Investigating Iraqi EFL College Learners' Perception and Use of Causative Verbs

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Causative verbs are used to indicate that one person causes a second person to do something for the first person. The causative verbs are : have, get, make (Croft, W. 2003:34) .

The present study aims at presenting the syntactic and semantic characteristics of causative verbs and investigating empirically the extent to which Iraqi EFL university learners' master these characteristics. In addition, it aims at investigating the extent to which they can recognize and use causative verbs correctly; and their ability to differentiate the causative verbs from another types of verbs.

A test has been conducted to a sample of 100 Iraqi EFL university learners at their third and fourth year in the Department of English at the College of Education, University of Wasit during the academic year 2013-2014. The test has been exposed to jury members to measure its face validity.

Statistical means have been applied to the results of the test to investigate the perception and use of the college students in causative verbs. They have yielded certain conclusions that Iraqi EFL university

learners at the third and fourth year face difficulties in perceiving and using the causative verbs. The rate of their correct responses in the whole test, (1291, 28.205%), is lower than their incorrect ones (3709, 71.795%). At the production level, the subjects' incorrect responses (2434, 79.84%) reveal that they are unable to use causative verbs correctly whether syntactically or semantically. The difference in the rate of the incorrect responses of the perception (1275, 63.75%) and the use levels show that the learners of the third - fourth year face more difficulty at the use level than that at the perception one.

1. Introduction

All languages have ways to express causation, but differ in the means. Some languages have morphological devices (such as inflection) that change verbs into their causative forms, or adjectives into verbs of becoming. Other languages employ periphrasis with idiomatic expressions or auxiliary verbs. All languages also have lexical causative forms (such as English *rise → raise*). The causative is a common structure in English. It is used when one thing or person causes another thing or person to do something.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Causative verbs

Causative verb is used when talking about something that someone else did for another person. It means that the subject caused the action to

happen, but didn't do it themselves. May be they paid, or asked, or persuaded the other person to do it.

Causative verbs express an action, which is caused to happen. In other words, when someone has something done for me cause it to happen. In other words, he does not actually do anything, but asks someone else to do it for him. This is the sense of causative verbs. Intermediate to advanced level English learners should study the causative verb as an alternative to the passive voice (Dixon, 2000:87).

2.2. Basic Causative Structures

There are two basic causative structures. One is like an active, and the other is like a passive. The following examples use the causative verb "have":

Active	Passive
I had John fix the car.	I had the car fixed.
I arranged for the car to be fixed by John	I arranged for the car to be fixed by someone.
I caused him to fix it.	We don't know who, so this is like a passive.

2.3. The Active Causative Structure

The basic structure of the active form, along with some more examples:

Subject	Causative verb	Agent	Action verb	Object
1- Susan	had	her brother	do	her homework.
2-The police	had	the suspect	stop	his car.
3-We	had	the carpenter	fix	our window.

2.4. The Passive Causative Structure

In the passive form, there is usually no agent. The action verb is in the past participle, and the object comes before it:

Subject	Causative verb	Object	Action verb
1-We	had	our door	fixed.
2-Amir	had	her hair	cut.
3-Samir	had	the windows	cleaned.

Causative verbs designate the action necessary to cause another action to happen. In "The devil made me do it." the verb "made" causes the "do" to happen. Here is a brief list of causative verbs, in no particular order: let, help, allow, have, require, allow, motivate, get, make, convince, hire, assist, encourage, permit, employ, force. Most of them are followed by an object (noun or pronoun) followed by an infinitive:

1- "She allows her pet cockatiel to perch on the windowsill."

2- "She hired a carpenter to build a new birdcage." (Ibid:65-68) .

Three causative verbs are exceptions to the pattern described above. Instead of being followed by a noun/pronoun and an infinitive, the causative verbs: (have, make and let) are followed by a noun/pronoun and the base form of the verb (which is actually an infinitive with the "to" left off).

Causative verbs also indicate that one person or thing helps to bring about a new state of affairs" In other words, a causative verb shows that someone or something somehow causes something to happen. The verb might be strong in meaning and implication force.

The Longman Grammar of Spoken Written English divides causative verbs into two groups:

1. Causative verbs with nominalized direct objects = "This information enables the formulation of precise questions".

2. Causative verbs with following complement clauses = "What caused you to be ill?" / "Police and council leaders agreed to let a court decide the fate of the trees"

(Biber,2002:108) .

Shibatani (2001:132) lists three criteria for entities and relations that must be encoded in linguistic expressions of causation:

1.An agent causing or forcing another participant to perform an action, or to be in a certain condition.

2.The relation between the two events (the causing event, and the caused performing/being event) is such that the speaker believes that the occurrence of one event, the "caused event," has been realized at the second one, which is after event, the time of the "causing event".

3.The relation between causing event and caused event seems such that the speaker believes the occurrence of the caused event depends wholly on the occurrence of the causing event—the dependency of the two events here must be to the extent that it allows the speaker a counterfactual inference that, the caused event would not have taken place at a particular time if the causing event had not taken place, provided that all them had remained the same. (Ibid: 112)

This set of definitional prerequisites allows for a broad set of types of relationships based, at least, on the lexical verb, the semantics of the causer, the semantics of the causee and the semantics of the construction explicitly encoding the causal relationship. Many analysts (Comrie (1981), Song (1996), Dixon (2000) and others) have worked to tease apart what factors (semantic or otherwise) account for the distribution of causative constructions, as well as to document what patterns actually occur cross-linguistically.

Comrie (1981: 158-177) focuses on the typology of the syntax and semantics of causative constructions proper. Crucially, Comrie (and others to be discussed here) distinguish between the linguistic encoding of causal relations and other, extra-linguistic concerns, such as the nature of causation itself, and questions of how humans perceive of causal relations. While certainly not irrelevant, these extra-linguistic questions will, for now, be left aside. Comrie usefully characterizes causative events in terms of two (or more) microevents perceived of composing a macroevent, and encoded in a single expression (of varying size and form). Formally, he categorizes causatives into 3 types, depending on the contiguity of the material encoding the causing event and that encoding the caused event. These are: 1) lexical causatives, in which the two events are expressed in a single lexical item, as in the well-discussed case of English kill; 2) morphological causatives, in which the causing event and the caused event are encoded in a single verbal complex via causative morphology, and, prototypically, morphological marking showing the status of affected arguments. Finally, Comrie discusses analytic causatives, in which the causing event and the caused event are encoded in separate clauses(Ibid:98).

Song's work (1996:22) is very critical of typological work that depends on statistical inference, citing data from the Niger-Congo family that contradicts some earlier claims that "languages within genera are generally fairly similar typologically" .Song therefore culls data from every language for which adequate documentation was available to him.

Song employs the following terminology:

1. (S cause) -the clause which denotes a causing event

2. (S effect) - the clause which denotes the caused event

3. (V cause) - verbal elements of (S cause)

4. (V effect) -verbal elements of (V effect)

One of Song's major contributions to the literature is fleshing out an analysis of his PURP causative. These are constructions which encode intended causation on the part of the causer, but which do not encode any outcome: i.e., the speaker encodes (V cause) and causer intentionality, but remains agnostic as to whether (V effect) was felicitously effected.

Dixon (2000:68), in his authoritative typology of causatives, discusses the syntax and semantics of all types of causative constructions, in much more detail than can be recounted here. One research question he begins to tackle is the following: Many languages, as he and many others have documented and attempted to categorize, have at least two causative constructions.

Causer acts naturally, intentionally, and directly while the causee either lacks control or has control but is willing, and is only partially affected. It may apply only to active intransitive verbs (or may include some small subclass or transitive), or to state verbs alone. (Ibid:77).

Thus, Dixon provides a data-driven account of the prototypical 'more compact' and 'less compact' causatives (though noting that these prototypes are somewhat artificial, chiefly in that many causative constructions in the languages surveyed involve only some subset of the criteria above). In addition, he calls for broader typological surveys to test his model—a call which we have taken into account when selecting the languages for our preliminary survey. One ongoing research goal in this study tests these parameters against this new set of languages: further below, we present a survey of causative constructions from our database, along with notes on which of Dixon's criteria seem to be at play.

As for the syntax of causatives, Dixon notes that for causativized intransitives, the overwhelming tendency is for the old S argument to be marked as O, with the introduced argument functioning as the new A. Somewhat more interestingly, Dixon posits six typological classes based on how languages (constructions?) treat arguments after a new argument has been introduced via the causativization of a base transitive verb (Dixon, 2000:87).

3. Statement of the Problem

This study intends to investigate the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL learners in recognizing and using the causative verbs especially the distinguishing between the passive and active causative verbs. The constructions used to express these verbs correctly could be problematic for the Iraqi EFL learners of English. This may be related to the fact that

the Iraqi EFL learners are not able or there is an obvious lack in distinguishing and using these verbs.

This study belongs to descriptive research design because the researchers described current event in using causative verbs that were investigated in the third and fourth stage students of English department at Wasit University as population of the research. The researchers have chosen the sample of this study randomly. The data of this study are students' answers derived from their test papers. The test comprises of five questions.

The researchers hope that the findings of this study will be useful for both teachers and students. For teachers, these results can motivate them to improve their quality in teaching and these errors in using causative verbs made by students can make them aware that they must keep studying hard and increasing their ability more and more.

4. Aim

The study aims at finding out EFL college learners' perception and use of causative verbs.

5. Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. Iraqi EFL college learners face difficulty in distinguishing the constructions functioning of causative verbs from other types of verbs, thus, they can't convert causative verbs to other types of verbs and vice versa.

2. The Iraqi EFL college learners' use of causative verb is below the average.

6. Limit

The study is limited to the third – fourth year students in the Department of English, College of Education at the University of Wasit at the academic year 2013- 2014.

7. Procedures

The procedures to be adopted in this study are the following:

1. Presenting and describing adequately the causative verbs in English and showing their syntactic classification according to the literature written so far.

2. Clarifying the differences in using causative verbs.

3. Constructing a test and presenting it to a jury. The data are gathered from grammar books to fit the purpose of the study.

4. Applying the test to the third and fourth year students and analyzing the results obtained to make conclusions and suggestions.

8. The Population

The population of the current study consists of third and fourth EFL students at Wasit University, College of education. The total numbers of students ' population at third and fourth stages is 208 students distributed into four classes.

9. The Sample

The sample of the study comprises of *100* subjects of the third and fourth stages in the academic year (2013-2014) of the Department of English at the College of Education, University of Wasit has been selected randomly from the population of the study. Fifty students (18 males and 32 females) of the sample have been taken from the third stage while the other half (14 males and 36 females) has been taken from the fourth stage. They are native speakers of Arabic language who have been studying EFL for eleven - twelve years in general and three - four years at the Department of English. Students whose native language is other than Arabic or students who have a language contact with native speakers of English are excluded from the sample, because students from other countries other than Iraq may have English language background different from that background of Iraqi students. In addition, repeaters have been excluded. Their average age is twenty-two years old.

The topic of the study has been taught in their second year of study at the university while the test has been applied at the third and fourth year-students because they are more proficient and the most advanced learners of English at the university level before graduation.

The textbook adopted, which they have studied, is *A University Grammar of English* by Quirk and Greebaum (1973)

10. Test Design

The test consists of five questions. The first two questions are designed to measure the subjects' responses at the recognition level. The first question includes five items intended to measure the subjects' ability to choose the right option for the right item. This question depends on the subjects' knowledge of the semantics of the causative verbs. The subjects' responses to such a question will reflect the extent to which they can join the meaning of the sentence with their correct response.

The last three questions, on the other hand, are designed to measure the subjects' responses at the production level.

Validity, reliability, economy, scorabilitty, and administrability are the features of a good test; therefore, they will be dealt with in some detail in the following sections

11.Pilot Administration

One method of estimating reliability and validity of a test is by administering parallel forms of the test to the same group called pilot administration.

The pilot test has been conducted before the actual administration of the final test on the twelfth of January , 2014 at University of Wasit, it implemented at fifth of December , 2013 and on the twentieth of December the same year another pilot test has been conducted at University of Wasit. This test has been administrated to twenty subjects, who have been excluded from the final administration.

The pilot administration has informed the researchers with the time allotted to answer the test and with feedback on the clarity of items and procedures, which of these items and procedures have needed modification or change by analyzing them in terms of item difficulty and discrimination.

After conducting the pilot test, the results have revealed that the time required for answering the whole items is about fifty minutes, and that some instructions needed modification because the subjects have not understood them

12. Item Analysis

Item analysis is "a means of estimating how much information each single item in a test contributes to the information provided by the test as a whole'' (Davies, 1986: 192).

The researchers focuse on the degree to which each item is properly written so that it can measure the desired content. Such analysis often involves making judgments about the adequacy of item formats.

This analysis is labeled according to two levels: item facility value and item discrimination power.

13. Item Facility Value

Item facility value (also called item difficulty or item easiness) refers to the proportion of correct responses to a test item (Murcia, 1991: 498).

The statistical index used to examine the percentage of students who correctly answer a given item by using the following formula which helps to measure the levels of difficulty and easiness of each item:

$$FV = \frac{R}{N}$$

Where

FV= item facility value.

R= the number of correct answers.

N= the number of the students taking the test. (Heaton, 1988: 178)

The application of this formula has yielded that the item difficulty and easiness range between (*0.20-0.80*). Some of the items show low facility value yet they have been involved in the final version of test because they measure certain aspects of the learners' production awareness.

Madson (1983, 181-2) states that " a test is considered too easy if more than 90 percent get it right. An item is considered too difficult if fewer than 30 percent get it right." This indicates that the present test is satisfactory. Table (1) shows the item facility value and the item discrimination power; which will be explained after the table:

Table (1)

The Facility Value and the Discrimination Power of the Test Items

No. of question	No. of Item	FV	D	No. of question	No. of Item	FV	D
	1	0.2	0.2	*3B*	1	0.2	0.4
	2	0.4	0.4		2	0.2	0.2
	3	0.4	0.6		3	0.4	0.2
	4	0.6	0.2		4	0.6	0.4
	5	0.4	0.4		5	0	0
1	6	0.8	0.6		*1*	0.4	0.2
	7	0.4	0.2		*2*	0.2	0.4
	8	0.4	0.4		*3*	0.6	0.2
	9	0.6	0.8		*4*	0.2	0.2
	10	0.2	0.2		*5*	0.4	0.2

2	1	0.4	0.4	4	6	0.2	0.2
	2	0.6	0.2		7	0.4	0.6
	3	0.6	0.4		8	0.4	0.4
	4	0.4	0.8		9	0.6	0.2
	5	0.4	0.4		10	0.2	0.2
	6	0.6	0.2	5A	1	0.2	0.4
	7	0.4	0.2		2	0.2	0.6
	8	0.2	0.2		3	0.2	0.4
	9	0.8	0.6		4	0.6	0.4
	10	0.6	0.4		5	0.4	0.4
3A	1	0.2	0.2	5B	1	0.2	0.4
	2	0.4	0.2		2	0.6	0.2
	3	0	0		3	0.4	0.6
	4	0.6	0.2		4	0.6	0.4
	5	0.4	0.4		5	0.4	0.4

14. Item Discrimination Power

The second concept 'item discrimination power' indicates the degree to which an item separates the students who performed well from those who performed poorly. These two groups are sometimes referred to as the high and low scores or upper and lower-proficiency students, which can be explained in the following formula:

Correct U- Correct L

D = -------------------------------

N

(Madson 1983: 80)

Where

D= discrimination power.

U= upper half.

L= lower half.

N= the number of the students taking the test in one group.

The computation of this formula has yielded that the discrimination power ranges between *0.20-0.80*. In this respect, Ahman and Glock (1975: 139) point out that good results can be obtained if the items vary in discrimination power (20٪ and above). Items (**3** and **5** in Question **3/A** and

B respectively**)** show low discrimination power yet they have been involved in the final version of the test because they measure certain aspects of the students' recognition and production levels.

In this respect, Ebel (1972: 395) assures that if the low discrimination is not due to technical weakness in the items or to inappropriate difficulty. The test constructor can include them regardless of their low discrimination if s/he is convinced that they do belong and are clearly relevant to some aspects of the learners' achievement to be measured by the test.

15. Test Features

The most important features of a good test are validity, reliability, and practicality (Harrison, 1993: 10). Practicality is achieved by conducting a test with economy (i.e. saving time and effort) and ease (i.e. showing smoothness of administration, responding to its items, and scoring). Validity and reliability are illustrated in the following sub-categories of the test features.

15.1. Validity

Since the researchers' main concern in this study is to measure the students' ability in using causative verbs both at the production and recognition levels, the techniques and items are carefully constructed so as not to give space to other grammatical aspects of language to be tested other than causative verbs. Hence validity is ensured as Brown (1996: 231) indicates that validity is "the degree to which a test measures what it claims, or purports, to be measuring." Face validity and content validity are

very important types of validity, which are considered standards to measure test validity.

In the words of Harris (1969: 7), face validity is "the way the test looks to the examinees, test administrations, educators, and the like." Therefore, the test has been exposed to the jury members. For more valid and reliable test items, it has been approved by a jury of seventeen experienced university teaching staff members.

Even a superficial inspection of the items will be sufficient to reveal that the test has face validity. If a test item looks right to other testers, teachers, moderators, and testees, it can be described as having at least face validity. Therefore, the present test has been exposed to some administrators and non-expert users who have shown their approval of the test as a whole.

The adequacy of sampling of content or objectives in a test is called content validity (Murcia, 1991:497). In order to investigate content validity, " the tester must decide whether the test is a representative sample of the content of whatever the test was designed to measure" (Brown, 1996: 233).

Content validation depends on the analysis of the language being tested and the objectives of a particular course (Heaton, 1988: 160).

Gardner and Gliksman (1982: 193) state that for ensuring content validity, two major standards must be conducted " (1) a representative collection of items and (2) 'sensible' methods of construction." Therefore,

statistical treatment of the students' scores in the pilot study has been made to ensure what is called above "sensible method of test construction." Thus, the items of the present test are assumed to be valid as they are constructed to meet the aims of the test.

Content and face validity are most often determined on the basis of expert judgment (Burns, 2000: 352), therefore, the test has been submitted to a jury of experts. The jury members have shown its approval of the test as being valid to measure the purposes for which it is designed. The jury members have given some suggestions, which have been taken into consideration by replacing some sentences and modifying some instructions

15.2. Reliability

One of the main characteristics of a good test is reliability. Brown (1996: 192) defines it as "the extent to which the results can be considered consistent or stable". To ensure that a definite scoring scheme has been used. Furthermore, the instructions of the test have been clearly explained to the subjects.

There are different methods for estimating the reliability of a test, as Burns (2000:340-344) says, such as: test-retest, two equivalent forms, split-half, and Kurder-Richardson method.

Kurder-Richardson is the method adopted to estimate the reliability of the present test which the following formula stands for:

$$R= (1-) \quad \frac{N\ m\ (N-m)}{N-1\ NX2}$$

Where

R= reliability.

N= the number of items in the test.

M= the mean of the test scores.

X= the standard deviation of the test scores.

The computation of this formula has yielded that the reliability coefficient of the present test is (**0.96**) which is a highly positive correlation (Ibid: 235).

16. Final Administration

On the twelfth of January during the academic year (2013-2014), the final version of the test was conducted on 100 of the learners of the English Department at University of Wasit. The subjects have taken one hour for responding to the items, which is the time allotted for the test. In the words of Carroll (1980: 16), a good test is expected to "provide as much information as is required with the minimum expenditure of time, effort and resources."

The researchers explained the causative verbs in general then they distributed the test papers. Any question, the subjects have asked, the researchers answered. The subjects have been assured that the test was purely for research purposes and did nothing with their marks by informing them not to write their names on the test sheets.

Moreover, the subjects were asked to give their responses on the test papers so as not to waste time and effort. Brown (1996: 205) remarks that " a good test should be economic both in time and stationary."

After collecting the test sheets, the researchers have marked those papers using a scoring scheme, which is presented in the following section.

17. The Scoring Scheme

The test has been scored out of 100. The scores have been divided in an equal way so as to give two scores for each correct answer in all questions and '*zero*' for the incorrect one. The item which is left without answer by the subjects has been considered incorrect and given zero since the subject hasn't recognized or produced any answer.

Regarding Question Three, Four, and Five which demand the subjects to produce the answer according to the given requirements, the following are considered wrong responses: (1) use of wrong verb formation; (2) use of wrong tenses with correct formation and (3) giving no response. Thus, the researchers have ignored the spelling mistakes. The scoring scheme is represented in the following table:

Table (2)
Distribution of the Scores of the Test

No. of Question	No. of Items	Scores	percentage
1	10	20	20
2	10	20	20
3.A	5	10	10
3.B	5	10	10
4	10	20	20
5A	5	10	10
5B	5	10	10
Total	50	100	100

18. Conclusions

The results of this study have yielded the following conclusions:

1. Iraqi EFL university learners at the third and fourth years face difficulties in recognizing and producing the causative verbs. The low rate of their responses in the main test at both levels can support this finding. The rate of their correct responses in the whole test, (**1291, 28.205%**), is lower than their incorrect ones, (**3709, 71.795%**).This validates the first hypothesis of the present study.

2. The rate of the subjects' incorrect responses in Questions (1 and 2),(**1275, 63.75%**), indicates that Iraqi EFL university learners can't distinguish the constructions functioning as causative verbs from those functioning .These results also support the first hypothesis of this study.

3. At the production level, the subjects' incorrect responses in Questions (3, 4, and 5) (**2434, 79.84%**) reveal that they are unable to use causative verbs correctly whether syntactically or semantically. The high rate of their incorrect responses in Question (3/ A and B) (**798, 79.8%**) shows that they face difficulty in mastering the semantics of causative verbs. This verifies the second hypothesis of this stud

استقصاءإدراك واستعمال طلبة الجامعة العراقيين الدارسين اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للأفعال السببية

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خلاصة البحث

تستخدم الأفعال السببية للإشارة إلى أن شخص ما تسبب شخص ثان ليعمل عملا للشخص الأول وهذه الأفعال هيhave, get, make .

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتقديم الصفات النحوية والنظرية للأفعال السببية كذلك تهدف تجريبيا استقصاء إلى أي مدى يتقن طلبة الجامعة هذه الصفات ، كذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء مدى قدرة الطلاب في إدراك واستعمال هذه الأفعال كذلك معرفة قدراتهم في التفريق بين هذه الأفعال والأفعال الأخرى .

اجري الاختبار على مائة من الطلاب الدارسين للغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية في المرحلة الثالثة والرابعة في قسم اللغة الانكليزية ،كلية التربية ، جامعة واسط في السنة الدراسية ٢٠١٣ـ٢٠١٤ وقد عرضت صيغة الاختبار على الخبراء للتأكد من صلاحيتها .

طبقت الأساليب الإحصائية على نتائج الدراسة لاستقصاء ادراك واستعمال الطلبة للافعال السببية وتوصلت الدراسة إلى أن طلاب اللغة الانكليزية للمرحلتين الثالثة والرابعة يواجهون صعوبات في إدراك واستعمال الأفعال السببية ذلك ان معدل الإجابات الصحيحة (%28.205 ,1291) اقل من الإجابات الخاطئة (%71.795 ,3709). على مستوى المعرفة او الاستعمال كذلك تبين من خلال الفرق في معدل الإجابات الخاطئة على مستوى الإدراك والاستخدام (%1275,63.75) ان طلبة المرحلتين الثالثة والرابعة يواجهون صعوبات اكبر على مستوى الاستخدام منه على مستوى الإدراك .

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