

# A Unified Analysis of French Causatives

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It is well known that the French causative verb *faire* assigns differential case to its ‘causee’ argument: given an intransitive infinitive as complement, it assigns accusative case; given a transitive infinitive, it assigns dative case (i.e. the causee is *à*-marked):

- (1) a. Le prof    fait    lire    l’élève  
      the teacher makes to-read the student-ACC  
      ‘The teacher makes the student read’
- b. Le prof    fait    lire    Proust à l’élève  
      the teacher makes to-read Proust the student-DAT  
      ‘The teacher makes ‘to’ the student read Proust’

This is true whether the causee is realised as a full NP/PP argument, as in (1), or as a pronominal affix<sup>1</sup> on the causative verb as in (2):

- (2) a. Le prof    le.fait            lire  
      the teacher him-ACC.makes to-read  
      ‘The teacher makes him read’
- b. Le prof    lui.fait            lire    Proust  
      the teacher him-DAT.makes to-read Proust  
      ‘The teacher makes ‘to’ him read Proust’

Previous HPSG work on this topic has argued for a ‘flat’ analysis of the causative VP, in which *faire* ‘inherits’ the arguments of its verbal complement (e.g. Abeillé and Godard 2002), and where *faire*, the causee, the downstairs infinitive and its complements are all realised as sisters. The varying case marking is then natural, given that French completely lacks double object constructions: if *faire* inherits additional nominal complements, it will not be able to realise more than one NP as a direct (accusative) object. The inherited direct object of a downstairs transitive fills *faire*’s direct object slot, and so the causee is relegated to indirect object status.

Although previous authors have acknowledged this generalisation (henceforth Bratt’s generalisation, after Bratt (1990) who proposed it), most current HPSG

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<sup>1</sup>For some time, the literature on Romance syntax had taken these dependent pronouns to be clitics, and this has led to a terminological difficulty for modern lexicalist accounts in which (following Miller & Sag 1997) they are recast as morphological affixes. We will attempt to stick to the word “affix” for the sake of consistency.

analyses of French complex predicates (Miller and Sag 1997; Abeillé et al. 1998) fail to express it. Instead, they posit two (or more) lexical entries for causative *faire*: one selecting a transitive infinitive; another selecting an intransitive. Existing attempts to account for the case marking with a single lexical entry have not fully explained data like the following, cited by Abeillé et al. (1998) as partial justification for their separate entries for transitive and intransitive complement *faire*:

- (3) a. Le prof    lui/\*le.fait                    voir  
           the teacher him-DAT/\*ACC.makes to-see  
           The teacher makes \*(‘to’) him see
- b. Son chef lui/\*le.fait                    en.vouloir            à tout le monde  
           her boss her-DAT/\*ACC.makes EN.to-get-angry everyone-DAT  
           Her boss makes \*(‘to’) her angry at everyone
- c. Il.fait    se.les.laver                    aux enfants  
           he.makes SE.them-ACC.wash the children-DAT  
           He makes ‘to’ the children wash them (*their hands*)

It is simply a fact about the verb *voir* – whether it realises a direct object or not – that when it is embedded in a *faire* causative structure, the causee is dative marked (3a). Likewise, *en vouloir à* (a so-called ‘intrinsic clitic verb’) requires a dative causee, even though its only complement is already dative. Again, the resulting valence requirements of *faire* include no direct object at all. What’s more, although affixal objects of downstairs verbs generally climb onto the upstairs causative, verbs with an intrinsic or reflexive affixal argument like *se laver* in (3c) always realise their affixal arguments locally instead (‘clitic trapping’). Even so, the corresponding reduction in the downstairs verb’s valence requirements does not influence the case marking of the causee as one might expect.

These facts not only defy Bratt’s generalisation (and corresponding attempts to derive case marking patterns from a single lexical entry for *faire*), they also disrupt the more fundamental generalisation that causee case is determined by downstairs verb transitivity, as exemplified by (1,2). In order to preserve the transitivity generalisation, Miller & Sag (1997) abandon the standard assumption that transitivity as a property of verb’s argument structure in favor of an ad-hoc feature [TRANS ±], which allows the intransitive uses of *voir* to be lexically specified as transitive.

We offer an analysis of the French causative that builds on the work of Miller (1991), Miller & Sag (1997), Monachesi (1999), Abeillé, Godard & Sag (1998), and Abeillé & Godard (2000,2002). Our analysis, however, makes a number of novel simplifying modifications.

- We capitalise on Bratt’s generalisation, and so require only a single entry for the composition causative.

- We eliminate the ad-hoc feature TRANS, and return to a argument-structural conception of transitivity.
- We provide a novel characterisation of “intrinsic clitics” that avoids an introduction of new types or features, and naturally accounts for the behaviour of reflexive pronominals like *se*.
- We drastically simplify the type hierarchy and feature geometry required by Miller & Sag’s (1997) account of pronominal affix placement.
- We enforce strict locality restrictions on complex predicates’ selection possibilities, obviating the need to propagate into the syntax “derivational history” like subtypes of word (Miller & Sag’s *plain-wd/clitic-wd*) or affix realisation features of the sort used by Miller (1991) or Monachesi (1999).

Much of the innovation in this analysis is in our reformulation of Miller & Sag’s (1997) analysis of affix placement. We identify ‘intrinsic clitics’ (affixal arguments which are lexically associated with a verb but do not contribute to the meaning) as items on the VALENCE list but not the argument structure.<sup>2</sup> Affix realisation is performed by an *affixing-construction*, which might in other frameworks be a type of word-to-word lexical rule. Affixing constructions obey the constraints in (4), which ensure that all valents of type *aff* are replaced with *pros* (a type of covert valent) at the time that they are morphologically realised. This is a departure from Miller & Sag, who assumed that affix realisation entirely removed affixal valents, rather than just marking them as realised (as *pro*).

$$(4) \quad \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{affixing-cxt} \Rightarrow \\ \text{DTRS} \left\langle \begin{array}{l} \text{SYN} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{verb} \\ \text{VAL} \quad \boxed{A} \text{list}(\text{non-aff}) \circ \boxed{B} \text{ne-list}(\text{aff}) \end{array} \right] \\ \text{MORPH} \mid \text{FORM} \quad \boxed{I} \end{array} \right\rangle \\ \text{MTR} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{SYN} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{verb} \\ \text{VAL} \quad \boxed{A} \circ \text{list}(\text{pro}) \sqrt{\boxed{B}} \end{array} \right] \\ \text{MORPH} \mid \text{FORM} \quad \text{affix}(\boxed{I}, \boxed{B}) \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right]$$

We uniformly treat null complementation in terms of a valence/daughter discrepancy. Complements not expressed as words are analysed as noncanonical valents that fail to be realised as daughters, whether they correspond to morphological affixes (e.g. *je l’aime* ‘I like it’) or not (e.g. *j’aime* ‘I like (it)’). In this way, we draw a parallel between the phenomenon of definite null instantiation, or DNI (Fillmore 1986; Lambrecht and Lemoine 2005) and affixal pronouns: in both cases, a defi-

<sup>2</sup>We assume, following Sag (to appear) and Fillmore et al (in prep), that the VALENCE (essentially the earlier HPSG feature SUBCAT), together with the feature X-ARG (external argument) replaces the features SUBJ and COMPS. The elements of VALENCE and ARG-ST lists are signs (note that signs do not have daughters). Additionally, this framework eliminates the features SYNSEM, HEAD, LOCAL, and NONLOCAL, and assumes a single class of *constructions* which replace both lexical rules and immediate dominance schemata.

nite argument of some verb is syntactically unexpressed, yet, as will be shown, the syntactic properties of this missing argument remain accessible to the grammar.

An example of definite null instantiation is given in (5), taken from Larjavaara 1997, in which the pronominal direct object may be omitted without any change in meaning:<sup>3</sup>

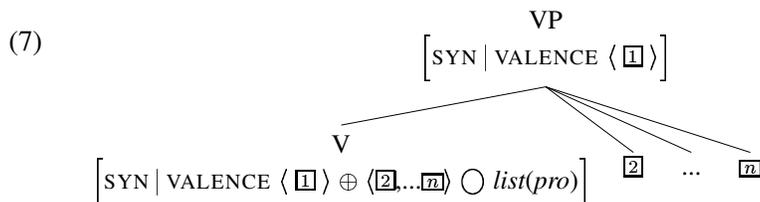
- (5) La correspondante, elle.(les).admirait aussi  
 the correspondent, she.(them).admired also  
 ‘The correspondent liked them also’

Evidence that the unrealised complement is still present at some level of syntactic representation is given by (6), due to Koenig (1993):

- (6) Je.lui.ai fait manger chaudes  
 I.him.have made eat hot-FEM.PL  
 ‘I made him eat (them) hot’

To treat the fact that the adjective *chaudes* above agrees with some missing object, we treat DNI objects as signs present on the VALENCE and ARG-ST of this seemingly intransitive verb. Such signs are taken to be *pros*, just like the valents introduced in place of *affs* following affixal realisation in (4).

Valents of type *pro* are never saturated by combination with another sign in linearisation, but are eliminated at the phrasal level by the constructions which introduce phrases (equivalent to the head-complements schema and subject-head schema of earlier HPSG incarnations). The following schematic illustrates the construction that licenses a phrase from a head and its complements. Note that the *pro* valents are not retained on the mother.



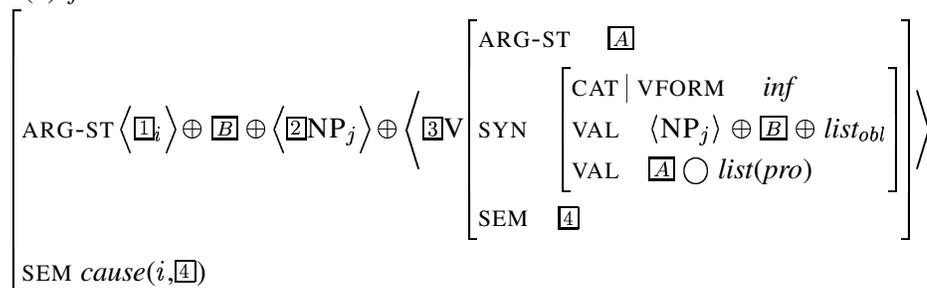
The effect obtained with the treatment outlined above is that both DNI objects and (already morphologically realised) affixes correspond to a *pro* valent. The problematic sentences given in (3) are then no longer exceptions to the transitivity rule: (3a) is an instance of DNI, and so *voir* has a *pro* direct object. Likewise, in (3b) and (3c), the realised affixes *en* and *les* correspond to *pros*. In all cases, the transitive case marking pattern is expected, as the verbs have a (*pro*) direct object. Therefore, there is no need to posit the stipulative feature TRANS.

<sup>3</sup>Many DNI sentences such as this seem to be proscribed in the prescriptive grammar, and may sound odd even in colloquial speech without context (due to necessarily anaphoric/contextual factors in retrieving the missing object). Robust arguments for their grammaticality is given in Lambrecht & Lemoine (2005).

It might be argued that these null valents are no less stipulative than the feature TRANS. Some evidence for the syntactic reality of the missing valents comes from (6): the agreement features needed to obtain the correct case marking on *chaudes* must be on the valent whose existence we are arguing for. Further support for our treatment comes from the fact that it enables us to implement Bratt’s generalisation.

By subtyping French ARG-ST lists, we ensure that intransitive verbs have no unmarked NP complements, while transitive verbs have exactly one. Any remaining nominal complements are constrained to be indirect or oblique (by default,  $\grave{a}$ -marked NPs).<sup>4</sup> A simplified lexical entry for causative *faire*, a transitive verb, is given in (8):

(8) *faire*:



Following Abeillé, Godard and Sag (1998), this entry for *faire* raises the valents of a downstairs verb directly onto its ARG-ST list. The causee ( $\boxed{2}$ ) will be the second item on *faire*’s VALENCE list and thus a direct object NP only if  $\boxed{B}$  is empty (i.e. if the downstairs verb is intransitive). The abbreviation *list<sub>obl</sub>* is used for a list of non-direct objects (indirect and oblique arguments), and will be spelled out in more depth elsewhere. The basic transitive/intransitive pattern is thus derived from a single lexical entry for *faire*, and its interaction with the properties of intransitive and transitive infinitives. To predict clitic trapping, we require that the only complements of the downstairs verb that are not on its ARG-ST are *pros*. This forces intrinsic clitic verbs to realise their affixal complements downstairs, as illustrated below.<sup>5</sup>

The problematic sentence involving *voir* in (3a) is now treated by allowing that instance of *voir* to have a *pro* direct object. It thus may fail to appear overtly. However, it will still be inherited onto the ARG-ST list of *faire*, thereby ensuring that the ‘causee’ is the third item on the argument structure, and therefore  $\grave{a}$ -marked, as explained above.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Loosely following Abeillé et al (2005), we take French bare NPs and  $\grave{a}$ -marked PPs of the type illustrated in (1) to be a natural class of nominal phrases which differ primarily wrt the value of the MARKING feature.

<sup>5</sup>The double path for VAL in this entry is non-standard, but perfectly coherent. In fact, when spelled out in more detail, our analysis does not have this property, as one of the VAL constraints is in fact associated with a type of which *faire* is an instance. Only one VAL constraint is specified on the lexical entry.

<sup>6</sup>Given the dyadic approach to the causative semantics that we have adopted, the determination

As mentioned above, one group of affixes (“intrinsic clitics”) do not float up to *faire*, but remain downstairs. Unlike Miller & Sag, we do not attribute this property to the type of verb on which they appear, but derive it from a mismatch between argument structure and valence. We define intrinsic affixes as those whose valent appears on some verb’s VAL but not on its ARG-ST. As the lexical entry for *faire* above prevents the downstairs infinitive from having any non-argumental valents that are not *pros*, intrinsic affixes must be realised on the downstairs verb. This serves to turn its *aff* valents into *pros*, so that *faire* can select it.

There are in fact two instantiations of the *affixing-construction* type specified in (4): one for finite verbs, and one for infinitives.

- (9) a. 
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{affixing-cxt} \\ \text{DTRS} \left\langle \left[ \text{SYN} \mid \text{CAT} \mid \text{VFORM} \quad \textit{fin} \right] \right\rangle \end{array} \right]$$
- b. 
$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{affixing-cxt} \\ \text{DTRS} \left\langle \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{ARG-ST} \quad \boxed{A} \\ \text{SYN} \quad \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{CAT} \mid \text{VFORM} \quad \textit{inf} \\ \text{VAL} \quad \boxed{A} \circ \textit{ne-list}(\textit{aff}) \end{array} \right] \end{array} \right] \right\rangle \end{array} \right]$$

By constraints on the latter, we ensure that infinitives only realise their affixes locally if at least one of them is an intrinsic. This prevents non-intrinsic affixes being “accidentally” realised downstairs.<sup>7</sup>

## References

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of the ‘causee’, when there is one, is actually pragmatic in nature.

<sup>7</sup>It is a simplification of the data to say that the only time infinitives can realise affixes locally is where one is intrinsic. There are in fact other situations where this can happen, and we would postulate further affixing constructions for these as required.

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