

# Causativization in Sinhala

## 1. The data

Causativization in Sinhala is sensitive to the lexical semantics of the base verb. Consider, first of all, causatives based on an unergative verb, (1), and an unaccusative verb, (2).

- (1) a. *sanath natəwə*  
 sanath.NOM dance.VOL.PRES<sup>1</sup>  
 'Sanath is dancing.'
- b. *wəddha sanathwə natəwəwə*  
 hunter.SG.NOM sanath.ACC dance.CAUS.VOL.PRES  
 'The hunter is making Sanath dance.'
- (2) a. *laməyawə wətuna*  
 child.SG.ACC fall.INV.PAST  
 'The child fell.'
- b. *miniha laməyawə wəttewwa*  
 man.SG.NOM child.SG.ACC fall.CAUS.VOL.PAST  
 'The man made the child fall.'

Notice that the causee is realized as an object in both (1b) and (2b). The situation is slightly different for transitive verbs. In (3), I show a causative based on a regular transitive, *a<sup>m</sup>bəwəwə* 'grind'.

- (3) a. *laksmi miris a<sup>m</sup>bəwəwə*  
 Laksmi.NOM chilli.PL.ACC grind.VOL.PRES  
 'Laksmi is grinding the chillies.'
- b. *amma (laksmiṭə kiyəḷə) miris a<sup>m</sup>bəwəwəwə*  
 mother.SG.NOM Laksmi.DAT by chilli.PL.ACC grind.CAUS.VOL.PRES  
 'Mother is having the chillies ground (by Laksmi).'

In (3b), the causee is realized as an optional oblique. On the other hand, ingestive transitive verbs involving physical intake such as *kanəwə* 'eat' take object causees, (4).

- (4) a. *asankə a<sup>m</sup>bə kəwəwə* b. *mamə asankəṭə a<sup>m</sup>bə kəwəwə*  
 Asanka.NOM mango.SG.ACC eat.VOL.PAST 1SG.NOM Asanka.DAT mango.SG.ACC eat.CAUS.VOL.PAST  
 'Asanka ate the mango.' 'I fed Asanka the mango.'

Note also that, in (4b), Asanka is unable to carry out the action of eating the mango unassisted, perhaps because he is a young child or an invalid. This nuance is suggested by the use of the verb 'feed' in the gloss. Ingestive transitive verbs such as *dhannəwə* 'know' involving sensory intake also express the causee as an object, (5).

- (5) a. *ohu thoreṭhuru dhannəwə* b. *niḷedhaariya ohuṭə thoreṭhuru dhannəwə*  
 3SG.NOM detail.PL.ACC know.VOL.PAST official.SG.NOM 3SG.DAT detail.PL.ACC know.CAUS.VOL.PAST  
 'He knows the details.' 'The official is informing him of the details.'

## 2. Alsina & Joshi (1991)

One theory intended to explain alternations in causee expression is that of Alsina & Joshi (1991) (A&J). Working broadly within the LFG framework, A&J assume that the causative is a three-place relation consisting of a causer, a causative patient, and a caused event, and hypothesize that two parameters determine whether the causative patient undergoes 'fusion' with the causee (Parameter 1) or with an 'affected' argument (Parameter 2) when the argument structures of the causative predicate and caused event are merged. A notable feature of A&J's approach is their treatment of physical-ingestive verbs: although the ingested material would appear to qualify as the affected entity in such an event, A&J stipulate that it is in fact the ingester which claims this status when argument fusion occurs in a causative based on this class of verb. They also account for the pattern found in one language, Malayalam, by setting both parameters to positive and making two stipulations: in this language, a two-place causative predicate is also available, plus Parameter 1 is blocked when the caused event contains an affected argument.<sup>2</sup>

A&J's theory works quite well for languages in which neither of the above stipulations is necessary, but otherwise comes across as rather ad hoc. At the very least, we need a more principled account of how the fusee is selected when a physical-ingestive verb is causativized. I would like to suggest, contra A&J, that the ingester is selected as the fusee in this type of causative construction not because it is, in some vague sense, the 'true' affected entity in the event, but rather *because it is also the causee*. In terms of A&J's theory, what this means in effect is that

<sup>1</sup> In the glosses, VOL stands for 'volitive' and INV for 'involitive'.

<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, the pattern for Sinhala can also be captured using A&J's approach if both parameters are set to positive and if the operation of Parameter 1 is restricted as above, though no two-place predicate is required in this language. Thus, the Sinhala causative instantiates a novel configuration of the options made available within A&J's parametric model. Note in particular that A&J's so-called Malayalam-specific restriction on Parameter 1 has turned out to apply to another, genetically-unrelated language as well. On the face of it, then, some progress has been achieved. At the same time, it must be conceded that this outcome obviously does nothing to mitigate the inherent shortcomings of A&J's theory itself, so that a satisfactory account of the Sinhala causative is still required.

both Parameter 1 and Parameter 2 conspire to select this entity as the fusee. The trouble is, of course, that there is no way of accommodating any such interaction between these two parameters within the theory in its current form.

### 3. Optimality Theory

The framework of OT (Prince and Smolensky 2004) provides us with an elegant means of doing just that, while also allowing us to maintain A&J's basic assumptions about how argument fusion takes place in a causative construction generally. Let us consider the Sinhala data once again. In (6) for intransitives, and (7) for transitives, I show the argument-structure representations corresponding to (1) through (5) earlier.<sup>3</sup> The 'fusee' argument is in bold.






- (6) a. *natəwənəwa* < [+ag, -aff] [-ag, +aff] < **[+ag, -aff]** >> (= 1b)  
 dance.CAUS.VOL.PRES
- b. *wəttəwəwa* < [+ag, -aff] [-ag, +aff] < **[-ag, +aff]** >> (= 2b)  
 fall.CAUS.VOL.PAST
- (7) a. *a<sup>m</sup>bərəwənəwa* < [+ag, -aff] [-ag, +aff] < [+ag, -aff] **[-ag, +aff]** >> (= 3b)  
 grind.CAUS.VOL.PRES
- b. *kəwəwa* < [+ag, -aff] [-ag, +aff] < **[-ag, +aff]** [-ag, +aff] >> (= 4b)  
 eat.CAUS.VOL.PAST
- c. *dhannəwəwa* < [+ag, -aff] [-ag, +aff] < **[-ag, +aff]** [-ag, -aff] >> (= 5b)  
 know.CAUS.VOL.PAST

Note that, because Asanka is an assisted causee in (4b), I propose that this causee should be analyzed not only as affected but also as *de-agentive*. Accordingly, it is labelled [-ag, +aff] rather than [+ag, +aff] in (7b).

It is possible to account for the Sinhala pattern if A&J's parameters are recast as the following OT constraints.

- FUSE: The causative patient fuses with a base entity
- AFF: The causative patient fuses with an entity marked [-ag, +aff]<sup>4</sup>
- CAUS: The causative patient fuses with the causee

The first constraint has the effect of ruling out candidates in which no fusion takes place at all, and therefore does not relate directly to either of A&J's parameters; however, AFF loosely corresponds to Parameter 2 (see fn. 4), while the third constraint, CAUS, corresponds to Parameter 1. Each candidate cell in the tableau below contains the argument structure of the base predicate only, with the fusee again indicated in bold. Note in particular the candidates associated with *kanəwa* 'eat': by ranking AFF and CAUS in the order indicated, I have ensured that, when two entities marked [-ag, +aff] are available as potential fusees, the one which is also the causee will always be preferred.

verb	candidates	FUSE	AFF	CAUS
<i>natənəwa</i> 'dance'	 <b>[+ag, -aff]</b>		*	
	[+ag, -aff]	*!		
<i>wəttənəwa</i> 'fall'	 <b>[-ag, +aff]</b>			
	[-ag, +aff]	*!		
<i>a<sup>m</sup>bərənəwa</i> 'grind'	<b>[+ag, -aff]</b> [-ag, +aff]		*!	
	 [+ag, -aff] <b>[-ag, +aff]</b>			*
	[+ag, -aff] [-ag, +aff]	*!		
<i>kanəwa</i> 'eat'	 <b>[-ag, +aff]</b> [-ag, +aff]			
	[-ag, +aff] <b>[-ag, +aff]</b>			*!
	[-ag, +aff] [-ag, +aff]	*!		
<i>dhannəwa</i> 'know'	 <b>[-ag, +aff]</b> [-ag, -aff]			
	[-ag, +aff] <b>[-ag, -aff]</b>		*!	*
	[-ag, +aff] [-ag, -aff]	*!		

### References

Alsina, A. and S. Joshi (1991) Parameters in causative constructions. In L. M. Dobrin, L. Nichols and R. M. Rodriguez (eds.) *Papers from the 27<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago: CLS, pp. 1-15.

Næss, Å. (2007) *Prototypical Transitivity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Prince, A. and P. Smolensky (2004) *Optimality Theory: Constraint Interaction in Generative Grammar*. Oxford: Blackwells.

<sup>3</sup> After Næss (2007) and others, henceforth I will be using binary-feature representations, e.g. [+ag, -aff], as a means of teasing apart ag(entity) and aff(ectedness). The rationale for this approach will become clear shortly.

<sup>4</sup> A&J do not specify in their formulation of Parameter 2 whether an affected entity must *also* be de-agentive. I assume that no such condition applies.