

Was she pushed or did she fall? Causation in Klon

This paper, with a focus on formal description, is a first look at the encoding of causation in Klon (a non-Austronesian language of south-west Alor). Traditionally a three-way distinction between the formal categories of lexical, morphological and syntactic (analytic or periphrastic) causatives is used to describe and typologise causatives. Categories for the semantic parameters of causation are yet to be widely agreed upon, but the concepts of direct and indirect causation are commonly used in the description of causation. Formally Klon has lexical causatives, does not have morphological causatives, but may also encode causation by periphrastic means, which do not fit neatly into most formal typologies.

Klon verbs are characterised based on how they interact with argument pronominals, falling into one of three classes: 1. verbs with obligatory pronominal prefixes; 2. verbs with optional pronominal prefixes; and 3. verbs that are not pronominally prefixed (except for in ritual speech). The two types of Klon lexical causatives are: 1. suppletive verb pairs (e.g. uur 'look, see' and tuub 'show, indicate') ; and 2. labile verbs (e.g. ebeer 'die' and mung 'fall'). The way in which pronominals are used with labile lexical causatives is of particular interest, because their use is the determining factor in whether a labile verb is understood as causative or not.

There are no verbs in Klon (like make in English) that are used to create causative constructions in the conventional way one would expect of the syntactic type of causative. However, the notion of causativity can be inferred from certain common discourse structures, such as strings of paratactic coordinated clauses. Whether this type of causation can be formally categorised as syntactic remains for discussion.