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# Abstrakt disertační práce

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## Causativity in Contemporary Portuguese

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# Abstract

Causation is one of the basic aspects of the way we conceive coherence in the world we live in. Ways of expressing causativity in languages has therefore been at the center of scientific attention for many years. Causative structures involve two events: a causing event expressing that an entity, the causer, acts on another entity, the causee, and causes its change or activity coded as a second event. On the one hand, our work is a structured compilation of theories and data provided by other scientists, bringing to light different causative mechanisms, their formal description, data related to their distribution and mainly their semantic explanation, based on cognitive linguistics. On the other hand, we carry out research to support theoretical assertions with quantified data and find new results.

Contemporary Portuguese has a wide range of morphological, lexical and syntactic causative tools. This thesis describes all of them. Nevertheless, we are mainly interested in what distinguishes Portuguese from other languages we know: the fact that there are at least three infinitive constructions corresponding to the prototypical analytic pattern *make + infinitive.* There are three canonic infinitive structures, differing in the position, form and function of the causee. We label them VSV (for causative verb – nominative subject – inflected infinitive verb), VOV (causative verb – accusative subject/object – infinitive verb) and VVO (causative verb – infinitive verb – accusative/dative/oblique object) and we try to found out the way they function and why.

According to the statements concerning argument structure and mental conceptualization of causative situations supported by Alsina (1992), Kemmer & Verhagen (1994) and especially Araújo (2009) and Silva (2005a), we claim that there is a mutual dependence between morphosyntactic expression and its semantic value. This interdependence also applies to the types of infinitive causative constructions. Silva believes that VSV, VOV and VVO represent three different stages in a continuum of syntactic and semantic integration of the two subevents. VSV and VOV being biclausal structures while VVO is a monoclausal structure, VSV represents the most indirect and mediate way of constructing causation with greater independence of the complement event and the causee, VOV represents the most interactive causation between two energy sources with quite autonomous causee manipulated by the causer, VVO represents the most direct causation with less independence of the complement and greater syntactic and semantic integration of both events. Combining the meanings of the constructions with meanings of the verbs that participate in them and semantic properties of the causer and the causee and other contextual factors leads to broad semantic complexity of the constructions. Thus, native speakers should use these semantic shifts between them in order to express as accurately as possible the way they conceptualize causative situations. The relevant semantic factors are, among others, the relationship between the causer and the causee in terms of force, energy flow and, above all, interpersonal manipulation: the degree of autonomy of the causee, his agentivity, self-control and intentions.

We used the *InterCorp* corpora tools and conducted research based on fiction texts in order to test the hypotheses arising from the semantic characteristics mentioned above. We do not pretend to judge speakers' points of view on causative situations found in fiction; we quantified phenomena and tried to verify hypotheses about compatibility of various constructions, verbs and subjects that are easy to identify. While for VSV we confirmed a strong tendency to combine with agentive causees and verbs implying their activity, we had too little data for VOV. Overall, we confirmed that there are various tendencies (and opposite tendencies, too) in combinations of constructions, verbs and actants. Therefore, we cannot confirm the general validity of the semantic bases. However, assuming that if semantic differences exist, then speakers are able to perceive them and that is why we have carried out a questionnaire survey in which native speakers commented on the interpretation of various formulations. This research showed a significant gap between theory and practice: respondents were not sufficiently aware of the three canonical types of construction (a certain degree of dismissive attitude emerged for all types). Our research certainly does not confirm existence of uniform approach of native speakers to infinitive causative constructions. If they perceive the given semantic differences, then purely on an individual level.

Many aspects of this topic still remain to be explored (differences between text types and genres, differences between written and spoken language, question of dialects, contemporary evolution of the three causative verbs, grammaticalization of constructions) as well as the data of previous researches need to be confirmed on larger samples of respondents and corpus data range.

**Key words:** Causation; Causativity; Transitivity; Infinitive constructions; Inflected infinitive; Argument structure; Cognitive grammar; Semantics; Force dynamics; Agentivity; Autonomy and Manipulation; Permissive construction; Corpus Linguistics; InterCorp.