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CAUSATIVITY AS THE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF RUSSIAN VERBS¹

Ph. D. (C) Gulnara Distanova

FSBEI HE N.I. Pirogov RNRMU MOH, Russian Federation

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4591-4338>

gulnara.distanova@bk.ru

Ph. D. Aida Abbasova

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Russian Federation

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8611-5073>

abbasovaaida@bk.ru

Ph. D. (C) Elena Gvozdeva

Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Russian Federation

[https:// orcid.org/0000-0003-1306-9608](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1306-9608)

gvozdeva_eva@mail.ru

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Abstract

In modern Russian, causality is the most important characteristic of verbs. Causativity, effectiveness, logical connection between cause and action, dependence of the result on the nature of the effect are integral to typological description of the corresponding language structures, to definition of causal semantics of causative constructions. Causation is broadly defined as an effect of the subject on the object for the purpose of transforming the reality. Cause-effect relationship follows from this action. In constructions with causative verbs, these verbs have a generalized meaning of influence, change, transformation. In syntagmatics, they realize their valency, among which the presence of the object of action is in evidence.

Keywords

Verb – Causative construction – Causative situation – An effect of the subject on the object

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Introduction

The meaning of causativity in Russian is “dissolved” in the semantics and grammatical categories of causative verbs, their study is impossible without analyzing syntactic causatives in which these verbs are used. Accordingly, the study of causality as a logical-grammatical concept requires a complex (language proper, speech, logic, lexical-semantic, etc.) analysis of the communicative phenomena in which they are reflected.

One of the first works dealing with systematic description of the typology of causative constructions was the collective monograph *Typology of Causative Constructions. Morphological Causative*². A separate part of the monograph³ makes an attempt of theoretical interpretation of the problem in the form of its complex presentation.

Defining the subject of attention – causative construction, the authors treat it as any construction that expresses a causative event, and remark that the concept of a causative situation is an initiation. In determining the correlation of causative and non-causative constructions, semantic, syntactic, and morphological bases are used.

By reference to multiplicity of events and situations of the realities of life, the authors classify the ways of their reflection in language / speech as simple situations and complex (macro) situations. Among the latter, a causative situation is exposed (*Мы вернулись из-за дождя. Его рассказ взволновал всех*). / (*We returned because of the rain. His story moved us*). The relations between the parts of such complex situations are defined as the relations between an antecedent (cause) and a consequent (effect). The intermediate factor in the cause-effect chain is a “causing state” (the relation of causation), which can be called the “way of action of the agent” or the “means of causation”⁴. The authors of the study note that this constant often does not find expression in the syntactic causative. Compare: *Его ход заставил (the relation of causation) противника сдаться* and *Он заставил (the relation of causation) противника сдаться* / *His move compelled the opponent to give in. He compelled the opponent to give in*. In the second example, the constant is semantically (but not grammatically) elliptic. The conclusion the authors reach lies in the following, “A means of causation can embrace many diverse, difficult to take into account components defined by close or distant, preceding or consequent context”⁵.

The notion of causative

The central category of typological research is the causative – “semantic prime; in other words, the semantics of causativity cannot be reduced to any other that would be “arranged” simpler than causative”. Consequently, the grammatical category of causative should imply the presence of two types of situations, “independent and dependent, compelled by circumstances, realized under the influence from the outside. The latter will be a caused one. The situation being caused suggests a causing one, although the converse is not true; “causation can be successful and unsuccessful if the initiator does not adequately control the situation”⁶.

² *Typology of Causative Constructions. Morphological Causative* (Leningrad: 1990).

³ V. P. Nedyalkov y G. G. Silnitsky, *Typology of Causative Constructions. Typology of Causative Constructions. Morphological Causative*. Leningrad (1969): 6.

⁴ V. P. Nedyalkov y G. G. Silnitsky, *Typology of Causative Constructions...* 7-8.

⁵ V. P. Nedyalkov y G. G. Silnitsky, *Typology of Causative Constructions...* 9.

⁶ V. B. Kasevich, *Tibeto-Burman Causative and the Principle of Iconicity*. Chinese Linguistics: Isolating Languages: 10th International Conference: Materials (Moscow: 2002), 76.

This definition of the semantics of causativity puts the very fact of causation (the influence of somebody / something on the object) in the forefront and does not require the immediate effect, i.e. the main thing is the presence of a causing situation and a situation being caused. Thus, one and the same situation can be presented as a simple, independent situation, and as a caused one (as a situation resulting from a causing situation).

Typology of causative constructions

Based on various ways of expressing causation, the following types of causative constructions are distinguished: a) suprasegmental, when causativity (the relation of causation) is expressed not in a discrete element, but in the grammatical construction as a whole (*Мы вернулись: пошел дождь. Истратив последние деньги, он сидел на хлебе и воде*)/ (*We returned, it began to rain. Having been down to his last penny, he was on bread and water*), causativity here is optional; b) non-suprasegmental when (the relation of causation) causativity finds expression in a certain discrete element of causative constructions that connects two micro-situations. These are copulative constructions (whereas the previous type is defined as non-copulative).

Based on the correlation of causative connectives with auxiliary or notional parts of speech, the authors distinguish auxiliary and autonomous links, both of which can be consecutive and causational. Auxiliary: a) conjunctive (*Пошел дождь, поэтому мы вернулись*)/ (*It began to rain, that is why we came back*); b) prepositional (*Мы вернулись из-за дождя*) / (*We came back because of the rain*).

Autonomous: a) nominal (*Твоя бестактность – причина его ухода*) / (*Your indiscretion is the reason of his having left*); b) verbal (*Я заставил его уйти*)/ (*I caused him to go*).

From a semantic point of view, causative connectives differ primarily in whether they express or do not express a caused state along with a causation. Effective causative links express a caused state and fall into: three-constant (express the relation of causation, a caused state, a causing state) and two-constant (express the relation of causation, a caused state, a causing state). Effective links are most often verbal.

The causative links that do not express the relation of the caused state is defined as ineffective. They are: two-constant instrumental (verbal: *велеть, просить, разрешить*; nominal: *приказ, просьба, разрешение*) and one-constant non-instrumental (all auxiliary – conjunctive and prepositional, most of the nominal connectives and part of the verbal – the verbs such as *заставить, вынудить, вызвать, дать (дать убежать)*).

The verbal link (it is of particular interest) is not only the semantic, but also the grammatical core of the syntactic causative. “All verbs that can function as the connectives of causative constructions (that is, express causation in its pure form or in combination with other constants) make up the class of causative verbs”⁷.

⁷ V. P. Nedyalkov y G. G. Silnitsky, Typology of Causative Constructions... 10.

The authors suggest semantically dividing causative verbs into non-instrumentative and instrumentative verbs, resultative (one-constant and two-constant) and non-resultative (two-constant and three-constant).

Two-constant and three-constant causative verbs have a complex lexical meaning, containing one or two additional constants along with the main constant (the relation of causation). The latter may have an independent lexical realization in the same language. A lexical unit (a word or a combination of words) expressing one of these additional constants in a “pure” form, i.e. without the accompanying meaning of causation, is called by the authors a non-causative correlate of the corresponding causative verb, i.e. a causative verb expressing the same additional constant in combination with a constant (the relation of causation). Three types of non-causative correlates of causative verbs are distinguished:

- 1) resultative causative verbs are correlated with resultative non-causative correlates: *испугать* (the relation of causation, the caused state) – *испугаться* (the caused state);
- 2) instrumentative causative verbs correlate with instrumentative non-causative correlates: *велеть* (the relation of causation, the causing state) – *сказать, написать* (the caused state);
- 3) three-constant causative verbs have non-causative correlates of both previous types simultaneously: *подозвать* (the relation of causation, the caused state, the causing state) – *сказать, крикнуть* (the causing state), *подойти* (the caused state).

Each word of the causative construction, denoting a constant, is a node. The causative connective is therefore a node. Non-copulative nodes form the environment of the connective, which consists of two parts (segments) corresponding to two micro-situations that make up this causative situation.

If both constants of a microsituation find expression in a segment, then the segment is complete and consists of two nodes: *Его приход /заставил/ меня уйти.* (*His arrival /compelled/ me to go*). If only one of the constants of a microsituation finds expression in a segment, the segment is incomplete: *Я /приказал/ ему уйти.* (*I /ordered /him to leave*).

Both the segments and the connective can be extended: *То, что он не вернулся, /заставило всех волноваться.* (*The fact that he did not come back /made everyone be worried.*).

Constructions with causative verbs

Causative verbs are one of the means of expressing the causative operator “*cause*”, connecting two situations – causing and caused (rather than the subject and the situation), i.e. is a double operator, both places of which are occupied by the predicates (or other operators). Consequently, the causative sense establishes the relationship between the subjects of the two actions – causing and caused, between the two situations, and the two-situational causative constructions are multisubjective: the subjects of causative verbs and dependent verbs are referentially not identical.

Most scholars adhere to this point of view, but there are other opinions.

V.K. Grechko differently understands the semantic structure of the causative verbs.

In her judgement, a causative situation, reflected by causative verbs, assumes a “causer”, a “caused object” and a feature “acquired by the object as a result of causation (at the syntactic level, a “causer” is expressed as the subject, a causative verb is the predicate, a “caused situation” is expressed by an infinitive group, the subject of which denotes the object of causation and is an addition)”⁸.

According to G.G. Silnitsky, who distinguishes a subclass of constructions with predicate actants with an exclusive relationship between referents of the principal verbs and dependent verbs, in mentioned subclass of the type *Я заставил его уйти* / (*I made him leave*) the referents of causative verbs and dependent verbs are two discrete, separate actions that overlap (or, in principle, can be nonoverlapping) in time. In this case, the non-semiotic causative verb acts as the principal verb, i.e. a causative verb that does not indicate the process of carrying information of one kind or another to an object. V. B. Kasevich and V. S. Khrakovky ambiguously decide the question of which semantic class causative verbs belongs to in their meaning. They believe that there are certain reasons to consider the operator of causation (functor) as a suprapredicate forming a modal frame with a variable and as a connector connecting two predicate relations⁹.

The presence of such different viewpoints of the semantic characteristics of causative verbs and their constituents is very likely to emphasize once again the existence of numerous forms of expression of causative constructions, the existence of causative verbs with diverse meanings and undertones.

The class of causative verbs deriving the constructions with predicative actants usually involves three types of verbs that differ from each other whether they include or do not include, in addition to the causative operator, the meanings of causing (= left predicate actant) and / or caused (= right predicate actant) situations. Type I is the causative verbs that express only the causative operator; in this case, causative constructions have two predicate actants – left and right, compare: *Его удачный ход вынудил меня сдаться* / (*His lucky move compelled me to give in*), moreover, most often in causative constructions with causative verbs of this type, there occur a syntactic ascension of the subject of the left predicate actant with a simultaneous elimination (exclusion, removal, elimination of any parts, features) of the very left predicate actant, compare: *Он вынудил меня сдаться* / (*He forced me to give in*); or with lowering it in syntactic rank, compare: *Своим удачным ходом он вынудил меня сдаться* / (*He forced me to give in with his lucky move*). Type II is the causative verbs that express both the causative operator and the meaning of a causing situation, but not a caused one; in this case, in causative constructions one predicate actant is the right one, compare: *Я прошу вас помнить об этом (чтобы вы помнили об этом)* / (*I ask you to remember about it (that you remember about it)*). Causative verbs of this type are the so-called “exercitive” verbs of speech, revealing, along with valencies to the “speaker” and “addressee,” valency to such a “content” that has an illocutionary character and persuades the “addressee” to do something. The constructions formed by these verbs are more likely to be not causative constructions, but transformations of imperative constructions, and they should, according to L.A. Biryulin, be called “the constructions of the indirect imperative” (compare: the direct imperative: *Я прошу вас: “Помните об этом!”* / *I ask you, “Remember about it!”*)¹⁰.

⁸ L. A. Biryulin, *Constructions with Phasal, Modal and Causative Verbs. Semantics and Syntax of the Constructions with Predicate Actants* (Leningrad, 1981), 75

⁹ V. B. Kasevich, *Tibeto-Burman Causative and the Principle...* 77.

¹⁰ V. B. Kasevich, *Tibeto-Burman Causative and the Principle...* 77.

However, the problem of distinguishing between a) causative and imperative constructions and b) causative verbs and imperative verbs of speech (compare: the "pure" verb of speech: *Я сказал им, чтобы они пришли вечером (I told them to come in the evening)*) is still far from being resolved.

Type III involves the causative verbs that express both the causative operator and the meaning of the situation being caused (but not causing); in this case, causative constructions have one left predicate actant, compare: *Его отношение к делу возмутило всех (His attitude to the matter filled everyone with indignation)* (the syntactic promotion of the subject of the left predicate actant turns the constructions with predicate actants into the non-constructions with predicate actants, compare: *((Своим отношением к делу) он возмутил всех (By his attitude to the matter he filled everyone with indignation))*¹¹.

Considering the main directions in the evolution of causative relations, the content and method of expression, T. G. Khazagerov offers a peculiar chain of transformations of logical operations, consisting of three stages, at each of them the ways of expressing causative relations extend and change accordingly. At the core of the formation of causative relations is the notion of a change in the state of objects which is expressed in an inchoative verb. The expression of the conditionality of such a change is exposed in the causative verb at the first stage of the formation of causative relations. However, they are not yet connected with specific subjects and are thought outside of goal-setting, motivation, or stimulus. At the next – the second stage in the development of causative relations, when the idea of a purposeful action motivated by a chosen goal is formed, and the thought moves to possible results of the action, the category of animateness and aspect, as well as the category of manner of verbal action begin to form. At the third stage, causative and causal relations are differentiated, "the causer – the carrier of the target setting is opposed to the causer-realizer (within the causative relations) and both are opposed to the realizer as the carrier of the causal but not causing relation"¹². Researchers of causative verbs and causative constructions pay attention to the features of their employment in texts of various functional styles. So, V.K. Grechko points out the increased frequency of causative constructions in technical literature as compared to fiction (selection scope is six printed sheets) in German¹³. The scholar notes that causative constructions based on the three causative verbs with general meaning of "предоставлять возможность" ("to provide an opportunity") are most used, and exposes the main features of the functioning of causative constructions in a scientific style:

- 1) the agent of causative constructions can be not only animate, but also inanimate (without traces of metaphoricity);
- 2) these causative verbs are not used with reflexive agent;
- 3) individual semantic nuances of these causative verbs are neutralized, they act as complete synonyms;
- 4) semantic attribution of negation to dependent verbs is impossible;
- 5) in past tense forms, the realization of the action being cased is always expressed;

¹¹ L. A. Biryulin, *Constructions with Phasal, Modal and Causative Verbs...* 85-86.

¹² T. G. Khazagerov, "Causativity: Status and Evolution of the Means of Expression in the Russian Language", *Philological Herald of Rostov State University*. Issue 2 (1998): 56-57

¹³ V. K. Grechko, *Functional and Semantic Characteristic of an Elemental Sentence in German Scientific-Technical Texts*. fr.rae.ru/pdf/2006/ 03

b) the denotation of the subject often takes part in the action being cased, which allows to transform causative constructions into a non-causative construction with the same subject unchanged (this is not possible in fiction in German);

7) the causer can be represented as an intermediary, which is also impossible in fiction

The characteristics of causative constructions allow V.K. Grechko speak on the third meaning of causativity, the meaning of “joint participation”, which is a connotation in relation to the central meanings. The researcher believes that the distinctive feature of scientific style is also the functional salience of close cooperation of the meanings of causativity and passivity¹⁴.

The meaning of joint participation, about which V.K. Grechko mentions as the connotation of causativity, is considered by A.V. Arkhipov in his work *Typology of Comitative Constructions*¹⁵. Comitative constructions, which are quite common in various languages and are employed to convey the semantics of joint action, incorporate several models that implement a causative function.

The peripheral nominal group in these constructions can occupy syntactic positions of either direct or indirect objects. This opposition correlates to the concept of transitivity. Transitive verbs (*бить, видеть, давать / to beat, to see, to give*) have two nuclear actants, intransitive verbs – one nuclear actant (*бежать, смотреть / to run, to look*) or none (*больно, холодно / it is painful, it is cold*). “Sociative causative” delivering simultaneously the semantics of joint action and the semantics of causativity falls in between direct and indirect causation and is characterized the very causer takes part in an event it causes, for example: *Он помог ему перейти реку (He helped him cross the river)* (the semantics of this construction can be represented as “causation + comitative”); *Я заставил его сажать (что-то). / Я сажал (что-то) (вместе) с ним (I made him planting smth. I planted smth jointly with him)* (“causation/comitative”); *Я должен отвести ребенка домой (I have to take my kid home)* (“causation + comitative”); *Змея напугала меня (The snake frightened me)* (“causation”)¹⁶.

Causative meanings, owing to their universality, extend not only to individual constructions, but also to entire texts, which is confirmed by V. K. Grechko (through the example of technical literature), T.G. Khazagerov and some other scholars. So, T.G. Khazagerov even distinguishes a special type of texts – causative texts. In them, “as if in advance a carrier of the goal set – the consumer of the goods, is uniquely determined, and the goal itself – the effective functioning of an apparatus, a gadget, a device, the effective use of medicines, perfumes, food and semi-finished products, etc., is unambiguously ascertained”¹⁷. He notes that the texts of this kind are characterized by a rather limited constructions and even vocabulary. The mere passive constructions and imperative forms of the verbs used in such texts do not have causative meanings, but acquire them within the context. For example: *Включите телевизионный приемник при помощи сетевого включателя, выберите программу при помощи сетевых клавиш,*

¹⁴ L. A. Biryulin, Constructions with Phasal, Modal and Causative Verbs...

¹⁵ L. A. Biryulin, Constructions with Phasal, Modal and Causative Verbs... 74.

¹⁶ A. V. Arkhipov, *Typology of Comitative Constructions. Part II. Polysemy of Comitative Constructions*, *Questions of Linguistics. Issue 3 (2008): 23.*

¹⁷ T. G. Khazagerov, “Causativity: Status and Evolution of the Means... 22.

прибор переключается на выбранную программу, etc.¹⁸. (Turn on the television set using the network switch, select a program using the network keys, the device can be switched to a selected program).

Of course, literary texts (prose and poetic) have specific features of the use of constructions with causal semantics. According to some observations, impersonal constructions like *Велено собираться* (*We are told to prepare*) are often found in literary texts. In studying the structural-semantic organization of this kind of sentences in Russian, N. N. Arvat points out to the fact that these constructions have passive causative verbs, related to the following lexical-semantic groups:

- 1) the three-actant main verbs of volition [predicate actant, “subject”, “addressee” – compare: *Законом не запрещено судье спать*(Fonvizin)] (*The law does not prohibit a judge from sleeping*);
- 2) the three-actant main verbs of predetermination [predicate actant, “denotatively zero” “subject”, “passive subject” - compare: *Природой здесь нам суждено в Европу прорубить окно* (Pushkin)] / (*Nature has predetermined us to open a window to Europe*);
- 3) the two-actant main verbs denoting “decision” and generally accepted things [predicate actants, “the subject” alias “the doer” – compare: *У них не принято задавать вопросы гостю; Оргкомитетом намечено провести конференцию через педделю*] (*They are not accepted to ask questions to a guest; The organizing committee is holding the conference in a week*)¹⁹.

N.N. Arvat fixes the lexical-syntactic ways of expressing object actants and the possibility of their elimination, as well as the ways of expressing predicate actants. The syntactic and semantic structures of these sentences are considered to be isomorphic: the “participle + infinitive” complex is syntactically interpreted as the complex verbal principal part of impersonal sentence, and semantically as a complex predicate, denoting, according to N.N. Arvat, modal attitude to action²⁰.

Conclusions

The study shows that the most important characteristic of Russian verbs their causativity. The concept of causativity is a key concept of causal semantics. Causative constructions as a broader concept of causal semantics incorporate a causal situation that defines the structure of causativity.

Despite of the fact that in the Russian language there is a difficulty in expressing causative relations, explained by the synthetical ways of expressing grammatical and semantic characteristics of an action, by overlapping different grammatical meanings (the presence of connotations), the classification of causative constructions based on the componential analysis and grouping of causative verbs seems to be the most correct.

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¹⁸ T. G. Khazagerov, Causativity: Status and Evolution of the Means... 23.

¹⁹ N. N. Arvat, Componential Analysis of Semantic Structure...

²⁰ N. N. Arvat, Componential Analysis of Semantic Structure...

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