

Introduction

- We focus on **Intransitive Causatives (ICs)**, an underexplored argument structure realization in verbs entering **causative alternation**, with key implications for argument structure and verb formation/derivation. We focus on the asymmetry between English (1) and Romance (2).
- (1) a. Smoking kills. b. Bleach disinfects. c. Alcohol dehydrates. d. Rice constipates. e. Shaving creams irritate. f. Sunlight oxidizes and discolors. g. Normal dryers wrinkle.
- (2) a. Fumar mata. b. La lejía desinfecta. c. El alcohol deshidrata. d. El arroz estriñe. e. Las cremas de afeitar irritan. f. La luz solar oxida y destiñe. g. Las secadoras arrugan.
- ICs challenge major claims on argument structure and causative alternations:**
 - The internal argument defined a constant constituent in the causative alternation (Haley & Keyser 2002)
 - The prediction that a unique argument in causative alternating verbs will be interpreted as undergoer by default (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005). Conversely, ICs show defective cause(r) reading.

Aspect and semantics of ICs

- (a)** ICs cannot appear in **perception reports**, be **located in space** (3) or license **habitual readings** (4).
- (3) a. #John saw smoking kill. (cf. I saw John kill Tom)
b. #Shaving creams irritate in the bathroom.
- (4) a. Alcohol (#regularly) dehydrates. (cf. John regularly kills animals)
b. Smoking (#regularly) kills.
- They are odd in **contexts forcing eventive readings** (5). **Modals generate epistemic** (not deontic) readings (6). This pattern is the one expected for **states** (Maienborn 2005, Rothmayr 2007).
- (5) a. #What the dryer did was wrinkle. (cf. What John did was kill animals)
b. #What happened was that rice constipated.
- (6) a. Smoking must kill (OK It probably has property x | #It is under obligation to kill)
b. John must kill Tom (#He probably has property x | OK He is under obligation to kill)
- (b)** ICs are similar to **middles** in that they are restricted to generic tenses (**Smoking killed/This vase broke easily*). Both constructions pattern **statively, and like dispositional generics**.
- They do not entail a **deontic reading**, but report a **property of the subject** (Lekakou 2015). ICs are thus true in virtue of properties inherent to the subject

- ICs contrast with **dispositional habituais** that “assert the existence of a pattern of regularly recurring events” (Krifka et al. 1995) (true insofar as there were actual helping events in the past, e.g., *John helps homeless people*).
- ICs crucially **differ from middles** in that the sole DP is not **internal but external**: hence, the property is not attributed to an undergoer (theme), but to a cause.
- (d) Genericity** is a property shared with another dyadic/monadic argument structure alternation (Unexpressed/Null Object alternations, Levin 1993) (8): PROPERTY-OF-AGENT ALTERNATION.
- (7) a. This dog bites (#but hasn’t bitten anybody yet).
b. Stand back! This horse kicks (#but hasn’t kicked anybody yet).
- Yet, ICs are distinct in **verb type** (activity/manner verbs in (8) vs. result verbs in ICs) and **interpretive and selectional restrictions** on the subject (animate/volitional actor in (8) vs. inanimate causer in ICs).

Syntax of ICs

Unlike Property-of-Agent Alternation (7), ICs are **not null-object constructions** (NO).

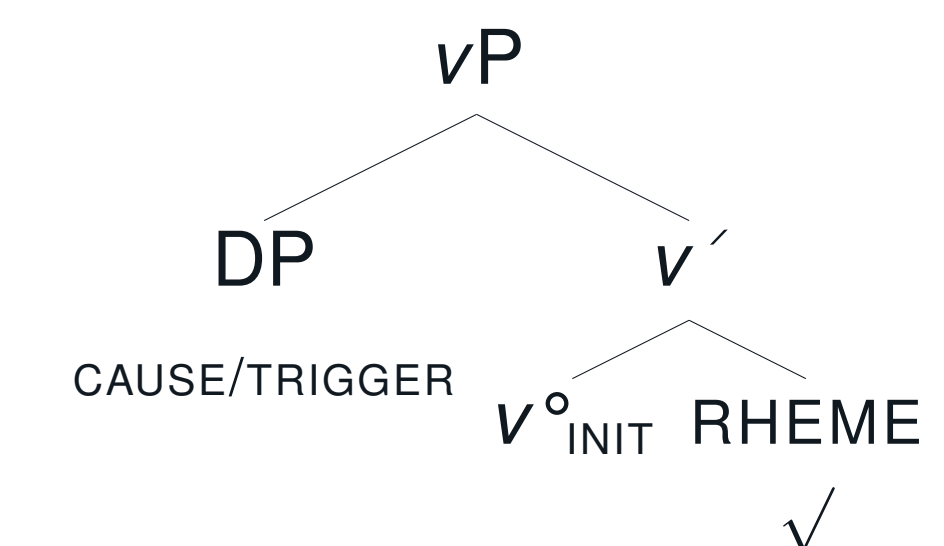
- ICs do not allow **null-object-oriented depictive predication**, which is OK if arbitrary implicit arguments are present (cf. *Il dottore visita [] nudi* ‘The doctor visits [] naked’ (Rizzi 1996)).
- (8) a. *Smoking kills dead/depressed.
b. John cooks healthy.
c. John buys cheap.
- ICs do not allow **null object quantification** either (e.g. bare *molti*, Italian)
- (9) a. *Smoking kills a lot.
b. John eats a lot.
- Ne-cliticization and inchoative/passive morphology** are disallowed (e.g. Romance).
- (10) a. Fumare (*ne/*si) uccide. (Italian)
b. Fumar (*en/es) mata. (Catalan)
- (11) a. El Joan en compra (cada dia). (Catalan)
b. El Joan en cuina (cada dia).
- ICs fail to bind **reflexive pronouns**.
- (12) a. Bad news sadden (*myself).
b. Take a crepe. Cover one half with the jam. Fold [] over onto itself and sprinkle with sugar. (Massam and Roberge 1989: 137)

Differences between English and Romance

- Differences lie in **IC productivity** (13): whereas Romance freely allows ICs from classes standardly related to the causative alternation like **psych verbs**, English uses a stative-attributive **ing-predicates** (14).
- (13) a. La playa cansa. (lit. *The beach tires)
‘The beach is tiresome/makes you tired.’
b. Tarantino aburre. (lit. *Tarantino bores)
‘Tarantino is boring/makes you bored.’
- (14) a. Sad movies are depressing.
(OK Causational reading = #IC: #Sad movies sadden)
b. Normal dryers are wrinkling.
(#Causational reading = OK IC: Normal dryers wrinkle)
- This suggests nontrivial contrasts between canonic change of state verbs and other verbs entering the alternation deserving explanation (crosslanguage IC availability).
- We hypothesize that in English the **ing-predicate** is the default mechanism to denote that a cause(r) has potential to trigger change of state.
- By contrast, ICs are allowed when **ing-predicate** does not yield IC, but rather a sole-theme-argument reading in an ongoing change (cf. (15)).

Proposal

- We contend ICs are **true monadic (atransitive) realizations**.
- The **external-argument-introducing head** responsible for the causative component is **merely complemented**, not by a theme, but by **rhematic information** (RhemeP, Ramchand 2008, 2013) specifying the change of state potentially triggered by the subject.



- ICs show that **nonrealization of internal arguments** correlates with lack of COS (sub)event instantiation.
- The **noneventive denotation and pure stative behavior** thus follow. ICs show if there is no theme, there is no change-of-state-event-encoding component in the semantic/syntactic makeup of the VP.

Conclusion

ICs (a) establish interesting crosslanguage regularities, **(b)** reveal important structural (syn/sem) consistencies, **(c)** raise questions on lexical coding of relevant features, **(d)** uncover a necessary contrast within intransitive alternations (Property-of-Agent Alternations vs. ICs).