

Predicting mood choice in causative complements in Catalan: A commitment-based approach

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Introduction. Quer (1998) observes that clausal complement of so-called implicative verbs in Catalan, e.g. *fer* ‘make’, *contribuir* ‘contribute’, *impedir* ‘prevent’, carry an embedded verb in the subjunctive mood, (1). Quer further notes that these verbs are also causative since the subject’s referent of the matrix clause is the initial causer of the embedded clause, (1) $\approx x$ cause/make y (to/not to) like w .

- (1) El professor **fa/impedeix/contribueix** que ens agradin (*agraden) les mates.
~‘The teacher makes/prevents/contributes that we like-SBJV (*like-IND) math.’

Karttunen (1971) notes that among implicative verbs, we find verbs such as *remind*, which for Bolinger (1971) are also causative in the sense that *remind* can be loosely paraphrased as *make x remember y*. According to Quer, then, implicative verbs with a causative reading of the *remind* sort in Catalan are predicted to carry an embedded verb in the subjunctive. **Here**, we show that this prediction is not met and that causative verbs of the *fer*-type as discussed by Quer do not show uniform behavior regarding mood choice. We assume two distinct subclasses of verbs that can be identified depending on whether they actually entail that the matrix subject’s referent knows the truth of the proposition in the clausal complement. Crucially, this correlates with mood selection in the embedded clause: causative verbs that do not entail such knowledge of the subject’s referent strictly select the subjunctive, i.e., *fer*-type verbs (2a). Verbs that do entail it select the indicative (in their non-directive interpretation). We call these *recordar*-type verbs, e.g. *falsificar* ‘falsify’, *aclarir* ‘clarify’, *ometre* ‘omit’ (2b).

- (2) a. El nou professor **fa/impedeix/contribueix** que ens agradin més les matemàtiques, ...però ell no n’és conscient, encara no li ho hem dit.
~‘The new teacher makes/prevents/contributes that we like-SBJV math more, but he doesn’t know it, we haven’t told him yet.’
b. El nou professor **recorda/aclareix/omet** que som molt bons en matemàtiques, ...#però ell no n’és conscient, encara no li ho hem dit.
~‘Our professor reminds/clarifies/omits that we are-IND very good at math, but he doesn’t know it, we haven’t told him yet.’

Analysis. To account for the contrast in (2), we offer an analysis based on Geurts’ (2019) take on commitments. Individuals undertake commitments to socially coordinate their actions through expectation management with themselves and with others by proposing them to the common ground. We further use Geurts’ three-place relation $C_{a,b} p$ to express that an individual a is committed to b to act on p . Thus, $C_{a,b} p$ can either express that a publicly commits to p ($a \neq b$), i.e. a says p ($C_{a,b} p$), or a privately commits to p ($a = b$), i.e. a believes p ($C_{a,a} p$). The stipulation for *recordar*- and *fer*-type verbs we suggest is that the former entail the matrix subject’s private commitment to the propositional content of the embedded clause in the actual context, as it cannot be canceled (2b). In contrast, *fer*-type predicates only imply the matrix subject’s uncertainty about the future in the actual context and allow cancellability (2a), leading to our assumption that these verbs implicate a lack commitment to $\neg p$ ($\rightarrow \neg C_{a,a} \neg p$). Quer (1998) similarly argues that *fer*-type verbs are future realizations of a world according to the referent of the matrix subject and only lexically imply but do not contribute to the context. Thus, we further assume that there is a possibility for the matrix subject to commit to p through strengthening of the weak implicature of $\neg C_{a,a} \neg p$ whenever it is common ground that $C_{a,a} p \vee C_{a,a} \neg p$ (cf. Geurts 2019). In (3), we only look at the entailment and (weak) implicatures of possible private commitments in our respective verb classifications of *fer* and *recordar*-type predicates:

- (3) a. *recordar*-type verbs, at the time of utterance entail $C_{a,a} p$
 a is committed to herself to act on p
b. *fer*-type verbs, at the time of utterance, implicate $\neg C_{a,a} \neg p$
 a is not committed to herself to act on $\neg p$

From the notation in (3b), the matrix subject together with a *fer*-type verb expresses that she cannot undertake a commitment to $\neg p$ at the time of utterance. Courtesy of the auxiliary premise

postulated that $\neg C_{a,a} \neg p$ gets strengthened to $C_{a,a} p$, whenever it is common ground that $C_{a,a} p \vee C_{a,a} \neg p$, we merely eliminate the possibility that a “has not made up her mind as to whether she is privately committed to p or to $\neg p$ ” (Geurts 2019: 26). Conversely, whenever it is not common ground that $C_{a,a} p \vee C_{a,a} \neg p$, the implicature can be canceled. In any case, since *fer*-type verbs imply $\neg C_{a,a} \neg p$ by default at the time of utterance, we take this lack of a commitment to be a licenser of subjunctive mood (cf. Giannakidou & Mari 2021). Applying our analysis to the examples in (2), these observations receive further support: the distribution of commitments not only patterns with our entries for *fer* and *recordar*-verbs but it also makes correct predictions with respect to mood choice:

- (4) El meu avi va **aconseguir** ($\rightarrow \neg C_{a,a} \neg p$) que el meu fill mengés(-SBJV) verdura,
 a. ...però no ho va arribar a saber ($\neg C_{a,a} p$), es va morir abans que li ho diguéssim. (it is not common ground that $C_{a,a} p \vee C_{a,a} \neg p$, $\neg C_{a,a} \neg p$ does not get strengthened to $C_{a,a} p$)
 b. ...però només se’n va assabentar ($C_{a,a} p$) poc abans de morir. (it is common ground that $C_{a,a} p \vee C_{a,a} \neg p$, $\neg C_{a,a} \neg p$ gets strengthened to $C_{a,a} p$)
 ‘My grandfather succeeded in making my child eat vegetables, ...but he never came to know that, as he died before we could tell him./ ...but he only found out shortly before he died.’
- (5) El professor ens va **recordar** ($\models C_{a,a} p$) que érem(-IND) molt bons en matemàtiques,
 a. ...#però no ho va arribar a saber ($\neg C_{a,a} p$), es va morir abans que li ho diguéssim.
 b. ...i en va estar convençut ($C_{a,a} p$) fins a la seva mort.
 ‘The professor reminded us that we were very good at math, ...but he never came to know that, as he died before we could tell him/and he was convinced of it until his death.’

Embedded clauses of *fer*-type verbs signal the matrix subject’s referent is not committed, from which it follows that it is not clear whether the matrix subject is committed to p , resulting in the subjunctive mood in the embedded clause. Since *fer*-type verbs express a lack of commitment to $\neg p$ at the time of utterance, there is a possibility to strengthen $\neg C_{a,a} \neg p$ to $C_{a,a} p$. Hence, both follow-up sentences in (4) are valid. With *recordar*-type verbs it is the case that when the sentence is uttered, the matrix subject’s referent is definitely committed to the truth of the proposition in the complement clause qua entailment, and this commitment usually persists (Geurts 2019: 5). This explains why (5a) is infelicitous and (5b), on the other hand, felicitous.

Implications. Our approach to the distribution of commitments with causatives can help us deepen our understanding of the nature of causal chains. Indirect causal chains involve an intermediate entity other than the initial causer and the final causee. Previous work (Fodor 1970; Shibatani 1976; Bittner 1999; Wolf 2003) argued only periphrastic causatives, e.g. *cause to die*, can felicitously describe scenarios that imply indirect causation, whereas lexical causatives, e.g. *kill*, cannot, as they entail direct causation:

- (6) CONTEXT: A gunsmith faultily repairs the gun that a sheriff brings him for inspection. The next day, the sheriff’s gun jams and he is killed. (Katz 1970)
 a. The gunsmith **caused** the sheriff to die. b. #The gunsmith **killed** the sheriff.

We propose direct causation is connected to commitments on part of the matrix subject’s referent, as they result in full accountability, whereas indirect causation involves the impossibility to hold someone fully accountable for their actions as they did not commit to p in the first place. The context in (6) shows the gunsmith is committed to repairing the sheriff’s gun, he’s not committed to killing him. The periphrastic causative is thus related to an accidental side effect of his faulty repair. Namely, the gunsmith’s commitment is not correctly reflected in *The gunsmith killed the sheriff* because his commitments do not match with direct causation, explaining (6b).

Conclusion. Cause-related verbs in Catalan do not show uniform behavior regarding mood choice in their complement clause since two distinct classes can be identified: *recordar*- and *fer*-type. We have argued that in the former, the referent of the causer is committed to the truth of the proposition and that in the latter, commitment of the causer’s referent is not clearly assignable, leading to a lack of commitment to $\neg p$ at the time of utterance which can be strengthened. These

distributions pattern with mood, corroborating a view of mood choice according to which indicative or subjunctive is dependent on commitments (cf. Giannakidou & Mari 2021).

Selected references. Geurts, B (2019). Communication as commitment sharing: Speech acts, implicatures, common ground. *Theoretical Linguistics*, 45(1-2) ♦ Giannakidou, A. & A. Mari (2021). Truth and veridicality in grammar and thought. University of Chicago Press. ♦ Quer, J. (1998). *Mood at the interface*. Holland Academic Graphics. ♦ Rigau, G. (1981). *Gramàtica del discurs*. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.