The Temiar causative (and related features)

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Abstract:
The productive causative inflection of the Temiar verb is formed by the affixation of -r-, either alone or as tr- and br-. This formative has no obvious Mon-Khmer source (which usually forms causatives with p-), and it may therefore be an Aslian innovation. In Temiar, r is a phoneme with the notional meaning ‘REPLICATION (OF SELF)’ found also in the reflexive intensifier riːˀ, the relative pronoun ro- and the preposition reˀ- ‘like’. In the causative, r is iconic of the replicative verb’s valency-increase. The causative inflection has high productivity as a true causative with inanimate secondary subjects and as the transitivizer of intransitive verbs. However, there are syntactic and semantic limitations on its use with various kinds of animate secondary subject. In particular, cultural inhibitions against imposing one’s will on someone else suggests that Temiar ‘causatives’ are frequently better thought of as permissives. The paper also discusses a set of verbs that retain a recognizably Mon-Khmer-like ‘causative’ shape but which no longer behave productively or semantically as causatives in Temiar.

Key words: causative, reduplication, morphology

ISO 639 language codes: tea, mly, jah, kns, mnq,

In a series of papers on the Aslian language Temiar and the Austronesian language Malay I have argued that certain grammatical and lexical features are related, via iconic expression, to the social and cultural context in which the languages are spoken. The iconicity involved is not a simple matter of speech-sounds imitating reality. Rather, it is based variously on (i) oral-articulatory gesture rather than on speech-sounds as such, and (ii) a posteriori (secondary) rather than a priori (primary) iconicity.

By ‘oral-articulatory gesture’ I refer mainly to the following opposition, which applies in varying degrees to both Temiar and Malay:

- Opening the mouth wide, as if addressing oneself to the rest of the world
- Closing the mouth in self-contemplation, as if in temporary retreat from the world.

The relatively open mouth position, which signifies the directing of one’s attention to the ‘objective’ realm of OTHER is expressed phonically in Temiar by the low vowel a, the back consonants ŋ and h, and velic opening (i.e. vowel nasality). The relatively closed mouth position, which conversely signifies the more ‘subjective’ SELF-focused, ‘I’-deixis realm, is expressed phonically by the high vowel i and the front consonants m, j, c and r. In this paper, I deal mainly with the iconicity of r, with some brief attention to i.

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1. The theoretical justification for the argument is elaborated in Benjamin 2012a (for Temiar, and language more generally) and Benjamin 1993: 344–356 (for Malay). For further discussion, see Benjamin 2011, 2012b on Temiar and Benjamin 2009 on Malay.

2. This approach overrides the oft-assumed necessity when discussing iconicity to dissect the phonemes into separate distinctive features in favor (as here) of examining entire phonemes (cf. Jakobson & Waugh 1979:181–182). Similarly, Gafos (1999:99–100) gives primacy to vocal gesture over feature analysis in his examination of the phonology of reduplication in Temiar.

3. In Temiar, the a priori iconicity additionally involves the inflectional morphology of the verb (Tables 2 and 3), which employs a variety of complex reduplicative patterns to model non-punctiliar patterns of temporality (Benjamin 2012a).

4. To accord with the preference of Mon-Khmer Studies for IPA transcription, changes have been made to the author’s regular phonemization for Temiar: j is the palatal approximant (usually written as y); j is...
The ‘social and cultural context’ just mentioned refers specifically to the various ‘modes of orientation’ maintained by the ‘cultural regimes’ associated with particular ‘polities’ (Benjamin 1993: 349–350, 2005: 262, 2011: 176, ). In the Temiar case, the preferred mode of orientation has been dialectical (Benjamin 1994, 2011, 2012a), and this is directly reflected not only in their music, interactional patterns, religion, food behavior and so on, but also in the iconically expressed semantic underpinnings of Temiar grammar.

**Iconicity: the affix -r- ‘REPLICATION (OF SELF)’**

The special iconic properties of the phoneme /r/ are widely exhibited in the languages of Malaysia and beyond. In the Northern Aslian languages that abut on Temiar to the north and east, the -ra- infix forms the collective-plural inflection of human nouns: Jahai baboˀ ‘woman’ → braboˀ ‘young women’ (Burenhult 2005: 74). In some Semai expressives (Diffloth 1976a: 253) it serves as a largely productive element with the meaning ‘simultaneous plural’. In Jah Hut, a ra- prefix forms the superlative (a kind of intensification-through-plurality) of some verbs and nouns: num ‘ripe’ → ra’nunum ‘very ripe’ (Diffloth 1976b: 97). In Semelai, the same prefix indicates ‘a comparative relationship between two or more entities’ (Kruspe 2004: 146). See also Kruspe’s notes (2004: 148–149) on ra- as pluralizers and replicatives in Aslian. In the Austronesian languages too, -r- widely indicates ‘plurality’ and it very likely derives from the Proto Austronesian infix *-ʀ- (or perhaps Wolff’s reconstructed *D) ‘human pluralizer’. Malay in particular seems in its earlier stages to have employed -r- to express duration, intensity, plurality, reciprocity, confusion and so on (Benjamin 2009: 304). The Temiar clitic bar- ‘progressive’ (probably an early Malayic borrowing) also incorporates the REPLICATIVE r, in this case as an indication of progressive or continuative Aktionsart.

To what then are the apparently iconic properties of /r/ due? Prototypically, /r/ is a trilled consonant [r] or a (velar) continuant [ɣ], which would lend it the inherent potential to express a ‘repetitive’ or ‘durative’ meaning in an *a priori* manner. But given the variation in the pronunciation of /r/ in Aslian (cf. Diffloth 1975: 4), an *a posteriori* iconic motivation is more likely. In the Maniq (Northern Aslian) of Southern Thailand /r/ is pronounced in a variety of manners, but never as a trill (Wnuk 2010: 14). In the Kensiw (Northern Aslian) of Southern Thailand (Bishop 1996: 234) /r/ is pronounced as a trill in only one word. Some Menriq and Batek Dèq (Northern Aslian) speakers employ uvular or velar fricatives for /r/ (Niclas Burenhult, p.c.). In the Sabüm dialect of Lanoh (Central Aslian) an original /r/ has become /j/ (Diffloth 1975: 11). In most varieties of Temiar, /r/ is an apico-alveolar flap (Benjamin 1976b: 135); but in some Temiar dialects, such as that spoken in the Ber valley (Kelantan) in the 1960s, /r/ was (is?) a retroflex flap or labialized vocoid.

The ‘related features’

This paper is concerned primarily with the causative-voice inflection of the Temiar verb. But first I take a brief look at the ‘related features’ mentioned in the title. In addition to the iconically expressed ‘REPLICATION meanings just discussed, the element r as a phonetically high and (usually) front consonant is well suited to express a variety of SELF-referring subject-orientation meanings. This is especially apparent in the forms riːˀ ‘the selfsame’, rə- ‘who’ and rɛˀ- ‘like’ (Table 1 and sentences (1)–(6)).

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5 Jah Hut was formerly placed in the Central Aslian division (Diffloth 1975, Benjamin 1976a), but Diffloth (in Diffloth & Zide 2005) and others (Burenhult, Kruspe & Dunn 2011) now regard it as forming a separate Aslian division on its own, alongside the Northern, Central and Southern divisions.

6 The uncertainty as to the Proto-Austronesian form is discussed in Benjamin 2009: 309. For Wolff’s most recent views on the various mergers that overtook Proto-Austronesian *D in Malay, see Wolff 2010: 484–485, footnote 27.

7 In Temiar the *a posteriori* character of its iconicity is further reinforced by the ‘two, dual’ meaning expressed by -r: naːr ‘two’, jaːr ‘we two (exclusive)’ and ˀaːr ‘we two (inclusive)’ all contain the same component, -aar.

8 On the reasons for referring to the causative as a ‘voice’ of the verb rather than as a derivation, see Benjamin 2011: 23.

Table 1: Forms in (-)r-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>riːˀ</td>
<td>the pronoun-intensifier ‘self(same)’ (emphatic, free-standing, stressed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rɛˀ-</td>
<td>the preposition ‘like, in the manner of’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rə-</td>
<td>REL, the relative-pronoun ‘who’, anaphoric to agentive topics (proclitic to verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-r-</td>
<td>CAUS, the causative, valency-raising verbal affix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Reflexive intensifier riːˀ

Riːˀ is not a reflexive pronoun; it is, rather, a participant adjunct meaning ‘the person in focus’ or ‘the aforementioned, the selfsame’. In (1) for example, riːˀ is obviously not the object of the verb koˀ ‘vomit’ but an intensifier (Moravcsik 1972) of the focused-on broad subject, Ɂalʉɟ. (In all examples riːˀ takes an emphatic sentence-stress.)

(1) Na-koˀ | riːˀ | Ɂalʉɟ naˀ, na-kəbus.
3SG-vomit.PFV self NOM-Ɂalʉɟ that, 3SG-die.PFV.
‘Ɂalʉɟ himself vomited, he died.’

It may be that riːˀ originated as an Austronesian loan. In Malay the so-called reflexive pronoun is diri. This, like riːˀ, also behaves like a noun. Winstedt remarks (1927: 116), without giving his evidence, that the Malay word originally meant ‘body’. Some relevant Austronesian forms are given by Blust under Proto-Austronesian *diRi ‘to stand’ (Blust & Trussel 2010), with polysemous extensions in some branches to ‘person’ and ‘self’ (see also Wurm & Wilson (1975: 150), under ‘person, human being’). Blust thinks that these may be due to ‘borrowing from Malay, in which the senses of “self” and “erect posture” evidently have become intertwined’ – presumably via the connecting idea of bipedalism. Malay diri is probably also related to the Temiar forms dəriːˀ, dɛˀriːˀ ‘alone, by oneself’.

Thus, if Temiar did indeed borrow riːˀ from early Malay or some other Austronesian source, that would explain some of the meanings the word appears to have retained, despite having been reanalyzed a posteriori for other purposes by Temiar speakers. In (2), for example, riːˀ is the noun-possessive of a possessing pronoun (‘his self’) as well as the affected noun-object (the ‘presentee’) in ha-riːˀ (‘ACC-self’). The gloss is in less than comfortable English, but it represents the literal meaning of the original quite closely:

(2) Na-ˀog | ɍi-Tataˀ | Ɂɛŋkãːj ha-riːˀ nej, ha-Ɂalʉɟ nej –
3SG-give.PFV NOM-Tataˀ Ɂɛŋkãːj ACC-self one, ACC-Ɂalʉɟ one –
kədeːg ˀabiːr ma-Ɂalʉɟ, riːˀ ˀəh kədeːg ˀagəːc.
squirrel ˀabiːr to-Ɂalʉɟ, self 3SG squirrel ˀagəːc.
‘Tataˀ Ɂɛŋkãːj presented his self with one and Ɂalʉɟ with one – an ˀabiːr squirrel to Ɂalʉɟ, and an ˀagəːc squirrel to his (own) self.’

The pronoun-anaphor rə-

The pronoun-anaphor rə- behaves much like a relative pronoun, in that it refers back to the subject of the verb in a replicative manner. Its usage varies. In the easterly Temiar speech with which I am more familiar rə- seems to occur only as an anaphor to the interrogative pronoun cɔːˀ ‘who?’, as in (3a) and (3b). The latter is taken from Schebesta (1931: 646), where it is written as


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cɔ(r)təɛl a naˀ? and translated as ‘who did this?’ In (3c) the character of rə- as a proclitic pronoun is confirmed through its ability to take the irrealis clitic -m- (as rum-):  

(3) a. Cɔːˀ rə-teŋlɛk jeh?
   Who REL-teach.PFV 1SG?
   ‘Who is it who taught me?’ (implying that the skill in question was self-taught)

b. Cɔːˀ rə-təɛl ə-naˀ?
   Who REL-do.PFV DET-there?
   ‘Who did it just there?’

c. Cə-baboˀ, cɔːˀ rum-həwɔˀ?
   CTRS-woman, who REL.IRR-desire?
   ‘As for the woman, who might have fallen for her?’

But in the north-westerly Temiar speech-area near Gerik in Upper Perak I observed that rə- was also used freely as an anaphor to ordinary personal pronouns, as in (4):

(4) Ɲɔb rə-teŋlɛk kaneh.
   2PL REL-teach.PFV 1PL.EXCL.
   ‘It is you who teach us.’

It is possible that rə- ‘relative’ and riː ‘self(same)’ are more closely related than the above remarks suggest. In (5), for example, it is likely that the two occurrences of rə- are a reduced procliticized form of riː’, equivalent therefore to riː bəːh riː kəwãːs:

(5) Ɂe-loˀ we-ɛj? Tɔˀ we-mɛˀmaːˀ, rə- bəːh rə- kəwãːs.
   ‘What happened to them that they’ve not returned – [the one] who is father, [the one] who is child?’
   Or?:
   ‘What happened to them that they’ve not returned – the father himself, the child himself?’

The preposition wab ‘with’ and the verb rəwab

A seemingly related form is rəwab ‘to accompany’, the verbal form of the preposition wab ‘along with, accompanied by’. At first sight it looks as if the initial rə- might be a prefixal version of the ‘causative’ r (just as the nominalizing infix -n- also occurs as a prefix, n-, especially in Perak and increasingly in Kelantan). Etymologically, however, rəwab is the fuller form, related to the proposed Proto-Mon-Khmer series *rum; *ruːm; *ruəm; *ruəp ‘to assemble’, under which Shorto (2006: 379, no. 1389) lists a large number of cognates from all branches of the family. In the Temiar case, therefore, it is the preposition wab that has been derived from the verb rəwab. But would this have happened if rə- was not already thinkable-of as a formative with causative connotations? The most common occurrence of rəwab is in the utterance cɔːˀ rə-wab? ‘who went along (as company)?’, which could easily be re-construed as cɔːˀ rə-wəb? ‘who REL-with?’. However, a transparently causative derivative of this verb is also found: perwab, pərebwab ‘to get someone to accompany someone’ (employing the non-productive per- rather than ter-).

The preposition reˀ ‘like’

With the preposition reˀ ‘like’, on the other hand, the idea of REPLICATION is expressed at its simplest, as in (6):
(6) ꦼ-bo-cemcap teː', bukan reˀ-hâʔ.
1SG-PROG-pack.IPfv earlier, not like-2SG.
‘I was packing up earlier, not like you.’

It seems likely, then, that riː ‘self(same)’ has become a purely iconic form consisting solely of the components REPLIcation and SELF, signaled by the front consonant r and the closed vowel i, respectively. If so, the forms rə- ‘relative’ and especially reˀ- ‘like’ would appear to have somewhat downplayed the SELF component signaled by the high vowel, retaining primarily the REPLIcation component indicated by the r. The forms rə- and reˀ- are probably etymologically cognate with (or just possibly borrowed from) equivalent Mon words: cf. Old Mon row /rɔw/, Middle Mon rau, Spoken Mon rèa ‘manner, like, as’ (Shorto 1971: 323).

Productive causatives in -r-

The productive causative inflections of the Temiar verb (Tables 2 and 3)\(^{11}\) incorporate the formative -r-, indicating that the causee replicates in some sense whatever has been set in process by the causer.\(^{12}\) This may be a peculiarly Aslian feature: Shorto (2006) lists no -r- causatives at all in his wide-ranging survey of Mon-Khmer, but Burenhult (2005: 108) and Kruspe (2004: 124, and in her ‘comparative notes’ on p.134) report that -r- causatives are found in Jahai (Northern Aslian) and Semelai (Southern Aslian), respectively. This suggests that the productive Temiar (Central Aslian) form, as well as cognate forms in Semai (also Central Aslian), might result from an innovation at the Proto-Aslian level. On the other hand, as a prefix, alone or in combination, r- is occasionally found elsewhere in Mon-Khmer, but not with an obviously causative meaning (Shorto 1963); it also occurs as an infix in Old Mon (Jacob 1963).

As Comrie (1985: 323) puts it, causative verbs indicate that the causer ‘brings about (or, more weakly, fails to prevent) the situation described by the sentence containing the basic verb’. More ‘weakly’ still, Temiar causatives, especially with an animate causee, often indicate a mere permitting or making-possible of the situation. From a semantic point of view an animate causee in such cases retains a degree of agentivity, thereby becoming what Palmer (1994: 237) describes as a ‘secondary agent’. The causer will almost always be animate and agentive, although non-agentive causers (i.e. material ‘things’) may also occur under certain restricted circumstances. But I have yet to find any examples of non-material forces in that role (cf. Comrie 1985: 332ff.). Perhaps this is because ‘rain’ tehtəːh, ‘flood’ bɛgˀaːg, ‘storm’ dɛŋdək, ‘wind’ hɛnhũl etc are verbal (imperfective) or deverbal (-n-) forms, rather than simple nouns.

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\(^{11}\) To simplify the presentation, Tables 2 and 3 omit two other forms of the Temiar verb, namely the inflected middle voice with infixed -a- (salɔg, gagol) and the derived progressive aspect with proclitic bar-, which are not directly relevant to the present discussion. The valency-reducing middle voice is of course incompatible with the valency-increasing causative. Consequently, middle-causative forms in *-ra- do not occur in the normal inflectional pattern of the verb. The morphology is found elsewhere in the language, however, in certain lexical items and (especially) in expressives (Benjamin, 2012a). On the other hand, the progressive bar- is completely compatible with the imperfective causative (bar-tərɛlgəl, bar-sərɛglɔg). But it is hardly ever found with the unreduplicated perfective – (*bar-tergel, (*bar-serlɔg) – with which it would appear to be semantically somewhat incompatible.

\(^{12}\) As discussed in the final section of this paper, non-productive causative-like forms, lacking the formative -r-, also occur.
Table 2: Verbal inflection (sesquisyllabic): *salɔg* ‘to lie down, sleep’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>VERBAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td><em>slɔg</em> [səlɔg]</td>
<td><em>sglɔg</em> [sɛglɔg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘sleep’</td>
<td>‘sleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(completed act)</td>
<td>(incomplete act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causative</td>
<td><em>srɔlɔg</em> [sɛrlɔg]</td>
<td><em>srɔglɔg</em> [sərɛglɔg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘put to sleep’</td>
<td>‘put to sleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(completed act)</td>
<td>(incomplete act)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Verbal inflection (monosyllabic): *gəl* ‘to sit’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>VERBAL NOUN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td><em>gəl</em> [gəl]</td>
<td><em>glɡəl</em> [ɡɛlɡəl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘sit’</td>
<td>‘sit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(completed act)</td>
<td>(incomplete act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causative</td>
<td><em>trɡəl</em> [tɛrgəl]</td>
<td><em>trɡlɡəl</em> [tərɡɛlɡəl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘set down’</td>
<td>‘set down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(completed act)</td>
<td>(incomplete act)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sesquisyllabic verbs (Table 2) the causative inflection is -r- unaltered: *slɔg* [səlɔg] ‘to lie down’ → *srɔlɔg* [sɛrlɔg] ‘to lay down’. With monosyllabic verbs (Table 3) the causative is formed by prefixing the affix *tr*- [tɛr- ~ tər-]: *gəl* ‘to sit’ → *trɡəl* [tɛrgəl] ‘to set down’. This regularly dissimilates to *br*- [bɛr- ~ bər-] before stems with an initial c- or t-: *ciːb* ‘to go’ → *brciːb* [bɛrciib] ‘to cause to go’, *tuːk* ‘to fear’ → *brtuːk* [bɛrtuuk] ‘to instill fear’. The -r- affix is retained when the causative verb stem undergoes incofixation to produce the imperfective-causative and verbal-noun forms (with -n-):

*sglɔg* → *srɔglɔg* → *srɔnlɔg* [sɛglɔg → sərɛglɔg → sərɛnlɔg]

*trɡlɡəl* [tərɡɛlɡəl] → *trɡnɡəl* [tərɡɛnɡəl]

*brciːb* → *brbciːb* → *brnciːb* [bɛrciib → bɛrnɛci:b].

The prefixes *tr*- and *br*- are also found in Malay (as *tər-, bər-*), from which the Temiar forms are likely to have been borrowed. If so, an interesting semantic reversal took place, for the Malay prefixes express (non-agentive) passive or (agentive) middle-voice ‘undergoer’ meanings respectively (Benjamin 1993: 383–384; 2009: 306–314), while the Temiar ones are clearly causative in meaning. In a dialectical cultural regime like that of the Temiars, however, such a switch would be relatively easy to effect, on the grounds that what happens to oneself necessarily

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13 Some apparently irregular verbs diverge from this paradigm in one or more respects. The causative of *həwal* ‘to emerge’, for example, is not *hɛrwal* but *terhəwal*, *tareləhəwal*. The ‘irregularity’ here, however, is not in the reduplicative pattern employed (it is a frequent means of forming expressives), but in the use to which it is put. The explanation in this particular case lies in an earlier vocalic shift from the diphthongal but monosyllabic *hual* to the reanalyzed sesquisyllabic *həwal* (Cf. Diffloth 1975:11).

14 However, according to the Gérard Diffloth (p.c.), the Semai and Temiar *br*- causatives derive from *pr-*, in accordance with the general Central Asian rule that such unvoiced stops become voiced under certain conditions. This suggests that at least some of the *ber*- causatives of Temiar are possibly ‘ancient’ Mon-Khmer forms that for some obscure reason have been preserved before c- and t-, but not in other positions.
also happens to one’s salient others. This applies especially to the structure of Temiar sanctions controlling interpersonal behavior (Benjamin 1967b: 336–340), where it is the ‘doee’, not the doer, who is expected to suffer the automatic consequences of the doer’s misdeeds.

Semai shares something of this orientation – but with a twist. There, a common use of causatives with stative verbs is to express the meaning ‘to pretend to’: bɔːr ‘good’, pərbɔːr ‘to pretend to be good’, which Gérard Diffloth (p.c.) explains as implying that the subject is being good for others, not that he is in himself good. The reference has shifted from self to others, and the causative meaning appears only to those others. Semelai (Southern Aslian), on the other hand, retained the original middle-voice meaning when it borrowed the Malay ber- (Kruspe 2004: 117–123). This accords with my suggestion in other contexts (Benjamin 1985, 2002) that the ‘Malayic’ societal pattern which the Semelais but not the Temiars have adhered to evinces a non-dialectical (specifically, a ‘transcendental’) rather than a dialectical mode of orientation. They would therefore be much less likely to have engaged in the kinds of semantic switch that the Temiars and Semais have taken up.

A straightforward example of the causative occurs in (7), which employs both the causative form tɛrˀɔɟ ‘to raise, carry up’ and its underlying base form ˀɔɟ ‘to ascend, climb up’. Here, there is no secondary agency, for this is not a permissive but a true (‘make’) causative governing an inanimate causee.

(7)  Kɔːd, na-ˀɔɟ, hameˀ deh, na-tɛrˀɔɟ
     Take,  3SG-ascend.PFV PSTV PSTV, 3SG-CAUS.ascend.PFV
     lamuːŋ ˀəh, tɛrˀɔɟ ha-wɛˀˀə-naˀ.
     springy.sapling 3SG, CAUS.ascend.PFV ACC-coil 3SG-that.
     ‘Then he climbed up, he brought up his springy sapling, he brought up his coiled [sapling].’

Less straightforward examples of the causative also occur. In (8) for example, the base form of the verb səg ‘to get caught’ carries an inherently passive meaning, but the active meaning ‘to catch’ is expressed by its causative form, tɛrsəg.15

(8)  Nam ˀamɛs na-səg bakoːʁ jeˀ? Ma-Ɂalʉɟ
     Animal small 3SG-get.caught.PFV springtrap 1SG. To-Ɂalʉɟ
     na-tɛrsəg ɲam rajaːˀ.
     3SG-CAUS.catch.PFV animal large.
     ‘A small animal got caught in my trap. But Ɂalʉɟ’s trap caught him a large animal.’

OR, more explicitly:

     ‘A small animal got caught (in the) trap. The trap caused a large animal to get caught for the benefit of (ma-) Ɂalʉɟ.’

The causative is also employed to generate the transitive form of semi-deponent verbs (Benjamin 2011: 20–22) that otherwise appear only in the intransitive middle-voice form. In (9b), for example, the middle-voice catək is clearly the anticausative transform of cɛrtək in (9a) (cf. Comrie 1985: 322–333); there is no base form *cətək.

(9)  a. Na-cɛrtək ˀəŋkaːˀ.
     Na-cɛrtək ˀəŋkaːˀ.
     3SG-close.CAUS.PFV door.
     ‘She closed the door.’

15 In (8), and probably also in (10b) and (11b), the causative inflection should more strictly be considered as indicating the ‘applicative’ voice (Aikhenvald 2011: 93–97). Languages sometimes employ different surface constructions for the two voices, but Temiar would appear to be one of the many languages in which the two voices are expressed in the same way morphologically, typically as the ‘causative’. 

Geoffrey BENJAMIN. 2012.
The Temiar causative (and related features). Mon-Khmer Studies. 41:32-45
Occasionally, the causative is employed to derive active verbs from stative verbs (adjectives), as with mej ‘good’ → termej, tərejməj ‘to repair, improve’, or (from a Malay loan) bətul ‘correct’ → bertul ‘to correct’.

Causatives can also be generated from nominal roots, as in (10), where the noun kəlɔːɟ ‘interior, insides’ (10a) is inflected to produce the idiomatic factitive ‘to turn inside out’ (10b):

(10) a. kəlɔːɟ deːk
   interior house
   ‘inside (of) the house’

b. Ham-kerɔːɟ ˀabat doh!
   2SG IMP-inside.CAUS.PFV sarong this!
   ‘Turn this sarong inside out!’

A further example (11) is tərcɔb, here further nominalized with -n- as tərɛncɔb, from the noun cɔb ‘position between’:

(11) a. ˀɛn-cɔb
   in-between
   ‘in between’

b. tərɛncɔb
   CAUS.NMLZ.between.PFV.
   ‘the hem of a plaited object, made by interweaving the unwoven strands’

As exemplified in (10b) and (11b), the resultant meaning of a derived causative is sometimes idiomatic rather than predictable. A further example is presented in (12), taken from the lyric of a commercial pop-song recording, where the causative (kerdu’) of kədʉˀ ‘to remain, stay’ is used to refer to the girl’s silence:

(12) Komun kah cə-haːˀ haj ha-jeˀ ma-je:? True Q CTRS-2SG PAST 2SG-reject.PFV to-1SG?

Ham-tuh, ham-tuh, ˀagɔˀ kerdu.
   2SG IMP-say.PFV, 2SG IMP-say.PFV, VET stay.CAUS.PFV.

‘Is it true that you have rejected me? Say, say, don’t make it stay [i.e. don’t keep it to yourself].’

Note that the ostensibly ‘causative’ kerdu in (12) is an example of what Aikhenvald (2011: 86) refers to as ‘causatives which do not cause’. These are morphological ‘causatives’ in which, instead of an expected valency-increase, the construction adds an extra meaning to the verb, typically ‘to

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16 From track 3 (‘Menhapekik’ = Mən ha-pəkiˀ, ‘Why do you ignore me?’) of the video karaoke CD Yang Lain Tëtap Lain (Warisan Sound 0607) performed by the Temiar pop-group Seniroi (i.e. Sənirɔy ‘Echoes’), Kuala Lumpur: Power Records. However, Diffloth (1977: 484) reconstructs the Proto-Semai cognate as *krdiˀ ‘to remain silent, quiet’ on the basis of several modern Semai forms that all contain the kr- element, which he interprets as ‘malevolent causative’. It is possible, therefore, that Temiar kədʉˀ ‘to remain, stay’ was originally a back-formation from kerdu’, which may therefore have originally meant ‘to cause offence by keeping silent’. A parallel but non-productive example is gɛrtʉːh ‘to be carried along in a current’, cf. tʉːh ‘to let drop’. (The change of voicing from *kr- to gr- is regular in both Temiar and Semai.)
do with manipulative effort, forceful and intensive action, complete involvement of the object – all of which happen to suit the song-lyric at this point.

Although the causative inflection is highly productive in Temiar, there are nevertheless some restrictions. Causatives appear to be derivable only from intransitive verbs or from verbs that can be employed both intransitively and transitively. Examples of the latter are caː ‘to eat (intrans); to consume (trans)’ or saː lg ‘to lie down, sleep (intrans); to marry (trans); tuːk ‘to be afraid (intrans); to fear (trans)’. Forming a causative from an intransitive verb produces a transitive verb, such as terːɔɟ ‘to raise’ from ɔɟ ‘to ascend’, as in (7). Forming a causative from an already transitive verb, such as bercaː ‘to feed’ from caː ‘to eat (consume), produces a ditransitive verb. But in the latter case, one of the causees usually appears as the indirect object, indicated by the proclitic ma- ‘to’: na-bercaː kebəː ma-sajɛ̃ːd (she-eat.CAUS.PFV fruit to-child) ‘she feeds fruit to the child’. A further example occurs in (17), below.

This is as far as it goes, for I have found no instances of a ditransitive causative like bercaː being further raised to a tritransitive verb (‘to make someone feed someone else’). Accordingly, the ditransitive verb ɔg ‘to give’ appears not to occur in the causative (*terːɔg ‘*to cause to give’). This restriction applies even to such ‘fully’ monotransitive verbs as toːɛl ‘to make’ or saː lu ɔ ‘to shoot (something with a blowgun)’. Such potential ‘double causative’ forms as *terːɛl ‘to make someone make something’ or *serlʊ ɔ ‘to make someone shoot at something’ would be morphologically well-formed, but they are semantically proscribed. To express such constructions, periphrasis would be employed, with oːr ‘to order’ (13a) or ɔg ‘to give (i.e. permit, let)’ (13b):

(13) a. ʔi-ːɔːr nam-təːɛl deːk.
   1SG-order.PFV 3SG.INT-build.PFV house.
   ‘I ordered him to build a house’

   b. Na-ːog ʔim-təːɛl deːk.
   3SG.give.PFV 1SG.INT-build.PFV house.
   ‘He let me build a house.’

Cultural issues: control v. permission

In Temiar there appears to be no way of saying ‘to make’ someone do something, whether inflectionally, periphrastically or lexically. As Alves (2001: 118) remarks in his subtle study of Mon-Khmer causatives, ‘perhaps more interesting than what causative verbs can do is what they cannot since that would be the real testing ground for lexically inherent syntactic constraints.’ With inanimate non-agentive causees, as in (7), (9), (10) and (11), the causative carries the meaning ‘bring about’ or ‘make’. But with human (and other animate?) causees, as already noted, the causative is usually permissive: the primary actor’s action merely makes it possible or sets the conditions for the secondary actor to do what he or she wishes. This would avoid the suggestion that one person’s will is being imposed on another’s. Thus bercaː ‘feed’, the causative of caː ‘eat’, would normally mean not ‘force someone to eat’, but ‘get someone to eat’ or ‘provide food so that someone might eat’, with ‘food’ rather than the eater as the direct-object causee of the verb. (In former times bercaː ‘feed’ was the regular way of referring to the custom by which a man would support a pre-pubertal girl in the hope that she would eventually marry him. This was not thought of as a formal agreement or contract, and the girl could later refuse.)

Similarly, with the causative terbot ‘to provide the breast, get the baby to suck’, from bot, benbot ‘to suck at the breast’ (bot also means ‘breast’, and sometimes ‘milk’), the actor is not seen as forcing the baby to suck, but simply as providing the means for it to do so if it wishes. The reciprocal expression is not ‘the child was forced to suck’ – a true agentive passive for which there is no equivalent in Temiar – but ‘the child sucks’, a straightforward active expression implying that the child is in control of its own actions. In any case, Temiar parents have no means to impose their will on their children, as it would clash with the strong value they place on individual personal autonomy (Benjamin 1967a: 14, 1994: 51). Similarly, terːɔŋ, the causative of ɔŋ ‘to drink’, is a permissive with the meaning ‘to get someone to take their medicine’ rather than an example of one person controlling another.
I suggest that this reluctance to use the causative to express control over a secondary actor’s actions is one reason why the Temiars have not developed the middle voice into a true agentive passive – a transition that has occurred in other languages. ‘Control’ in Temiar can be expressed only in relation to the primary causer’s own actions or effects; it cannot be imposed or extended further. (A similar pattern also applies to the syntax of the ‘irrealis’ clitic -m-, discussed in Benjamin 2012b.) Animate causees (‘secondary agents’) are understood as retaining their own independent agency.

In some cases, however, this stricture appears at first glance to be waived; but closer inspection shows that this is because special circumstances hold. In (14), for example, the causee’s will had been put aside by the altered state of consciousness induced in her by the shaman. (Or perhaps the shamanic blowing merely permitted her to sit down, still agentively.)


‘Her younger brother blew (shamanically) on her, and set her down.’

In (15), the accusative marker ha- is attached to the causee (‘wife’), presumably to indicate a more direct degree of causation, though physical manipulation. (The verb səŋiːl, sɛrŋiːl is inceptive in meaning: ‘to wake up’, whereas wɔg means ‘to get up (from sleep)’.)

(15)  Na-sɛrŋiːl lah ha-lɛh ˀə-naˀ, na-wɔg hamɛˀ. 3SG-wake.CAUS.PFV EMP ACC-wife 3SG-that, 3SG-woke PRSTV.

‘He woke his wife up, and she got up.’

In (16), the death of Ɂalʉɟ’s wife was the unintended result of his brother Karey’s excessive sex with her. In other words, this was a case of manslaughter rather than murder, and therefore a kind of permissive – ‘he let her die’ / ‘he did nothing to stop her dying’.


‘She died, he had killed her.’

In (17) there is a contrast between gəp, gɛmgəp ‘to paint one’s own face’ and its causative tergəp. Rather than ‘cause someone to paint his/her face’, the latter means ‘to cause paint to be applied to someone’s face’, with sumba:’ (red annatto) as the direct object of the verb. Semantically, therefore, it is an applicative rather than a simple causative. The indirect object here, ma-babəːh [to-man], is somewhat ‘passive/undergoer’ in character, in apparent accordance with the ‘causee hierarchy’ of Comrie (1985: 342): direct object > indirect object > oblique object.


‘After they trance, then they prepare, paint their faces with annatto – women painting the men, flirting.’

Since causation from the Temiar point of view prototypically has its source in some animate being’s will, it may therefore be impossible or at least difficult to employ a causative verb non-metaphorically in such expressions as ‘The tree fell and made the house collapse’ or ‘The car killed the man’. (The appropriate verb-forms exist: terkol (also takol ‘to cause a collapse’ from kal ‘to collapse’, and kerbus ‘to kill’, from kəbus ‘to die’.) Such expressions could perhaps be realized with a causative verb if the tree or car were being deliberately personified, as they just might be in a typical Temiar story involving the transmogrifying of plants and animals into human beings, or in
the animistic ascription of a controlling soul to the tree or car. But I have yet to discover a clear example of such a construction.\(^{18}\)

### Non-productive ‘causatives’

As noted earlier, there are also non-productive ‘causatives’ with formatives other than \(-r-\). These include: təlɛk, tənɛlɛk ‘to teach’ (cf. lek, lelɛk ‘to know’); təsɡɛː, təsɡɛːn ‘to hunt for food’ (cf. gɔːs, gɛsɡɔːs ‘to be alive’); pɔnɛːh, pɛnɛːh ‘to show’ (cf. nɛːh, nɛnɛːh ‘to see’); pədəɬ, pɛɬɛːɬ ‘to hunt with dogs’ (cf. ɬɛɬ, ɬɛɬɛ ‘to bark’); pədə, pɛdə ‘to drive fish’ (cf. ɗo, ɗɛdə ‘to run, flee’, and the contrasting ‘regular’ causative tɛrdə, tɛrdɛ ‘to cause to flee’). There is also a set of transparently causative words with pi- ‘to utter a … sound’: piɛːw ‘to say “don’t know”’, from ɛːw ‘dunno’; pihəː ‘to say “yes”’, from ha ‘yes’;\(^{19}\) pɛwɛ ‘to suck one’s teeth’, from cɛd ‘the sound of sucking’. However, these are non-reflecting verbs, with no imperfective form.

Since the most common causative formative in Mon-Khmer is \(p-\) (Gérard Diffloth, p.c.; Alves 2001: 109), at least some of these forms may be ancient. Pədə, for example, has \(p-\) cognates elsewhere in Mon-Khmer (see Shorto 2006, item 84a: *(p[d]j)u. ‘to carry, transport’, \(\sim 81 *du.\) ‘to run away’). In one of my texts, tɛrdə and pɛdə ‘occur in the same utterance (18). But here, the first occurrence is a productive permissive-causative (‘to let run away’), while the second is a non-productive lexical item (‘to fish-drive’) in itself, with a simple transitive semantic:

\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
18 & Na-\text{ayk} & ha-kɛ & na, & na-tɛrdə & la-kɛ & na, \\
& 3SG-take.PFV & ACC-fish that, & 3SG-CAUS.flee.PFV & EMP-fish that, & & \\
& ?un-ma & un-pɛdə & na & & & \\
& 3PL-return.PFV, & 3PL-drive.JPFV & that. & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

‘He took the fish, and let it get away. Then they who had been driving fish returned home.’

However, Temiar-speakers probably do not regard the non-productive forms as causatives. For example, they also employ the verbs pədəɬ and pədə in the ‘collective, all-together’ middle-voice forms pədəɬ ‘to go hunting together’ and pədə ‘to go fish-driving together’ (Benjamin 2011: 15–16). As already noted, the combination of valency-increasing causative with valency-reducing middle-voice is a semantic impossibility, and these forms therefore must lack any ‘causative’ component.\(^{20}\) These and the other such words lack the \(-r-\) affix that marks the morphologically productive causatives, demonstrating that they are lexical rather than morphological causatives. It is nevertheless likely that at least some of the very common words just listed formerly contained the \(-r-\) affix: (*tɛrɛk, (*pɛrɛnɛːh (but perhaps not *pɛrɛlɛk). That this still sometimes occurs is evidenced by the following extant alternative forms, in which the \(-r-\) is optional: tɛrmu, tərɛmuh,
alongside \textit{təmuh}, \textit{tɛhmuh} ‘to bathe (someone else)’, from \textit{muh} ‘to bathe (oneself)’; \textit{təbɔt}, \textit{tɛnbɔt} ‘to let suckle’, from \textit{bɔt} ‘to suckle’; \textit{tərɛnbɔt} ‘to mutually commit incest’, from \textit{bɔt} ‘to suckle’; \textit{təgɛːs}, \textit{tɛsgɛːs} ‘to get someone to commit incest’ (alongside the reciprocal \textit{bar-gɛːs} ‘to mutually commit incest’), from \textit{gɛːs} ‘incest’; \textit{pədɔg}, \textit{pɛgdɔg} alongside \textit{pɛrdɔg}, \textit{pərɛgdɔg} all meaning ‘to lean (transitive), set in place’. In one of my texts, both \textit{pɛrdɔg} and \textit{pɛgdɔg} occur close together in the same utterance (19), with no discernible difference in meaning (except that the latter is imperfective in aspect, for which \textit{pərɛgdɔg} could also have served).

\begin{verbatim}
Na-to’el lah de:k ’oh, ni:s ’oh na-perdɔg.
3SG-build.PFV EMP house 3SG, floor 3SG 3SG-lean.CAUS.PFV.
Lapas na-pɛgdɔg, na-gəl, na-səlɔg lah.
After 3SG-lean.CAUS.PFV, 3SG-sit.PFV, 3SG-lie.down.PFV EMP.
\end{verbatim}

‘Then he built his house, fitted the flooring into place. After he had fitted it, he sat and lay down/slept.’

\textbf{‘Deponent-causative’ verbs}

Just as there are non-inflecting ‘deponent’ verbs in Temiar that possess a middle-voice shape (with \textit{-a-} in the presyllable) but a superficially active meaning (Benjamin 2011), there are also a few verbs that appear to exist only in a causative shape but without an explicitly ‘causative’ meaning. Some of these contain \textit{tə-} or \textit{pə-} as frozen prefixes but no \textit{-r-}, while others contain the normal ‘causative’ elements \textit{-r-} or \textit{ter-}, except that in these instances they are non-productive.

I have no record of any base or middle-voice forms for the following ‘deponent-causative’ verbs, and their meaning appears to be simply transitive rather than causative:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{perheɟ}, \textit{pərɛɟheɟ}: ‘to magic something into existence’
\item \textit{serpaːg}, \textit{sərɛgpaːg}: ‘to parcel up food (for cooking)’
\item \textit{cɛrləːj}, \textit{cərɛjləːj}: ‘to serve food out onto mats’ (cf. \textit{ləːj} ‘to spread mats out’)
\item \textit{tɛrpʉk}, \textit{tərɛŋpʉk}: ‘to ceremonially terminate a mourning period’
\end{itemize}

There is also a small set of permissive-causatives formed with \textit{bɛr-} (rather than \textit{ter-} or \textit{-r-}), that indicate a somewhat reflexive meaning. An example is \textit{bɛrkɛːˀ}, \textit{bərɛˀkɛːˀ} ‘to search one’s mind’, from \textit{kɛːˀ} ‘to search’. (This is not a case of the regular dissimilatory employment of \textit{bɛr-} in stems with initial \textit{t-} or \textit{c-} mentioned earlier.) These refer to internal psychic events, of the kind also indicated by \textit{bɛrləːk} ‘remind’, from \textit{bələːk} ‘to have something come to one’s mind’, a passive-like spontaneous happening rather than the result of deliberate ratiocination – which, through a morphological coincidence, also happens to begin with \textit{bɛr-}. The productive causative form \textit{bɛrləːk} therefore means ‘to allow something to come to (the secondary subject’s) mind’. This differs significantly from the meaning that underlies the English ‘remind’, which is more like ‘to make someone remember’. A more subtle example is \textit{bɛrtuh}, the verb sometimes used to indicate that one’s heart-soul (\textit{hup}, the seat of agency) is internally ‘telling’ its possessor to act in a certain way. The normal, externally-directed verb for ‘to tell’ is simply \textit{tuh}, as in (12).

Although these \textit{bɛrkɛːˀ} type of causatives do not belong to a productive class, they are nevertheless of some interest, both semantically and historically, as implying internally-directed, ‘subjective’, permissive-causation. There is no space to pursue the issue further here, except to note that \textit{gerˀəːb}, \textit{gərɛbˀəːb} ‘to belch’ and \textit{bəhup}, \textit{bɛmhup} ‘to fart’, both of which possess ‘causative’-like shapes, may belong here too.

\textbf{Concluding remarks}

Elsewhere (Benjamin 2011, 2012a), I have argued that the Temiars’ dialectical psychocentrism, well evidenced in other domains of the culture, is also reflected in the patterning of their language. This is apparent in the peculiar manner in which the polarity of the Temiar middle and causative voices in the valency schema is given expression. (There is no inflectional passive voice in Temiar.) The middle voice carries a SELF-directed meaning through the iconically expressed incorporation of a virtual \textit{object} into the verb, as \textit{-a-} (Benjamin 2011: 22–23), while the
causative voice expresses the OTHER-directed meaning of getting someone else to do something through the iconically-expressed incorporation into the verb of the subjective and ‘replicative’ marker -r-. Thus, the dialectical SELF–OTHER deixis, exhibited in the Temiar cultural regime more generally, also pervades the semantic and grammatical organisation of the Temiar verb, where it is given phonetic expression through the iconicity of oral gesture (closed/open mouth), as presented in the opening section of this paper.

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