

Modality and causation: Evidence from Finnish morphological causatives.

Tatjana Ilic

National Defense Academy of Japan; Keio University Japan, tatjana@keio.jp

Keywords: causation, modality, force-dynamics

The theory of force-dynamics views causative and modal verbs as semantically unified through the notional concepts of CAUSE and ENABLE (Talmy, 1988; 2000). A strong crosslinguistic evidence for the proposed conceptual relationship between causation and modality is provided by Finnish morphological causatives in which causative and modal (desiderative) meanings commonly arise in the same morphosyntactic environment thereby indicating a shared conceptual base. The interpretation of the Finnish morphological causatives as causative vs. modal (desiderative) is determined by the semantic properties of the causer and its capacity to bring about the event actualization. Specifically, causatives with an intentional human causer receive the causative interpretation (1); causatives with inanimate causer are interpreted as either causative (2a) or causative with a modal flavor (2b); and causatives with a syntactically unexpressed causer receive the modal interpretation (3) (Ilic, 2013; 2014).

Building on the native speaker judgments presented in Ilic (2013; 2014), it is argued that the Finnish morphological causatives provide three kinds of evidence for the semantic unification of causative and modal meanings. First, causative and modal meanings can co-occur in a single interpretation of the same morphosyntactic structure, as in causatives with a modal flavor (2b). It is important to note here that this interpretation occurs only with inanimate causers and in contrast to the causative interpretation in (2a) it has no requirement with respect to actualization of the event. The causative interpretation with a modal flavor is therefore compatible with both actualized (4) and unactualized events (5). These data have an important implication for the nature of modality – they demonstrate that modality and event actualization are *not* mutually exclusive and that modality is consequently not confined to the realm of *irrealis*, as it is commonly held.

The second kind of evidence for the semantic unification of causation and modality is provided by the fact that, when the causative interpretation becomes unavailable due to the infelicitous match with a syntactically unexpressed causer, the construction is reinterpreted as modal, as in desiderative causatives (3).

The third kind of evidence demonstrating a semantically unified relationship between causation and modality comes from the fact that the modal desiderative meaning commonly arises as a non-cancelable presupposition, along with the asserted causative meaning, both in a single reading of a construction (6). It is exactly the presence of this modal presupposition which is claimed to give rise to the modal flavor in the interpretation of the causative in (2b). Modal presuppositions, understood as manifestations of causal relations and unconfined to *irrealis*, are also claimed to give rise to the asserted modal meaning in the desiderative causatives (3), which involve an infelicitous match between the morphosyntactic environment and the semantic properties of the causer. Modal presuppositions in desiderative causatives therefore provide a semantic basis for their reinterpretation, when nothing else can be stated about the event.

- (1) Jussi naura-tt-i Maiya-a.
 Jussi.NOM laugh-CAUS-3SG.PAST Maiya-PART
 'Jussi made Maiya laugh.'
- (2) Vitsi naura-tt-i minua.
 joke.NOM laugh-CAUS-3SG.PAST I-PART
 a) 'The joke made me laugh.'
 b) 'The joke made me feel like laughing.'
- (3) Minu-a naura-tt-aa.
 I-PART laugh-CAUS-3SG.PRES
 'I feel like laughing.'
- (4) Vitsi naura-tt-i minua, ja nauroin.
 joke.NOM laugh-CAUS-PST I-PART, and laugh.1SG.PST
 'The joke made me feel like laughing, and I laughed.'
- (5) Vitsi naura-tt-i minua, mutta en nauranut.
 joke.NOM laugh-CAUS-PST I-PART, but not.1SG laugh.SG.PST
 'The joke made me feel like laughing, but I did not laugh.'
- (6) ??Vitsi naura-tt-i minu-a, mutta minua ei naurattanut.
 joke.NOM laugh-CAUS-PAST I-PART, but I-PART neg.1SG laugh.PAST-PTC
 'The joke made me laugh, but I did not feel like laughing (at the moment of laughing).'

References

- Ilic, Tatjana. 2014. Modality and causation: two sides of the same coin. In B. Copley and F. Martin (eds.), *Causation in Grammatical Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ilic, Tatjana. 2013. *Modality and Causation in Serbian dative anticausatives: a crosslinguistic perspective*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawai'i. ProQuest, online dissertations.
- Pylkannen, Lina. 2002. *Introducing arguments*. PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.
- Talmy, Leonard. 1988. Force dynamics in language and cognition, *Cognitive Science* 12: 49-100.
- Talmy, Leonard. 2000. *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*. Vols. 1 and 2. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.