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In: Kudrnáčová, Naděžda. *Caused motion: secondary agent constructions*. Vyd. 1. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2013, pp. 37-38

ISBN 9788021063730

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/128513>

Access Date: 28. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

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5 SA Constructions as Verb-Class-Specific Constructions

Intransitive verbs and their transitive counterparts have the same form and it is often difficult to decide which use is primary and which is derived. Nevertheless, the status of self-agentive manner of motion verbs is obvious: these verbs are inherently monadic and “enter into a real process of ‘causativization’, in the sense that the causative form is the derived form” (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1994: 72). That is, their intransitive use is primary and their transitive causative use is secondary (cf. also Dixon 1991: 291–293, Wunderlich 2006: 72–73). Their transitive causative use is often described as involving the augmentation of their argument structure by adding a causer who initiates and controls the activity (e.g., Dixon 2000, Wunderlich 2006), which is a feature of prototypical lexical causatives.¹⁶ Nevertheless, self-agentive manner of motion verbs employed in SA constructions fall outside of the class of prototypical lexical causatives. It should be realized that the causativization of these verbs involves the fulfilment of strict requirements imposed on the verbs’ semantic structures. What is equally important is that the requirements derive from a specific character of the causal structuration encoded in SA constructions themselves (causal structuration in SA constructions in relation to verbal semantics will be dealt with in Chapter 6).

It thus seems more appropriate to take SA constructions as verb-class-specific constructions (in the sense of Croft 2003). The reasons are as follows: (a) SA constructions include a narrowly defined set of verbs and (b) the resulting meaning is derived from the interaction between the meaning of the verbs and the meaning of the construction, involving a very specific causal structuration (as regards the form of SA constructions, directional phrases can be missing, depending on the type of scenario).

In the light of these facts, the transitive causative use of inherently monadic self-agentive manner of motion verbs is marked (cf. also Dušková 1976a). Owing to (a) the specificity of their causal structuration, (b) the heavy restrictions imposed on the repertory of verbs and, last but not least, (c) the more or less well-established character of scenarios, SA constructions express a relatively limited range of caused motion situations. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995: 189) contend that the

¹⁶ In a valency-based approach the second complement of the transitive verb in a sentence such as *He marched the prisoners* is thus taken as the patient (see, e.g., Hajičová 1993).

“phenomenon is more widespread than the few examples cited in the literature suggest, although its relatively limited use suggests that speakers of English are conservative about exercising this option.” Filipović (2007: 147), however, proposes an alternative account. She points out that the fact that “there are so few verbs that are permitted in this construction suggests that it is not felt to be the natural way of expressing the kind of situations those expressions could potentially refer to.” If this construction is used, it is because the whole scenario is productive, evoking the whole context of the typical causative use of a given verb (2007: 148).