Lexical Valence Typology project:
Instructions for elicitation of causative-noncausative verb pairs

copyright © Johanna Nichols   1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005

johanna@berkeley.edu

[Data collection instructions as issued to GSR's and other project assistants. Publication of this project has begun but expansion of the database will continue indefinitely. The Lexical Valence project will be grateful for references to any publications in which you use this elicitation list, and for any comments on the list. If you are interested in contributing data to the project, it may be possible to arrange payment for your consultant and/or research assistant: please contact project director Johanna Nichols at the above address.]

1. Preliminaries.   The goal of this project is to typologize languages in terms of whether they tend to treat intransitives as basic and transitives as derived, vice versa, both, or neither. Pairs of verbs with causative and non-causative semantics are a good arena for testing for types, and we are eliciting or looking up a standard list of 18 pairs of verb glosses in a number of different languages. (The typology is described in J. Nichols, D. A. Peterson, and J. Barnes, 'Transitivizing and detransitivizing languages', *Linguistic Typology* 89:2.149-211, 2004.) Note that we seek causative and non-causative **semantics**; this may or may not correspond to causative morphology in your language.

It is best if the work can be done by a linguist experienced with the language working with a native speaker and consulting published dictionaries if they exist.

2. Verbs to elicit.   The project seeks (if possible) one pair of verbs for each of the 18 pairs of glosses listed below.   The descriptions 'causative' and 'non-causative' are semantic labels.

Only lexicalized verbs are sought. (If, for example, the target language has a verb 'laugh' but nothing like 'make laugh', just indicate that fact. Avoid getting your consultant to produce causative syntactic constructions like English *make laugh*. We are looking for pairs with both members lexicalized.) If any pair is lexically problematic or hard to render in the language, use one of the proxies instead. If there are several verbs corresponding to a gloss, use the most neutral or basic one; if more than one seem neutral and basic, record them all.

Here are the 18 pairs of verbs sought in the survey, their proxies, and notes giving survey instructions:

Non-causative	Causative	Proxies	Notes
1 laugh	make laugh, amuse, strike as funny	cry	
2 die	kill		

3 sit	seat, have sit, make sit	lie down; go to bed, put to bed	(a, b)
4 eat	feed, give food	drink, give to drink	(c)
5 learn, know	teach	understand, find out, grasp	(d)
6 see	show		
7 be/become angry	anger, make angry	annoy(ed)	(e)
8 fear, be afraid	frighten, scare		(e)
9 hide, go into hiding	hide, conceal, put into hiding		

Non-causative	Causative	Proxies	Notes
10 (come to) boil	(bring to) boil	cook	
11 burn, catch fire	burn, set fire	be aflame; char	(f)
12 break	break	split, shatter, smash	(g)
13 open	open	close	
14 dry	make dry	wet, clean; black, white	(h)
15 be/become straight	straighten, make straight	crooked, long, round, flat	(i)
16 hang	hang (up)	lean (incline), extend, project, protrude	(j)
17 turn over	turn over	turn, turn around, rotate, revolve, roll; shake, tremble; move; ascend, rise	(k)
18 fall	drop, let fall	fall down, fall over, etc.; sink	(l)

Notes:

(a)   For the causative, avoid verbs meaning 'set' or 'lay' with inanimate object. Unless there is explicit evidence to the contrary, assume that a verb glossed 'set' or 'lay' is used chiefly or even exclusively with an inanimate object.

(b)   For 'sit' as well as 'lie' and 'stand', many languages distinguish between position ('sit, be sitting') and assuming the position ('sit down, sit up'), i.e. between state and inceptive. For languages that make this distinction, attempt to use the inceptive verb as the non-causative for this pair.

(c)   For languages with separate verbs 'eat' and 'feed' for human and nonhuman S/O, use the human verbs. Several languages have different verbs for 'feed or give food to an adult, as when hostess gives food to guest', 'feed a child by putting food in its mouth', 'breast-feed a baby'. 'Feed' often has a metaphorical sense 'nourish, bring up, support financially'. Insofar as possible, attempte to find a verb meaning literally 'feed, give to eat' as a primary or at least salient sense.

(d)   For this pair it may be easiest to first look up 'teach' and then determine whether or not it is derivationally related to any one of the non-causative glosses given here. Avoid the activity verb 'study' (in the sense of 'work at', 'do homework'); the non-causative should be a verb of psychological state or change of state, or as close to that as you can come.

(e)   For (7) and (8), recorded derivational pairing with either stative or inceptive non-causative. Especially for these emotion verbs, languages vary in whether they chiefly lexicalize the non-causative as a state ('be afraid') or an inceptive ('take fright, get scared').

(f)   Preferred: 'burn' in the sense of 'catch/set afire, be aflame, burn up'. Avoid words glossed 'burn' for which a primary or salient sense is 'glow, shine, burn (of lamp)', 'light (torch)', etc. In many languages, 'burn' is not distinct from 'roast, bake' or even 'cook'.

(g)   First choice: stick-like object snaps in two. Second choice: glass or pottery vessel breaks (shatters).

(h)   The non-causative is a state or quality; in the causative, human action indirectly produces a change in state or quality. If the only transitive verb for 'dry' seems to mean primarily 'hang up, hang out' (e.g. to dry), use a proxy.

(i)   Verbs of shape or similar physical configuration are additional proxies.

(j)   These verbs involve the position of the S/O, and the positions do not involve defiance of gravity or inertia; the non-causatives are not primarily verbs of motion. Avoid using 'stand' for this set, as standing involves some defiance of gravity or inertia.

(k)   Verbs of motion in place; the object defies gravity or inertia.

(l)   Motion in response to gravity.

3. Information to record.   Please record the following things:

(1)   The verb pairs in citation form, in transcription or standard orthography as you prefer, and their glosses.

(2)   Morphological analysis of the pairing, using this classification if possible:

• The causative member of the pair is derived (and the non-causative is not).

• The non-causative is derived (and the non-causative is not).

• Both are derived.

• There is no difference between the two (other than valence).

• There is a difference of ablaut or the other internal alternation, for which it cannot easily be determined which form is basic and which derived.

• There is a difference of conjugation class or the like, i.e. a difference of inflectional paradigm, but no derivational difference.

• Both members of the pair are compounds, phrasal verbs, or the like, with any conjugation done on an auxiliary; and the two differ in having different auxiliaries.

• The non-causative is an adjective, the causative a verb.

• The pair is suppletive.

Note that more than one of these kinds of pairing can co-occur. For instance, a pair can be suppletive and also have the regular derivational morphology on one or both members of the pair.

If there are any difficulties with this classification, discuss that in your report.

(3)   The elicited sentences, if you do elicitation.

4. Suggested elicitation protocol. Standard sentences are given below for eliciting the 18 verb pairs. Sessions begin by eliciting two common personal names in the language, and these are then used in place of X and Y in the following sentences. The investigator is free to vary tense and aspect categories, nouns, and names if this helps create a more natural context, and in general the investigator is free to depart from the list if the native speaker suggests better contexts for the verbs.

1.   X laughed
2.   Y made X laugh

3.   X died
4.   Y killed X

5.   X sat down
6.   Y seated X, gave X a seat

7.   X ate (an apple / a mango / meat)
8.   Y fed X (an apple / a mango / meat)

9.   X is learning English
10.   Y is teaching X Englishs

11.   X saw Y's car
12.   Y showed X his / her car

13.   X is angry
14.   Y made X angry

15.   X is afraid
16.   Y frightened X

17.   X hid
18.   Y hid X

19.   The water boiled. (or: Water boils at 100˚ C.)
20.   X boiled water

21.   X's house burned up (down). (X's house caught fire.)
22.   Y burned down X's house. (Y set fire to X's house.)

23.   The pencil (stick) broke.
24.   X broke the pencil

25.   The window opened
26.   X opened the window

27.   The dishes dried (are dry).
28.   X dried the dishes

29.   The wire straightened out (was straight, became straight)
30.   X straightened the wire

31a.   The towel (shirt, rope) hung from the branch (nail, beam, line)
32a.   X hung the towel (shirt, rope) on the branch (nail, beam, line)

31b.   The pole (shovel) leaned against the wall
32b.   X leaned the pole (shovel) against the wall

33.   The boat (basket, chair) turned over
34.   X turned the boat (basket, chair) over

35.   The stone fell (down)
36.   X dropped (let fall) the stone