) (and the alternative structures underlying (43))? I suggest that (42) implies not only that Bill came to know the names of the flowers, but that he retained the knowledge; (45), on the other hand, implies knowledge only at the instant of telling. I therefore propose the following as the deep structure of (42):

(46) John CAUSE ((Bill remember the names of the flowers)BECOME)

Remember must here be understood in the sense of 'retain in the memory' rather than 'recall'.

teach$_4$: This is exemplified in (47), and can be paraphrased 'impart a belief'. Consider (47) and (48):

(47) John taught Bill that honesty was the best policy.
(48) John told Bill that honesty was the best policy.

An important difference between these two lies in the fact that in (47) Bill came to believe what was told him. Neither of them seems to be simply related to (49), since the latter implies the truth of the *that*-clause (or, more precisely, the speaker's belief in the truth of the *that*-clause), whereas this implication is absent from (47) and (48).

(49) Bill knew that honesty was the best policy.

A possible deep structure for (47) is

(50) John CAUSE ((Bill believe that honesty is the best policy)BECOME)

There is food for thought in the fact that (50) might also be proposed as the deep structure of (51):

(51) John persuaded Bill that honesty was the best policy. (cf. Lakoff 1970, 92)

Some of the details of my analysis of *teach* might be disputed, but it is clear that any attempt to derive *teach* from underlying causative constructions would need to assign

different deep structures to the different meanings of *teach* which have been distinguished above, and that the differences between these deep structures would appear in the sentences which form the subjects of the inchoative pro-verb BECOME.

I have assumed for the purposes of the above analysis that *teach* is synonymous with *cause to learn*. This is, however, not so. I shall illustrate the point using $teach_1$: a similar case can be made for the other meanings.

(52) a. ?John taught Bill to ride by sending him to Tom for lessons.
b. John made Bill learn to ride by sending him to Tom for lessons.

(53) a. ?John taught Bill to ride, although he himself did not know how.
b. John made Bill learn to ride, although he himself did not know how.

(54) a. ?John taught Bill to ride, although neither was aware of the other's existence.
b. John made Bill learn to ride, although neither was aware of the other's existence.

(54b) would be applicable of John was, say, City Transport Manager, and increased the bus fares to the point where Bill could no longer afford them. Not only, therefore, is the underlying CAUSE (if we persist in this analysis) not synonymous with *cause*, but it seems fairly clear that it is distinct from the three other varieties of CAUSE that we have already encountered. (There is some evidence that this particular CAUSE recurs with other three-place covert causatives:

(55) a. ?John explained the matter to Bill, although he himself did not understand it.
b. John made Bill understand the matter, although he himself did not understand it.

(56) a. ?John explained the matter to Bill, although neither was aware of the other's existence.
b. John caused Bill to understand the matter, although neither was aware of the other's existence.)

In respect of the nonsynonymity of covert and overt causatives, examples (52) through (56) merely confirm the conclusions reached earlier with regard to two-place causatives. But here there is a more serious difficulty. Our analyses exhibit four distinct structures: their association with the same surface lexical item has not been shown to be other than accidental. Yet there is a strong, intuitive, conceptual

unity amongst these varieties of *teach*: they are all variations on one basic idea. In each, some individual, temporarily accepted as an authority, attends to the behavior of someone else, and attempts to influence his behavior in the direction of what he considers to be correctness, by correcting his errors, etc. It is this complex of characteristics which enables us to describe his behavior as "teaching". Our analyses, therefore, completely miss what is felt to be common to the various meanings of *teach*, and furthermore, they fail to formalize our intuition that the various meanings belong naturally together. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that *teach* must occur as an element of deep structure.

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On Nonrecoverable Deletion in Syntax

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Beware

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In "On the Nature of Syntactic Irregularity" (Lakoff 1965, henceforth ONSI) G. Lakoff remarks that the verb *beware* is an exception to the question formation rule, citing as evidence the ungrammaticality of the following sentence:

(1) *Did you beware of John?

But this is the wrong thing to say about *beware*. Properly