



December 13, 2024 4pm-6pm Paris time
(note time change!)
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Léa Nash, SFL: Linguistic expression(s) of indirect causation

Languages express causation in various ways. Although periphrastic biclausal strategy is universally attested in every language, it coexists with a more parsimonious strategy that involves, depending on language, a light causative verb (e.g. *faire* in French) or a causative morpheme (*-tIr-* in Turkish). Since Marantz (1984) and Baker (1988), it has been widely acknowledged in generative theorizing that both of these causative markers are verb categories and carry event semantics. This conception is consistent with a classical semantic definition of indirect causation which involves potential temporal distinctness of the causing event and the caused event (Fodor 1970).

In this talk, I will challenge the categorial uniformity of light causative verbs and causative morphemes. I will propose that in many languages, the causative morpheme is an active Voice head, i.e. a transitiviser, without event semantics. When combined with non-agentive verbs, it introduces an external argument. However, this Voice may not combine with agent-bearing complement, as the result will yield an illicit configuration with stacked Agents in one eventuality. In this case, demotion/deagentivisation of the embedded predicate must take place, as transparently illustrated by Georgian/Hindi/Amharic morphological causatives of transitives. I will further propose that languages where causative marker is not a verb but a Voice head (i.e. transitivizer) conform to another conception of indirect causation based on the presence of some intervening causer argument between the agent of the causing event and the caused event (Wolff 2007).

Yining Nie, San José: Voice-over-Voice causatives

Recent studies of productive morphological causatives have found that causatives in some languages involve an additional event, introduced by a causative light verb, while in other languages causatives simply involve an additional argument, introduced by Voice (e.g. Nash 2020, Nie 2020). For the second type of causative, which we could call Voice-over-Voice causatives, we can ask whether there is cross-linguistic variation in the properties of the embedded VoiceP. For example, while the embedded causee in Georgian is de-agentivised, the embedded causee in other languages may remain agentive. In this talk, I report evidence from Tagalog that causatives can indeed have a transitive/agentive embedded VoiceP, and provide additional support from Bantu languages. I also point out a further locus of difference between verb-over-verb and Voice-over-Voice causatives with respect to the availability of causative recursion.