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Contrasting GIVE-causatives in French Sign Language (LSF) and French

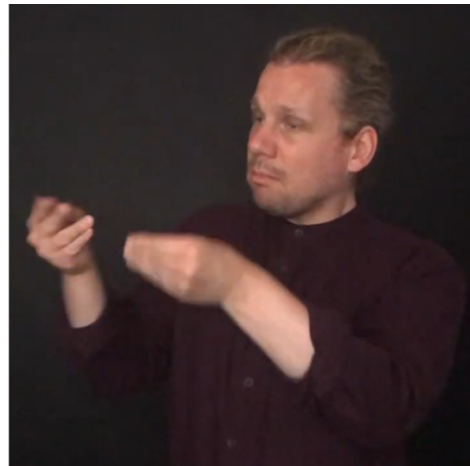
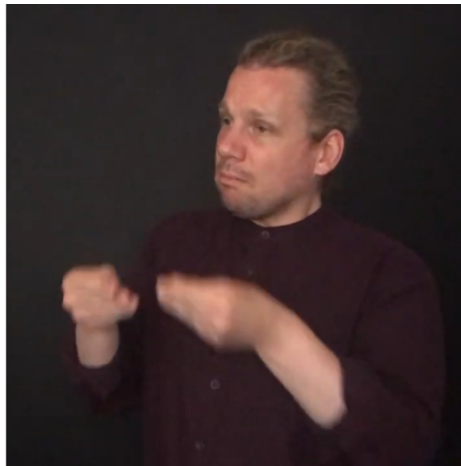
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1. Introduction

The present study investigates causative GIVE-constructions in French Sign Language (LSF) in (1a). The causative predicate is lexically identical to the neutral verb of transfer GIVE (1b/c).

- (1) a. Pierre GIVE₁ LAUGH (LSF)
 ‘Pierre makes me laugh.’ (causative GIVE)
- b. Pierre IX_a BOOK_a _aGIVE(book)₁
 ‘Pierre gives me a book.’ (main verb GIVE)¹
- c.



LSF sign GIVE (from Dadone, in progress)

Cross-linguistically, causative constructions using a verb homophonous with the verb of transfer GIVE are common (Lord & al. 2002:223-6, Veenstra & Muysken 2017, see Santoro & Aristodemo 2021 for Italian Sign Language LIS). However, despite the shared lexical origin of the causative verb, causative GIVE constructions (GIVE-CAUSATIVES in what follows) are clearly syntactically and semantically diverse. For example, as illustrated in (2), some GIVE-causatives combine with verb phrases (2a) while others take nouns as complements (2b).

- (2) a. Jan **bay** Mari kondwi vwati a (Haitian)
 Jean GIVE Marie drive car DET
 ‘Jean made Mari drive the car.’ (Glaude 2012:170)
- b. [Courir comme ça] me **donne** faim. (French)
 run like that 1SG.DAT GIVE hunger
 ‘Running like that makes me hungry.’ (attested)

In what follows, we compare the LSF GIVE-causative and the French GIVE-causative.

¹ Abbreviations in the glosses follow the Leipzig glossing rules with the addition of DET.PTV = partitive determiner. Additional abbreviations in the LSF glosses: IX = pointing sign; a, b: loci in signing space; 1 = signer, 2 = interlocutor. _aGIVE₁ glosses the sign GIVE articulated from locus **a** towards the signer (locus **1**). LSF does not have tense-marking morphology. We give translations with the simple present in English for sentences that allow past, progressive and future interpretations.

We begin by sketching the language contact situation between LSF and French, motivating the assumption that the LSF GIVE-causative arose as a result of language contact with spoken French (section 2). We proceed to show that the LSF and French GIVE-causatives differ syntactically as well as semantically (sections 3 and 4 respectively). Based on the syntactic properties observed, we propose a syntactic analysis of GIVE-causatives in LSF and French (section 5). Section 6 concludes.

2. Language contact between LSF and French

In general, deaf signers are a linguistic minority in their communities. As a consequence, sign language users are in contact with the spoken and written forms of the languages of their communities (see Millet & Estève 2012 for LSF, Zeshan 2005, Plaza Pust & Morales López eds 2008, Quinto-Pozos & Adam 2020 for general discussion).

In the case of LSF contact with written and spoken French arises in multiple ways. Firstly, in educational contexts, deaf students receive instruction in written French as part of standard schooling. In addition, teaching of French for signers may use a manually coded form of French using signs from LSF (a form of Signed French).²

A second source of language contact is bilingual LSF/French speaker-signers, including hearing children of deaf signers and signers that had exposure to spoken French before becoming deaf. Furthermore, many educators in specialised schools for the deaf are hearing signers that learn LSF as part of their training.

Plausibly, LSF GIVE-causatives arose as a result of language contact. Like French GIVE-causatives (3a/b), the LSF GIVE-causative (4) is limited to non-agentive predicates.

- (3) a. donner le vertige / donner du souci (French)
 GIVE DET vertigo GIVE DET.PTV.SG worry
 ‘to make dizzy / to worry’
- b. donner peur
 GIVE fear
 ‘to frighten’
- (4) a. PIERRE GIVE₁ SAD (LSF)
 ‘P. makes me sad.’
- b. DOG GIVE₁ FEAR
 ‘Dogs frighten me/ Dogs make me afraid.’

In what follows, we show that despite superficial similarities the GIVE-causative in LSF differs from both French GIVE-causatives syntactically and semantically.

3. Syntactic contrasts between LSF and French GIVE-causatives

French has two GIVE-causatives: one construction with bare *nouns* (5) and one construction with singular or plural NPs denoting emotions (6a) and feelings (6b) (for detailed discussion see Gross 1989).

- (5) With bare N: (French)
 donner faim / soif / peur / envie
 give hunger/ thirst/ fear / desire
 ‘make hungry / thirsty/ fearful/ make sb want sth’

² Signed French is used for educational purposes, reminiscent of linguistic glossing; it is not a natural form of communication between signers.

- (6) With NP: (French)
- a. **noun expressing an emotion**
 donner du souci, du chagrin, des regrets, des remords;
 give DET.PTV worry, DET.PTV sadness, DET.INDF.PL regrets, DET.INDF.PL regrets;
 un fou rire
 an irrepressible laugh
 ‘make worried, sad, regretful / make break out in irrepressible laughter’
- b. **noun expressing a feeling**
 donner le vertige / la migraine / la nausée / des frissons
 give the vertigo / the migraine / the nausea / DET.INDF.PL shivers
 ‘give vertigo / a migraine / nausea / the shivers’
 ‘make dizzy / give a headache / make feel nauseous / make shiver’

French GIVE-causatives have two syntactic forms: the GIVE-causative with a bare N in (5) is a light-verb construction, while the constructions with NPs (6a/b) have the syntax of the lexical verb *donner* ‘give’. GIVE-causatives with bare Ns behave as complex predicates, taking the same intensifiers as adjectives (7a) while GIVE-causatives with NPs (7b) take the intensifiers corresponding to NP objects (7c).

- (7) a. donner **très** faim / peur (GIVE-causatives + NP) (French)
 give very hunger / fear
- b. donner **beaucoup de** soucis
 give a.lot of worry (GIVE-causatives + NP)
- b. donner **beaucoup de** fleurs
 give a.lot of flowers (lexical donner ‘give’ + NP)

GIVE-causatives with NP complements (8) have the same syntax as the lexical verb *donner* ‘give’ (9):

- (8) a. Ce problème **donne des soucis** à Jean. (French)
 b. Ce problème lui **donne des soucis.**
 this problem (3SG.DAT) gives DET.INDF.PL worries (to Jean).
 ‘This problem worries Jean / worries him/her.’ (causative *donner* +NP)
- (9) a. Marie **donne des fleurs** à Jean.
 b. Marie lui **donne des fleurs.**
 Marie (3SG.DAT) gives DET.INDF.PL flowers (to Jean)
 ‘M. gives Jean flowers. / M. gives him/her flowers.’ (main verb *donner* ‘give’)

GIVE-causatives with bare N complements do not allow modification of the noun: with modification a determiner is obligatory (10a), while GIVE-causatives with NP complements admit limited modification (10b).

- (10) a. donner soif / donner une soif épouvantable (French)
 give thirst / give a thirst terrible
 ‘make thirsty / make terribly thirsty’
- b. donner des frissons dans le dos / donner de gros regrets
 give DET.INDF.PL shivers in the back give of big regrets
 ‘give shivers down the spine / give great regret’

The syntax of the LSF GIVE-causative differs from both French GIVE-causatives.

Unlike the French GIVE-causative with bare N complements that are always stative, the complements of the LSF construction can be dynamic (11) or stative predicates (12) and may be marked with (non-manual) durative modification (11b).

- (11) a. UNHAPPY LOVE STORIES GIVE₁ CRY (LSF)
 ‘Unhappy love-stories make me cry.’
- b. THAT GIVE₁ COUGHING
 ‘That makes me cough protractedly.’
 -----durative---
- (12) MEDICATION GIVE HEALTH GOOD (attested) (LSF)

While the French GIVE-causative with NP complements follows the syntactic pattern for the lexical verb *donner* ‘give’ (9a/b), the LSF GIVE-causative differs from the lexical verb GIVE in LSF. The direct complement in the LSF GIVE-causative is obligatorily post-verbal (13a) while for the lexical verb the direct object can be preverbal (13b).³

- (13) a. PIERRE GIVE₁ ADVANCE (LSF)
 ‘Pierre makes me progress.’ (GIVE-causative)
- b. PIERRE IXa BOOK IXa _aGIVE(book)₁
 ‘Pierre gives me a book.’ (main verb GIVE)

In contrast with the French GIVE-causative with bare N complements, the LSF GIVE-causative allows modification of the embedded predicate as illustrated in (12) and (14).

- (14) TRAINING GIVE₁ CHESS PROGRESS (LSF)
 ‘The training makes me progress at chess.’

4. Semantic contrasts between LSF and French GIVE-causatives

The LSF GIVE-causative also has a different semantics from the French GIVE-causatives.

While the French GIVE-causatives are limited to emotions (e.g. *peur* ‘fear’, *soucis* ‘worries’) and feelings (*migraine* ‘migraine’, *vertige* ‘vertigo’), the LSF GIVE-causative allows a wider range of internally caused changes of state. The LSF GIVE-causative combines with dynamic predicates that can be linked to emotional states (15a/b) but need not be (15c/d/e).

- (15) a. SAM GIVE₁ BLUSH (LSF)
 ‘Sam made me blush.’
- b. UNHAPPY LOVE STORIES GIVE₁ CRY/ SAD
- c. ONIONS GIVE₁ CRY /*SAD
 ‘Unhappy love stories/onions make me cry/sad.’
- d. THAT GIVE₁ LEARN STH
 ‘That makes me learn something’ (attested, speaking of a training course)
- e. THAT GIVE₁ SNEEZE
 ‘That made me sneeze.’

Furthermore, the LSF GIVE-causative is compatible with non-psychological internally caused changes of state with predicates like RUST/RUSTY, MELT and DAMAGE (16a/b/c).

- (16) a. WATER GIVE METAL RUSTY (LSF)
 ‘Water makes metal rust.’
- b. SUN GIVE ICE-CUBE MELT
 ‘The sun makes ice-cubes melt.’
- c. SALT GIVE TREES DAMAGE
 ‘Salt causes trees damage.’

³ The word order with the lexical verb GIVE is flexible: post-verbal objects are possible as in (i). For causative GIVE, in contrast, the order is fixed.

(i) ₁GIVE₂ 400 FRANCS ‘I give you 400 francs.’ (attested). (LSF)

The locus of the change of state in both French GIVE-causatives in (5/6) is an experiencer of a feeling (*faim* ‘hunger’) or an emotion (*soucis*, ‘worries’) and has to be animate. In contrast, the LSF GIVE-causative allows inanimate loci of the change of state (16) in addition to animate experiencers (15).

In an overview of the typology of causative formation, Shibatani (2002:6) identifies 4 classes of verbs, with class 1 most likely to allow causative morphology:

- | | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|
| (17) a. | CLASS 1 Inactive intransitives | (<i>fall, slip, burn, break, sleep?, laugh</i>) |
| b. | CLASS 2 Middle/ingestive verbs | (<i>sit down, ascend/ put on clothes, eat, learn</i>) |
| c. | CLASS 3 Active intransitives | (<i>work, run</i>) |
| d. | CLASS 4 Transitive | (<i>read the book, paint the house</i>) |

The LSF GIVE-causative does not take complements of classes 2/3/4: Intentional/agentive predicates are ungrammatical.⁴

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|-------|
| (18) a. | *SAM GIVE KIM SIT DOWN. | (LSF) |
| b. | *SAM GIVE KIM RUN. | |
| c. | *SAM GIVE KIM WASH CLOTHES. | |

Only a subset of class 1 predicates is possible in the LSF GIVE-causative. It is not sufficient to have a non-intentional non-agentive predicate: Examples like (19a/b) are not acceptable.

- | | | |
|---------|--|-------|
| (19) a. | *SAM GIVE ₁ FALL | (LSF) |
| | Not: ‘Sam made me fall’ (by startling/pushing me). | |
| b. | *SAM GIVE ₁ VASE BREAK. | |
| | Not: ‘Sam made me break the vase’ (by startling/pushing me). | |

The complements of the LSF GIVE-causative are limited to non-agentive/non-intentional predicates that are construed as internally caused changes of state:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| (20) a. | psychological predicates (stative HAPPY and non-agentive dynamic: LAUGH) |
| b. | internally caused inactive intransitive (COUGH/SNEEZE/BLUSH; LEARN; CRY (<i>onions</i>)) |
| c. | internally caused changes of state (RUST/MELT/CRUMBLE) see (16). |

The conclusion that the LSF GIVE-causative is limited to predicates of internally caused involuntary change is supported by the contrast found with another means of expressing caused change so-called CLASSIFIER CONSTRUCTIONS in LSF (*TRANSFERTS* in Cuxac 2000, see Garcia & Sallandre 2014 for an overview of the literature on established signs and classifier constructions). Classifier constructions have a strong iconic component. Classifier constructions expressing caused change insist on the process and the result: the process is modified by facial expressions during the time of realization of the predicate. At the same time the higher subject is presented as the cause of the process (21). In contrast, the LSF GIVE-causative expresses only the result, not the process yielding the result: the higher subject is interpreted as a trigger for a change of state, not as a direct cause (22). The examples in (21) and (22) are attested examples from an article in LSF on the effects of the sun:

(21) LSF Classifier constructions expressing caused change

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| a. | SUN LIGHT IX1 RADIATE HORMONE HAPPINESS DEVELOPMENT | (LSF) |
| | ‘Sunlight stimulates the development of the happiness hormone.’ | |
| b. | EXPOSURE LONGTIME CORNEAL INFLAMMATION | |
| | ‘Continuous [UV-B] exposure causes corneal inflammation.’ (attested) | |
| | https://www.media-pi.fr/Article/Le-monde-en-LSF/Sante-et-Bien-etre/Les-dangers-du-bronzage/3094 | |

⁴ The classes in (17) are formulated as classes of *verbs*. For LSF it is not clear that there is a grammatical distinction between nouns and verbs. The predicates in (18) correspond to the classes in (17) insofar as they are dynamic agentive predicates.

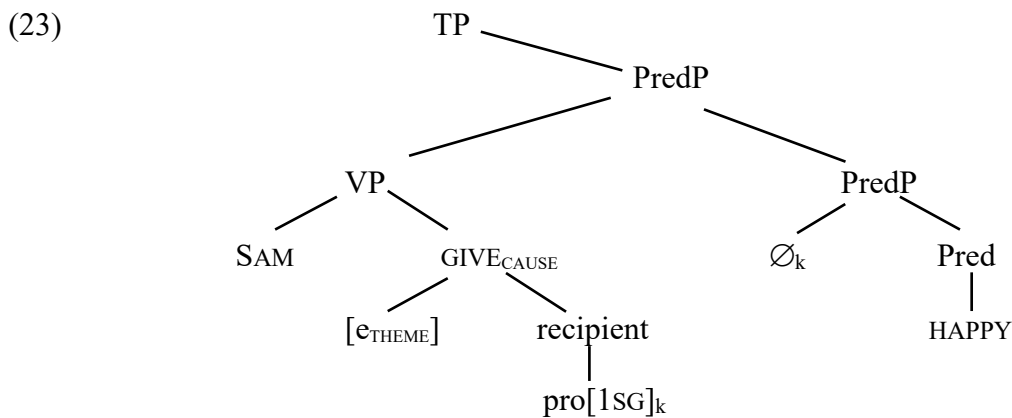
(22) LSF GIVE-causative

- a. SUN GIVE₁ MOOD POSITIVE (LSF)
 ‘The sun is good for morale.’
- b. ENDORPHINS GIVE₁ FEEL GOOD
 ‘Endorphins make us feel good.’ (attested)
<https://www.media-pi.fr/Article/Le-monde-en-LSF/Sante-et-Bien-etre/Les-dangers-du-bronzage/3094>

5. The syntax of GIVE-causatives

LSF GIVE-causatives combine with predicates that allow durative modification and cannot be treated as light verbs.

We propose that LSF GIVE-causatives are adjunction constructions with the GIVE-VP introducing a triggering event related to the causee subject left adjoined to the main phrase denoting a predication of a non-agentive event VP[1-LAUGH] or a result PredP[IX1 HAPPY/IX1 HEALTH GOOD].



LSF does not have a verb BE/HAVE so the predications [JOHN HAPPY / JOHN GOOD HEALTH] are well-formed as independent phrases in LSF:

- (24) SAM HAPPY SAM HEALTH GOOD (LSF)
 ‘Sam is happy.’ ‘Sam is in good health/ well.’

The adjunction structure in (23) is compatible with different syntactic forms for the second phrase including dynamic predicates (LAUGH), stative predicates (HAPPY) and nominal predicates (HEALTH GOOD). Adjunction structures like (23) are proposed for serial verb constructions of directed motion in Martinican and Haitian in Zribi-Hertz & al. (2019), following Déchaine (1993).

According to our analysis, the causing relation appears in different syntactic structures in the three GIVE-causatives:

1. in French GIVE-causatives+ NP complement have an abstract transfer with the syntax of the lexical verb *donner* ‘give’
2. in French GIVE-causatives+ bare N complements the causative relation is introduced by the causative light verb *give* forming a complex predicate construction
3. in LSF GIVE-causatives a trigger of a change of state is introduced by an adjunction of a VP headed by a grammaticalized GIVE_{CAUSE}. The subject of the main predication is not the recipient of the GIVE-verb but an empty category controlled by the recipient.

6. Conclusion

The comparison of French and LSF GIVE-causatives shows that grammaticalization of predicates like GIVE to causative markers is neither syntactically nor semantically uniform.

The French and LSF GIVE-causatives differ in their semantics: while the French GIVE-causatives are limited to emotions and feelings, the LSF construction allows a wider range of predicates of internally caused change including ADVANCE (13a), SNEEZE (15e) and LEARN (15d) with human experiencers but also RUST/ MELT with inanimate loci of change (16).

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