

Two types of external causation and the causative alternation in Romance

Delia Bentley
The University of Manchester

Scope and aims of this talk

Three groups of verbs identified by **the distribution of the morpheme SE** in the **causative alternation** in Romance (Italian and French): +SE; \pm SE; -SE (Zribi-Hertz 1987).

- An analysis of the \pm SE variation.
- What does the Italian and French evidence suggest about the causative alternation?

Existing research

Lexicalist (also called **projectionist**) and **constructionist** accounts differ in terms of whether event decomposition is located in the lexicon or in syntax (see, e.g., Levin/Rappaport Hovav 1995; Bentley 2006 for projectionist accounts and Folli/Harley 2005; Labelle/Doron 2010; Alexiadou et alii 2006 for some examples of constructionist accounts).

There is **no agreement** on

- which - or indeed how many - **atoms of meaning** are relevant to the distribution of SE (process vs. result: see, e.g., Zribi-Hertz 1987; Folli/Harley 2005; Labelle/Doron 2010; Cennamo 2015; external-internal causation: e.g., Levin/Rappaport Hovav 1995; Alexiadou et alii 2006, etc.);
- the direction the operation underlying the alternation.

Claims

Taking a projectionist approach (Dowty 1979, Jackendoff 1983, Foley and Van Valin 1984, Kiparsky 1997, Van Valin and LaPolla 1997, etc.) and assuming that productive morphosemantic operations are monotonic (Kiparsky 1982, Koontz-Garboden 2012)...

- **Two types of anticausativization** and a **labile causative alternation** in Italian and French.
- A distinction between **two classes of verbs of external causation**.
- The key to an adequate account of the constituency of the three groups, and the variation between Italian and French, is in the **lexicon** and **how it interfaces with syntax**.

Terminological issues

By **causative verb** I mean a verb which allows a causative paraphrase

(1a) Maria ha **rotto** la sedia. (Italian)

Mary has broken the sedia

‘Mary broke the chair’

(1b) Maria ha fatto sì che si rompesse la sedia ‘Mary made it so that...’

(1c) Maria ha fatto rompere la sedia “Mary made the chair broke’

Terminological issues

By **causative alternation** I mean a pattern whereby the same argument (the causee) is the object of a transitive causative verb and the subject of its intransitive counterpart. The latter structure does not admit a *by*-phrase with the demoted subject or a purpose clause.

(2a) La sedia **si è rotta**. (cf. 1a) (Italian)

the chair REFL is broken

‘The chair broke.’

(2b) La sedia si è rotta (**per fare arrabbiare la mamma /**da Maria).

‘The chair broke (**to make Mum angry /**by Mary).’

The ±SE group: Italian and French

(itTenTen16)

- (3a) Ma il capitolo non **si** è **chiuso**.
but the chapter NEG REFL=be.3SG closed
'But this chapter has not come to an end.'
- (3b) Nel menù a tendina che **si** è **aperto** a sinistra...
in.the menu a tendina REL REFL=be.3SG opened at left
'In the drop-down menu which opened on the left...'

The ±SE group: Italian and French

(itTenTen16)

- (4a) [...] **ha chiuso** anche il giornalaio e tabaccaio.
have.3SG shut.PTCP also the newsagent's and tobacconist's
'Even the newsagent's and the tobacconist's have shut.'
- (4b) La Lavanderia Orchidea [...] **Ha aperto** nel 1979.
the launderette Orchidea have.3SG open PTCP in.the 1979
'The Orchidea Launderette opened in 1979.'

The \pm SE group: Italian and French

(frTen Ten17)

- (5a) Le bureau **s' est** **fermé** hermétiquement devant elle.
the office REFL=be.3SG closed hermetically before her
'The office closed hermetically before her eyes.'
- (5b) [C'est donc la semaine dernière] que **s' est** **ouvert** le portail PressPlay...
that REFL=be.3SG opened the portal PressPay
'It was last week that the portal PressPlay opened.'

The ±SE group: Italian and French

(frTen Ten17)

- (6a) L' usine de textile où ils travaillaient **a** brusquement **fermé**.
the factory of textile where they worked has suddenly shut
'The textile factory where they worked suddenly shut down.'
- (6b) La piscine **a ouvert** le 7 juillet 2002.
the swimming pool has opened the 7 July 2002
'The swimming pool opened on 7 July 2002.'

The ±SE group: only French

(itTenTen16)

- (7a) [...] manca [...] il lampione che **si** **era** **arrugginito**.
miss.3SG the lamppost REL REFL=be.3PST.3SG rusted

‘The lamppost which had become rusty is missing.’

(frTenTen17)

- (7b) Et mon bijou **a** **rouillé** et s'est cassé au bout de...
and my jewel has rusted and REFL=be.3SG broken within

‘And that item of jewellery of mine rusted and broke within a couple of months.’

The intransitive with HABERE (\pm SE group)

Corpus searches on SketchEngine (<https://app.sketchengine.eu/>).

KWIC = ptcp; context = lemma *avere/avoir* within 2 tokens to left.

- The **incidence of intransitives** in the first 100 hits was normally higher in French than in Italian.

The intransitive with HABERE (\pm SE group)

Italian \geq French	French $>$ Italian
<p>asciugare (0.05)/essuyer (0); chiudere (0.12)/fermer (0.12); ghiacciare (0.13)/glacer (0.01);</p>	<p>blanchir (0.29)/sbiancare (0.10); brûler (0.26)/bruciare (0.03); cailler (0.8)/cagliare (0.7); caraméliser (0.50) /caramellare (0.12); cuire (0.30) /cuocere (0.06); fermenter (0.87)/fermentare (0.86*) geler (0.32)/gelare (0.07) liquéfier (0.02); liquéfare (0); mûrir (0.82)/ maturare (0.01); noircir (0.41)/annerire (0); ouvrir (0.04) /aprire (0.02); oxyder (0.05)/ossidare (0.03); reverdir (0.83) /rinverdire (0); rouiller (0.81)/arrugginire (0.02); sécher (0.72) /seccare (0) solidifier (0.08)/solidificare (0.03); tarir (0.17)/prosciugare (0.01)</p>

The intransitive with HABERE (\pm SE group)

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The intransitive with HABERE (±SE group)

- Clear evidence that the HABERE intransitives do **not necessarily** describe **processes** (cf. 6a-b).

(frTen Ten17)

- (6a) L' usine de textile où ils travaillaient **a** brusquement **fermé**.
the factory of textile where they worked has suddenly shut
'The textile factory where they worked suddenly shut down.'
- (6b) La piscine **a ouvert** le 7 juillet 2002.
the swimming pool has opened the 7 July 2002
'The swimming pool opened on 7 July 2002.'

The intransitive with HABERE (±SE group)

In the examples which do not describe processes, HABERE is not readily replaced by the reflexive and ESSE.

(8a) **Ha chiuso** /*?si è chiuso* anche il giornalaio e il tabaccaio...

(8b) Se il vostro iPhone di Apple **ha ghiacciato** / *??si è ghiacciato* e premendo sull'opzione Dormire...

(8c) La piscine **a ouvert** /*?s'est ouverte* le 7 juillet...

The intransitive with HABERE (±SE group)

Contrast between HABERE and reflexive+ESSE in terms of an understood causer (Franck Floricic, p.c.): see compatibility with *by itself*.

(9a) La branche **a cassé** (sous le poids de la neige). (French)
the branch has broken under the weight of the snow

‘The branch broke under the weight of the snow.’ understood causer

(9a) La branche **s’est cassée** (toute seule).
the branch refl=is broken all alone

‘The branch broke (by itself).’

Two intransitive patterns with HABERE

- I propose that a distinction ought to be drawn between **two intransitive patterns with HABERE**.
- One of these is a **construction** which describes an event of **indirect causation** with verbs which would normally describe direct causation (Cruse 1972, Wierzbicka 1985) by an effector (Van Valin & Wilkins 1996).
- The other is a structure where HABERE is selected because of the **lexico-aspectual properties** of the verb (French > Italian).

Two types of external causation

The former construction with HABERE is only available for **verbs which lexicalize an effector causer**.

(Italian)

(10a) Luca ha visto Maria chiudere la porta.

Luca has seen Maria close the door

‘Luca saw Mary close the door.’

(10b) Luca ha fatto chiudere la porta da/a Maria.

Luca has made/let close the door by to Maria

‘Luca made/let Maria close the door.’

Two types of external causation

(Italian)

(11a) **Luca ha visto Maria / la pioggia arrugginire la porta.

Luca has seen Maria the rain rust the door

Lit. Luca saw Mary / the rain rust the door.

(11b) Luca ha fatto arrugginire la porta (**da(la)/**a(la) Maria/pioggia).

Luca has let rust the door by.the to.the Maria/rain

‘Luca let the door become rusty.’

Two types of external causation

(12a) Dov'è che Luca ha chiuso la valigia? – In aeroporto /#Sul lato destro.

‘Where did Luca close the case?’ – ‘At the airport.’/‘On the right side.’

(12b) Dov'è che l'acqua ha arrugginito la porta? – Sulla maniglia/#In cucina.

‘Where did the water cause the door to rust?’ – ‘On the handle.’/‘In the kitchen.’

➤ (12a) is a question-answer pair about an event in which an effector closes a case, whereas (12b) is a question-answer pair about a process of rusting.

Two types of external causation

- The contrasts in (10a-b) to (12a-b) suggest that *chiudere* lexicalizes an event of causation with an effector, while *arrugginire* does not (Bentley 2019).
- Could it be that *close* verbs lexicalize causation and *rust* verbs do not?

Two types of external causation

We have to capture the difference between *rouiller*, *mûrir*, *tarir* verbs, which alternate, and the verbs which do not participate in the causative alternation.

Process	Process+result
(13a) Il caldo ha **sudato / fatto sudare Maria. the heat has sweated made sweat Maria 'The heat made Maria sweat.'	(13c) Il caldo ha **sbocciato/fatto sbocciare i fiori. the heat has blossomed made blossom the flowers 'The heat made the flowers blossom.'
(13b) Maria ha sudato. Maria has sweated 'Maria sweated.'	(13d) I fiori sono sbocciati. the flowers are blossomed 'The flowers blossomed.'

Two types of external causation

The logical structure of the two classes of verbs of external causation (drawing on Centineo 1995; Van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005).

(14a) [**do'** (x, [**pred'** (x)])] CAUSE [PROC **pred'** (y) & INGR **pred'** (y)]
(e.g., *chiudere/fermer*)

(14b) [**pred** α' (x)] CAUSE [PROC **pred'** (y) & INGR **pred'** (y)]
(e.g., *arrugginire/rouiller* (tr.))

Two types of external causation

Levin & Rappaport Hovav (1995)'s lexical conceptual structures.

(15a) [[X DO-SOMETHING] CAUSE [Y BECOME [STATE]]]

(15b) [[X PRED] CAUSE [Y BECOME [STATE]]]

➤ BECOME is broken down as PROC... INGR (Van Valin 2005:44).

➤ Problem of prediction of too many scopal ambiguities?

SE anticausativization

Both classes of verbs of external causation lend themselves to **SE anticausativization**: the suppression of the highest argument (the causer), i.e., its saturation with a null-argument value (Bentley 2006).

(16a) [**do'** (\emptyset , [**pred'** (\emptyset)])] CAUSE [PROC **pred'** (y) & INGR **pred'** (y)]

(16b) [**pred α'** (\emptyset)] CAUSE [PROC **pred'** (y) & INGR **pred'** (y)]

The lexico-aspectual properties of the construction are predicted: resultative meaning.

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ESSE SELECTION IN SE anticausativization

Selection of ESSE in Romance: pattern of **active-middle alignment** (La Fauci 1988; Bentley 2006, 2016; Ledgeway 2012): marking of subjects which are not default in terms of accusative alignment (Van Valin 1990: Centineo 1995; Bentley 2006).

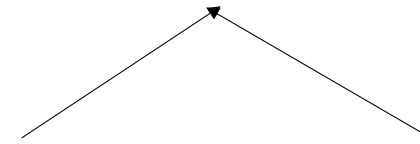
Default subject links from **highest specified position in logical structure** in accusative alignment, but this position is not available after SE anticausativization.

ESSE SELECTION IN SE anticausativization

(17a) [**do'** (\emptyset , [**pred'** (\emptyset)])] CAUSE [PROC **pred'** (y) & INGR **pred'** (y)]

(17b) [**pred** α' (\emptyset)] CAUSE [PROC **pred'** (y) & INGR **pred'** (y)]

Undergoer



ESSE SELECTION IN ITALIAN AND FRENCH

- **Italian:** ESSE is selected when the subject is an undergoer or a marked actor (an actor which also links to one of the low positions in logical structure).
- **French:** ESSE is selected when the subject is not the highest argument in logical structure because of the saturation of this position with \emptyset and with a finite set of lexically specified verbs whose subject is an undergoer or a marked actor.
- ESSE selection in SE anticausativization is predicted by the account.

Labile alternations

The two intransitive patterns with HABERE are manifestations of two types of labile alternation.

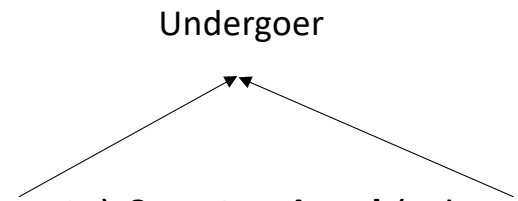
➤ **Labile anticausativization** (*ha chiuso anche il tabaccaio...*)

➤ **Labile causativization** (*rouiller...*)

Labile anticausativization

(4a) Ha chiuso anche il tabaccaio (**da solo).

(4a') [do' (x, [pred α' (x)])] CAUSE [PROC **close'** (tabaccaio) & INGR **close'** (tabaccaio)]



CAUSEE AS CAUSER →

CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEMA: L.ANTIC.(I)

SYNTAX: default template, aux H

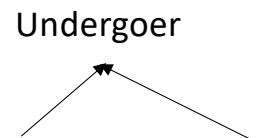
SEMANTICS: contains an understood effector causer

.....

Labile anticausativization

(9a) La branche a cassé (sous le poids de la neige/**toute seule).

(9a') **ext.cause'** (poids, [**do'** (x, [**pred** α' (x))]) **CAUSE** [PROC **open'** (branche)&...])



CAUSEE AS CAUSER →

CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEMA: L.ANTIC.(I)

SYNTAX: default template

SEMANTICS: contains an
understood effector causer

.....

Labile causativization

(7b) Et mon bijout a rouillé....

(7b') PROC **rust'** (bijout) & INGR **pred α'** (bijout) >

> [**pred α'** (x)] CAUSE [PROC **rust'** (y) & INGR **pred α'** (y)]

- The intransitive is the basic form (monotonicity principle, theory of verb meaning, percentages with French verbs...).
- Rather than a mere process the intransitive could be a gradual completion verb (Bertinetto & Squartini 1995).
- HABERE is predicted in French (Ledgeway 2012, Smith 2016, Bentley 2020, etc.).

Labile causativization in Italian?

A few of the *very few* tokens found were red herrings.

(itTenTen16)

(18a) [...] restaura ciò che ha demolito, ripulisci ciò che **ha arrugginito**...

restore.IMPthat REL has demolished clean.imp that REL has rusted

‘Restore what was demolished, clean up what became rusty...’

(18b) Stanotte **ha gelato** e non si apriva la portiera...

Last.night has frozen and NEG REFL open.IMPERF the door

‘Last night it froze, and the car door would not open...’

Labile causativization in Italian?

...or examples of labile anticausativization (causee for causer).

(itTenTen16)

(19) *"Ho fatto un pò tutto, ristorante, pizzeria... " lo: "Ah ok. E poi sei venuta in Irlanda" Lei: "Si si, poi il ristorante **ha bruciato** ... " lo: "...bruciato? " Lei: " eh...si, lui proprio stronzo, non pagava mai...poi il ristorante ha bruciato... "*

"I did all sorts, restaurants, pizzerias..." Me: "Ah ok. And then you came to Ireland" Her: "Yes, that's right, then the restaurant burned down..." Me: "...burned down?" Her: "Eh...yes, he was a real xxx, he never paid... then the restaurant burned down..."

Labile causativization in Italian

Nonetheless, there seem to be a couple of genuine examples.

(itTenTen16)

(20a) Quando la frutta **ha maturato** correttamente sotto il calore del sole...
when the fruit has ripened properly under the heat of the sun

‘When fruit ripens properly under the sun...’

(20b) Se la brillantezza dei due colori è simile allora il colore non **ha prosciugato**.
if the shininess of the two colours is similar then the colour NEG has dried

‘If the two colours are equally shiny, it means that the paint has not dried.’

-SE > ±SE

(frTenTen17)

- (21a) Ma lentille de contact **avait glissé** à l' intérieur de mon œil
my lens of contact had slipped at the inside of my eye
'My contact lens had slipped inside my eye.'
- (21b) un papier que j' **avais glissé** dans mon exemplaire.
a paper REL I had slipped in my copy
'a sheet of paper which I had slipped into my ??'
- (21c) Un bug **s' était glissé** dans la version 1.8...
a bug REFL=be.PST.3SG slipped in the version 1.8
'A bug had slipped into version 1.8...'

Labile causative alternations

- The verbs in the –SE group participate in labile causative alternations in which the basic form is the intransitive, as suggested by comparative evidence from the sister language (*scivolare* ‘slip’ (intr.)).
- Once the labile alternation is established, then the transitive can be anticausativized.

Glisser (intr.) > *glisser* (tr.) > *se glisser* (+PP)

Conclusions and theoretical considerations

Three kinds of causative alternation in Italian and French with verbs of the \pm SE group:

- SE anticausativization
- Labile anticausativisation
- Labile causativization

Conclusions and theoretical considerations

Three patterns of causative alternation in Italian and French with verbs of the \pm SE group:

➤ **SE anticausativization**



available to all causatives

➤ **Labile anticausativisation**



causative verbs which lexicalize an event with an effector

➤ **Labile causativization**



caused processes (+result) (French (and Italian?))

Conclusions and theoretical considerations

A theory of the **lexicon** is needed to make predictions on which verbs participate in which kind of alternation (e.g., Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995, see also Haspelmath 2016).

The principal type of alternation in Italian (and to a lesser extent French) is **SE anticausativization** as a result of the strength of active-middle syntax.

Thank you

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