



April 11, 2025, 3pm - 5pm Paris time
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Encoding complex causal relations: French *Faire-Que* constructions Clémentine Raffy (Newcastle)

French syntactic causative constructions exhibit a variety of forms, including *Faire-Infinitive* (FI), *Faire-Par* (FP), Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) constructions (under strict constraints, see Abeillé et al. 1997), and *Faire-Que* (FQ). This talk explores the semantic and syntactic distinctions between FIs (the default and all-purpose syntactic causatives in French), and FQs, with a particular focus on the differences between various FQ types.

- (1) Jean fait pleurer Marie. *FI*
Jean make.PRS.3SG cry.INF Marie.
'Jean makes Marie cry.'
- (2) a. Jean fait en sorte que Marie pleure. *FQ*
Jean make.PRS.3SG in sort that Marie cry.SBJV
'Jean makes so that Marie would cry.'
- b. Jean fait que Marie pleure.
Jean make.PRS.3SG that Marie cry.IND
'Jean causes Marie to cry.'

FIs are typically understood as simple constructions, where the light verb *faire* combines with a non-finite verb to form a complex predicate. In contrast, FQs realize more complex syntactic structures, with *faire* functioning as a full lexical verb selecting a CP complement. This difference raises important questions regarding the semantics of these constructions. It has been argued that more complex syntactic structures correspond to more intricate meanings. Following Givón (1980) and Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2023), more integrated complements are expected to (i) encode events with minimal separation, in which (ii) the Causer exerts a stronger influence on both the Causee and the caused event, leading to (iii) a higher likelihood of the caused event occurring. However, the contrast between (2a) and (2b) suggests that FQs involve subtle semantic distinctions

that warrant further investigation. This talk provides an analysis of these distinctions and their implications for the relationship between syntax and semantics in causative constructions.

Thick vs. thin lexical causatives **Fabienne Martin (Utrecht)**

Hall, Dowty and Partee noticed that lexical causative verbs are incompatible with all kinds of event-denoting subject:

(1) ??A change in molecular structure broke the window.

The problem vanishes, however, with causative verbs like *change* or *destroy*:

(2) A change in molecular structure changed/destroyed the window.

More recently, Rose et al. observed that lexical causative verbs like *break* (or *burn*) or do not combine well either with absences, but again, this constraint doesn't hold of verbs like *destroy* or *change* (cf. (3)):

- (3) a) The lack of proper packing ??broke/OK destroyed the vase.
b) The lack of sunscreen ??burned/ OK destroyed/ OK changed her skin.

We propose that these contrasts arise because contrary to verbs like *change* or *destroy* (thin causatives), verbs like *break* or *burn* (thick causatives) encode a way of causing, i.e. convey information about the way the new state arises (i.e. by exposure to fire, heat, or radiation in the case of *burn*). For this reason, thick causatives must express a productive (and sufficient) cause, while thin causatives can also express a dependence cause. This makes thick causatives incompatible not only with omissions (Rose et al.) but also with other expressions with abstract reference as well as with events that do not fulfill the way of causing conveyed by the verb (cf. (1)). I discuss the question of whether thick causative verbs should be analysed as a subtype of manner verbs, and argue that production is actually the deeper story about why some (but not all) lexical causative verbs must obey the directness constraint.