clac CÍRCULO

de lingüística aplicada a la comunicación

6/2001

CULTURAL DETERMINATION OF CAUSE-EFFECT. ON A POSSIBLE FOLK MODEL OF CAUSATION

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Abstract

Even though the basic causative constructions in Spanish correspond to the FORCED MOVEMENT metaphor, the folk model of CAUSE that underlies them sees the world on terms of the naturalness of things and courses of events, not so much on the terms of CAUSATION proper. In the Navajo and Samoan constructions, the forced movement metaphor does not seem to play a significant role. At the same time, both languages-and-cultures differ in the general way of conceptualising and expressing CAUSE, and their respective conceptualisations seem to be fairly coherent with other basic features of their cultures. We can thus assume that both the conceptualisation(s) and linguistic expressions of cause and causation will be heavily dependent on, and determined by, the different cultures.

Key words: cause, Spanish, Navajo, Samoan, language, culture

1. Preliminaries: CAUSE and 'causes'

1.1. Definitions of CAUSE

The study of CAUSE and its linguistic forms of expression poses a considerable number of problems. Beyond linguistics proper, the concept of CAUSE itself deserves and needs a detailed analysis, too.[1] Bringing both aspects of the problem together, the study of the linguistic expressions of cause is tied to the 'linguistic meaning' of CAUSE and to its

1 This article is a slightly revised version of the paper read at the Aarhus Seminary of Semiotics, January 2000.

CÍRCULO de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación (clac) 6, 3-14.
Universidad Complutense de Madrid. ISSN 1576-4737. http://www.ucm.es/info/circulo/

conceptualisation, so that the more philosophical issue of the nature of the concept is of direct significance for linguistics too: The form in which we conceptualise this notion will determine the way in which we express it. The reason is that language is organised on the basis of knowledge, on the basis of our conceptualisation of reality and our reasoning with the means of that knowledge. Our knowledge about causes and about the notion of CAUSE itself will necessarily play a major role in our linguistic expression of the causative relations.

First, it is clear that the philosophical-and-scientific concept of CAUSE is NOT exactly the same as its folk counterpart:

The *Webster's Third International Dictionary* defines *cause* as: "a person, thing, fact, or condition that brings about an effect or that produces or calls forth a resultant action or state"; it continues, when considering the set of synonyms: "CAUSE indicates a condition or circumstance or combination of conditions and circumstances that effectively and inevitably call forth an issue, effect, or result or that materially aids in that calling forth" (s.v.).

This definition of *Cause* can be seen as *the* basic philosophical and scientific definition of the concept: a condition or circumstance or combination of conditions and circumstances that **effectively and inevitably** call forth an issue, effect, or result. Causes are inevitable and they can be symbolized with the logic conditional: ($p \rightarrow q$) means that *q* must inevitably be the case whenever *p* is the case. Our science, our logical and philosophical thinking are largely based on this assumption. But note that the definition uses the verb *to call forth* which has clear locative connotations.

1.2. Possible problems with CAUSE in the colloquial language and in different cultures

It is sufficiently well known that this definition does not hold for the colloquial language or folk thinking: for instance, the inevitability of the effect is not always present or even assumed. On the other hand, not everything needs to have been caused by something else: "some things are just as they are and they have always been" Also, it could be open to debate whether the notion itself is universal: do every language and every culture have this concept? Of coruse, I will not attempt to answer this question here.

1.3. Lakoff and Johnson's approach to CAUSE

George Lakoff and Mike Johnson (1999) set out to analyse the way in which we understand a number of basic, fundamental concepts, including that of CAUSE. I basically agree with their analysis, which I want to sum up very briefly before entering into the details of my proposal here.

> Being too complex and abstract a notion to be conceptualised directly, human beings interpret whatever might be understood under the term "cause" in terms of some other domain of reality which may be more directly accessible and thus easier to grasp; i.e., human beings use a conceptual metaphor. (Problems may thus arise if we assume that that metaphorical understanding is in fact the real comprehension of the 'essence' of the notion, with independence of our categorisation and conceptualisation of it).
>
> A frequent experience is that of seeing something *a* in movement which interacts with something else *b* and, subsequently, the second objet is also set in motion. Our interpretation is that *a* causes the movement of *b*, in the sense that if *b* had not been affected by *a*'s movement, it would have remained in its original position. This understanding is then extended to other domains, physical or abstract,

ultimately leading to the concept of CAUSE as defined above.

1.4. CAUSE as forced motion

L&J seem to assume FORCED MOTION as central in the formation of the concept, but there are other common experiences in the physical world which could have become the basis of our notion of cause. L&J study the metaphorical nature of the Western philosophical concepts and do not imply that their analysis should be valid for other cultures, too. In fact, a supposed indiference towards the cultural component of cognition is sometimes wrongly overemphasised when discussing CL; as a matter of fact, Lakoff′s Theory of Conceptual Metaphor explicitly recognises that metaphors are, or may be, culturally bound, culturally determined. Of course, much of our experience of the world is common, but the reality is comprehended in different ways in the different cultures, according to the culturally-bound interest and significance or, in other terms, according to the pregnance of the various elements in the world human beings interact with.

As mentioned aboce, saying that a cause “calls forth″an effect implies that causation is seen in spatial terms, i.e.: an element (the causer) pushes or draws (*calls*) to a new position (*forth*) another element (the causee). Thus, the *Webster′s* definition of CAUSE contains the FORCED MOTION METAPHOR in a nutshell.

1.5. Some possible (cultural) alternatives to FORCED MOTION

But my aim here is to try an approach to the concept of cause that does away with any a priori pretension to universality and emphasises the cultural element instead. First, as already mentioned, human beings have access to some experiences that could be seen as central for the development of the concept of CAUSE and which would also be reflected in the linguistic expressions referring to cause-effect and causation. Let us briefly consider a couple of possibilities.

1.5.1. TEMPORAL PRECEDENCE

First, REPEATED TEMPORAL PRECEDENCE: we perceive something which is later followed (or accompanied) by something else; a possible interpretation is that the second entity′s presence is a consequence of the first, i.e., the first entity can be seen as the cause of the second entity′s existence, presence, etc.. For instance, heavy rains fall and a couple of hours later a river has grown. If precedence is immediate the understanding in terms of cause-effect is more likely than when a long lapse of time exists: it is well known that human beings needed many centuries before they were able to establish any relation between sexual intercourse and the birth of a child nine months later.

Of course, in a purely scientific view simple temporal precedence does not guarantee the existence of a cause-effect relationship, but I′m dealing here only with folk models of reality and causation. Now, in which metaphorical terms could this relation be seen? How could it be expressed linguistically? The linguistic expression would probably include some element directly pointing to the temporal relation: “the causer precedes the cause″or “the causee follows the cause”. According to the apparently universal metaphorical conceptualisation of time relations in terms of movement, we could expect verbs of movement and in general spatial, locative expressions. Maybe the causer could be conceptualised as a rather passive entity, not as an agent proper, because the relation here is not that of forced movement, where the causer carries out some kind of action, but of spatial and/or temporal precedence, where the causer simply moves.

1.5.2. *ACCOMPANIMENT*

Second, REPEATED ACCOMPANIMENT, when a certain entity which we perceive as especially salient -or pregnant- is accompanied by a second entity of lesser salience or importance, even if there is no temporal precedence. As when we see the sun being accompanied by light, even though the light appears before the sun is visible over the horizon and lingers for a while after sunset. The lesser importance of the second entity (our 'causee') can be culturally determined, inasmuch as cultures assign different weights to entities in the social and cultural life. This amounts to saying that the selection of an entity as the causer or the causee may have very little to do with its status in the 'real world', and that it will be culture which assigns the role. A culture might assign the status of causers to big entities, while smaller entities would be seen as the causee.

This conceptualisation could lead to the use of commitative expressions where something is accompanied by something else, and it will be upon the particular culture whether the sun causes the light or viceversa.

1.5.3. POSSESSION and LOCATION

The causee can also be seen as an entity owned (or possessed) by some other entity, the causer. Possession, in turn, is frequently conceptualised in terms of location, that is, something (the causee) is in a certain place (the causer). We could thus expect linguistic expressions of a stative locative and/or possessive character in charge of causation: the sun possesses the light.

1.5.4. On the plurality of the conceptualisation of CAUSE

Other possible conceptualisations may exist, of course, and they will be systematically expressed in some favoured ways by each culture. It seems obvious to assume that the 'simplest' conceptualisations of CAUSE might be the most universal, and that we could find in every language and culture different layers of conceptualisation, so that even if our *main* understanding of CAUSE is as FORCED MOVEMENT, we could still find secondary types of understandings with locative/possessive, commitative and temporal/movement constructions.

On the other hand, the central metaphor used in a given culture "should be" tied to other aspects of that culture, and we should be able to discern them.

Also, in addition to the causative expressions, we can gain some insight into the conceptualisation of CAUSE by considering the complete family of words the term for 'cause' belongs to. I shall briefly attempt this at the end of this talk.

2. Two Spanish causative constructions

To begin with, I shall very briefly analyse the two main causative constructions in Spanish. They are very similar to the corresponding constructions in other European languages, which could only be expected as we basically share the same culture and worldview.

These Spanish constructions have been the object of much investigation which, however, has focused on their syntactic features more than on their semantic and conceptual characteristics. In the most recent work on Spanish grammar (Bosque and Demonte (eds., 1999)), the article dealing with these constructions only considers the syntactic aspect, leaving semantics completely aside (Campos 1999). In my opinion, saying that these constructions govern an object in the accusative case (as understood in Generative Grammar) is a rather poor -and empty-explanation.

2.1. The construction *DEJAR* + INFINITIVE

First I'll tackle those with *dejar*, whose meaning is very close to that of English *let*, although not identical:

1. Ana dejó caer el libro

"Ana let the book fall"

In such a process, the subject Ana is responsible for a certain effect on the object, "the book", so that Ana's action is the cause of the fall of the book. However, *dejar* can only be used in this sense when the affected entity has a certain "tendency" to behave in a certain way which is prevented by some obstacle. That is, the book has the tendency to fall but it does not because it is lying on a table; then Ana just lets it go, allowing it to follow its "natural tendency". In folk belief, the reason for the fall of something is not the influence of something else on it, in this case the force of gravity, but "its own weight": *las cosas caen por su propio peso*. An obviously pre-scientific explanation but which determines the linguistic expressions used. There is at first some obstacle that prevents the causee to change, move, etc., and it is the causer's action that removes the obstacle.

The causer must be a controller, that is, the causer has to able to decide whether or not to let that particular thing happen, so that (2) is rather an impossibility:

2. La lluvia dejó derrumbarse la pared

'The rain let the wall fall down'.

Let's see another example:

3. Ana dejó morir al perro

'Ana let the dog die'

also implies that unless Ana did anything, the dog would naturally die. But now compare:

4. Ana dejó libre el asiento

'Ana left the seat free'.

Things change a bit here. The seat cannot naturally be "free" in the same way that the book can fall if abandoned to the force of gravity or to any "natural tendency" of its own (seats have no tendency to being or becoming free). As you see, in this instance the English equivalent would be *to leave* and not *to let*. But the "causative" meaning is still there: the seat is now free, as a result of Ana's action. Moreover, the "natural state" of a seat can be construed as "being free", i.e., as not occupied; in fact, chairs and others seating are free most of the time.

5. Ana dejó llorar al niño

'Ana let the child cry'

The naturalness of the child's crying is open to question, but the verb *dejar* in this sentence implies that the child was crying before and that Ana simply did nothing to stop his crying.

The verb *dejar* is glossed in the dictionary as:

> 1. Hacer que [una pers. o cosa] quede [en un sitio] al cesar la sujeción (física o moral) ejercida sobre ella. (...) 3. Abstenerse de actuar [sobre una persona o cosa]. (...) 5. Hacer que [alguien o algo] pase a estar o continúe estando [en un determinado lugar o situación]. (...). 11. Permitir. (Seco et al. 1999, s.v.).

More generally, the meaning of *dejar* could be glossed in the following way: "An entity *b* exists in a certain way; another entity's action causes *b* either to remain in the same way or to change to some other state or way of existing; if no action would have taken place, *b* would continue to exist in the same way as it initially was".

As for the semantic characterisation of the causer and the causee, we have already seen that the causer has to be [+ CONTROL]. The causee needs not be characterised. The action itself has to be "natural" in some way, which renders (6) impossible:

6. Ana dejó subir la mesa

'Ana let the table go up'

as a table cannot "naturally go up"; it will however deteriorate with time, so that (7) is perfectly acceptable:

7. Ana dejó estropearse a la mesa

'Ana let the table deteriorate'

To sum up, I think characterise the "ideology" behind this construction with the folk postulate "THINGS ARE AS THEY ARE UNLESS SOME ONE INTERFERES".

2.2. The construction *HACER* + INFINITIVE

The second basic causative verb in Spanish is *hacer* 'to do, make', as in the following sentences, equivalent to those commented above:

8a. *Ana hizo caer el libro*

8b. *Ana hizo caer al libro*

9. *Ana hizo morir al perro*

10. *Ana hizo llorar al niño*

In all three cases, Ana is the real causer of what happens to the object/causee: the book falls because Ana does something to it; the dog dies because Ana did something that lead to its death, otherwise it would still be alive; Ana's actions are also the direct cause of the child's crying. The causee has to have a certain control over its own development, which is overcome by a stronger controller, the causer. In this sense, this construction is quite different from that with *dejar*, where we were dealing with some form 'naturalness'. Let's refine this analysis.

Note that there is no equivalent with *hacer* for *Ana dejó libre el asiento*: there is no such thing as *?Ana hizo libre el asiento*, because *el asiento* is not a controller. (8b) is also anomalous, as the presence of the preposition *a* would imply that the book somehow did not "want" to fall, i.e., that the book *is* a controller. This preposition is used in Spanish to mark specific direct object characterised as human, secondarily also as animated (Torrego 1999), although its use is not fully automatic, as we shall see.

In all expressions with *hacer*, the causer does something that works against the interest, purpose or natural tendency of a causee which is capable of control; that is, the causer has to overcome the causee's control over its own location, state, etc. If we use the preposition *a*, the causee is assigned some animated character, thus becoming a controller itself in some way. But all this is combined with the naturalness of the process, so that (8a) is possible without the preposition, maybe because falling is natural, even if the causee has no control whatsoever over itself. Compare (11), where the table still lacks control but the caused action if not natural; the only possible sense of (11) is 'Ana had someone else lift the table' or used magic):

11. *Ana hizo subir la mesa*

Subir and *caer* are syntactically similar, but they behave quite differently. The same thing happens with *bajar*: 'to take down, to lower', which has none of the 'natural' overtones of falling *caer*:

12. *Ana hizo bajar la mesa*

'Ana had someone take the table down/make the table shorter'

Note also that the medial voice is impossible in all these cases, as it marks its subject (the causee) as somehow responsible over itself, i.e., again, as a controller:

13. *??Ana hizo a la mesa subirse*

14. *??Ana hizo a la mesa bajarse*

15. *??Ana hizo a la mesa caerse*

16. *??Ana hizo a la mesa romperse*

'Ana made the table break-itself'

Some more examples:

17. *Ana hizo salir al niño*

'Ana made the child go out'

implies that the child preferred not to leave, in the same way that

18. *Ana hizo caer al niño*

'Ana made the child fall'

clearly means that she did something against the child's wishes or interests: she disrupted the child's control over himself. Notice that the causee/ object is here regularly introduced by the preposition *a*. The child's status as a controller is also patent in the possibility of using the medial voice:

19. *Ana hizo al niño caerse*

'Ana made the child fall-itself'

The causer, on the other hand, needs not be human or even animated, although it is usually characterised as being "strong" in some sense, i.e., as being a controller or, according to Palancar's (1996, 1999) proposal, an *energizer*:

20. *El viento hizo caer al niño*

'The wind made the child fall'

21a. *El viento hizo caer el árbol*

'The wind made the tree fall'

21b. ?*El viento hizo caer al árbol*

'The wind made (*a*) the tree fall'

with the same explanations as above, although the acceptance of (21b) seems to be marginally better than that of (8b), probably because the tree is a living thing and thus animated, and in folk belief it could be assumed to have some control over itself. See also the following:

22a. *El viento hizo caer la sombrilla*

'The wind made the parasol fall'

22b. *??El viento hizo caer a la sombrilla*

23a. *El niño hizo caer la sombrilla*

'The child made the parasol fall'

23b. *?El niño hizo caer a la sombrilla*

Curiously enough, whereas (2bb) is unanimously judged as bad, some speakers judged (23b) as a bit more acceptable. Perhaps because the child is seen as a poor controller.

In fact, this construction seems to need a clear difference in the relative strength of control: the causer must be much stronger than the causee.

The preceding examples had an animated entity as their causers, but it is not always necessary that the causer is in any way 'active':

24. *El silencio hizo enloquecer al prisionero*

'The silence caused the prisoner to get mad'

In (24) the causee is again a controller and the sentence presents no problem. We are certainly dealing here with a metaphorical extension, where silence is seen as a situation which exerts an influence on the causee, i.e., it is represented as a controller. The same would happen if the causer were *el frío* 'the cold', *el ruido* 'the noise', *el hambre* 'hunger', *la visión* 'the vision' (esp. if something horrible or fright-inspiring is seen) etc.; but most words cannot appear as the subject in these constructions: *el oído* 'the ear', *el peine* 'the comb', etc., which cannot possibly be endowed with any kind of energy. In these cases, the causee would be a semantic experiencer, but the crucial factor seems to be the capacity of the causer to affect the physical or psychological state of the causee. That is why I prefer to use the term *energizer*, which is a very general type of agentive notion (close but not identical to Foley and Van Valin's *effector*, as the energizer is even more abstract) that can cover both concrete, animated entitites characterised as having strength, will, and control, but also abstract entities lacking all of these features.

Note that (22) is impossible (exept in extremely anomalous readings and in very special contexts):

25. *??El silencio hizo caer a la silla*

'The silence caused the table to fall'

But now consider the following two sentences where the cause appears with a verb in the medial voice, the infinitive in (26a) and finite form in (26b):

26a. *La inactividad hizo estropearse (?a) la máquina*

26b. *La inactividad hizo que la máquina se estropeara*

'The inactiviy caused the machine to break down'

The verb *estropear* in the active voice is impossible in either case, as it would have to be understood as a transitive: the machine would then break down something else which is left unexpressed but that is demanded by the verb. But these sentences imply that the machine is endowed with certain capacity of self-control. In (26a) we are again faced with the possibility or not of the accusative preposition *a*. Again, its use would give a too animated character to the machine, which however is marginally acceptable because a machine is active.

I think that the basic meaning of the causative construction with *hacer* and its conceptual conditions are sufficiently clear and can be glossed as follows: "an anergizer *a* causes another entity *b*, which is endowed with control, to enter into a new state, or undergo a process, overcoming the control exerced by *b* over itself: *a* is a stronger controller than *b*."

On the relative strength of causer and causee, note that in (27)

27. *El niño hizo volver a su padre*

'The child made his father return'

the child can exceptionally be seen as stronger than his father, because of some psychic, not physical, influence on him. The relative oddity of (27) would fall along the same lines as (28).

28. *Un niño mordió a un perro*

'A child bit a dog'.

2.3. Comparison of the causative constructions with dejar *and* hacer

1) In both constructions, the causer has to be a controller.

2) In constructions with *hacer*, the causer must also be an energizer.

3) In those with *dejar*, it is irrelevant whether the causee is or not a controller.
4) In constructions with *hacer,* the causee has to be a controller itself.
5) In constructions with *dejar,* the causee is in a state that is somehow considered as ʻnaturalʼ.
6) In constructions with *hacer,* the change induced by the causer runs against the causeeʼs interests or desire.
7) In constructions with *hacer,* the causer has to be stronger than the causee.

In summary, causality is seen in both constructions as the effective action of an agent on something or someone, but with a clear difference: In the constructions with *dejar*, the causer only has to “let things go″ so to speak, and the causee will follow some natural tendency. In the constructions with *hacer*, the causer has to be strong enough -and stronger than the causee- in order to be able to disrupt the natural state of affairs.

Both constructions are transparent if the meaning of the causative verbs is considered: *hacer* signifies a prototypical action by an agent, whereas the meaning of *dejar*, from Latin *laxare*, ʻto let freeʼ implies that something is simply left free to follow its own course. Augusto Soares de Silva (1998) analyses the semantic evolution of the verb including “the strengthening of the passive values (a greater passivization of the subject)” which gave rise “to the prototypicalization of ʻnot to intervene, not to impedeʼ and, consequently, to the assymetry of the current prototypical centers (*active* prototype ʻto abandonʼ vs. *passive* prototype ʻnot to interveneʼ″ (p.279).

These basic causative constructions correspond fairly well to what is to be found in other Western European languages: the causer has a direct influence on the causee, which will change due to the causerʼs action.

But is it possible that other languages -other cultures- have a different representation and conceptualisation of causes?

3. Causation in Navajo

Several interesting associations exist in the Navajo words and constructions for CAUSE and causation. There are several roots that imply the notion of cause, but the most important one seems to be *♥♥d*. In its main derivatives, it can mean (Young and Morgan 1992, 243-249): A1) do, act, make thus, happen, be; 2) be(come) wealthy; 3) discuss, criticize, molest; 4) make an effort involving self-sacrifice, suffering or privation; 5) live, reside; 6) happen, take place; 7) be(come) useful, make use of; 8) imitate, mimic; 9) copy, obey, take someone as a stepkinsman or parent.” In the momentaneous mode it can also mean “be the cause of an event”. The basic meaning of the root seems to point to some qualitative form of existence.

Another important root is *□□h*, associated with lateral contact along an extended surface, as the snow on a mountain slope; its usual gloss is “alongside”.

In both cases, then, a cause seems to be seen as something that occurs together with something else, and in close contact with it. This is confirmed by the postposition used for the causee, as in the following examples taken from Young and Morgan (1987)

bee ʼátʼé (p. 842)

ʻwith-it it-is: it causes itʼ

The cause is marked with *-ee*, a postposition glossed as “with, by means of, about, from, on, of (out of a named material), in possession of, concerning (an event)” (Young and Morgan

1992: 924; Young and Morgan 1987: 29); it basic meaning seems to be commitative and instrumental. The basic conceptualisation of cause in Navajo could thus be glossed as SOMETHING IS IN PERMANENT, INTIMATE CONTACT WITH SOMETHING ELSE.

The idea of origin or movement does not appear in these roots, in spite of the enormous importance of movement in the language and culture of the Navajo; but we do have a secondary meaning of ‘exertion, effort’, especially directed to oneself. Let me venture a very hypothetical relation with the American Indian rituals concerning self-deprivation and self-torture as a means of obtaining a vision which will determine (cause) one’s life: a man (sorry for the sexism) will always be accompanied by his vision, which will be determinant for the whole of his life.

On the other hand, “[i]n the Navajo view of the world, nothing happens without the intention and control of some animate being, whether human or spirit” (Palmer 1996: 152). This may be reflected in the view of a causer as something that intimately accompanies the causee, being even “wrapped around” as expressed by yet another root used for causation. Due to the importance of control in Navajo syntax (Palmer 1996: 150-158), the causer will always be expressed as the subject (if we want to stick to this term for Navajo grammar, what does not seem sensible), as what “accompanies” the causee, in the same way that one’s vision will be a permanent life companion, determining what will happen. On the other hand, the Navajo have a very complex but stable hierarchy of controllers, what can be extended to a hierarchy of entities which can be possible causers.

The following conceptual metaphor could thus be proposed: A CAUSE IS WHAT PERMANENTLY ACCOMPANIES SOMEONE OR SOMETHING

4. CAUSE in Samoan

Samoan associates CAUSE with PATH. The word *ala* is glossed as “(1) path, road; (2) way; (3) method, way of doing something; (4) cause, reason; (5) working section (area of mat woven by one person at a particular time)” (Milner 1966: 12 s.v.): *o le a le ala o lenei?* ‘What is the cause of this?’ It is also used verbally with the meaning ‘to cause/to be the cause of’: *‘o le mea ‘ua ala ai*: ‘the thing which caused it’.

Another word meaning ‘cause’ is *m~fua*: “originate from, be caused by” , as in *o le ma’i e m~fua i le l~* ‘the disease originates from/is caused by the sun(light)’ (Milner 1966: 120 s.v.). The causer (‘the sun’) is introduced by the preposition *i*, which “indicates place, source, origin, cause, direction, goal” (Mosel & Hovdhaugen 1992: 144); the same PATH SCHEMA would then be valid for both *m~fua* and *ala*.

Apparently, the Samoan conception of cause is double: (a) SOMETHING IS THE PATH OF SOMETHING ELSE, and (b) SOMETHING COMES FROM SOME PLACE/FROMSOMETHING ELSE. The PATH SCHEMA metaphor is present in both forms of expression, pointing to the understanding of cause as movement along a path, proceding from the causer to the causee. FORCED MOVEMENT as such does not seem to play a role, although the locative, spatial conceptualisation of cause is also there. I dare to posit the following conceptual metaphor for causes in Samoan (and probably other Polynesian languages): A CAUSE IS THE ORIGIN OF THE PATH FOLLOWED BY SOMETHING.

In this conceptualisation, things do not seem to be directly and ‘efficiently’ caused by something else, but just follow their “natural path of existence”, which was however decided at some point by some more or less abstract entity. That is: “things have their natural way”, a metaphor we have also met in Spanish. This “inactiveness” is one of the main characteristics of the Samoan culture and finds its reflection in many linguistic constructions, including the preference toward the omission of the agent in transitive clauses, which are then seen as intransitive processes centred on the semantic object. In this sense, as in so many others, the Samoan culture is far away from that of the Navajo; so are their ways of expressing causation.

5. Conclusions

In this brief exploration we have been able to see (so I hope) the following:

1) Even though the basic causative constructions in Spanish correspond to the FORCED MOVEMENT metaphor, the folk model of CAUSE that underlies them sees the world on terms of the naturalness of things and courses of events, not so much on the terms of CAUSATION proper.

2) In the Navajo and Samoan constructions, the forced movement metaphor does not seem to play a significant role. At the same time, both languages-and-cultures differ in the general way of conceptualising and expressing CAUSE, and their respective conceptualisations seem to be fairly coherent with other basic features of their cultures.

3) We can thus assume that both the conceptualisation(s) and linguistic expressions of cause and causation will be heavily dependent on, and determined by, the different cultures.

These conclusions are obviously extremely provisional and tentative. A much wider and deeper analysis of the cultural correlates of causative expressions has to be done in order to (dis)confirm my proposal.

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