ON PERIPHRASTIC CAUSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN MODERN ENGLISH

Causation is traditionally defined as a relation between events. According to Frawley, causatives express some relation of determination between two events, with a prior event resulting in or giving rise to a subsequent event (W. Frawley 1992: 158). Similar view is held by L. Talmy "causatives involve relation of a precipitating event and a resulting event (L. Talmy 1985: 130). As L. Talmy continues "causativity refers to whether an event is conceived either as occurring by itself or resulting from another event, where this latter event is either initiated by an agent or not, and such an agent is either volitional or not" (L. Talmy 1985: 132). The causative construction is one of the most theoretically significant aspects of English grammar and an understanding of causatives is fundamental to an understanding of clause structure as a whole (M. Shibatani 1976: 1-2, J. Song 1996: 12, R. Dixon 2000:30-31). Consequently, analyses of the causative have had a major influence on many foundational aspects of syntactic theory and the morphology-syntax interface.

The phenomenon of causation can be expressed in natural language by a wide variety of linguistic constructions. Each of these constructions has its own specific linguistic meaning, and that their use in language is determined by this meaning. They all express different aspects of the same extralinguistic situation: the causative situation. A causative situation is generally defined as "a relation between two events: the causing event and the caused event occurring in temporal succession and causally dependent on each other" (L. Talmy 2000: 478-9). This basic causative situation underlies all linguistic expressions of the phenomenon.

In order to explain the variable behavior of causative verbs in Modern English, it is fundamental to consider not only the lexical properties of those verbs, but also the interaction between those properties and the meanings of the constructions in which the causative verbs may appear. The aim of this article is to elaborate on the syntactic and semantic properties of periphrastic causative constructions in Modern English based on the framework of construction grammar where a construction is construed as a pairing of meaning and form (Ch. Fillmore et al 1988; A. Goldberg 1995 and 2006, R. Jackendoff 2002).

There are many ways in which the causative situation may be encoded in a language; one of these is *periphrastic causative constructions*. The causative construction is a linguistic expression which denotes a complex situation consisting of two component events: (i) the causing event, in which the causer does or initiates something; and (ii) the caused event, in which the causee carries

out an action or undergoes a change of condition or state as a result of the causer's action (B. Comrie 1989: 165-166; J. Song 2001: 256-259). Periphrastic causatives (also called *syntactic, analytic, overt* or *auxiliary causatives*) (S. Kemmer and Ar. Verhagen 1994; A. Wierzbicka 1998) express causal relationships with two or more predicate terms, one associated with the cause and result. Periphrastic causative constructions are composed of a matrix verb that takes an embedded clause (or predicate) as a complement (P. Wolff and D. Gentener 1996). An analytic causative construction is a "construction that overtly encodes causing and resulting events separately such that the morphosyntax encoding the effected event is in some way dependent on the morphosyntax encoding the causing event; furthermore, the causing event is encoded by a general verb expressing primarily causation, and hence its precise nature is left unspecified" (B. Comrie 1989: 167; S. Kemmer and Ar. Verhagen 1994: 117).

It is assumed that causative verbs are derivable from one-place intransitive constructions by means of a causative operation, which has the effect of embedding a one-place nucleus into a matrix sentence with an abstract causative verb, and combining the predicate element of the embedded clause with that of a higher clause. B. Comrie states that causative constructions result from "the compression of an underlying complex structure with embedding into a derived structure simple sentence" (B. Comrie 1976: 303). Thus, a causative construction, denoting a complex event, is defined as a structure that is derived from a simple active sentence by adding a new argument to indicate the role of causer. While some languages employ a special causative affix which derives a transitive verb from an intransitive verb, for example Armenian *հասնել* vs. *հասցնել*, others like English may use making verbs such as *make, have, cause and get* to play the role of causative markers in English periphrastic causative constructions.

In the periphrastic causative construction the two underlying events are condensed into one simple clause. An analytic causative can indeed be described as "a two-verb structure that expresses a predicate of causation and a predicate of effect" (S. Kemmer and Ar. Verhagen 1994), the causal predicate being termed in many languages "auxiliary", indicating that it has no full verbal status. Periphrastic causatives are two-clause expressions (P. Cole 1983, I. Kozinsky and M. Polinsky 1993) that encode the notions of cause and result in different clauses. The main (matrix) verb expresses the notion of cause while the embedded verb expresses the particular result: *I made him leave; She let him eat some brownies.* This construction is used when a speaker views the underlying causing event as causally dependent on some action of the agent of the causing event, no matter what this action is. The causing event itself is thus not overtly specified, all that remains is the pure notion of cause expressed by a causal

predicate. Thus, some sort of "change of state" in the object, in its "physical or mental condition" or its "physical or abstract location" (J. Anderson 1971: 64) is a consequence of the action denoted by the causative verb. In analytic causatives the subject of the caused event becomes the object of the causative verb, regardless of whether the causative verb is transitive or intransitive.

Constructions encoding this type of situation are structurally identical with and semantically very similar to resultative constructions like *I banged the door shut* or *I painted the house green*, although unlike the latter, they leave the causing event unspecified. This type of construction is called as resulting-state causative, and causative constructions encoding an event-result is called resulting-event causatives. Conceptually, there is a continuum between resulting states and resulting events. They share the same general characterization but differ in terms of the degree of dynamicity of the result, or, put differently they differ with respect to the semantic transitivity of the result. The two situations described are extreme points on this continuum: the resulting-state causative encodes a situation where an agent acts on a patient with the result that the patient is in a particular state, the resulting-event causative encodes a situation where an agent acts on a patient with the result that the patient engages in some action directed at a third participant.

Periphrastic causative constructions may employ two basic sets of meaning: active and passive. At first glance, causative and passive may not likely be expressed by the same marker or construction, since they appear quite different from each other both syntactically and semantically. However, certain causative and passive constructions do share formal expression in Modern English. English sentences *John got himself fired* and *John had his bike stolen* can be interpreted as either causative or passive.

Periphrastic causative constructions with passive meaning are used to talk about having something done by another person/thing. Passive causatives use the following sentence structure ***subject + periphrastic causative verb + object + past participle.***

1) *You have had your hair cut!*
2) *We had our house repaired after the tornado last year.*
3) *The President had his speech written by a very talented group of writers.*

In ex. 1, 2, 3 the subject (you, we and the President) arranged for something (repairing a house and writing a speech) to be done by a third person.

Periphrastic causative constructions with active meaning are used when someone causes something to happen, or when that person causes another to take an action. Active causatives use the following sentence structure: ***subject + periphrastic causative verb + agent + bare infinitive or to-infinitive + object/complement.***

4) *The police had the witness identify the thief.*

5) *The professor made the students stay after class.*

6) *He got his sister to help him with his homework.*

In ex. 4, 5, 6 the subject of each sentence (the police and the professor) caused another action to happen (identifying the thief and staying after class).

It is also important to mention that some causative verbs require the bare infinitive, namely when using *have, let,* and *make.* Other common causative actions require the to-infinitive, such as *get, allow, cause, convince, encourage, help, permit, and require.*

7) *You have got to let me have that five hundred thousand back and get me out of this. (Dreiser, The Financier)*

8) *The lawyer convinced the judge to lower the fine.*

9) *The teacher encouraged his students to apply for the scholarships.*

It is necessary to decompose the meaning of causative constructions into its semantic components for causative constructions are described as unique combinations of semantic components. This is mainly necessary "in order to distinguish the meaning of different causative constructions within one language" (A. Wierzbicka 1988: 240). Therefore, it is worthwhile to have a look at the semantic and syntactic differences between the periphrastic causative constructions with *make, get, have, cause,* which can differ according to the type of complement they can take.

The most current constructions in Modern English are those with *make* and *get. Make* clearly refers to compulsion, whereas the meaning of *get* seems to be closer to that of persuade than to that of compel (A. Hantson, 1981: 151). Ex. 10, 11 may be paraphrased reasonably accurately by replacing *made* with *forced.*

10) *I made him clean the garage by threatening to cut his allowance. (Talmy 1976: 107)*

11) *June made her lover take her on the top of a 'bus, saying she wanted air, and there sat silent, with her face to the breeze. (Galsworthy, The Man of Property)*

12) *I've got to run back and pay the auctioneer. (Dreiser, The Financier)*

13) *He had ridden away from the Saxonsteade Arms feeling that he had got to do something at once, but he was not quite clear in his mind as to what that something exactly was. (Fletcher, The Paradise Mystery)*

Causative constructions with make/cause. Causative *make* primarily expresses the causation of a process that is not directly dependent on the causee, meaning which one would certainly not expect from a verb which is often regarded as "the most basic and prototypical causative" (R. Dixon 2000: 36). The difference in complementation between *make* and *cause* is explained in terms of directness. "We should distinguish between causative situation where

the causer acts directly on the causee and the situation where the causer does so through some intermediary party" (R. Dixon 2000: 70). *Make* "refers to anything the causer does to bring something about directly, so it doesn't take *to*" (ex.14). in case of *cause* "there is no unity of time and space and the intermediary situation is mainly constituted by the *by-phrase* and it takes to" (ex.15) (R. Dixon 1991: 194, 230).

> 14) *Recovering him, however, shortly, he turned to his partner, and said, "Sir William's interruption has made me forget what we were talking of". (Austin, Pride and Prejudice)*
>
> 15) *He caused Mary to crash by almost cutting through the brake cable and then sending her down the mountain road. (Dixon 1991: 194)*

Causatives with *make/cause* can take animate or inanimate subjects of the embedded clause. In both cases the event of the embedded clause is the result of the verb of the main clause. *Make* is a direct cause (often with volition), *cause* an indirect one (generally without volition).

> 16) *This made the accident appear reasonable, something which even they could have done. (Galsworthy, The Man of Property)*
>
> 17) *This information made Elizabeth smile, as she thought of poor Miss Bingley. (Austin, Pride and Prejudice)*
>
> 18) *...But the hatred sustained him; it nourished him. It quenched his thirst or caused him to forget it. (Zelazny, Jack of Shadows)*
>
> 19) *I caused a rumour to reach her that my fortune was not a third of what was supposed, and after that I presented myself to see the result. (Bronte, Jane Eyre)*
>
> 20) *It is told in the Lay of Leithian how she escaped from the house in Hirilorn for she put forth her arts of enchantment and caused her hair to grow to great length... (Tolkien, The Silmarillion)*
>
> 21) *The image raised caused her to take pity upon herself as one who was ill-used. (Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, A Pure Woman)*
>
> 22) *"Too late, too late!" she said, waving her hand in the impatience of a person whose tortures cause every instant to seem an hour. (Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, A Pure Woman)*

When a speaker wishes to express a change in temperament or in general conditions, the construction *to make + adjective / adverb* is used.

> 23) *And yet we manage to make ourselves fairly happy, do we not, Beryl?" (Arthur Conan Doyle)*
>
> 24) *Pray, lie down there and make yourself absolutely at home. (Arthur Conan Doyle)*
>
> 25) *If such goodness does not make her miserable now, she will never deserve to be happy! (Austen, Pride and Prejudice)*

In the sentence *She had him dance* the reference would seem to be to arrangement or result, the sentence being roughly paraphrasable as *She arranged for him to dance*, the result of her intervention was that he danced.

As for *cause*, this is a typically formal verb with a very general meaning. It is unlikely to occur in an informal sentence like *She caused him to dance*. If cause does occur in an everyday context, it would appear to express indirect, often unintentional causation.

> 26) *The dense fog caused him not to see the red light (Lawrence, The Rainbow)*

However, the verb is "typical of academic, scientific, technical English, where it expresses a direct or indirect causal relation between two phenomena" (Hantson, 1981: 152).

> 27) *Raising the temperature of liquid compounds causes them to decompose into their elements.*
> 28) *This effectively reduces the file packing and may also cause fixed lengths to become variable in length.*

Causative constructions with have. Causatives with *have* denote a state, not a process and can take different structures as its complement. If the causative with *have* has a bare infinitive, the subject of the embedded clause must be an agent and agree in performing the action, this is called *a volitional agent* (L. Talmy 1985: 132). Therefore, this construction can only be used if the agent is animate and willing to perform the action.

> 29) *John had his daughter clean her bedroom.*
> 30) *You are an unwelcome guest in the house, and I'll be delighted to have you leave. (M. Collins, The Fog Comes)*
> 31) *I had two dogs die of snake bite. (Galsworthy, Escape)*
> 32) *John had his watch repaired.*

It should be noted, however, that the difference between the construction *have + infinitive* and the construction *have + present participle* seems to be that the *infinitive* refers to the factual aspect of the activity, whereas the *ing-form*, being more descriptive, focuses attention on the way the activity is performed. Thus ex. 33 just states that it is a fact that *we* regularly worked for him, whereas ex. 34 draws attention to the way the activity is performed (mostly, though not necessarily, in one particular case).

> 33) *They had us work hard.*
> 34) *John had all the students performing the same experiment at the same time.*

Causative constructions with get. An analysis of the words occurring in the environment of causative *get* reveals that many of them imply some of sort of effort or difficulty. Besides, it is common to find a reference to a deadline

emphasizing some urgency. We can summarize the main meaning of the construction as "to carry out an action in difficult circumstances or under a tight schedule".

> 35) *It is easy to criticize the government's decisions: after a century of inertia, making changes in London was always going to be difficult, and Mrs Bottomley deserves credit for getting the process started.*

It is worthy to mention that in colloquial English the verb *to get* often replaces *to have*, in which case *to* is added to the infinitive (but not before past participles). This construction also suggests that it may be difficult to produce a certain reaction on the part of the agent.

> 36) *The police got him to confess to the crime.*
> 37) *I couldn't get the car to start this morning.*

Causatives with *get* can take different types of embedded complements. *Get* has a resultative meaning not a stative meaning. A detailed examination of periphrastic causative constructions with *get* reveals major differences which justify making a distinction between the different specific schemas related to one and the same causative. The causee is usually animate in the construction *get + to-infinitive*, inanimate in the construction *get + present participle*, and unexpressed in the construction *get + past participle* (Dixon 2000).

> 38) *John got all the students to perform the same experiment.*
> 39) *Can you really get that old car going again?*
> 40) *It's not hard to get him talking – the problem is stopping him.*

The construction *get something done* often implies that the action is typically carried out by the causer himself or herself.

> 41) *He won't eat dumplings, if he sees dumplings in a stew he'll puke. So I've gotta get them cooked before Terry comes home.*
> 42) *I'm going to get in touch with her on Saturday, then I'll get my geography project done, I can't do anything until I've got this bloody project out the way, can I?*

To conclude, we should state that all natural languages, namely English, offer a multitude of alternatives to express causation. All the possible periphrastic causative constructions have their specific meaning and that the selection of one alternative over another is thus not arbitrary. Thus, we may conclude that there are semantic and syntactic differences between them. The most current periphrastic causative constructions in Modern English are those with *make* and *get*. *Make* clearly refers to compulsion, whereas the meaning of *get* seems to be closer to that of *persuade* than to that of *compel*. In the *have* sentence the reference would seem to be to arrangement or result. As for *cause*, this is a typically formal verb with a very general meaning.

143

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