

Embedding anticausatives in Italian: evidence for Voice

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Embedded anticausatives Italian exhibits a complex causative construction where an infinitive clause is embedded under a causative light verb (1). The constructions in (1a) realise a monoclausal structure (Rizzi 1976, Manzini 1983, Guasti 1996, a.o.). The interpretation of (1a) is that of an indirect causal relation, whereby the event expressed by the infinitive is realised by a participant (i.e. the Causee) which is necessarily distinct from the subject of the light verb (i.e. the Causer). The Causee is (optionally) introduced by the preposition *da* “by” (1b), and it is generally interpreted as an Agent.

- (1) a. Mario ha fatto aprire la porta.
Mario make.PF open.INF the door
b. Mario ha fatto aprire la porta (dal custode).
Mario make.PF open.INF the door (to/by the janitor)
Mario made the janitor open the door

Vecchiato (2011) notes that complex causatives can get an additional interpretation, still expressing an indirect causal relation, by which the effector of the second event is realised by an instrument P (2).

- (2) Mario ha fatto aprire la porta (con il cartellino/dandole un calcio).
Mario make.PF open.INF the door with the badge/ giving-it a kick
(Mario had the door opened [with a badge/with a kick])

Syntactic/semantic evidence points to the analysis of the embedded clause in (2) as the anticausative alternant of (1b). First, the relevant interpretation of (2) is available only when the infinitive predicate may undergo the TAA, cf. (2) vs. (3a,b). Second, the effector of the event in (2) is expressed by an instrument phrase introduced by the preposition *con* “with”, just as in matrix anticausatives (4).

- (3) a. Mario ha fatto innaffiare i fiori (#con la pompa/#gettando acqua in giardino)
Mario make.PF water.INF the flowers (#with the hose/#by throwing water in the garden)
b. Mario ha fatto riparare la macchina (#con un calcio)
Mario make.PF fix.INF the car (#with a kick)
(4) La porta si è aperta (con il vento/*dal vento)
The door opened (from the wind/*by the wind)

The analysis of (2) as a case of embedded anticausative has two important theoretical consequences, bearing (i) on the structure of complex predicates and (ii) on the analysis of TAA in Romance.

i) The possibility of TAA argues for a complex vP structure in the complement of the light verb, going against recent analysis positing a reduced (nominalised) VP as complement of *fare* in structures such as (1) (Folli & Harley 2007).

ii) Contributing to the debate on TAA in Romance, we show that the interpretation of anticausatives embedded in a complex causal chain provide evidence for the existence of a CAUSE component in the anticausative alternant. We conclude that our analysis supports the hypothesis of a Voice head that sits above the causative *v* and triggers the TAA by suppressing the External Argument of the predicate.

The CAUSE component. Recent theories about the Transitive/Anticausative Alternation (TAA) hold two opposite views concerning the causative structure of the anticausative alternant. (i) The anticausative variant retains its CAUSE component; anticausatives are derived by manipulating the External Argument of the causative verb, either by suppressing it or by conflating its Th-role with the one of the Theme argument (Chierchia 2004, Alexiadou et. al. 2006, Koonz-Gaborden 2009, a.o.). (ii) Anticausatives are derived by a lexical operation that adds (Causativisation) or reduces (Decausativisation) the CAUSE component to/from the transitive alternate (Harley 2008; Pytkäinen 2008; Reinhart 2002, Horvath & Siloni 2011, a.o.); in both these cases, the Anticausative lacks a CAUSE component.

We assume the (somewhat simplified) lexical conceptual structure in (5a) for the transitive variant of lexical causative verbs like *open* (cf. Rappaport-Hovav & Levin 2008). This structure corresponds to a semantic representation (5b), where CAUSE introduces an event existentially.

- (5) Mario opened the door
a. CAUSE(OPEN(y))
b. Causer(Mario,e1) & CAUSE(e1,e2) & OPEN(e2) & Theme (e2,door)

Embedding (5) under a light causative verb yields the structure in (6) for transitive *open*.

- (6) (Lit: Mario makes the janitor open the door)

- a. Causer (Mario, e1) & CAUSE (e1,e2) & Causee(janitor,e2) & CAUSE (e2,e3) & OPEN(e3) & Theme (e2,door)

According to the Decausativisation hypothesis, the CAUSE component of the second event is suppressed from the causative chain in (6). Accordingly, the structure (7) counts one event less, turning into an instance of direct causation similar to (5).

- (7) (Lit.: Mario makes open the door)

Causer (Mario, e1) & CAUSE (e1,e2) & OPEN(e2) & Theme (e2,door)

This option seems therefore to be incorrect, in view of the interpretation of (2a) with respect to a direct causative such as *Mario ha aperto la porta con un calcio* “Mario opened the door by kicking it”.

Against reflexivisation. In Italian (and Spanish/French), anticausatives (8) typically display clitic marking akin to that of reflexive morphology (9); in Italian, the similarity extends to auxiliary alternation (8b, 9b).

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|---|---|
| <p>(8) a. Gianni ha aperto la porta.
Gianni AUX_{HAVE} opened the door
b. La porta si è aperta.
The door SI AUX_{BE} opened</p> | <p>(9) a. Gianni ha lavato il bambino.
Gianni AUX_{HAVE} washed the baby
b. Gianni si è lavato.
Gianni SI AUX_{BE} washed</p> |
|---|---|

This parallels suggested to Chierchia (2004) an analysis by which anticausatives are derived through an operation similar to reflexivisation, resulting in a structure where the subject is understood as being the Causer, in addition to being the Theme. Chierchia (2004) notes that the subject of an anticausative locally binds the reflexive in the modifier *da se*’ “by (one)self” meaning “without external help” (10a). This is not possible in passives (10b). The contrast is supposed to show that in the former case the subject expresses the Causer, which is existentially bound and therefore not a possible binder in passives (Williams 1981).

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|---|--|--------------------------------|
| <p>(10) a. La porta si
the door RFX
b. La porta è stata
the door has been</p> | <p>è aperta
has opened
aperta (*da se’)
opened by itself</p> | <p>(da se’).
by itself</p> |
|---|--|--------------------------------|

Modification of (2) by *da se*’ “by itself” leads however to an unexpected result. Besides a marginal reading where the modifier is bound by the subject of *fare* (meaning that Mario acted out of his will), *da se*’ cannot be bound by the (putative) subject of the infinitive (11). This empirical fact challenges the hypothesis that in (2) the anticausative is obtained by reflexivisation.

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| <p>(11) ??Mario ha fatto
Mario make.PF</p> | <p>aprire
open.INF</p> | <p>la porta da se’
the door *by itself/?by himself</p> |
|--|----------------------------|--|

In sum, while the interpretation of embedded anticausatives makes plausible to assume that a second causative event is retained in the structure, they provide evidence against the hypothesis that the Theme of the infinitive verb acts as the Causee in the complex chain realized by the complex construction.

Evidence for Voice In line with (Alexiadou et al. 2006), we conclude that TAA should be analysed as operated by an Anticausative Voice head that suppress the EA, while leaving the CAUSE feature of the transitive alternant unmodified (12).

- (12) a. Causer (Mario, e1) & CAUSE (e1,e2) & CAUSE (e2,e3) & OPEN(e3) & Theme (e2,door)
b. ...[Voice_{ANTIC} [_{VP} V_{CAUSE} [_{VP} OPEN [the door]]]]

Embedded causatives thus provide evidence for an extended vP structure in the complement of *fare* in (2a), and for a specialised Voice head responsible for the TAA in Italian. Anticausative Voice sits above the v realizing CAUSE, and suppress the EA of the predicate (Alexiadou et al. (2006), Harley (2013)). This accounts for the fact that the EA cannot be interpreted as an Agent or Causer within the causal chain, but it can be expressed optionally by an instrument phrase introduced by the preposition *con* “with”, as in matrix anticausatives.

Selected references. • Alexiadou et al, (2006) The properties of anticausatives crosslinguistically. M. Frascarelli, *Phases of interpretation*. Mouton. • Chierchia (2004). A semantics for unaccusatives and its syntactic consequences. In Alexiadou et al. *The unaccusativity puzzle: explorations of the syntax-lexicon interface*. Oxford UP, 22-59 • Harley (2013) External arguments and the Mirror principle. On the distinctness of Voice and v. *Lingua* 125, 34-57 • Horvath & Siloni (2011) Anticausatives: against reflexivization. *Lingua* 121, 2176–2186; • Folli & Harley (2007) Causation, obligation, and argument structure: On the nature of little v. *Linguistic Inquiry* 38(2), 197 – 238. • Vecchiato (2011) *Events in the grammar of direct and indirect causation*. Ph. D. diss, University of Southern California.