CHAPTER THREE

CAUSATIVES WHICH DO NOT CAUSE:
NON-VALENCY-INCREASING EFFECTS OF A
VALENCY-INCREASING DERIVATION

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A causative construction typically involves the introduction of a new argument, a Causer, into a basic clause. The Causer refers to someone, or something, which initiates or controls the activity. A causative is thus primarily a valency-increasing derivation. However, in a number of languages causative is straightforwardly valency-increasing only if applied to intransitive verbs. With transitive verbs, the effect of the same marker may be rather different. We start with two relevant case studies. Causativizers in Manambu, from the Ndu family (Papua New Guinea), express manipulative effort, forceful action, and multiplicity and extent of the object, when applied to transitive verbs. Causativizing markers with transitive verbs in Tariana, from Arawak family (Brazil), have an applicative-like effect with transitive verbs—an additional, erstwhile peripheral, constituent becomes obligatory. The findings of the case-studies are then viewed in cross-linguistic perspective. I discuss other cases where the same morphemes operate as causatives (that is, valency-increasing devices) with transitive, and also with intransitive verbs, and add an extra meaning to the verb, to do with manipulative effort, forceful and intensive action, complete involvement of the object, and/or multiple or large object. These non-causative

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meanings of primarily causative morphemes are characteristic only of morphological causatives expressing direct causation with the Causer in control, and can be considered to be their semantic extensions. The Appendix outlines the historical development of polysemous morphological causatives in a number of relevant language families.

1. What this Chapter is About

Causative forms may not always imply causation. What other meanings they may have, and why? This is what this chapter is concerned with.

A causative construction is primarily associated with increasing valency—that is, introducing a new argument, a ‘Causer’. In a number of recent years, there has been a considerable amount of typologically and formally oriented literature on the issue of causatives. This chapter is cast within the framework of functionalist typological approach whereby causatives are viewed essentially as mechanisms of introducing an additional argument, a ‘Causer’, someone or something that initiates or controls the activity (see Comrie 1976a, 1981a, 1989, 2003; Dixon and Aikhenvald 1997, Dixon 2000, and also papers in Comrie and Polinsky 1993).

A causative construction can also be described as involving two events (for instance, Frawley 1992: 159 differentiates a ‘precipitating event’ and a ‘result’, while Shibatani (1976b) and (2002b) presents causatives as consisting of a ‘causing event’ and a ‘caused event’). In §7, we return to the interpretation of causative construction as involving an ‘event fusion’ in the light of the polysemy of causative markers discussed in this chapter.

Further seminal work on clause union within relational grammar is also relevant for a multi-event representation of causative constructions (see Aissen and Perlmutter 1983). Causatives viewed as ‘fusion’ of two events are frequently analysed as semantically complex predicates (this issue was explored within the framework of lexical-functional grammar, e.g. Alsina and Joshi 1991, Alsina 1992, 1996). Along similar lines, Dowty (1972, 1979) offers a bisentential (or biclausal?) representation of causatives (also see Wunderlich 1997: 34, Levin and Rappaport 1995; Härtl 2001 and others). The issue of clausality in causatives is briefly addressed in §2. Further work on complex predication and causativization cast within the Minimalist framework includes Rosen (1989); also see Ackerman and Moore (1999, 2001) on the argument structure of causatives. In a different approach to causative construction, Pylkkänen (2008: 9) argues that causativization involves ‘a causative head that introduces a causing event into the semantics of the construction’, and that ‘external arguments are always introduced by Voice’. Each of these approaches merits attention within a specific formal approach, and it would be a mammoth task to discuss their advantages and disadvantages here. We choose to rely upon a more traditional typology which has withstood the test of time, and which allows us to deal with a broad variety of empirical data, most of them hardly ever discussed in a cross-linguistic perspective. This agrees with a general orientation of this chapter which, in Givón’s (1982: v) words, ‘leans towards substantive rather than formal linguistics, an interest in language universals of both function and typology, a commitment to a broadly defined data-base’.