Causation in Wolof

In this presentation, we want to expose both a canonical distribution of several markers of causation in the point of view of Shibatani & Pardeshi (2002) and the emergence of a specific suffix expressing a single meaning of sociative causation in Wolof, an Atlantic language spoken in Senegal.

In the literature of causative constructions, the semantics has received an important attention, as the different syntactic operations involving in causative derivation. The common meanings of causative constructions are direct vs. indirect, intentional vs. unintentional, and recently, sociative (Comrie, 1985, Dixon (2000) and Kulikov (2001)). The particularity of this last meaning is be included in a scale where the extremities are the direct / indirect opposition. In this view, Shibatani & Pardeshi (2002) described a semantic continuum of markers of causation. This continuum can be have different configurations according languages, and several markers can shown some semantics overlaps.

In this way, the five suffixes of causation in Wolof are a great illustration of this continuum, and also add a new way of observation. The causative suffix -e has direct meaning and, is limited to a handful of intransitive verbs (Cf. (1)). A productive way of deriving causative forms from intransitive verbs in Wolof is to add -al, implying a direct involvement of the causer in the event caused (Cf. (2)). Suffixes carrying a meaning of indirect causation are –loo and –lu (Cf. (3)). The suffix –loo occurs in typical causative constructions, it is not limited to intransitive verbs, and semantically implies indirect causation. The suffix –lu differs from –loo. With –lu, the referent of the subject is presented as having another participant, not mentioned in the construction, acting as the immediate agent.

Among these causative suffixes, the –le derivation, is specialized to the expression of a particular type of causation, namely sociative causation, in which the causer is not the only initiator or controller of the event, but crucially contributes to the realization of an event in which the causee takes an active part (‘help someone do something’) (Cf. (4)) (Voisin, 20002).

In the typological literature, sociative causation is typically presented as a possible reading of regular causative construction as do the others suffixes –al, –lu and –loo in Wolof, rarely as a specific marker as for –le.

In Rose & Guillaume (forthcoming), the same specificity is described for several South American languages. We can see partially the same features for this kind of derivation (e.g. a specific distribution of sociative marker on only one class of verbs, intransitive or transitive according languages). In Wolof and South American languages, markers of sociative causation are linked with an applicative marker. In South American languages, the sociative markers show a syncretism with an applicative derivation. In Wolof, the sociative marker is diachronically compounded with an applicative marker.

In their paper, following features of South American languages, the authors bring together sociative and applicative markers into the phenomenon of applicative / causative syncretism. In theses languages, the sociative marker has the same form of the applicative derivation. They postulate, according to the characteristics of theses languages, an extension of the applicative derivation to the sociative causative meaning. This explanation is the reverse of the hypothesis postulated by Shibatani and Pardeshi (2001). With the data of Wolof, we propose to confirm that applicative derivation is a possible source of sociative causation.
References


Wolof examples extracted from Voisin (2002 & forthcoming)

1. a. génn na ci diggu kër
   go.out PRF.S.3SG LOC yard
   ‘He/she went out in the yard.’

   b. génn-e na guro yu sëmkar yépp
   go out-CAUS PRF.S.3SG cola.nut LINK be.with.worms all
   ‘He/she took out all the cola nuts that had worms.’

2. a. Tan mi dal na ci médd mi.
   vulture DEF alight P3S LOC carrionDEF
   The vulture alighted on the carrion.

   b. Mu né ñu dal-al leen fii.
   N3S say N3P put.down-CAUS O3P here
   He says that they put them here.

3. a. ñaw naa roob
   sew PRF.S.1SG dress
   ‘I sewed a dress.’

   b. ñaw-lu naa roob
   sew-CAUS PRF.S.1SG dress
   ‘I had a dress sewn.’

   c. ñaw-loo naa ko roob
   sew-CAUS PRF.S.1SG O.3SG dress
   ‘I had him/her sew a dress.’

4. a. Tabax naa kër-am.
   build P1S house-POSS3S
   ‘I built his house.’

   b. Tabax-le naa ko kër-am.
   build-CAUS P1S O3S house-POSS3S
   ‘I helped him build his house.’