

EVENT STRUCTURE OF THE ANTICAUSATIVE AND UNACCUSATIVE IN RUSSIAN^{*}

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1 Introduction

The goal of this paper is, first, to single out a previously unattested difference between unaccusatives and anticausatives and, secondly, to show that this difference provides an argument for an analysis in which unaccusatives differ from anticausatives in event-structural terms.

It has long been assumed that the causative and anticausative/inchoative/unaccusative (AIU), illustrated in (1), form a binary distinction both syntactically and semantically. AIUs describe a change of state that some entity undergoes. The causative renders information about the agent's activity, an impact from a natural force, an event, etc., that brings the change about.

- (1) a. The door opened.
b. John opened the door.

This binarity view of the distinction between the causative and AIU replicates in a number of analyses of the phenomenon (Lakoff 1965, Dowty 1979; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995; Pesetsky 1995, Wunderlich 1997, Piñón 2001, Reinhart 2002; Chierchia 2004; Kalulli 2006, 2007; Koontz-Garboden 2009, Rappaport Hovav, Levin 1995, 1998, 2012). These analyses may disagree on the structure they assign to the causative and AIU and offer different answers to the question if the two are derivationally related. Nevertheless, the common (often tacit) assumption has long been that there are exactly two configurations, one for the causative, and one for the AIU.

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The binarity view, however, faces a challenge if one looks at the languages where morphologically unmarked unaccusatives and morphologically marked anticausatives co-exist.¹ Modern Greek is one of these languages, as illustrated in (2):

- (2) Unaccusative; active morphology
 i sakula adias-**e** apo moni tis.
 the bag.NOM emptied-**ACT** by itself
 ‘The bag emptied by itself.’ (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2004:122)
- (3) Anticausative; non-active morphology
 O Giannis giatref-**tike** apo monos tu.
 the Giannis healed-**NACT** by himself
 ‘John healed by himself.’ (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2004:123)

Can we maintain that (2) and (3) and their counterparts in other languages are different phonological spell-outs of the same configuration? In a number of recent studies, the negative answer has been advocated (Folli 2002, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2004, Alexiadou et al. 2006, Schäfer 2008, Labelle, Doron 2010, among others). Alexiadou *et al.* (2006) argue that cross-linguistically, at least two AIU syntactic configurations are to be identified. They differ as to whether the Voice head merges on top of *v*P or the structure lacks Voice altogether. Voice, which is part of the anticausative structure, does not project a specifier and bears the [-external argument], [-agent] feature specification.

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- (4) AIU structure I; unaccusative
 [*v*/CAUS [Root]]
- (5) AIU structure II; anticausative
 [Voice (-ext. arg., -AG) [*v*/CAUSE [Root]]]

In Modern Greek the presence of Voice(-ext. arg., - AG) is said to correlate with the non-active verbal morphology. Unaccusatives are associated with the AIU structure I and appear with the active morphology.

Folli (2002), Schäfer (2008), Labelle & Doron (2010) and others, too, argue that unaccusatives and anticausatives project distinct syntactic configurations and differ semantically. However, their accounts are sharply different both in terms of the structure they assign to unaccusatives and anticausatives and semantic peculiarities they identify. Schäfer provides a number of significant refinements of Alexiadou et al.’s (2006) approach. For Folli, the difference between anticausatives and unaccusatives reduces to the resultative projection, which, only being part of the anticausative structure, makes anticausatives obligatorily telic. In Labelle & Doron’s system, the verbal root merges with *v* in anticausatives, focusing the result, but with *V* in unaccusatives, highlighting the process.

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Part of this theoretical discrepancy obviously stems from the fact that morphosyntactic patterns differentiating between unaccusatives and anticausatives, if any, tend to vary across

¹ To avoid terminological confusion, in what follows I will be referring to morphologically unmarked AIUs as unaccusatives, morphologically marked AIUs as anticausatives, and keep on using the cover term “AIU” when my focus is not the difference between the two.

are still poorly understood, and we can only hope that future research will yield new insights into what a possible AIU system looks like cross-linguistically. If this paper has contributed to this larger enterprise, I believe that its goal has been successfully accomplished.

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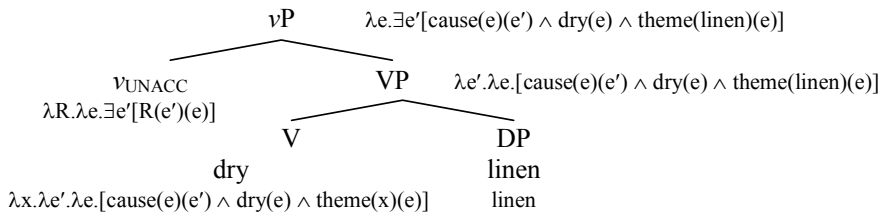
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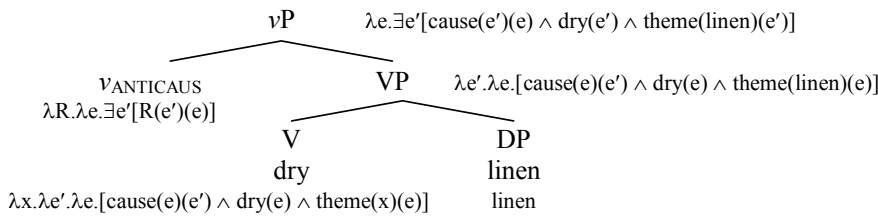
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Appendix

(i) Unaccusative configuration



(ii) Anticausative configuration



(ii) Transitive configuration

