

Hoda Haj Obeid (DE): The Acquisition of English Lexical Causatives by Native Speakers of Syrian Arabic

The goal of the study is to investigate the acquisition of English lexical causative verbs by native speakers of Syrian Arabic L2 learners of English. Agentive lexical causatives are formed from unergative verbs with the addition of an Agent-causer (see Horvath & Siloni 2011). Compare (1b) with its causative counterpart in (1a):

1. a. The general marched the soldiers to the tents.
- b. The soldiers marched to the tents.

In English, lexical causativization is restricted to a small set of manner-of motion verbs, e.g., *run, swim, trot, walk, race, march, leap, jump, fly*. The causative use of these verbs must be accompanied by a directional prepositional phrase, e.g., *the general marched the soldiers to the tents*/**the general marched the soldiers* (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995). Other agentive verbs are causativized periphrastically in English, e.g., *I spoke to him/he made me speak to him*. Syrian Arabic exhibits a wider range of lexical causatives that are not restricted to manner-of-motion verbs, and whose input verbs can be either transitive or intransitive.

As languages differ in their employment and patterns of lexical causativization, L2 learners of different linguistic backgrounds were reported to have learnability issues regarding the lexical causativization of agent verbs. Research has shown that English L2 learners of Spanish, and Hindi-Urdu L2 learners of English tend to overgeneralize lexical causative patterns from their L1 into L2 contexts, particularly when encountering verbs that are lexically causative in their native language but lack direct equivalents in L2 (Montrul, 2001; Helms-Park, 2001; Cabrera and Zubizarreta, 2005). The main goal of the study is to examine how Syrian Arabic speakers translate Syrian Arabic lexical causative structures into English in two conditions: with verbs that are lexically causative in both English and Syrian Arabic, and with verbs that are lexically causative in Syrian Arabic but not in English.

Twelve Syrian Arabic L2 learners of English (9 advanced, 3 upper-intermediate) completed a 20-sentence translation task involving, in addition to distractors, two verb categories: verbs that are lexically causated in both English and Syrian Arabic, e.g., *run, swim, walk, jump, dance*, and verbs that are lexically causated in Syrian Arabic but not in English, e.g., *sleep, laugh, cry, wait, crawl*.

Results show a clear preference for periphrastic translations, accounting for 75% of all cases (90 out of 120). Lexical translations are extremely rare, appearing only for *swim* and *walk* (2 out of 12 each), making up just 3.3% of the total. Participants also produced non-causative, non-literal translations, which are more common with the verbs *dance* and *swim*, though these accounted for only 20% of the total. The results imply that L1 did not affect participants' L2 performance. They also seem to go for periphrastic causative constructions mode as a default, irrespective of the condition.

Key words: Lexical causatives, periphrastic causatives, second language acquisition, Syrian Arabic, translation task.

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