Causative construction

1. Introduction

What is a causative constructions? A construction in which
a) somebody makes somebody else do something.

(1) Gianni ha fatto leggere un libro a Maria
(2) Paola ha fatto credere a Giorgio che non c’era

b) Therefore in the causative construction there are
c) two verbs, one is the causative verb, the other is the main verb (and it occurs in its
   uninflected form)
d) a “causer” (Gianni), am agent (Maria) and a theme (book) notice that the agent is not
   expressed in the nominative but as a dative complement of the causative verb.

The tense of the embedded clause and of the main clause must always be the same with causative
verbs

(3) a *Last night she made him go tomorrow
   b *Last night she caused him to go tomorrow
   c *Last night she had him go tomorrow
   d *Last night she got him to go tomorrow

The same is true of perception verbs

(4) *Last night she heard him go {today, tomorrow}
(5) *Last night she watched him to go {today, tomorrow}
(6) *Last night she saw him go {today, tomorrow}

this is not true of other verb classes

(7) Last night she persuaded him to go tomorrow
(8) Last night she told him to go tomorrow
(9) Last night she ordered him to go tomorrow
(10) Last night she asked him to go tomorrow

2. Italian causatives

Questions for Chris: are there any tense restrictions on the different verbs?

Italian has only one causative verb, namely *fare*, which is used for all the English examples we will
see below. The verb *lasciare* has exclusively the meaning of *permettere* and as such is not a real
causative verb.

The syntactic properties of the Italian causative construction are the following:
   a) in Italian and main verb always occurs in the infinitival form without any preposition

(11) Paolo ha fatto (*a, *di* con, *per) leggere un libro a Maria

b) negation, object clitics pronouns always precede the verb

(12) Maria non ha fatto riparare la macchina al/dal meccanico
(13) Maria non gli ha fatto riparare la macchina
3. English causatives

In English there are several causative verbs with partially different behaviours: *have*, *get*, *cause*, *make*.

Causative verbs can differ according to the type of complement they can take:

(15) The bad weather caused the plane to crash
(16) John made the water boil
(17) The police had all the students locked up
(18) The heavy downpour had all the demonstrators running for shelter
(19) Mary got Peter to run errands for her
(20) Mary had Peter run errands for her
(21) Her son’s behaviour caused Mary great distress
(22) Mary had her son in bed

**Causatives with make/cause**

- Causatives with *make/cause* can take animate or inanimate subjects of the embedded clause

(23) She made me clean the floor
(24) She caused me (to) clean the floor
(25) The flood in New Orleans made people sell their dearest possessions to buy food
(26) The flood in New Orleans caused people to sell their dearest possessions to buy food
(27) The fact that John had washed his car made everybody admire it
(28) The fact that John had washed his car caused everybody to admire it
(29) John’s unfortunate decision made all hell break loose
(30) John’s unfortunate decision caused all hell to break loose
(31) The rain made the mushrooms come out
(32) The rain caused the mushrooms to come out
(33) The sky drew progressively darker, making, the stars appear one by one
(34) The sky drew progressively darker, causing the stars to appear one by one
(35) By letting the gun go off when I did, I quite inadvertently made the runners start the race too soon
(36) By letting the gun go off when I did, I quite inadvertently caused the runners to start the race too soon

- In both cases the event of the embedded clause is the **result** of the verb of the main clause

- *Make* is a direct cause (often with volition), *cause* an indirect one (generally without volition)

(38) I’ll make you pay for this!
(39) I’ll cause you to pay for this!
(40) She didn’t just cause him to do it, she made him do it
(41) ?? She didn’t just make him do it, she caused him to do it
• Make has the infinitival without to, cause the infinitival with to

(42) The king’s remarks made all his advisers laugh
(43) The king’s remarks caused all his advisers to laugh

Causatives with have

• A causative with have denotes a state, not a process and can take different structures as its complement

(44) John had [all the students performing the same experiment at the same time]
(45) John had [all the students { puzzled}, [ furious about the exam}]
(46) The police had [ all the students locked up]
(47) The police had [ all the students { [ in a stadium], [ on trial}]

• If the causative with have has an infinitival without to, the subject of the embedded clause must be an agent and agree in doing the action, this is called a volitional agent. Therefore this construction can only be used if the agent is animate and willing to perform the action.

(48) #John had Mary trip on the stairs.
(49) #John had the water boil.

• This is not the case if have does not take an infinitival without to or with other causative verbs

(50) John made Mary trip on the stairs.
(51) John made the water boil.
(52) John had the water boiling in no time at all

• Have cannot be used in ellipsis

(53) A  Why on earth did they do that?
    B.  a) Because we made them
         b) Because we caused them to
         c) Because we got them to
         d) *Because we had them

Causatives with get

Get (like have) and contrary to make and cause can take different types of embedded complements:

(54) John got to the airport by car
(55) John got a new car
(56) John got ill
(57) John got killed
(58) John’s doctor got him walking again in no time at all:
(59) John got the car repaired very quickly

- When get takes an infinitival complement, it is with to, not without

(60) a John got all the students to perform the same experiment: is this impossible without to? Not possible

- Get has a resultative meaning not a stative meaning, it is like cause/make and unlike have in this respect. In other words get means “cause to have”

- Get has the same “volitional” effect found with have

(61) #John got Mary to trip on the stairs.
(62) #John got the water to boil.

Notice that even things can have a “volitional” interpretation

(63) How did you get the washing machine to go?
(64) Try as I might, I just couldn’t get the figures to add up

(65) The washing machine refuses to start
(66) That blasted rock refused to move!

- Get takes an “indirect” causation, like cause, not a direct one like make

Sentences to translate

(67) Ho fatto riparare la macchina al meccanico
(68) Gianni ha fatto cadere un vaso Ming inciampando sul tappeto del salotto
(69) Maria gli ha fatto raccogliere e incollare tutti i pezzi
(70) Poi si è scoperto che Paolo aveva fatto inciampare Gianni di proposito in modo che rompesse il vaso Ming
(71) L’uragano ha fatto crollare moltissime case
(72) Gianni è rimasto ucciso in un incidente stradale
(73) Maria ha fatto bollire l’acqua per la pasta
(74) Si può far bollire l’acqua in cinque minuti
(75) Mi fratello mi ha fatto cadere dalle scale
(76) Le battute di Gianni fanno sempre ridere tutti
(77) Le disavventure di Gianni fanno sempre ridere tutti