

Ibibio Causative and Anti-Causative Verb Alternations

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1. Introduction

Causative and anticausative verb alternations are widely studied phenomena in world languages. As noted by Comrie (1985), they are a source of great interest not only because of the important role they play in the derivational morphology of many languages, but also because of the way their analysis requires complex approach combining syntax, semantics and morphology. A causative construction indicates that a subject agent / force causes some entity to do or become something, or causes a change in the state of a non-volitional event. Languages have ways of expressing causation, and may also differ on how they do so. Depending on the contiguity of the elements encoding the causing event and that encoding the caused event, Comrie (1981) categorizes causatives into three main types which are described in the following subsections.

1.1. Lexical causatives

Some transitive-causative verbs have non-causative counterparts. These are considered lexical causatives since they always contain a subject which causes someone or something to do or become something. For example, the verbs *kill* (The dog *killed* the rat vs. The rat *died*), *break* (Mary *broke* the plate. vs. The plate *broke*) and *move* (John *moved* the stone vs. The stone *moved*.) are lexical causatives. For verbs like *break* and *move*, the same verb enters into sentences of both causative and anti-causative types without modification of the verb itself (Lyons 1968). For pairs of verbs such as *kill* and *die*, Lyons (1968) notes that they are pairs of different verbs between which the same syntactic (and semantic) relationship of causativity is “lexicalized” existing in corresponding intransitive and transitive sentences. The implication of this relationship is that *kill* is the lexical causative version of the anti-causative *die* and this is part of the lexical structure of English. Thus, the class of verbs in English and other languages to which *kill* belongs is also referred to as the class of *lexical causative*.

1.2. Morphological causatives

In morphological causatives, the causing event and the caused event are encoded in a single verbal complex via causative morphology as the following from Japanese (Haspelmath 2008), Turkish, Swahili and Nivkh (Comrie 1985) show:

1. Japanese: *-asu* as in *kawak-asu* 'make/cause dry' (cf. *kawaku* 'become dry')
2. Turkish: *-dür* as in *öl -dür* 'cause die' (cf. *öl* 'die')
3. Swahili: *-ish* as in *imb-ish* 'sing cause' (cf. *imb* 'sing') (intransitive)
4. Nivkh: *-gu* as in *cě-gu* 'dry cause' (cf. *cě* 'dry') (intransitive)

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Also in Degema [Edoid; Benue Congo] (Kari 1995), the morphological type of causation is attested as shown in (5a-c) below.

- 5a) tu ‘be burnt’ → tu-**ese** ‘cause to be burnt’
 5b) tul ‘reach’ → tul-**ese** ‘cause to reach’
 5c) kir ‘return’ → kir-**ese** ‘cause to return’

Thus, a good number of languages have a morphological causative, a device for creating a verb form which means “to cause x to verb” from a form x verbs” (Spencer 1991). The additional morpheme to the already existing root morpheme expresses the idea of causation where ‘x’ is a variable which stands for the entity that gets the effect of the causation.

1.3. Analytic (syntactic) Causatives

An analytic causative construction is a type of construction that uses regular syntactic devices of a language to form complex sentences out of simple ones without fusing together the predicates of the derived complex sentences; in the case of analytic causative constructions, the predicate expressing the idea of causation will be separate from the one expressing the effect of the causation (cf. Comrie 1985). In English for instance, an analytical causative construction consists of two predicates. The first predicate contains the causative verb which expresses the idea of causation, while the second predicate is normally a complement clause to the causative verb which expresses the result situation/effect as initiated by the causative verb as the examples in (6a & b) show. Compare (6a & b) with (6c) their anti-causative counterpart.

- 6a) Mary caused Sam to slide off the roof
 6b) Mary made Sam slide off the roof
 6c) Sam slide off the roof.

Ibibio exhibits the three major types of causative constructions: analytical¹, morphological and lexical causatives. In this paper however, our focus shall be on the Ibibio morphological and lexical causative/anti-causative verb alternations.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview on Causative and anti-causative Verb Alternation. Section 3 examines causative and anticausative verb alternations in Ibibio while section 4 is the conclusion.

2. Causative and Anti-causative Verb Alternation

The causative/anticausative alternation has provided an extensive platform for the study of the interface between lexical semantics, morphology, and syntax from a wide range of theoretical perspectives (Haspelmath 1993; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995; Wunderlich 1997; Hale and Keyser 2002; Baker 2003; Chierchia 2004). With respect to the marking of the causative and anti-causative verb alternations, in some languages, there is a clear morphological marking on the verb to indicate the causative/anti-causative distinction, in some others, there is no such morphological reflex or marker to indicate a verb’s status with respect to causative alternation. English shows no change in the verb form of the intransitive member of the alternation, (i.e. labiality proper), as in (7), while in

¹Here is an example of an analytic causative in Ibibio. This class of causatives in Ibibio is extensively discussed in Anyanwu (forthcoming)

Òkón a-máá-nám	Ènò á-sák	ímám
Okon 3sg.cl-past-make	Ènò 3sg.cl-laugh	laugh

‘Okon made Eno laugh’

languages like Greek (8) (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2004), and Italian (9) (Folli 2002, Cennamo & Jezek 2009) there are dedicated morphemes signaling anticausative status.

7a)	Mark broke the vase.	<	7b)	The vase broke.
8a)	I sup akegete The soup burns NACT 'The soup is burning.'	<	8b)	O Janis ekapse ti supa the John burnt ACT the soup 'John burnt the soup.'
9a)	Mario ruppe il vaso Mario broke the vase 'Mario broke the vase.'	<	9b)	Il vaso si ruppe the vase REFL broke 'The vase broke.'

Two general semantic constraints on anti-causativization have been recognized in the literature. They are (i) the spontaneous manifestation of an eventuality (Siewierska 1984), and (ii) the absence of agent-oriented meaning components or other highly specific meaning components that debar the spontaneous interpretation of the verbal process (Haspelmath 1987, 1993). Thus, it is the case that only transitive causative verbs denoting event which happen spontaneously, without the intervention of an external willful animate causer, can occur in the anticausative alternation (Siewierska 1984, Haspelmath 1987). In most languages, the causative/anti-causative alternation is characterized by a change in word order and the absence of an agent NP in the anti-causative (inchoative) while the causative transitive form consists of an agent subject NP and theme object NP.

This paper contributes to the discussion on the typology of causative and anti-causative verb alternations by presenting data from Ibibio. It is noted that the anti-causative construction in Ibibio unlike its causative counterpart is characterized by a change in word order and absence of causative agentive noun phrase. Following Haspelmath (1993), two major ways by which the causative/anticausative verb alternation in Ibibio are highlighted. First, they are shown through the directed (morphological) alternation where the distinction between the causative/anti-causative is indicated by a morphological reflex on the anti-causative verb; secondly, they are shown through the non-directed (lexical) alternation which is further sub-divided into the suppletive (different verb roots are used for the causative/anti-causative alternations) and the labile (same verb occurs in both the causative and anti-causative constructions) options. Ibibio is spoken by about four million people (Essien, 1990) in fourteen (Uyo, Itu, Uruan, Etinan, NsitIbom, NsitAtai, NsitUbiom, IbeskpoAsutan, Ikono, Ini, IkotAbaasi, MkatEnin, IbionoIbom, Onna and Eket ((Essien 1990, Urua 2007)) of the thirty-one Local Government Areas of AkwaIbom State, Nigeria. More recent classifications have placed Ibibio in the Lower Cross group of the (New) Benue-Congo language family (Williamson, 1989).

3. Ibibio Causative/Anti-Causative Verb Alternations: A Description

The Ibibio language has a rich verbal morphology. As in other pro-drop languages, grammatical agreement holds between a lexical subject and a verb. In the anti-causative alternation, the undergoer of a change of state, which is lexically an internal argument externalizes, functioning as the grammatical subject. However, unlike in the passive structures, the causative agent does not become an oblique argument. In fact, it is not expressed overtly and it is probably the case that the pervasiveness of the anti-causative constructions in Ibibio is due to the fact that passives are not attested in the Ibibio grammar. Causative/Anti-Causative verb alternations in Ibibio can be directed (morphological) and non-directed (lexical). The non-directed class (lexical) is further split into labile and suppletive alternations. These categorizations are discussed in the following sub-sections.

3.1. Directed (Morphological) Alternation in Ibibio

Ibibio behaves like some European languages (e.g. Russian, Nivkh, Spanish (and a sub-set of verbs in Turkish)) (Comrie 1985) in having an anti-causative morpheme. Thus, the distinction between the causative/anti-causative verb alternations is marked morphologically on the anti-causative alternation. The causative verb in its anti-causative usage is overtly marked by an involitivity and (agentive) causer suppression morpheme (cf. Beavers and Zubair 2010) which eliminates the causer argument from the argument structure of the anti-causative verb, thus preventing the anti-causative verb from occurring in certain contexts requiring agentivity (10d & 11d) of a syntactically active argument.

3.1.1. The Nature of the Anti-causative Morpheme in Ibibio

The anti-causative morphemes in Ibibio generally occur with change of state verbs. It is a reflexive marker of involitivity and (agentive) causer suppression. The anti-causative morpheme in Ibibio can overtly be realized in three different morphophonological ways. These three morphophonological processes include consonant gemination (cf. Essien 1990), vowel suffixation with consonant lenition, and non-final vowel lengthening. These are discussed below with examples.

(i) Consonant Gemination

The derivation of this class of anti-causative verbs involves the gemination of the final consonant of a lexical causative verb (root) and the insertion of a high tone vowel whose [ATR] value harmonizes with that of the final vowel of the lexical verb root. Some examples are shown below.

- 10a) étim á-máá-bôm èsiò
 Etim 3sg.cl-past-break pot
 ‘Etim broke the pot. / Etim had broken the pot.’
- 10b) èsiò á-máá-bòmmó
 pot 3sg.cl-past-break.ANTC.suff.
 ‘The pot broke/The pot had broken.’
- 10c) * èsiò á-bòm
 pot 3sg.cl-break
- 10d) *étim á-máá-bòmmó èsiò
- 11a) étim á-wàk òfòn òmò
 Etim 3sg.cl-tearcloth his
 ‘Etim has torn his cloths.’
- 11b) òfòn òmò á-wàkká
 cloth his 3sg.cl-tear.ANTC.suff.
 ‘His clothes are torn.’
- 11c) *òfòn òmò á-wàk
 cloth his 3sg.cl-tear
- 11d) *étim òmò á-wàkká òfòn
- 12a) òkòyó á-máá-dúòk òmòyò
 Nkoyo 3sg.cl-past-pour water
 ‘Nkoyo poured the water. / Nkoyo had poured the water.’

- 12b) *m̀m̀òp̀n* *á-máá-dúòk̀k̀p̀*
 water 3sg.cl-past-pour.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘The water poured. / The water was poured.’
- 13a) *ìni* *à-máá-b̀n* *úòk̀* *òp̀m̀*
 Ini 3sg.cl-past-snapped hand his
 ‘Ini broke his hand. / Ini had broken his hand.’
- 13b) *úòk̀* *òp̀m̀* *á-máá-b̀l̀ǹǹá*
 hand his 3sg.cl-past-break.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘His hand broke. / His hand was broken.’

As can be observed from the examples (10b - 13b), consonant gemination affects verb roots ending in nasals (10 & 13) and the voiceless velar plosive [k] (11 & 12). Also, the causative constructions (10a - 13a), unlike their anti-causative counterparts, have volitive causative/agentive subject overtly expressed while their causative verbs are complemented by patient objects. In the anticausative constructions (10b, 11b, 12b, 13b) however, there is a morphological reflex of causer suppression reflected on each verb stem; the causative agent is overtly absent while the patient becomes the grammatical subject. Without the anti-causative morpheme, the anti-causative construction will be ungrammatical (10c, 11c). Also a co-occurrence of the anticausative morpheme with a substantive subject causer agent results in ungrammaticality (10d & 11d).

(ii) *Vowel Suffixation with Consonant Lenition*

The second way of indicating the (agentive) causer suppression morphological reflex on the anti-causative verb which is identified by this paper is through a suffixation of a high tone vowel with a consequent lenition of the final consonant of the causative root verb. The suffixed high tone vowel harmonizes with the [ATR] value of the immediately preceding vowel root. The following are some of the examples.

- 14a) *úòp̀* *á-máá-b̀iát* *àkèb̀ènd̀d̀sè*
 Udo 3sg.cl- past-spoil television
 ‘Udo spoiled the television. / Udo had spoiled the television.’
- 14b) *àkèb̀ènd̀d̀sè* *á-máá-b̀iárá*
 television 3sg.cl-past-spoil.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘The television spoiled. / The television was spoiled.’
- 15a) *éyò* *á-máá-tát* *údák*
 Eyo 3sg.cl-máá-untie rope
 ‘Eyo untied the rope. / Eyo had untied the rope.’
- 15b) *údák* *á-máá-tárá*.
 rope 3sg.cl-past-untie.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘The rope untied. / The rope was untied.’
- 16a) *àsúk̀wò* *á-máá-yíd* *úsán*
 Asukwo 3sg.cl- past-lock door
 ‘Asukwo locked the door. / Asukwo had locked the door.’

- 16b) úsáń á-máá-yíré
 door 3sg.cl-past-lock.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘The door locked. / The door was locked.’
- 17a) èmèm á-máá-síid úsáń
 Emem 3sg.cl-past-close road
 ‘Emem closed the road. / Emem had closed the road.’
- 17b) úsáń á-máá-síiré
 road 3sg.cl-past-close.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘The road closed. / The road was closed.’
- 18a) étim á-máá-wúúk étóúdíá
 Etim 3sg.cl-past-erect stake yam
 ‘Etim erected a yam stake. / Etim had erected a yam stake.’
- 18b) étó údíá á-máá-wúúghó
 stake yam 3sg.cl-past-stand erect.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘The yam stake erected. / The yam stake was erected.’
- 19a) éyò á-máá-siák ífía
 Eyo 3sg.cl-past-split firewood
 ‘Eyo split the firewood. / Eyo had split the wood.’
- 19b) ífía á-máá-siághá
 firewood 3sg.cl-past-split.**ANTC.suff.**
 ‘The firewood split. / The firewood was split.’

As can be observed from the examples (14b-19b), alveolar stops are generally weakened to become the voiced alveolar trill [r] while the velar stop is weakened to become the voiced velar fricative [ɣ] (orthographically represented as **gh**). While the constructions in (14a), (15a), (16a), (17a), (18a) and (19a) are causative constructions with their respective overt syntactic agentive subjects, the ones in (14b), (15b), (16b), (17b), (18b) and (19b) are their anticausative counterparts with anticausative morphological reflexes (-a, -ɔ, -e, -e -a and -a respectively). Again, the anticausative constructions do not have any syntactically active causers.

(iii) Lengthening of a Non-final Vowel Root

The morphological reflex of anti-causation in Ibibio can also be expressed by lengthening the non-final (first low tone) vowel of the causative verb root. Thus, in this case, the anticausative morpheme is just a non-final low tone vowel suffix which copies all the features of the immediately preceding vowel of the causative verb root as examples (20b-23b) show.

- 20a) òkón á-máá-bèré úsúń
 Okon 3sg.cl-past-open door
 ‘Okon opened the door. / Okon had opened the door.’
- 20b) úsúń á-máá-bèèré
 door 3sg.cl-past-open
 ‘The door opened. / The door was opened.’

- 21a) ífìòk á-máá-tòṅṅó itók
Ifiok 3sg.cl-past-begin race
'Ifiok began the race. / Ifiok had begun the race.'
- 21b) itók á-máá-tòṅṅó
race 3sg cl-past-begin
'The race began. / The race was begun.'
- 22a) ímá á-máá-dòmmó íkán
Ima 3sg.cl-past-lit fire
'Ima lit the fire. / Ima had lit the fire.'
- 22 b) íkán á-dòmmó
fire 3sg. cl-lit
'The fire lit. / The fire was lit.'
- 23a) dó á-máá-nímmé íkán
Udo 3sg.cl-past- put off fire
'Udo put off / quenched the fire. / Udo had put off/quenched the fire.'
- 23b) kán á-máá- nìmmé
fire 3sg.cl-past put off
The fire quenched. / The fire was quenched.'

As can be observed from (20b - 23b) the low tone vowel anticausative morpheme eliminates the causative semantics (and causer argument) while retaining the change-of-state semantics. Other independent principles of argument realization ensure that the hitherto patient argument is raised to occupy the subject position in the absence of a causer agent. The directed morphological alternation in Ibibio is summarized in the table that follows.

S/N	Causative (Transitive)	Gloss	Anticausative (Intransitive)	Gloss
1.	bôm	break	bòm ó	be broken
2.	Wàk	tear	wàk ká	be torn
3.	dúòk	pour	dúòk kó	be poured
4.	bán	snap	bán á	be snapped
5.	biát	spoil	biá rá	be spoilt
6	tát	untie	tá rá	be untied
7.	yíd	lock	yí ré	be locked
8.	síid	close	sí ré	be closed
9.	wúúk	stake	wúú ghó	be staked
10.	siák	split	siá ghá	be split
11.	bèré	open	bè èré	be opened
12.	tòṅṅó	begin (a race)	tòṅṅó	be started
13.	dòmmó	light (fire)	dò òmmó	be lit
12	nímmé	put off (fire)	nì ímmé	be extinguished

A summary of morphological directed causative/anticausative alternation in Ibibio

3.2. Non- Directed (Lexical) Alternations

As mentioned earlier, there are two types of non-directed lexical alternation-labile and suppletive. In Ibibio grammar only the suppletive alternation has been observed. The labile option, if attested has not yet been observed.

3.2.1. Suppletive Alternation

In the suppletive alternation, there is no formal similarity between the basic verb and its causative counterpart (Song 2001). They are pairs of different verbs between which the same syntactic (and semantic) relationship of causativity holds in corresponding intransitive and transitive sentences. This phenomenon is however, quite common in languages. It is obvious that both the syntactic and semantic relationship existing between the transitive and the intransitive verbs can be said to be “lexicalized”. As shown below, (24a) illustrates the basic verb while (24b) shows the causative.

- 24a) ùdó á- máá-**wòt** ébót
 Udo 3sg.cl-past-kill goat
 ‘Udo killed a goat. / Udo had killed a goat.’
- 24b) ébót á-máá-**kpá**
 goat 3sg.cl-past-die
 ‘The goat died.’

4. Conclusion

This paper has provided a description of causative and anti-causative verb alternation in Ibibio, thus, initiating interest and discussion in an aspect of Ibibio grammar that has hitherto not been given adequate attention. It has been observed that Ibibio anti-causative verb morphology can be expressed through the directed (morphological) alternation and the non-directed (lexical) alternation. It has been noted that the directed (morphological) alternation in Ibibio can be expressed in three ways (i) germinating the final consonant of the verb (root) of the lexical causative with a high tone vowel whose [ATR] value harmonizes with that of the final vowel of the root verb, (ii) suffixation (to causative verb root) of a harmonizing high tone vowel with a consequent weakening of the final consonant (iii) by lengthening the first vowel of the causative verb root. It is only the suppletive lexical alternation that has been observed to be attested in Ibibio grammar. An aspect of the Ibibio causative/anti-causative alternation that deserves immediate examination is the direction of the alternation; whether it is from the causative to the anti-causative or vice versa.

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