

Simple and Multiple Causatives in Xamtanga

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Xamtanga is a Central Cushitic (Agäw) language spoken by approximately 143 000 people in Northern Ethiopia. This presentation intends to give an overview of morphological causative involving the derivational suffix *-s* in Xamtanga, arguing that both simple and multiple causatives seem to exhibit a more complex behavior than what has been previously stated in Appleyard's description of the language (1987). The talk will essentially focus on new data where the sequences *-s-s* and *-s-s-s* are attested. As a preliminary comparative analysis of this phenomenon, I suggest that causative in Xamtanga shares interesting features with causative in Oromo (Dubinsky et al., 1988) and in Konso (Mous, 2004), whereas it differs from other Central Cushitic languages (Appleyard, 1986).

In Xamtanga, the simple causative *-s* may be added to transitive stems (*x^wä-* 'to eat' / *x^wä-s* 'to feed', *qal-* 'to see', *qal-s* 'to show') as well as intransitive ones (*bir-* 'to be hot' / *bir-s* 'to warm', *g^wäyy-* 'to seat' / *g^wäyy-s* 'to make seat'). With a limited number of verbs, *-s* alternates with another derivational suffix, namely the middle *-t~r*, and the bare stem can not occur alone. According to Appleyard (1987: 470), in this case *-s* acts as a transitivizer. But a closer look on the data bellow underlines that *-s* does not always have the same effect on such types of pairs. While in 1b *-s* creates a transitive form as opposed to 1a, in 2b *-s* adds an external cause to 2a, the initial subject being expressed as an object bearing the accusative case.

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| (1) | a. | <i>Guläšä</i> | <i>aqa-r-äk^w</i> | b. | <i>Guläšä</i> | <i>η-älvä-d</i> | <i>aqa-s-äk^w</i> |
| | | Guläšä | wash-MID-IMPRF | | Guläšä | POSS3-cloth-DEF | wash-CAUS-IMPRF |
| | | 'Guläšä washes himself' | | | 'Guläšä washes his cloth' | | |
| (2) | a. | <i>Guläšä</i> | <i>iq^wa-r-äk^w</i> | b. | <i>Birtuk^wan</i> | <i>Guläšä-t</i> | <i>iq^wa-s-äk^w</i> |
| | | Guläšä | laugh-MID-IMPRF | | Birtuk ^w an | Guläšä-ACC | laugh-CAUS-IMPRF |
| | | 'Guläšä laughs' | | | 'Birtuk ^w an makes Guläšä laugh' | | |

In addition to the simple causative *-s*, Appleyard (1987: 471) points out that Xamtanga -and this is indeed the case in many other Cushitic languages- has a double causative *-iss* or *-sis* (where *i* is an epenthetic vowel) which is used in "secondary transitivization" i.e. to form the causative of a transitive verb (*x^wä-* 'to eat' / *x^wä-sis*, 'cause to feed', *zīy-* 'to drink' / *zīy-sis* 'cause to make drink'). If we consider Appleyard's examples, we expect *-iss~-sis* to be found only with verbs that are transitive (or ambitransitive) to begin with. Even though my data confirm this tendency, the *-iss~-sis* form also appears with initially intransitive verbs such as *bir-* 'to be hot' / *bir-iss* 'cause to be hot' as in 3, where both 3a and 3b have only one object.

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| (3) | a. | <i>Guläšä</i> | <i>s'ab-id</i> | <i>bir-s-u</i> |
| | | Guläšä | milk-DEF | be_hot-CAUS-PRF |
| | | 'Guläšä warmed the milk' | | |
| | b. | <i>k^wärä-d</i> | <i>Bahir Dar-it</i> | <i>bir-iss-u</i> |
| | | sun-DEF | Bahir Dar-ACC | be_hot-2CAUS-PRF |
| | | 'The sun makes Bahir Dar be hot' | | |

Moreover, my corpus contains instances of *-(i)sis*, with the causative morpheme repeated three times after the verb stem as in 4c, a sequence that has not been recorded before in Xamtanga as far as I know. Xamtanga's 'multiple causatives' may then be used in syntactically identical sentences.

- (4) a. *Guläšä firzit'-id aq^w zi-s-u*
 Guläšä horse\PL-DEF water drink-CAUS-PRF
 ‘Guläšä made the horses drink water’
- b. *č'äw-in Guläšä-tat šila zi-sis-n-u-n*
 beg.CNV-1PL Guläšä-NOM.PL beer drink-2CAUS-1PL-PRF-1PL
 ‘We insisted and Guläšä and the others agreed to drink beer (litt. we made them drink beer)’
- c. *Guläšä firzit'-id aq^w zi-siss-u*
 Guläšä horse\PL-DEF water drink-3CAUS-PRF
 ‘Guläšä made the horses drink water (by using a material such as a bottle)’

In Oromo, the number of causative morphemes *-s* matches the number of underlying subjects in the clause: initially unaccusative verbs form their causative with one *-s*, while initially transitive and unergative verbs form their causative with two *-s*. As a result, the causative of *Dug-* ‘to drink’ is *Dug-siis* (**Dug-is*) ‘to make drink’. In respect to this point, Oromo differs from Xamtanga. But what is relevant to our study is the fact that Oromo also allows the sequence *-s-s-s*, thus *Dug-siisis*. According to Dubinsky et al. (1988: 490), *Dug-siisis* has two possible interpretations: either ‘cause to make drink’ (with three underlying subjects, as we expect from the Oromo rule stated above) or ‘to force to drink’ (with two underlying subjects + the idea of forcing someone to do something). In the latter case, Dubinsky et al. propose to analyze the third *-s* as a reduplication of the causative morpheme with the meaning of an intensifier.

I would suggest that the situation is quite similar in Xamtanga, i.e. that the addition of *-s* to an already causativized verb form may be attributed to reduplication rather than to the suffixation of another causative morpheme. As far as meaning is concerned, my preliminary survey of Xamtanga shows that the reduplication of *-s* mainly implies ‘indirect causation’. This term is used by Mous (2004: 223-4) to refer to causative morphemes in Konso which specifically occur “to reflect a degree of indirectness between the action of the subject and the result”. In other words, indirect causation “assumes an extra factor, some indirect way of causing the action/event”. Thus in 3b ‘the sun’ is responsible for Bahir Dar to be hot but does not control its effect, while in 4b and 4c external parameters interfere with the realization of the action.

Given that the extra factor involved in indirect causation does not need to (and sometimes can not) be mentioned in the clause, the interpretation of Xamtanga’s multiple causative widely depends on the context: in 4c *zi-siss* was paraphrased ‘to make drink by using a material’, but the same causative in an other sentence was understood ‘to force to drink’. From this viewpoint, reduplication in Xamtanga also has the intensive function described in Oromo. However, as far as Xamtanga is concerned, I would think of intensive causation as a part of indirect causation.

References

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