A Semantic and Syntactic Analysis of Vietnamese Causatives
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1. Introduction

The causative construction is a structure with a complex predicate denoting the event of causation and the desired event brought about by the causer. If a language has an alternation between an analytical causative and a synthetic (morphological) causative, the former is predicted to denote indirect causation, and the latter, direct causation (Comrie 1989). Less is known about the variation in properties of analytical causatives in those languages which simply lack the morphological version—as in isolating languages, for example. In this paper, I present a semantic and syntactic analysis of the Vietnamese causative construction \textit{lành (cho)} ‘make’ as in (1), showing that this causative construction has both indirect and direct causation interpretations and both bi- and monoclausal properties. Following Duffield’s (1999) analysis of Vietnamese clause structure, I provide the syntactic analysis of the complement clause of the construction. The proposed structure of the construction, in turn, provides the means to evaluate the analysis of sentence-final modal-like elements by Duffield (1999).

(1) Tôi làm cho con chim bay
    1sg make CL bird fly
    ‘I made a bird fly’

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces basics of Vietnamese grammar and analyzes the semantics of the \textit{lành (cho)} construction. Section 3 presents syntactic properties of the construction. Section 4 introduces the IP structure proposed by Duffield (1999), and proposes a syntactic analysis of the \textit{lành (cho)} construction. Section 5 discusses the IP structure and analyses of the modal elements by Duffield in detail using the \textit{lành (cho)} construction, and suggests revision. Section 7 summarizes the findings.
2. Typological and Semantic Analyses
Việtnamese, which belongs to the Mon-Khmer language family, has three main dialects. The current study is based on the Northern dialect. It has isolating morphology, tone, SVO word order, and is head-initial. Moreover, as can be seen throughout the examples in the paper, tense marking is optional. This section examines semantics of the Vietnamese causative construction, làm (cho).

2.1. Analytical causative
The làm (cho) construction shows characteristics of analytical causatives. The construction has separate predicates for expressing the notions of causation and effect. Moreover, the argument structures of the causation predicate and the lower verb are maintained, as shown in (2) and (3).

(2) đá tan
ice melt
'Ice melt'
(3) Tôi làm đá tan
1sg make ice melt
'I made ice melt.'

Typologically, there are close mappings between analytical and indirect causatives, and between morphological and direct causatives. As an isolating language, Việtnamese lacks a morphological causative. A question arises whether the làm (cho) construction is limited to the expression of indirect causation. This question is discussed in detail in the next section.

2.2. Direct/Indirect causative
Even though the làm (cho) construction is an analytical causative, the construction can express both direct and indirect causation, depending on the degree of control on the part of the causee. When the causee is inanimate, the construction always expresses direct causation. In (4), the indication that the causation is direct comes from the fact that the caused event is entailed and cannot be cancelled. However, when the causee is animate (5), the construction preferentially expresses indirect causation. In particular, the cancellation of the effect does not lead to contradiction.

(4) #Tôi làm (cho) cây ngã nhưng nó không ngã
I make tree fall but it not fall
'I made a tree fall but it did not fall.'
(5) Tôi làm (cho) chó sủa, nhưng nó không sủa tiếng sủa gì cả
I make dog bark but it not bark sound at all
'I made the dog bark but it did not bark at all.'
Thus, the interpretation of the Vietnamese causative construction is ambiguous between direct and indirect causation. The choice of the interpretation crucially depends on the degree of control on the part of the causee. In the next section, I turn to the syntactic analysis of the construction.

3. Syntactic Analysis of Vietnamese Causative Construction

The goal of this section is to present the syntactic features of the làm (cho) construction. Typologically, analytical causatives tend to be associated with biclausal structure; indirect causation is a typical correlate of biclausality, while direct causation often corresponds to a monoclausal structure. However, as shown in the previous section, analytical causatives in Vietnamese could denote direct as well as indirect causation. This leads to two questions: (i) is the làm (cho) construction structurally ambiguous (monoclausal vs. biclausal), and (ii) if the construction is structurally ambiguous, is there a one-to-one correspondence between clausality and directness of causation? In this section, I show that the Vietnamese causative construction does show such structural ambiguity between bi- and monoclausality.

3.1. Biclausal properties

A biclausal analysis of the làm (cho) construction is based on adverbial placement, scope of negation, and the use of a sentential proform.

3.1.1. Adverbial placement

The làm (cho) construction can host two separate adverbials associated with causation and effect events, respectively. Sentence (6) shows this event modification with two temporal adverbials.

(6) Hôm qua Minh làm cho Mary đi vào tiệm ngày hôm nay
   yesterday Minh make Mary go into store today
   ‘Yesterday Minh made Mary go into a store today.’

The example of adverbial modification supports the biclausal analysis of làm (cho) construction.

3.1.2. Scope of negation

The làm (cho) construction can have the negation marker không appearing before either the causation predicate, or the effect predicate, leading to different interpretations. Sentence (7) shows the negation of the causation predicate and (8) shows the negation of the effect predicate.

(7) Tôi không làm đá tan
   I not make ice melt
   ‘I did not make the ice melt.’
(8) Tôi làm đá không tan
   I make ice not melt
   ‘I prevented the ice from letting (lit.: I made the ice not melt.)’
Evidence on the scope of negation also supports a biclausal analysis of the construction.

3.1.3. Làm như vậy proform

In the làm (cho) construction, làm như vậy ‘do so’ can replace the causation predicate as in (9) or the effect predicate as in (10).

(9) John làm cho Mary giết Sam và tôi đã ngạc nhiên vì anh ta làm như vậy
John make Mary kill Sam and I pst surprise that he did so
‘John makes Mary kill Sam and it surprised me that he did so.’

(10) John làm cho Mary giết Sam và tôi đã ngạc nhiên vì cô ta làm như vậy
John make Mary kill Sam and I pst surprise that she did so
‘John makes Mary kill Sam and it surprised me that she did so.’

In sum, adverbial placement, scope of negation and the use of a sentential proform all support a biclausal analysis of làm (cho) construction. However, there is also evidence supporting a monoclausal analysis of the construction.

3.2. Monoclausal properties

The arguments for the monoclausality of the làm (cho) construction come from negative polarity item licensing, the scope of được ‘can, manage to, be permitted to’, and binding.

3.2.1. Negative Polarity Items (NPI): gì cả ‘at all’

The distribution of NPIs supports a monoclausal analysis of the làm (cho) construction. In general, negative polarity items are licensed by clause-mate negation, as is the case in (11). The NPI gì cả is restricted to sentence-final position, as shown in (12).

(11) Tôi *(không) đọc sách gì cả
I not read book at all
‘I don’t read the book at all.’

(12) * Cô ấy không bảo gì cả tôi đọc sách
she not tell at all I read book
‘She does not tell me to read book at all.’

Therefore, when gì cả appears in a clear biclausal structure, negation should appear in the lower clause as well, as in (13). When negation appears in the main clause, the sentence is not grammatical, as in (14). Gì cả cannot appear before rằng ‘that’ either, because it would not be in the sentence-final position, as in (15).

(13) Cô ấy nói chúng nó [rằng tôi không đọc sách gì cả]
she say they that I not read book at all
‘She tells them that I don’t read the book at all.’

(14) * Cô ấy không nói chúng nó [rằng tôi đọc sách gì cả]
she not say they that I read book at all
‘She did not tell them that I read the book at all.’
Interestingly, in the *lâm (cho)* construction, *gi cả* can be licensed by negation both in the upper and the lower clauses, as sentences (16) and (17) show.

(16) Tôi làm cho cô ấy không đọc sách gì cả
    I make she not read book at all
    ‘I make her not read books at all.’

(17) Tôi không làm cho cô ấy đọc sách gì cả
    I not make she read book at all
    ‘I did not make her read the book at all.’

The distribution of NPIs suggests that the causative is monoclausal.

3.2.2. Scope of *được*

*Được* has different interpretations depending on where it occurs, namely ‘can, manage, be permitted to’. The interpretation most relevant to the current study is when *đều* appears sentence-finally as ‘can’.

(18) Tôi kiếm việc đươc
    I look-for work aux
    ‘I can look for work.’ (Duffield 1998, p99)

When *đều* appears sentence-finally in a clear biclausal structure, its scope is limited to the embedded clause. Therefore, the interpretation of the main predicate is not affected by *đều*, as (19) shows.

(19) John nói rằng Mary đi học đươc
    John say that Mary go study đươc
    ‘John said that Mary can go to school.
    *‘John can say that Mary go to school.’

In the *lâm (cho)* construction, however, *đều* affects the interpretation of the causation predicate, as shown by (20).

(20) John làm cho Mary đi học đươc
    John make Mary go study đươc
    ‘John can make Mary go to school.’
    *‘John makes Mary able to go to school’.

The scope of *đều* suggests that the causative is monoclausal.
3.2.3. Binding: nhau ‘each other’

Following standard principles of Binding Theory, we expect the anaphor nhau ‘each other’ to be bound in its governing category. In a clear biclausal structure, nhau should be bound within the lower clause, as in (21). If the binder appears in the main clause, with nhau in the embedded clause, then the sentence is ungrammatical, as in (22).

(21) Jane nói rằng chúng nó nhìn thấy nhau
‘Jane said that they saw each other.’

(22) *Chúng nó nói rằng nhau đã thắng
‘They said that each other won.’

However, in the làm (cho) construction the governing category of nhau is the whole clause. Therefore, both the causee and the causer can be the binder of nhau as (23) and (24) show.

(23) Tôi làm cho chúng nó nhìn thấy nhau
‘I made them see each other.’

(24) Chúng nó làm cho nhau thắng
‘They make each other win.’

In sum, NPI licensing, the distribution of được and reflexive binding all support a monoclausal analysis of the làm (cho) construction. On the other hand, adverbial placement, scope of negation, and sentential proform tests support a biclausal analysis of this construction. It remains to be seen if the structural ambiguity corresponds to the difference between direct and indirect causation. The preliminary data collected here do not support such a one-to-one mapping.

In the next section, I examine the syntactic structure of the complement clause of the làm (cho) construction, following Duffield’s (1999) analysis of Vietnamese clause structure.
4. Generalized IP Structure and the Causative Construction

4.1 Generalized IP structure of Vietnamese
Examining various syntactic phenomena, Duffield (1998, 1999) proposes the following IP structure for Vietnamese.

(25) topicalized XPs > Subject > Tense > Negation/Assertion > Verb
(Duffield 1999, p100)

Following Cinque (1998), Duffield (1999) argues that Vietnamese modals occupy different syntactic positions with different interpretations.

(26) epistemic modals > tense > deontic > alethic modals > aspectuals > VP
(Duffield 1999, p123)

Identified modal elements include both có thể and được as epistemic or alethic modals depending on their distribution, and phải ‘must’ as a deontic modal.

Let us now check how the proposed clause structure applies to the làm (cho) construction.

4.2. Applying IP structure (Duffield 1999) to the causative construction
On the assumption that the causative construction is biclausal, at least in some of its properties, a question arises concerning the level at which the complement clause of the làm (cho) construction is projected. As shown in (8), and repeated below, the negation marker không can appear in the lower clause, showing that the NegP is projected in that clause.

(27) Tôi làm đá không tan
I make ice not melt
‘I made the ice not melt.’

Moreover, modal elements can also appear in the lower clause as in (28), showing the ModalP projection in the lower clause.

(28) Tôi làm (cho) con chưa tôi có thể/phải ngừng khóc
I make child of I can/must stop cry
‘I make my child stop crying.’

However, of all the possible tense markers only sẽ (future) is partially allowed in the complement clause, as in (29)4.

(29) Tôi làm cho Jane sẽ/*đang/*đã đọc sách
I make Jane fut/prog/past read book
‘I make Jane read a book.’
Although further study is necessary, it is possible that sẽ is not a tense marker, but a modal. It was shown that the complement clause of the làm (cho) construction is projected to ModalP. Therefore, if sẽ is actually a modal, this is compatible with the current analysis.

Likewise, topicalization, còn...thì, is not allowed in the lower clause, as in (30). The ungrammatical sentence (30) contrasts with a clear biclausal sentence (31), where topicalization in the lower clause does not induce ungrammaticality.

(30) *Tôi làm cho còn Jane thì, cô ấy đọc sách
   I make TP Jane TP she read book
   ('As for Jane, I make Jane read book.')
(31) Tôi nói rằng còn Jane thì, cô ấy đọc sách
   I say that TP Jane TP she read book
   ‘As for Jane, I said that she reads books.’

Unlike a clear biclausal sentence, the complement clause of the làm (cho) construction is projected up to ModalP, but it does not have a TP or CP. It therefore represents a reduced structure, commonly observed in complement clauses, especially complements of modals or control verbs.

(32) Proposed structure of the complement clause of the làm (cho) construction

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CP
   Epistemic modals
   lam (cho)
   TP
   ModalP
   VP
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This section showed that the complement clause of the làm (cho) construction is projected to the ModalP following the IP structure given by Duffield (1999). Next, based on this finding I revisit the biclausal properties identified in section 3.1.

5. Revisiting Bi- and Monoclusal Properties
Section 3 showed bi- and monoclausal properties of the làm (cho) construction. First, biclausal properties were identified using the distribution of negation, adverbial placement and proform tests. The question to follow regarding negation is whether không negation is sentential or constituent. Sentences (33) through (35) show that không can appear before both the VP and modal, suggesting that không is constituent negation.
Thus, negation phenomena do not pose a problem for the proposed structure of the previous section.

The other two biclausal properties are adverbial placement, as in (6), and the làm như vậy sentential proform, as in (9) and (10). These tests, however, are sensitive to the propositional content (semantics) of the VP. Therefore, the two adverbials are licensed semantically rather than syntactically. Likewise, làm như vậy might be VP proform.

The evidence in favor of a monoclausal analysis of the làm (cho) construction, such as NPI licensing, reflexive binding, and the scope of được, could result from the absence of a TP or CP in the complement clause.

Next, based on the proposed structure of the complement clause of the làm (cho) construction, I examine the validity of the AssertionP (AsrP), and analyses of được and không (Duffield 1999).

6. Evaluation of Vietnamese IP structure (Duffield 1999)

One of the most interesting problems that Vietnamese poses for contemporary syntactic theories is the presence of sentence-final modal-like elements in an otherwise predominantly head-initial language. Sentence (36) shows that được appears sentence-finally, and its meaning overlaps with that of the alethic modal, có thể.

(36) Tôi (có thể) lái xe được
I can drive car can
‘I can drive a car.’

Trying to account for the aberrant distribution of được, Duffield notes the similar pattern for the negation marker không. When không appears sentence-finally with optional có, as in (37), it no longer signals negation. Instead, không serves as a question-marker in Yes/No questions.

(37) Hôm qua anh (có) đến nhà chỉ không?
Yesterday he Q go house you Q
‘Did he go to your house yesterday?’
In proposing a unified account of these sentence-final modal-like elements in an apparently head-initial language, Duffield suggests an analysis that relies on the interaction of formal (syntactic) and functional (parsing) principles, but without syntactic movement. The only syntactic requirement that is proposed is c-commanding relations. In other words, **được** and **không** are proposed to be licensed by c-commanding heads—**có thể** and **có** respectively. In the next section, I examine this proposal in detail, and show that it calls for revision.

### 6.1. **Có:** Examining the validity of Neg/AsrP (AssertionP) (Duffield 1999)

Duffield (1999) proposes that **có** heads the Neg/AsrP. The motivation for Neg/AsrP comes from the theory-internal evidence for the Assertion Phrase (Chomsky 1965, Klima 1964), and the language-specific fact that the interpretation of **có** is functionally determined; **có** is interpreted as an emphatic marker in declarative sentences, but as a question marker in interrogative sentences, as in (38) and (37).

(38) Hôm qua anh **không** (có) **đế**n **nhà** chi.
Yesterday he neg asr go house you
‘He didn’t go to your house yesterday.’

Moreover it was proposed that [±wh] features on the AsrP license the sentence-final **không** through c-command. What remains unclear, however, is whether **có** functioning as a question marker really occupies the same syntactic position as **có** functioning as an emphatic marker, as Duffield assumes. In fact, a closer examination of their distribution suggests that they occur in different syntactic positions.

In the preceding sections, I showed that the complement clause of the **lâm** (**cho**) construction is projected up to the ModalP. More specifically, it was shown that negation can appear within the complement clause. This predicts that **có** as an emphatic, and **có** as a question marker should be equally able to appear within the complement clause of the **lâm** (**cho**) construction. But this prediction is not borne out. Only the emphatic use of **có** is possible within the complement clause, as sentences (39) and (40) show.

(39) ?Minh **lâm** cho **cô** **Lan** **có** ān **hái-lố**
Minh make Miss Lan emp eat bribe
‘Minh made Miss Lan did take bribes.’

(40) *Minh **lâm** cho **cô** **Lan** **cô** **ăn** **hái-lố** **không**?
Minh make Miss Lan int eat bribe Q
‘Did Minh make Miss Lan take bribes?’
Sentence (40) contrasts with sentence (41), where the wh-word can appear within the complement clause. In other words, sentence (40) is not ungrammatical because of question formation within the complement clause. The sentence is ungrammatical because the complement clause is not projected up to the syntactic position where interrogative có occurs, contrary to the Neg/AsrP analysis.

(41) Minh làm cho John viết cái gì vậy?
Minh make John write what
‘What did Minh make John write?’

Moreover, there is clear evidence that interrogative có appears above TP.

(42) Minh có đã nói rằng cô Lan then không?
Minh int past say that Miss Lan shy Q?
‘Did Minh say that Miss Lan was shy?’

In short, interrogative có appears in a different syntactic position than emphatic có. Therefore, the argument that [+wh] features on the AsrP licenses the sentence-final không through c-command cannot be maintained.

Moreover, a closer examination of empirical data shows that positing the AsrP in Vietnamese is not well motivated (contra Duffield). If the emphatic có occurs in the Neg/AsrP as Duffield suggests, both the negation marker không, and có should be able to co-occur with modals. This prediction, however, is not borne out either. The negation marker không can co-occur with modals, but emphatic có cannot, as shown by (43) and (44).

(43) Tôi không phải đọc sách
I neg must read book
‘I don’t have to read the book.’
(44) Minh đã (*cô) phải (*cô) ăn hối-lở.
Minh past emp must emp eat bribe
‘Minh did have to eat bribe.’

If the AsrP in Vietnamese is unmotivated, this in turn undermines the argument that a c-commanding head in AsrP licenses the sentence-final không. The next section discusses the analysis of another sentence-final modal-like element được and shows that được does not support the c-command requirement either; the analysis has an overgeneralization problem.

6.2. Analysis of được
Duffield (1999) proposes that the sentence-final được is licensed by c-commanding có thể in the alethic modalP. Thus, it is predicted that sentence-final được should be licensed if a clause allows có thể in this position. This prediction, however, is not borne out. In both (45) and (46), có thể is allowed
within both the embedded and the main clauses. However, (45) shows that được is licensed only by có thể in the main clause. In contrast, (46) shows that được is licensed only by có thể in the embedded clause. This suggests that the c-commanding alethic modal có thể is not a sufficient condition for licensing được.

(45) John (có thể) làm cho Mary (có thể) đi học được.
    John can make Mary can go study được.
    ‘John can make Mary go to school.’
    *‘John makes Mary able to go to school’.

(46) John (có thể) nói rằng Mary (có thể) đi học được.
    John can say that Mary can go study được.
    ‘John says that Mary can go to school.
    *‘John can say that Mary go to school’.

Although I am not in a position to offer an alternative licensing condition for được, let me conclude by emphasizing the need to revise existing licensing conditions on the sentence-final elements in Vietnamese.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, I have presented a semantic and syntactic analysis of the Vietnamese causative construction. It was shown that the làm (cho) construction is an analytical causative with separate causation and effect predicates that maintain their argument structures. This construction has both direct and indirect causative readings. Moreover, the làm (cho) construction shows both mono- and biclausal properties, adding Vietnamese to the set of languages with restructuring in causatives (Shibatani 1976, Moore 1991, Wurmbrandt 2001). If the complement clause is analyzed in terms of reduced structure, it is no longer surprising that the làm (cho) construction is monoclausal in terms of TP and CP domains, with its complement clause projecting up to ModalP. The biclausal properties of the construction obviously come from the fact that the construction has two VPs, and the propositions associated with the two VPs induce biclausal properties.

The structure of the causative allowed us to reconsider an earlier proposal concerning Vietnamese clauses structure in general. Duffield’s (1999) proposed AsrP, and the analyses of the sentence-final modal elements được and không are problematic in light of the causative construction. In particular, it was shown that Duffield’s c-commanding condition leads to an overgeneralization problem.
Notes
1 I am indebted to Đặng Đệ and Hill Kimloan for their consultations on Vietnamese data. I am also grateful to Maria Polinsky and UCSD classmates for discussion of the paper.
2 For the full discussion of different interpretations depending on its distribution, please refer to Duffield (1998, 1999).
3 It might be possible that nhau is a logophor or not even a pronominal at all, considering the wide range of relational terms carrying out the roles of pronominals in Vietnamese. For the present paper, it is enough to show that the use of nhau leads to different grammaticality in clear biclausal and làm (cho) constructions.
4 Grammatical judgments for sê vary. One informant did not accept the sentence as grammatical at all; the other informant initially did not accept the sentence, but later began to accept it as grammatical.
5 Please refer to Duffield (1999) for the evaluation of the analyses of đoan of Simpson’s (1997) and Duffield (1998).
6 Có the is also used as an epistemic modal as mentioned in the section 4. When functioning as an epistemic modal, however, có the occurs before subject position.

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