On the Nature of Synonymy in Causative Expressions*

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1. In recent issue of *Language Research* (vol. 10, no. 1), In-Seok Yang attempted to show that the two Korean causative forms, the productive *-key ha-ta* construction and the lexical causative, are synonymous. To my mind Yang did not succeed in showing that they are indeed truly synonymous, and I still maintain that they are not, as even original proponents of the synonymy hypothesis, e.g. G. Lakoff, no longer maintain that even the English *cause* form and the corresponding lexical causative are truly synonymous.[1] Rather than arguing against Yang's paper point by point, which I don't think would be very productive[2], I want to show in a rather informal manner how one might proceed in explicating the semantic differences between the productive form and the lexical causative.

To begin with, we might try a simple test by way of finding out whether or not two lexical items or two sentences are truly synonymous. The test involves the two sentences in question conjoined with *but*, having one in the affirmative and the other in the negative. If the entire sentence involves contradiction, the two sentences are synonymous, and if not, they are not truly synonymous. The English words *pediatrician* and *baby doctor* [3] are considered synonymous by the speakers of English whose vocabulary contains both of them, and the distinction between them can be considered to be "a matter of style and use". That is, while in a professional presentation given at an American Medical Association meeting one tends to opt for *pediatrician*, in a conversation with a small child, *baby doctor* may be chosen. In other words, *pediatrician* and *baby*

*Thanks are due to Hyun-Oak Kim, a linguistics graduate student at USC, for providing me with some of the example sentences contained in this paper, and verifying the interpretation of the data for me.

[1] Different versions of this paper were presented at the University of California at Santa Cruz and at the University of California at Berkeley in 1975. I am grateful to the comments given to me by George Lakoff and Karl Zimmer and others at Berkeley.

[2] This is partly because the terms such as 'direct causation' and 'indirect causation' used by Yang and my earlier papers Yang refers to are extremely vague. I have since then redefined these notions in a little more precise way (see Shibatani 1973).

[3] The form *baby doctor* used in this paper refers to the one with the 1-3 stress pattern rather than the one with the 2-1 stress pattern.

doctor fit the description that Yang used in characterizing the distinction between the productive causative and the lexical causative. Now, a pair of sentences involving *pediatrician* and *baby doctor* pass the synonymy test, as both of the following sentences clearly involve contradiction.

(1) a. *Mary is a pediatrician, but she is not a baby doctor.
b. *Mary isn't a pediatrician, but she is a baby doctor.

A pair of active and passive sentences, a celebrated example of synonymous sentences in the history of transformational grammar, behave the same way, as we find both of the following sentences contradictory.

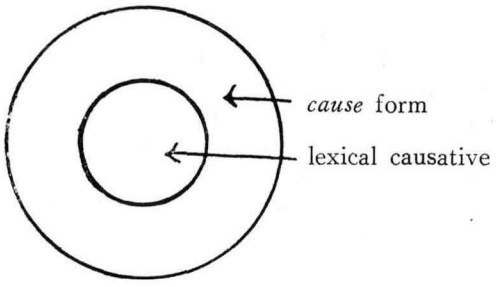
(2) a. *John loves Mary, but Mary isn't loved by John.
b. *John doesn't love Mary, but Mary is loved by John.

2. The situation is a little different with pairs involving the *cause* form and the lexical causative in English. As observed in (3) and (4), while one sentence in each pair involves contradiction, the other does not, indicating that the pairs are not truly synonymous like the one involving an active sentence and a passive sentence.

(3) a. *John stood the child up, but he didn't cause the child to stand up.
b. John caused the child to stand up, but he didn't stand him up.
(4) a. *The mother bathed the child, but she didn't cause him to bathe.
b. The mother caused the child to bathe, but she didn't bathe him.

What the situation here shows is that while the lexical causative expression implies the productive expression with *cause*, the reverse does not hold true. That is, if one says that he bathed the child, he implies that he caused the child to bathe, but even if one says that he caused the child to bathe, he does not necessarily imply that he bathed the child. In other words, the *cause* form expresses a more general causative situation than the lexical causative form, which expresses a specific mode of causation. The relation between the two forms, then, is that of inclusion; the range of the meaning of the more general *cause* form includes that of the more specific lexical causative form. Schematically represented, the relation looks like the following:

(5) Inclusion relation



The same situation just observed holds between the words *doctor* and *pediatrician*, as the former is a more general term than the latter. All pediatricians are doctors but all the doctors are hardly pediatricians. Thus, the following asymmetrical situation obtains.

(6) a. *Mary is a pediatrician, but she is not a doctor.
b. Mary is a doctor, but she is not a pediatrician.

The verb phrases *drive to school* and *go to school* show the same pattern; driving to school implies going to school but not vice versa.

(7) a. *John drove to school, but he didn't go to school.
b. John went to school, but he didn't drive to school.

Now, no one wishes to say that *doctor* and *pediatrician* or *drive to school* and *go to school* are synonymous. The fact that two processes or activities end up with the same result is no guarantee that they are the same processes or activities. Similarly, that two expressions share certain entailments is no guarantee that they are synonymous. That John got to school is entailed by both *John went to school* and *John drove to school*, but they are hardly synonymous. By the same token, although that the child got himself bathed is entailed by both *The mother bathed the child* and *The mother caused the child to bathe*, it is no guarantee that the two sentences are synonymous; and in fact that sentence (4b) does not involve contradiction shows that they are not. Thus, to say that the *cause* form and the corresponding lexical causative are synonymous is similar to the saying that *doctor* and *pediatrician* as well as *drive to school* and *go to school* are synonymous.

3. The situation with the causative forms in Korean and Japanese appears even worse. Unlike the relation between the *cause* form and the lexical causative in English, the lexical causatives in Korean and Japanese do not imply what is expressed by the corresponding productive forms. First observe the following data:

(8) Korean
a. emeni-nun ai-eykey os-ul iphyessciman, ipkey haci-nun an hayssta.
b. emeni-nun ai-eykey os-ul ipkeyhayessciman, iphici-nun an hayssta.

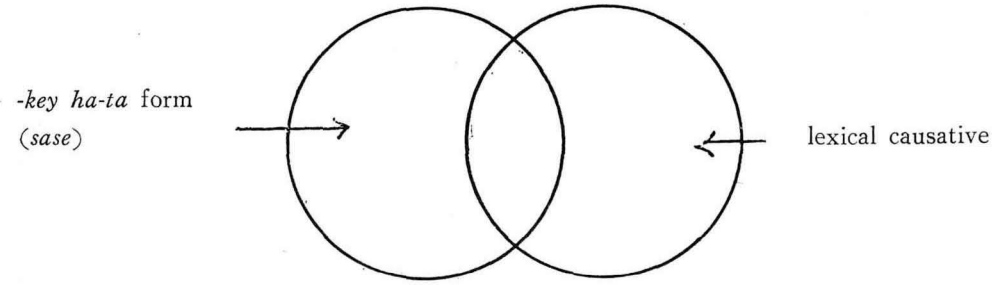
(9) Japanese
a. Hahaoya wa kodomo ni huku o *kise* ta ga, *ki-sase* wa sinakatta.
'Though the mother dressed the child, she did not have him put on the clothes.'
b. Hahaoya wa kodomo ni huku o *ki-sase*-ta ga, *kise* wa sinakatta.
'Though the mother had the child put on the clothes, she did not dress him.'

What the data given above show is that unlike the English pair involving the *cause* form and the corresponding lexical causative, the Korean lexical causative *iphi-ta* does not imply *ip-key ha-ta* just in the same way as the Japanese lexical causative *kise-ru*

does not imply *ki-sase-ru*. The same kind of relation holds between *pediatrician* and *oculist*, or between *drive to school* and *walk to school*, as neither the first form nor the second form implies the other. Thus, again to say that *iphi-ta* and *ip-key ha-ta* are synonymous or mere stylistic variants is like saying that *pediatrician* and *oculist*, or *drive to school* and *walk to school*, are synonymous.

It is true that both *pediatrician* and *oculist*, as well as *drive to school* and *walk to school*, share certain semantic properties; however, they are sufficiently distinct. The same is true in the case of *iphi-ta* and *ip-key ha-ta*, as indicated by the well-formedness of the sentences in (8). The semantic relation between the two forms in this case, then, is the intersecting relation, schematically represented below.

(10) Intersecting relation



In order for two forms to be truly synonymous it must be the case that the interchangeability between them holds in all possible contexts without changing the truth value and the eatailments. In the case of *pediatrician* versus *baby doctor*, the interchangeability appears to hold in any context. Thus, despite the fact that replacing one form for the other may be stylistically undesirable, it does not affect the truth value or the entailments of the sentence. The same is not the case with Korean lexical causatives and their corresponding *-key ha-ta* forms. For example, the sentence *Haksayng-tul-un kyoswu-eykey/lul cha-eyse nayli-key ha-ess-ta* 'The students had/made the professor come out of the car' entails that the professor was alive at that particular time when the professor came out of the car, but the corresponding sentence *Haksayng-tul-un kyoswu-lul cha-eyse nayli-ess-ta* 'The students brought the professor out of the car' does not necessarily entail that the professor was alive. Thus, while *nayli-ta* form (the causative version of *nayli-ta*). can be used in the context where the causee was not alive, using the *nayli-key ha-ta* form in the same context will not do. The same holds true between the Japanese counterparts *oro-su* and *ori-sase-ru*. This very fact and the fact that the sentences in (8) and (9) involve no contradiction should suffice to show that it is unwarranted to consider the lexical causative to be synonymous with the corresponding productive causative form in Korean and Japanese.

4. Having seen what kinds of semantic relations exist between the productive causative

form and the lexical causative, a difficult task that awaits us now is the characterization of the meaning difference between the two types of causative form. Since trying to explicate all of the possible semantic differences goes beyond the scope of this paper, we address ourselves only to the most salient features. For a more complete and detailed discussion, readers may be referred to my dissertation (Shibatani 1973).

The basic semantic difference between the lexical causative and the productive form in Korean (and also in Japanese and in certain English constructions) has to do with how the causer effects the caused event. In a situation where the causee is involved as a non-volitional entity, the causer must physically manipulate the causee in effecting the caused event. It is this situation involving **manipulative causation** that the lexical causative usually expresses. Thus, forms such as *iphi-ta* 'dress' *nayli-ta* 'bring down' are not normally appropriate if the situations were such that the causer did not physically manipulate the causee.

Another mode of causation frequently observed involves the causee as a volitional, agentive entity, and the causer as an agent giving direction to the causee. The productive *-key ha-ta* forms (and the Japanese *sase* and English *have* forms) normally express this **directive causative** situation.[4] In contrast to the lexical causatives given above, the productive forms, *ip-key ha-ta* and *nayli-key ha-ta* require a situation where the causee functions as an agent. It is due to this distinction that *nayli-key ha-ta* cannot be used in case the causee refers to a dead man. By the same token if the causee refers to an inanimate object such as a package, *nayli-key ha-ta* cannot be used. In the case of the lexical forms, on the other hand, they describe a situation where the causer manipulates the causee himself in effecting the caused event; as a consequence even an inanimate entity may occur as a causee. Thus, *nayli-ta* can occur with a dead man or a package as a causee. Compare:

(11) a. na-nun ai-lul cha-eyse nayli-key hayessta.
b. *na-nun cim-ul cha-eyse nayli-key hayessta.
(12) a. na-nun ai-lul cha-eyse nayliessta.
b. na-nun cim-ul cha-eyse naliessta.

5. While what has been said above about the directive-manipulative distinction holds generally true, there are certain cases where productive forms express manipulative causation, and there are certain other cases where lexical causatives express directive causation. We look at the former case first.

What Yang noted (p. 98) about certain lexical gaps had been already pointed in my 1973 dissertation. That is, many languages that have both productive and lexical

[4] In addition to this situation, the productive form is used to express a situation that involves neither manipulative nor directive causation. Such a situation, termed *indirect causative situation* in Shibatani (1973), involves the causer's doing something indirect, e.g. the husband's watching TV all day, which brings about a certain consequence, e.g. the wife's becoming mad.

causative forms may not have certain lexical causatives to be matched with the productive forms. In Korean there seem to be no corresponding lexical causatives for constructions such as *kil-key ha-ta* 'cause to be long' and *masi-key ha-ta* 'cause to drink'. Also even if there are corresponding lexical causatives, they may impose a severe restriction on the choice of possible causees that can occur with them. For example, unlike the English verb *stand up*, the Japanese verb *tate-ru* does not permit an animate entity to be its causee. So, while *boo o tate-ru* 'stand a stick up' is possible *kodomo o tate-ru* 'stand a child up' is not.

In situations like these, languages generally allow the productive construction to take over the function of the lexical form in expressing the manipulative causative situation in addition to the directive situation. Thus, the Japanese form *kodomo o tat-ase-ta* 'made the child stand up' is ambiguous between the directive causative reading and the manipulative causative reading. Also what Yang says about the Korean forms such as *masi-key ha-ta* is generally corrcect. However, what Yang draws as a conclusion from this kind of phenomenon is unacceptable. First of all, we can talk about the presence or absence of synonymy only when we have two forms to compare. When there is only one type of form available we cannot say anything as to its synonymity. Secondly, the fact that one type of form takes over the function of the other in a certain well-definable situation does not allow us to conclude that that function is inherent in that type of form elsewhere, and that the corresponding members of the two types are generally synonymous. Suppose that in a small isolated village, only a pediatrician was available as a medical doctor. Under this unfortunate circumstance, the pediatrician would have to function as an oculist, as a gynecologist, and so on. However, even in such a situation the villagers cannot regard the pediatricians elsewhere the same as oculists or gynecologists. By the same token, even if the productive causative form may take over the function of the lacking lexical counterpart, one cannot consider the pairs of lexical and productive causatives to be synonymous elsewhere.

6. The situations in which lexical causatives express non-manipulative causation are more difficult to characterize than the opposite situations. Although details must be worked out further, the notion of "conventionalized purpose" seems to play the key role in characterizing this type of situation. That is, if a causative situation is associated with a conventionalized purpose, then a lexical causative sentence can be used to describe such a situation even if no physical manipulation is involved. In order to see this, compare the following sentences:

(13) ku yecwuin-un sonnim-ul ichung-ey ollyessta.

(14) ku yecwuin-un sonnim-ul sikthak-ey ollyessta.

Strictly speaking, (13) can express two distinct situations; in one situation, the mistress physically carried the guest upstairs (the manipulative situation), and in the other, more normal, situation, she welcomed the guest and ushered him in to go upstairs (the

directive situation). Compared to (13), (14) can express only one situation where the mistress physically lifted the guest onto the table (the manipulative situation).

The pair of sentences (13) and (14) illustrate an interesting problem; namely, that the same lexical forms do not necessarily express the same range of meaning. Depending on the context in which the form appears, its range of meaning is affected. Our problem is to find out exactly when a lexical causative sentence may express a directive causative situation. By comparing (13) and (14), it is noticed that while the causative situation, i.e. having a guest upstairs of a restaurant, etc., in (13) has a conventionalized and well-defined purpose, i.e. entertaining, causing a guest to be top of a table has no conventionalized purpose associated with it. That is, when a particular causative situation is associated with a conventionalized purpose, a lexical causative form may be used to express non-manipulative, directive causation.

The same observation holds in a large number of lexical causatives in English and Japanese. For example, the lexical causative verb *bring* in English used in the following sentences normally express non-manipulative, directive causative situations:

(15) a. We brought Chomsky to our campus.

b. This year, we brought three hundred foreign students to USC.

Compared to these sentences, the following express non-directive, manipulative situations (in this case taking or escorting someone to places):

(16) a. We brought our parents to our campus.

b. We brought foreign students to our house.

While causing scholars and students to come to an academic institution has conventionalized purposes associated with it, causing one's parents to come to an academic institution or causing students to come to one's house has no well-defined and conventionalized purposes associated with it. Though it probably is the case that the notion of "conventionalized purpose" may not explain the entire case for the use of lexical causatives in expressing non-manipulative, directive causation, it seems to play an important role in explaining the differences in the possible meaning exhibited by pairs of sentences such as (13) and (14) in Korean and (15) and (16) in English.

7. Finally, a few methodological notes. It should be clear by now that a lexical causative sentence and its corresponding productive causative sentence are by no means synonymous, despite the fact that in some well-definable situations one form may function in a similar way as the other. From a methodological point of view, a kind of approach taken by In-Seok Yang is neither interesting nor productive in pursuing a scientific endeavor. That is, it helps us reveal the nature of language in no way to conclude that members of certain sentence pairs are synonymous by observing that they mean roughly the same, by brushing aside possible meaning differences and relegating the study of them to the field of stylistics, and by noting that one form is sometimes used in the function of the other. As a scientist, the linguist is charged with the task of ferreting

out even minute semantic properties of each grammatical sentence and relating them to a well-formed unit of speech sound. Furthermore, there is a great difference between saying that two forms are used interchangeably or synonymously and saying that under specific, well-defined circumstances, one form may take over the function of the other. Again, it is a linguist's task to determine, by observing the data carefully, whether a particular phenomenon is systematic or random, and to explicitly state the regularities that govern the systematic aspect of the phenomenon. It is noteworthy at this point that in recent years many linguists have begun to adopt the kind of attitude described above in dealing with fuzzy areas of grammar. For example, recent works by George Lakoff, John Robert Ross, and others on fuzzy grammar, on literal versus indirect meaning, on variable rules, etc. clearly show that they are seriously attempting to ferret out regularities in the phenomena that had been neglected or simply brushed aside by early transformational grammarians as the problem of performance and of no importance to the theory of linguistic competence. It is indeed about time that we linguists took a professional attitude toward linguistic phenomena as scientists.

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