

Causation in the periphery: Causative adjuncts in Estonian and Finnish

Understanding and expressing causality is an essential part of the human cognition and communication – in order to understand the world, we attempt to clarify the relationships between events and the processes or occurrences that impel them. Causation can be expressed by various linguistic means. Most part of the literature on causation focus on the causation encoded in the argument structure: lexical (*kill, push*), morphological (e.g. Estonian: *vaju-ta-ma* [sink-CAUS-INF] ‘press’) and analytical (*The teacher had the pupil run*) causatives. We will however focus on causal relationships conveyed by adjunct constructions. In our paper, we examine the semantics and morpho-syntax of subordinate causative adjuncts in two Baltic Finnic languages: Estonian and in Finnish.

Regarding their linguistic form, the causative adjuncts can both in Estonian and Finnish be expressed by a) locative cases (and sometimes using other sc. marginal cases), e.g. illative in (1), and b) postpositions/prepositions, e.g. *tõttu* and *takia* in (1). For instance:

- (1) Est. *Koer suri mürgitu-sse / mürgituse tõttu.*
Fin. *Koira kuoli myrkytykse-en / myrkytyksen takia.*
Dog died intoxication-ILL / intoxication-GEN due
‘The dog died because of intoxication’

We will discuss causative adjuncts in connection with the verbs the adjuncts occur with and attempt to distinct different types of causal subordinate relations. In addition, we will identify constructions that activate a causal reading and the factors disposing a construction to express causation.

The more specific topics of our presentation are the following:

1. The interplay between the predicate verb (e.g. ‘die’ in 1) and the adjunct from the semantic point of view. In light of the causal adjuncts, we will consider the linear theory of causal relationships of Croft (e.g. 1991), the sc. *linear causal chain* hypothesis. We argue for a non-linear approach for causal structures: our claim is that the causal relations are more complicated than a linear chain; we do not assume a 1:1 correspondence between causal and temporal relationships and suggest an analysis that separates causation from the temporal flow.
2. The division of labor among different types of causative adjuncts.
3. Comparison of Estonian and Finnish causative adjuncts.

References:

Croft, William 1991. *Syntactic categories and grammatical relations: The cognitive organization of information*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

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This topic would suit to the section *Language structure and cognition*. We would prefer to give an oral presentation.