
Anticausatives are weak scalar expressions: Experimental evidence from Greek

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In this paper we compare the interpretation of anticausative (ACs) and passive of causative (PCs) verbs. Building on Alexiadou et al. (2006, 2015), Schäfer (2008), we argue that both causatives and ACs involve a cause event and ACs differ from causatives only in the presence and the nature of a Voice head: morphologically unmarked ACs lack Voice, morphologically marked ACs involve an expletive Voice head and passives of causatives involve a contentful Voice head which introduces the agent for the causing event. Under this view, PCs are predicted to entail their AC counterparts.

- (1) a. i valitises aniksan. (AC) \Leftarrow b. i valitises anihtikan. (PC)
a'. The suitcases opened \Leftarrow b'. The suitcases were opened

On this view, an (agentive) causative and its anticausative counterpart are scalar expressions such that the former asymmetrically entails the latter (Schäfer & Vivanco 2016). The question is whether an implicature that there is no Agent is derived with an AC. To test this hypothesis, we performed on the basis of Greek data a Truth Value Judgement task (N=40) with pictures varying the AC/PC verb form and the picture scenario (agent vs. non-agent) as the two factors. We had 4 items per condition with 4 verbs (*clean, close, empty, open*) which appear as unmarked ACs and PCs (1a,b). We analysed the data in two separate analyses for ‘unmarked AC’ and ‘PC’. We observe a significant difference between the agent and non-agent-scenario in the case of anticausatives. The AC is accepted 54% of the time in the agent-scenario, compared to 76% for the PC, suggesting that subjects indeed derive an implicature. Our results suggest that speakers find a semantically transitive alternative relevant when they consider an AC in an agentive context (cf. Fox & Katzir 2011).

References: • Alexiadou, A, E. Anagnostopoulou & F. Schäfer (2006). The properties of anticausatives crosslinguistically. • Schäfer, F. & Vivanco, M., (2016): Anticausatives are weak scalar expressions, not reflexive expressions”, *Glossa* 1(1), p.18.