The syntax and semantics of causative affixes in central Kenya Bantu

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Typologists have established that there are two main types of causative constructions: the lexical and the non-lexical (Cooper, 1976; Shibatani, 1973, 1976; Givon, 1976). The two constructions are said to differ both syntactically and semantically. One of the main syntactic differences between the two is that lexical causatives are said to be mono-clausal while non-lexical causatives are bi-clausal, even in languages where both are morphologically marked in the verb (Marantz, 1984; Shibatani, 1976). Mwangi (2001) argues that though the mono-clausal/bi-clausal distinction may be relevant in the description of causative constructions in some languages, it does not seem to have a direct bearing on Gikuyu. This paper focuses on the description of the syntactic and semantic features determining the distribution of the two causative affixes in four Central Kenya Bantu languages and discusses the relevance of this distribution to the distinction made between lexical and non-lexical causatives.

Introduction

The causative construction in the languages of the world has attracted a lot of interest. This interest falls into two major concerns: 1) typological issues (Comrie, 1976; 1981), and 2) formulation of morpho-syntactic theories (Marantz, 1984; Baker, 1988). In order to arrive at a reasonable description of the causative construction in the languages of the world, the typological studies concentrate on syntactic and semantic descriptions of the causative construction in various languages. The interest of many descriptive linguists researching on the causative construction has been to establish the syntactic and semantic features of the two main types of causative constructions found in languages viz. non-lexical and lexical. The non-lexical causative, also called the periphrastic causative, is characterized by the use two predicates. For example in, 'He made me sleep late' the two predicates are 'make' and 'sleep'. The lexical causative on the other hand, makes use of one predicate. For example 'kill' which can be expressed as 'cause to die'.

In many languages, causation is expressed morphologically by the use of affixes in the verb. It has been claimed that even in the languages which mark causation morphologically, the two types of causative constructions can be identified. For example, in Japanese the affix **sase** is said to mark the non-lexical causative while the affix **sas** marks the lexical causative (Shibatani, 1976). Cooper (1976) also claims that in Xhosa and Tswana the same affix can be used for both the lexical and non-lexical causatives. Syntactically, the non-lexical morphological causative is said to be underlying bi-clausal while the lexical one is mono-clausal.

The syntactic and semantic criteria given below have been used in the literature to distinguish between the non-lexical and the lexical causatives in languages where both are expressed morphologically.

(i) **Productivity:** The lexical causative is said to be semi-productive while the non-lexical one is highly productive (Shibatani, 1976).

(ii) **Scope of adverb:** The non-lexical causative shows ambiguity when used with adverbs

but the lexical causative does not have this ambiguity (Cooper, 1976:323). To illustrate, he says that the sentence, *Umfundisi ubalisa abafana intsomi eminiqha* could either mean, 'The teacher makes the boys write a story only during the day' or 'The teacher only makes the boys write a story during the day.'

(iii) **Reflexivization:** The non-lexical causative can allow the reflexivization of the causee, while in the lexical causative only the causer can be reflexived (Shibatani, 1976:248). Below, (1a) is non-lexical while (1b) is lexical.

(1a) Taroo wa Hanako ni kagami ni ututta zibun o mi-sase-ta
'Taro$_i$ made Hanako$_j$ look at self$_i$/self$_j$ reflected in the mirror.'

(1b) Taroo wa Hanako ni kagami ni ututta **zibun** o mise-ta
'Taro$_i$ showed Hanako$_j$ self$_i$/* self$_j$ reflected in the mirror.'

(iv) **Directive versus Manipulative Causation:** Lexical causatives express manipulative causation in which the causee is a non-agentive entity while directive causation involves the causee as an agentive entity (Shibatani, 1976:31–32). (2a) and (2b) illustrate this respectively.

(2a) John stood the child up.

(2b) John had the child stand up.

(v) **Object Marking:** Lexical causatives have one of the objects marked as locative or instrumental while non-lexical causatives have both objects unmarked (Cooper, 1976:314). Evidently, (3a) is lexical and (3b) non-lexical.

(3a) Ndi-theng-is-e iincwadi k-umfundisi
(Xhosa)
I-buy-cause-past books locative-teacher
'I sold books to the teacher.'

(3b) Ndi-lum-is-e umtana nge-nja   (Xhosa)

I-bite-cause-past child instrumental-dog
'I made the dog bite the child.'

In the Bantu languages where lexical and non-lexical causatives have been observed, the same suffix is used for both and the distinction is made in terms of the sentence structure (Cooper, 1976). In the Central Kenya Bantu languages examined here, it has been observed that there are two distinct causative affixes (Leakey, 1959; Gathenji, 1981; Mwangi and Kioko, 1998).

In this paper we set out to: examine the causative situations expressed by the two causative affixes; discuss the semantic and syntactic features governing the distribution of these affixes in the Central Kenya Bantu (Kikamba, Gikuyu, Kiembu and Kimeru) and finally determine the relevance of this distribution to the distinction drawn between non-lexical and lexical causatives.

The causative affixes

In the Central Kenya Bantu, there are three ways of coding causation. First, there is the use of two predicates as in (4) below.

(4a) Mwangi nia**tuma** mwana **agwe**   (Gikuyu)
'Mwangi made the child fall'

(4b) Mwangi niwa**tuma** mwana **avaluka**
(Kikamba)
'Mwangi made the child fall'

Second, there is the use of a lexical verb that is inherently causative in meaning. For example:

(5a) Kamau ni-a-urug-a Njeri   (Gikuyu)
Kamau foc-TNS-kill-FV Njeri
'Kamau has killed Njeri'

(5b) Kamau ni-u-a-vet-a Njeri   (Kikamba)
Kamau foc-SA-TNS-move-FV Njeri
'Kamau removed/moved Njeri'

The Gikuyu verb *uraga* means 'kill' and could be expressed as 'cause to die' and the Kikamba verb *veta* expresses the meaning 'cause to move/cause to change position'. Both these verbs do not

have morphological marking and so the causative meaning is inherently part of the lexical verb.

The third type and the main way of marking causation in these languages is by the use of verbal affixes. There are two causative affixes, the -i- and the -ithi-. In Gikuyu, Kiembu and Kimeru they are realised in these forms regardless of the phonological structure of the verbs to which they are affixed, but in Kikamba phonological processes affect the realisation thus -i- is also realised as -y-, -e-, and -sy- while -ithi- is also realised as: -ethy- or -ithy-. The following examples show the use of these forms.

(6a) Nog-i-a   (Gikuyu, Kimeru & Kiembu)
     Tire-CAUS-FV
     'Cause to be tired'

(6b) Nog-ithi-a   (Gikuyu, Kimeru & Kiembu)
     Tire-CAUS-FV
     'Make tired (deliberately)'

(6c) On-i-a   (Kikamba)
     See-CAUS-FV
     'Show'/Lit. 'Cause to see'

(6d) On-ethy-a   (Kikamba)
     See-CAUS-FV
     'Make see'

The nature of causation

Here we will consider the meanings that are expressed by the use of the causative affixes. Several meanings have been isolated on examining the data from the four languages:

(i) The construction can be used when an agent (causer) deliberately makes someone (causee) do something. Consider the sentences below.

(7a) Mwangi ni-a-rug-ithi-a kaana irio (Gikuyu)
     Mwangi foc-TNS-cook-CAUS-FV child food
     'Mwangi made the child cook food'

(7b) Mwangi ni-w-a-u-ithy-a kana liu (Kikamba)
     Mwangi foc-SA-TNS-cook-CAUS-FV child food
     'Mwangi made the child cook food'

In example (7) above, the causee *kana* (child) does the cooking as a result of the deliberate action of the causer (Mwangi).

(ii) Secondly, the affixal causative can be used when an animate causer deliberately brings about a certain change of state on the part of the causee.

(8a) Mwangi ni-w-a-valuk-ithy-a kana (Kikamba)
     Mwangi foc-SA-TNS-fell-CAUS-FV child
     'Mwangi made the child fall'

(8b) Mwangi ni-w-a-tan-ithy-a kana   (Kikamba)
     Mwangi foc-SA-TNS-happy-CAUS-FV child
     'Mwangi made the child happy'

In example (8) the deliberate action of the causer (Mwangi) brings about a change in the state of the causee.

(iii) Thirdly, it is used when an animate causer accidentally brings about a change of state on the part of the causee (e.g. (9) below).

(9a) Mwangi ni-w-a-valuk-y-a kana   (Kikamba)
     Mwangi foc-SA-TNS- fell-CAUS-FV child
     'Mwangi caused the child to fall (not deliberately)'

(9b) Mwangi ni-w-a-that-y-a kana   (Kikamba)
     Mwangi foc-SA-TNS-annoyed-CAUS-FV child
     'Mwangi has annoyed the child (not deliberately)'

The difference between examples (8) and (9) is that in (8) the action of the causer is deliberate while in (9) it is accidental. For Gikuyu, Kiembu and Kimeru the -ithi- affix is used for both (ii) and (iii) above, with *gwa* (fall) and the distinction is made by adding words such as *atekwenda* (unwillingly) or *akiendaga* (willingly). However, with the other verbs, deliberate causation is marked by -ithi- and accidental causation by -i- in these languages.

(iv) Fourthly, the construction is used to express the meaning that an inanimate causer brought about a certain change of state in the causee.

(10a)   Marua ni-ma-ken-i-a kaana   (Gikuyu)
        Letter foc-SA-TNS-happy-CAUS-FV child
        'The letter has made the child happy'

(10b)   Valua ni-w-a-tan-i-a kana   (Kikamba)
        Letter foc-SA-TNS-happy-CAUS-FV child
        'The letter has made the child happy'

(v) The fifth use is to express 'self-causation'. This is where one makes oneself do something or assume a certain state unnaturally. The action or state is simulated and not genuine, as in example (11) below:

(11a)   Mwangi ni-e-andik-**ithi**-a marua (Gikuyu)
        Mwangi foc-refl-TNS-wrote-CAUS-FV letter
        'Mwangi has made himself (pretended to) write a letter'

(11b)   Mwangi ni-w-e-ken-**ithi**-a   (Kiembu)
        Mwangi foc-SA-refl-be happy-CAUS-FV
        'Mwangi has made himself (pretended to be) happy'

(vi) Finally, the construction can be used to express 'indirect causation' where the causer instigates or manipulates the causee to do something to somebody or to something. In these constructions, the causee can be left out, as in example (12a) below. Comrie (1981:168) also notes this phenomenon of indirect causation.

(12a)   Mwangi ni-a-rum-**ithi**-a Nduku (Gikuyu)
        Mwangi foc-TNS-insulted-CAUS-FV
        Nduku
        'Mwangi had Nduku insulted'

(12b)   Mwangi ni-a-rum-**ithi**-a Nduku kaana
                                         (Gikuyu)
        Mwangi foc-TNS-insulted-CAUS-FV
        Nduku child

'Mwangi had Nduku insulted by the child/ had the child insult Nduku'

We also noted that in Gikuyu and Kiembu the **-ithi-** form produces ambiguity in that the interpretation can either be 'make somebody do something' or 'help somebody do something'. This happens when -ithi- is attached to dynamic verbs. Example (13) below could mean 'Mwangi made the child cook food' or 'Mwangi helped the child cook food'.

(13)   Mwangi ni-a-rug-**ithi**-a kaana irio (Gikuyu)
        Mwangi foc-TNS-cook-CAUS-FV child
        food
        'Mwangi has made/helped the child cook food'

In contrast, this ambiguity does not arise in Kimeru and Kikamba since the only interpretation possible is that of 'make somebody do something'.

Comrie (1981:164) notes that a construction like (13) above could mean 'cause/help' or 'let'. We have, however, noted that the 'let' or 'permissive' meaning is not possible with any of the four languages examined in this study.

Syntactic features affecting the distribution of the two affixes

The search for the syntactic features that determine the distribution of -i- and -**ithi**- can be approached from different perspectives. The relevant perspectives have a direct bearing on the classification of causative constructions. Firstly, we can concentrate on examining the effects of the presence of either of the affixes on the syntax – number of objects, type of objects etc. (for this approach see Comrie (1981). Secondly, we can make use of the theoretical approaches that seek to establish whether a particular morphological causative construction is bi-clausal or mono-clausal (Marantz, 1984; Baker, 1988). Using this approach one can investigate whether the use of one of the affixes results in a bi-clausal while the other results in

a mono-clausal construction. A third approach would be to explore the distribution of the affixes in terms of the types of verbs they attach to. We will follow the last approach and only make brief comments on the other two approaches.

We noted that the -ithi- form is more productive and can occur with all verbs, though sometimes with restricted interpretation. In discussing its distribution, we have employed the distinction made between dynamic and stative verbs (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:14–21). Dynamic verbs are those that denote an action rather than a state.

With dynamic transitive verbs only the -ithi- affix can be used. This can be seen in the well-formed (14a) and (14b). The ill-formedness in (14c) results from the use of the -i- affix with a dynamic verb.

(14a) Mwangi ni-end-**ithi**-a Wacuka marigu
                                                    (Gikuyu)
       Mwangi foc-sold-CAUS-FV Wacuka
       bananas
       'Mwangi has made Wacuka sell bananas.'

(14b) Kioko ni-andik-**ithi**-a Nduku barua
                                                    (Kimeru)
       Kioko foc-wrote-CAUS-FV Nduku letter
       'Kioko has made Nduku write a letter'

(14c) *Kioko ni-andik-i-a   Nduku barua
                                                    (Kimeru)

With stative transitive verbs, only the -ithi- affix can be used as is shown by the ill-formedness of (15c) below.

(15a) Mwangi ni-w-a-vit-**ithy**-a Nduku nzia
                                                    (Kikamba)
       Mwangi foc-SA-TNS-miss-CAUS-FV
       Nduku way
       'Mwangi made Nduku miss the way'

(15b) Mwangi ni-w-a-meny-**ithi**-a Nduku njira
                                                    (Kiembu)
       Mwangi foc-SA-TNS-know-CAUS-FV
       Nduku way

'Mwangi has made the way known to Nduku'

(15c) *Mwangi ni-w-a-vit-**i**-a Nduku nzia
                                                    (Kikamba)

Both affixes can be used with the dynamic intransitive verbs. Consider example (16a) and (16b).

(16a) Mwangi ni-w-enam-**ithi**-a Wacuka
                                                    (Kiembu)
       Mwangi foc-SA-bend-CAUS-FV Wacuka
       'Mwangi has made Wacuka bend'

(16b) Mwangi ni-w-enam-i-a Wacuka (Kiembu)
       Mwangi foc-SA-bend-CAUS-FV Wacuka
       'Mwangi has made Wacuka bend'

Stative intransitive verbs can also take either of the affixes as in example (17a) and (17b) below.

(17a) Kioko ni-w-a-no-**ethy**-a kana   (Kikamba)
       Kioko foc-SA-TNS-tire-CAUS-FV child
       'Kioko made the child tired'

(17b) Kioko ni-w-a-no-**sy**-a kana   (Kikamba)
       Kioko foc-SA-TNS-tire-CAUS-FV child
       'Kioko made the child tired'

From examples (16 and 17) above, we observe that the -i- affix, which can be realised as -sy- in Kikamba as mentioned on page 5, is only used with intransitive verbs. This suggests that this affix has the function of changing an intransitive verb into a transitive one, quite like that of the affix -sas- in Japanese discussed in Shibatani (1973). The restricted use of the -i- affix may suggest a lexical analysis in line with the productivity criteria given in Shibatani (1976). However, this is ruled out by further evidence showing that -i- can be used with some transitive verbs as in the examples below.

(18a) Kioko ni-w-a-kund-y-a Nduku supu
                                                    (Kikamba)
       Kioko foc-SA-TNS-drink-CAUS-FV
       Nduku soup
       'Kioko made Nduku drink soup'

(18b) Kioko ni-w-a-rum-i-a Nduku itunda

(Kiembu)

Kioko foc-SA-TNS-drink-CAUS-FV
Nduku soup
'Kioko has made Nduku bite the fruit'

Further, verbs of perception (verbs expressing sense experiences) whether transitive or intransitive can take the -i- affix.

The syntactic distribution of the affixes in terms of the verb types can be summarised as follows:

- Intransitive verbs take the two affixes -i- and -ithi-
- Verbs of perception typically take the two affixes -i- and -ithi-
- Transitive verbs mainly take the -ithi- affix

Semantic features affecting the distribution of the affixes

In discussing the semantic features affecting the distribution of the two affixes, we examine the parameter of **control** either on the part of the causer or the causee. Following the approach of Givon (1975), we take control here to mean deliberateness or intentionality.

The distribution of the two causative affixes can be predicted on the basis of the nature of control. The two main parameters are: 1) who has the control? Is it the causer, the causee or both? 2) When the causer has control, is it coercive or non-coercive? We note that with dynamic verbs, coercive control amounts to manipulation and non-coercive control to a directive (Shibatani, 1976).

Where the causer has coercive control, the affix used in the four languages is -ithi- and -i- is unacceptable.

(19a) Mwangi ni-end-ithi-a Wacuka marigu

(Gikuyu)

Mwangi foc-sold-CAUS-FV Wacuka
bananas
'Mwangi has made Wacuka sell bananas'

(19b) *Mwangi ni-end-i-a Wacuka marigu

(Gikuyu)

Mwangi foc-sold-CAUS-FV Wacuka
bananas
'Mwangi has made Wacuka sell bananas'

Here, Mwangi's action is deliberate and involves the use of force. The assumption is that Wacuka has no choice but to do what Mwangi wants. This agrees with Givon's assertion that control entails coercion (Givon, 1975:63). Although the manipulation in (19a) suggests that -ithi- is a lexical affix, we note that the causee (Wacuka) is not non-agentive as is the case with such affixes (Shibatani (1976).

The four languages also express non-coercive control. This obtains when the causer does something deliberately but without the use of force. In such a case an animate causee also has control since s/he can choose to act or not to (Comrie, 1981:166). The causative affix used to capture this situation is the -i- as in (20) below.

(20) Mwangi ni-w-ekal-y-a andu nthi

(Kikamba)

Mwangi foc-SA-sat-CAUS-FV people
down
'Mwangi influenced people to sit down'

The interpretation of (20) is that Mwangi (causer) deliberately influenced or directed *andu* (people) to sit down but did not use force. The people (causee) have an option of obeying or disobeying. In fact we can add the clause *Na malea* (and they refused) to (20) above and the sentence will be acceptable. If coercion is involved on the part of the causer and therefore giving the causee no choice but to sit down, the causative affix used will be -ithi-. The non-coercive use where both the causer and the causee share control contradicts Givon's (1975) principle that only one participant in a causation chain has control. Shared control is the only interpretation we can posit for the phenomenon observed in four languages.

Thirdly, in the four languages it is possible to express a situation in which the control lies with the causee and not the causer. In such a situation

the -i- affix is used. Such constructions mainly involve verbs of perception, as in example (21) below.

(21) Mwangi ni-a-thur-i-a Wacuka   (Kimeru)
     Mwangi foc-SA-annoyed-CAUS-FV
     Wacuka
     'Mwangi has annoyed Wacuka'

Here we note that whatever Mwangi (causer) does, whether accidentally or deliberately, he has no control over the reaction of Wacuka (causee). Thus the causee retains some control over her reaction. If Mwangi's (causer) actions are deliberate, then he has control over his own actions. This is a situation that seems to allow both the causer and the causee to have control. With verbs of perception, the four languages differ in the way they use the two causative affixes to express this meaning. Gikuyu, Kimeru and Kiembu use -i- whether the causer acts deliberately or not, while Kikamba makes a distinction by using -ithi- when the causer acts deliberately and -i- when the causer acts accidentally (see example (22) below).

(22a) Eka kuthat-ithy-a Wacuka   (Kikamba)
      Stop annoying-CAUS-FV Wacuka
      'Stop annoying Wacuka'

(22b) Eka kuthat-i-a Wacuka   (Kikamba)
      Stop annoying-CAUS-FV Wacuka
      'Stop annoying Wacuka'

(22a) carries the meaning that the causer is acting deliberately and therefore has control over his/her actions while in (22b) the causer may not even be aware that his/her actions are causing anger.

The above discussion has shown that the distribution of the two causative affixes in the Central Kenya Bantu languages can be predicted by using distinctions related to the parameter of control. When the causer has coercive control, the affix used is -ithi-. When the causer has non-coercive control or has no control, the affix used is -i-

(Except with verbs of perception in Kikamba as in (22a) where -ithy- may be used).

The lexical and non-lexical distinction

Now we look at the relevance of the semantic and syntactic distribution of the two causative affixes to the distinction drawn between lexical and non-lexical causatives. The analysis above has shown that the two affixes differ on two parameters: **productivity** and **control.** On the parameter of productivity, the -ithi- affix is the more productive of the two. Thus, if we were to recognise a lexical and a non-lexical causative, the -ithi- would be said to be non-lexical and the -i- the lexical on the basis of productivity. On the parameter of control, data from the four languages shows that the -ithi- is used with manipulated/coercive control while -i- is used with directives and non-coercive control. This would suggest a lexical analysis for the -ithi- affix and a non-lexical analysis for the -i- affix. Thus, this criterion gives us just the opposite of what the productivity criterion yields. Given these mixed results, it is difficult to call one affix lexical and the other non-lexical. To validate this point, we review each of the criteria given on the first 2 pages of this article and show that while some contradict each other in the face of our data, others are not applicable.

Firstly, the criterion of productivity would make the semi-productive -i- lexical while the highly productive -ithi- would appear to be non-lexical.

Secondly, though ambiguities resulting from adverb scope may be observed in these languages, we have not found it significant in determining the distribution of the two affixes. Upon examining Bemba data, Givon (1976: 50) drew the conclusion that the 'adverbial interpretation do not converge sufficiently to differentiate lexical from non-lexical causativization [and therefore] ... a clear-cut distinction between the behaviour of lexical and non-lexical causatives is rather difficult to draw'. After analysing data from the four languages, we concur with Givon's conclusions on this aspect.

Thirdly, in all the preceding examples, the causer nominal is realised as the grammatical subject and the other nominals are ranked for objecthood according to the hierarchies operating in Bantu languages (Kioko, 1994; 2000). None of the object nominals in a causative construction in these languages seems to have logical subject features. We therefore cannot apply the reflexivization test of Shibatani (1973) to establish whether the two affixes can be differentiated on the basis of whether the resulting sentence is mono-clausal or bi-clausal.

Fourthly, lexical causatives are said to express manipulative causation in which the causee is a non-agentive entity. Though this kind of causation mainly attracts the -ithi- form as opposed to the non-lexical -i- which expresses directive causation, our data shows that the main factor determining the distribution of the two affixes is the parameter of control expounded in Givon (1975) as is evident in examples 19–22.

Fifthly, the four languages have basically no object marking. Therefore, we cannot use Cooper's (1976) object marking criterion to distinguish the two affixes. In all the examples we have given above, the participants increase by one regardless of the causative affix used. That is, a basically one-place verb becomes two-place as in (4a) and (4b) while a two-place verb becomes a three-place verb (see example (9).

Conclusion

Our data has shown that the distribution of the two causative affixes can be predicted on the basis of verb types and the semantic parameter of control. However, none of the syntactic criteria proposed for distinguishing lexical from non-lexical causatives has independent motivation for the four languages examined. We have found that syntactically, the constructions resulting from the affixation of -i- are similar to those resulting from the affixation of -ithi-. Thus, if there were reasons for analysing one as non-lexical and therefore bi-clausal, the same reasons would suffice to accord the other the same bi-clausal status. The criteria

of productivity and that of directive versus manipulative causation, though useful in explaining the distribution of the two affixes, have yielded contradictory results in as far as the distinction between lexical and non-lexical causative is concerned. While -ithi- would be classified as non-lexical on the basis of the productivity criterion, it turns out to be lexical on the directive/ manipulative criterion. Consequently, it is difficult to classify either causative affix as lexical or non-lexical using the semantic criteria

Finally, the data has shown that the semantic parameter of control/deliberateness is the main factor determining the distribution of the two causative affixes in the Central Kenya Bantu languages. That is, -ithi- is used in situations that entail control while -i- is used in non-control situations.

Abbreviations

APP   applicative
CAUS   Causative affix
FOC   Focus
FV   Verb final vowel
REC   Reciprocal affix
REFL   Reflexive
SA   Subject agreement
TNS   Tense

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