

DIRECT AND INDIRECT CAUSATION IN SINHALA: EXAMINING THE COMPLEXITY CONTINUUM¹

DANIELLE MATHIEU-REEVES

Rice University

1. INTRODUCTION. The *causative*, or the causative clause, is the linguistic expression of *causation*. Causation is a somewhat abstract concept in which the occurrence of one event results in the occurrence of a separate event. It is not always evident how one can ‘cause’ another; it is an intangible connection between events: a series of events alone does not necessarily connote a relationship of causation. A Causative can be defined as:

A linguistic expression that contains in semantic/logical structure a predicate of cause, one argument of which is a predicate expressing an effect (Payne 1997:176)

Because causation is not concrete, it is expected that there are different structures for causative expressions. Causative expressions come in several forms: lexical, morphological, and analytical, but each have common parts:

- Causer - agent of predicate of cause
- Causee - agent of caused event
- Caused event - resultative action, i.e. ‘the effect’

A lexical causative is an expression in which the caused event is part of the semantics of the verb, such as “kill” meaning “cause to die.” In these expressions, the causer and the causee will be the same entity. A morphological causative is an expression with a productive change in verb form, such as an inflection that changes ‘go’ to ‘send.’² This is a valence increasing operation so that an intransitive verb becomes transitive and a transitive verb becomes ditransitive. Thus an additional party, a causee or a causer, is added to the expression. An analytical causative is one in which there is a separate causative verb and which are not *de facto* valence increasing operations. Sinhala uses the latter two of these methods to express causation.

2. ICONICITY IN CAUSATIVES. Iconicity in causatives is namely concerned with the correspondence between linguistic distance and conceptual distance. Conceptual distance is directness or indirectness of a predicate of cause and a predicate of effect. Linguistic distance is the distance between two grammatical structures.

The linguistic distance between [two structures] is least when they are fused in [the same morpheme]; greater when they are distinct but bound morphemes; and still greater when they are separate words. The linguistic distance between them is greatest of all when they are separated by one or more other words. (Haiman 1983:782)

¹ I offer my sincere thanks to Nissanka Wickremasinghe for all of his assistance, time and patience as well as Dr. Robert Englebretson for his guidance. Any errors in examples or analysis are mine alone.

² Such as example (2)

exception to the tendency for the morphological causative to be used with very direct causation. Inanimate causers can provoke questions about indirectness behind the event, which would make the clause conceptionally less direct. However, because inanimate agents are non-prototypical agents, some non-prototypicality is to be expected. This does not result in a complete dismissal of Haiman's continuum in Sinhala causatives.

- (2) gaha ohuwə ispiritaleṭə yawənəwa
 tree 3SG-ACC hospital-DAT go.NPST.CAUS
 'The tree is sending him to the hospital.'³

Whereas English has lexical causatives, such as 'send,' the Sinhala language does not use this form of causative clause. Therefore when our consultant translated these words, a causative inflection of the verb is used.

- (3) mamə oyawə yawənəwa
 1SG 2SG-ACC go.NPST.CAUS
 'I make you go.' or 'I send you.'

Verbs that are transitive become ditransitive when the causative inflection is used.

Ditransitive causative:

- (4) amma laməyaṭə bat kawənəwa
 mother child-DAT rice eat.NPST.CAUS
 'The mother feeds the child rice.'

Past tense causative forms have two different inflections, one for volitional and one for non-volitional forms. The former (5) connotes compliance or willfulness on the part of the causee. The latter (6) connotes resistance on the part of the causee, and some force, whether physical or verbal manipulation, on the part of the causer.

- (5) mamə oyawə kadeeṭə yauwa
 1SG 2SG-ACC store-DAT go.PST.VOL
 'I sent you to the store.'
- (6) mamə oyawə kadeeṭə yauna
 1SG 2SG-ACC store-DAT go.PST.NVOL
 'I sent you to the store.'

3.2. MORPHOLOGICAL CAUSATIVES WITH POST-POSITION *lauwa* 'THROUGH'. In addition to clauses with a causative inflection of the verb, slightly less direct causation is accomplished with a causative inflection in addition to a post-position. In this type the causee is an oblique rather than the patient. This type of clause connotes that the causer uses the causee as an instrument to accomplish the caused event. The causation is direct because the causer is the agent, but less direct than the unmarked clause because some action must occur for the causee to be an instrument or channel for the caused event.

³ This paper includes all combinations of causer-causee and animacy : animate-animate (1), inanimate-animate (2), animate-inanimate (14) and inanimate-inanimate (15).

- (7) mamə oya lauwa redi hodəwənəwa
 1SG 2SG through clothes wash.NPST.CAUS
 ‘I am using you to wash the clothes.’
- (8) mamə oya lauwa sindu kiyəwənəwa
 1SG 2SG through song say.NPST.CAUS
 ‘I am using you to sing.’

3.3. MORPHOLOGICAL CAUSATIVES WITH THE COMPLEMENTIZER *kiyəla* ‘SAY’. The causative inflection of the verb can also be used with the *kiyəla* converb, which has grammaticized strongly into a complementizer. It is also possible to interpret this clause type as a converb with two events taking place: The causer is telling the causee something *and* a caused event happens. If this is the case, then the clause type is of greater linguistic distance as well as greater conceptual distance. If *kiyəla* is to be interpreted as a converb, then the causation would be analytical rather than morphological. However, the other types of analytical causatives in Sinhala are not used with the causative inflection of the verb. Additionally, *kiyəla* is used in several clause types as a complementizer in complement clauses, not simply in causative ones. Therefore, it is more likely that *kiyəla* functions as a complementizer here, however both explanations are possible.

As with other clauses with converbs in Sinhala, the agent of the second action, here the caused event, can be unspecified. It is implied that the agent of the second event is the patient of the first event. In example (9) it is stated that ‘you’ is told something and it is implied that ‘you’ is made to wash the clothes. However, the agent of the caused event could be an additional unstated party, depending on context.

- (9) mamə oyaṭə kiyəla redi hodəwənəwa
 1SG 2SG-DAT say.CONV clothes wash.NPST.CAUS
 ‘I am making you wash the clothes.’ lit. ‘I cause that you wash the clothes.’

To specify the causee, it can be directly stated after the converb/complementizer:

- (10) nuwan maṭə kiyəla mawə prəmadə kərəwənəwa
 nuwan 1SG-DAT say.CONV 1SG-ACC late do.NPST.CAUS
 ‘Nuwan is making me late.’ lit. ‘Nuwan causes that I am late.’

4. ANALYTICAL CAUSATIVE. Analytical causatives usually involve a separate causative verb and are not *de facto* valence increasing operations. In Sinhala, as in many other languages, the caused event verb is in the infinitive.

4.1. ANALYTICAL CAUSATIVES WITH *denəwa* ‘DIVE’ AND *ərinəwa* ‘OPEN’. These verb forms imply indirect causation: the causer lets, or does not prevent, the causee from accomplishing the caused event.

denəwa - According to the consultant, this expression is used when causer allows causee to accomplish the caused event

ærinəwa - According to the consultant, in this expression the causer retains less agency (which would make the causation less direct). This would be used when the causee accomplishes caused event through “carelessness” of the causer.

The consultant translates both forms as ‘let’ in English. These are more like permissive clauses than causative clauses, but it is one of the main ways in Sinhala to express indirect causation. There is greater linguistic distance here because of the compound verb form.

(11) mamə oyaṭə sindu kiyannə denəwa
 1SG 2SG-DAT sing say.INF give.NPST
 ‘I am letting you sing.’

(12) mamə kukulawə marannə ærinəwa
 1SG chicken-ACC die.INF open.NPST
 ‘I am letting the chicken die.’

4.2. ANALYTICAL CAUSATIVES WITH *kriya kəranəwa* ‘ACT IN SUCH A WAY THAT’. This is used for the most indirect causation in Sinhala. The linguistic distance here is greater because it is a three word verb compound, the caused event verb, and *kriya kəranəwa*. The conceptual distance for these clauses is also fairly great because it involves two caused events, one implied (action A) the other expressed (action B). Action A occurs, which leads to action B being caused. Action B is the caused event that is expressed, action A is unstated. However, there must be an unexpressed action A for this clause type to be chosen by the speaker over one of the morphological causative clause types.

(13) mamə kukulawə marann kriya kəranəwa
 ə
 1SG chicken-ACC die.INF act do.NPST
 ‘I am causing the chicken to die.’ or ‘I am acting in such a way that the chicken is dying.’

(14) ohu gaha perəlennə kriya keruwa
 3SG tree topple.INF act do.PST
 ‘He is causing the tree to topple’ or ‘He is acting in such a way that the tree is toppling.’

(15) hulaṅgə ge wəṭenn kriya kəranəwa
 ə
 wind house fall.INF act do.NPST
 ‘The wind is causing the tree to fall.’

5. CASE STUDY WITH *kata kəranəwa* ‘TALK’. This section shows the same verb, tense and participants in each causative expression, as well as a context that would have caused a particular expression to be used, rather than one of the others.

Clause Type: unmarked morphological causative

(16) mamə oyawə kata kəwəwəna
 1SG 2SG-ACC talk do.NPST.CAUS

‘I make you talk.’

Possible context: This, being the most basic causative, could be used in almost any context, as long as it wasn’t indirect, or the speaker does not want to highlight the indirectness. For example, I poke you with a stick so you say ‘ow’.

Clause Type: morphological causative with *lauwa* ‘through’

(17) mamə oya lauwa kata kərəwənəwa
 1_{SG} 2_{SG} through talk do._{NPST.CAUS}
 ‘I am using you to talk.’

Possible context: I have a mouthpiece (you) and I tell you to address the public on my behalf.

Clause Type: morphological causative with *kiyəla* ‘say’

(18) mamə oyaṭə kiyəla kata kərəwənəwa
 1_{SG} 2_{SG-DAT} say._{CONV} talk do._{NPST.CAUS}
 ‘I cause that you talk.’

Possible context: I order you to talk and so you are doing it.

Clause Type: analytical causative with *denəwa* ‘give’

(19) mamə oyaṭə kata kərannə denəwa
 1_{SG} 2_{SG-DAT} talk do._{INF} give._{NPST}
 ‘I am letting you talk.’

Possible context: I give you permission and because of that permission, you are talking.

Clause Type: analytical causative with *ərinəwa* ‘open’

(20) mamə oyaṭə kata kərannə ərinəwa
 1_{SG} 2_{SG-DAT} talk do._{INF} open._{NPST}
 ‘I am letting you talk.’

Possible context: Although you would not normally talk, I am not paying attention to you, so you go ahead and talk.

Clause Type: analytical causative with *kriya kərənəwa* ‘act in such a way’

(21) mamə oyaṭə kata kərannə kriya kərənəwa
 1_{SG} 2_{SG-DAT} talk do._{INF} act do._{NPST}
 ‘I act in such a way that you talk.’

Possible context: I behave very rudely at a dinner so that eventually you have to say something to make me stop my poor behavior.

6. SUMMARY. In Sinhala, Haiman’s iconic motivation fits with the continuum of direct-indirect causation. The most conceptually direct causation is accomplished with the least linguistically distant clause types. The least conceptually direct causation is accomplished with the most linguistically distant clause types.

Most Direct

-wə- lauwa

kiyəla

denəwa ərinəwa

Least Direct

kriya kərənəwa

Causative clauses in Sinhala are a confirmation of Haiman's theory of iconic motivation, and support the idea of motivated language. The distribution of causative constructions is not random or by chance. Specific conceptual events influence which form will be used over others. This leads to further research questions such as what other construction types in Sinhala are a product of iconic and economic motivation? Additionally, how many and what other languages demonstrate iconic or economic motivation in causative constructions?

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Rice University
Department of Linguistics, MS 23
6100 Main Street
Houston, TX 77005-1892