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Increasing the valency of motion verbs

Abstract:

Typologies of voice or valency-change usually consider two main types of valency-increasing operations: causatives and applicatives (e.g. Haspelmath & Müller-Bardey 2004, Kulikov 2011). But a number of constructions in various languages seem to fall between these two categories, e.g. the portative construction, exemplified in (1b), which typically takes intransitive motion verbs as a base. Conceptually the portative construction contains an element of (co-motional) causation, making it similar to a causative construction. But unlike the causative construction, exemplified in 1c, the it is not the causer argument that is introduced to the argument structure, but rather the causee, since the prototypically inanimate causee could not be the agentive subject of the base intransitive construction containing a motion verb. Nor is the portative an example of a prototypical applicative construction.

(1)  Caddo (Melnar 1998: 170)

a.  ci-ʔa=d(ih)-ʔa?
1A-go-FUT
'I will go.'

b.  ci-ni-ʔa=d(ih)-ʔa?
1A-PORT-go-FUT
'I will take it.'

Purepecha (Capistrán-Garza 2015: 152)

c. ni-tára-a-ka=ni tumpí-ni
go-CAUS-FUT-1=1SG.S boy-O
'I will make the boy go.'

In this talk, I will present the results of a cross-linguistic study of 50 genealogically diverse languages which looks at the various ways the valency of motion verbs can be increased.
Valency-increasing operations are almost always lexically restricted to certain verbs or verb classes and interact with these in different ways. The talk therefore focuses on a single class of verbs which can provide good examples of a greater variety of operation types than we are perhaps used to considering. The valency-increasing operations in the sample languages have been analysed and classified in order to discover the range of operation types that occur with motion verbs and determine whether the common categories of causative and applicative are sufficient to describe this range operation types.

Based on the results of the study, I will argue that we should expand our standard inventory of valency-increasing operation types beyond causatives and applicatives and consider interactions with verb classes, differences in argument structure and complex event structure as well as conceptual differences between the operation types in out classifications.

References:


