

Typology of case marking in the embedded clause of causatives

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The present paper discusses the case marking in the embedded clause of causative constructions in some languages.

The case marking of causative construction is discussed in Comrie (1976), which deals mainly with languages that conform to the hierarchy ‘subject – direct object – indirect object – oblique’. Dixon (2000) criticizes his argument on the ground that the hierarchy is workable only in a small portion of world’s languages.

There are five types of case marking in the ordinary main clause: neutral, ergative, split-intransitive, accusative, and tripartite types (Comrie 1978). The present paper applies this typology to the embedded clauses of causative constructions and tries to reveal the difference between the case-marking patterns of ordinary main clause and those of embedded clause of causatives. In English, all of the embedded intransitive subject (“embedded S”), embedded transitive subject (“embedded A”), and embedded transitive object (“embedded P”) are marked with accusative case, as in the following examples (the square bracket in the examples indicates embedded clauses):

(1) *John made [him run].* (‘him’ = embedded S)

(2) *John made [him hit her].* (‘him’ = embedded A, ‘her’ = embedded P)

English belongs to the neutral type, in which all of the embedded S, A, and P are marked in the same way.

In Japanese, the embedded A is marked with dative and the embedded P with accusative. The embedded S is marked with dative if it is volitional and with accusative if it is non-volitional:

(3) *Hanako=wa [Taroo=ni sara=o araw-ase-ta].*
Hanako=TOP Taroo=DAT dish=ACC wash-CAUS-PST
‘Hanako made Taroo wash the dishes.’

(*Taroo* = embedded A, *sara* = embedded P)

(4) a. *Hanako=wa [Taroo=ni korob-ase-ta].*
Hanako=TOP Taroo=DAT fall.down-CAUS-PST
‘Hanako let Taroo fall down (by asking him to do so).’

- b. *Hanako=wa* [*Taroo=o*] *korob-ase-ta*.
 Hanako=TOP Taroo=ACC fall.down-CAUS-PST
 ‘Hanako made Taroo fall down (by pushing him, hitting him, etc.).’
 (*Taroo* = embedded S)

Japanese belongs to the split-intransitive type based on semantics of S in the embedded clause of causatives. This pattern is analogous to the ‘fluid-S’ type in Dixon (1994).

In the way outlined above, I investigate and classify languages: (a) neutral: English, Manchurian, German, and Amis (Austronesian); (b) ergative: Sanskrit, French, Turkish, and Mongolian; (c) split-intransitive: Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Nivkh (Paleosiberian); (d) accusative: Burmese; (e) Tripartite: none.

From the typology, it turns out that:

[1] split-intransitive type is not rare, compared to that in the ordinary main clause. This is because many languages are sensitive to the semantic role of embedded S; many languages overtly mark whether the causee (embedded S) is an actor in addition to the causer. “Volitionality” is an important criterion for deciding whether the embedded S is marked as an actor or not.

[2] Most languages are not sensitive to the semantic role of embedded A and P, in contrast to the normal transitive clause, in which arguments of verbs that are low in transitivity tend to be marked differently from those that are high in transitivity.

[3] Accusative type is rare. This is because many languages treat embedded S and embedded A as ‘causee’ as against embedded P, which is not treated as an argument of the main clause.

[4] Tripartite type is even rarer and has not been found.

References

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