

29 Understanding applicatives

Abstract: This chapter presents and analyzes the main criterial properties of applicative constructions as proposed by Zúñiga and Creissels in their introductory chapter. These properties are as follows: (i) applicativization, as a subtype of nucleativization, alters the status of non-agentive non-subject arguments; (ii) the predicate in the applicative construction has overt morphological marking that sets it apart from the base-construction predicate; (iii) the applied phrase has a role other than S or A and refers to a participant that either requires a non-core coding different from its coding in the base construction or cannot be expressed at all in the latter. While generally in agreement with these criteria, the chapter proposes some adjustments to and expansions of all three of these properties. Concerning property (i), the chapter discusses the connection between causativization and applicativization, which is manifested through common causative-applicative syncretism. With regard to (ii), it argues for loosening the restriction on overt morphological marking of the applied verb, which would allow us to capture language-internal inconsistency in applicative marking and include agreement exponents as signals of the applicative as well. With respect to property (iii), the chapter advocates the inclusion of constructions with an external object possessor (object possessor-raising constructions) in the range of applicatives.

1 Introduction

In their introductory chapter, which informs this volume, Fernando Zúñiga and Denis Creissels (henceforth Z and C) define the relation between the applicative construction and the base construction using three criteria. The order in which I present them is different from the order used in their chapter.

First, the participant that is agentive or subject-like (referred to as A or S,¹ depending on transitivity) in the base construction retains these properties in the applicative construction. This requirement is needed to capture the generalization that applicativization alters the status of non-agentive/non-subject arguments, in contrast, for instance,

¹ A stands for Agent or most agent-like argument of a transitive/ditransitive clause, and S stands for the sole argument of an intransitive clause.

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to passivization. This criterion is also needed to separate applicativization from causativization, which, as Z and C indicate, “target[s] an instigating agent that appears in A role”.

The second operational criterion has to do with overt marking of the predicate; the predicates in the base construction (BC) and in the applicative construction (AC) need to be marked differently. Finally, the applicative construction naturally includes an applied phrase: “a noun phrase in a role other than S or A, . . . which refers to a participant that either requires a non-core coding different from its coding in the AC or cannot be expressed at all in the BC”.

It is commendable that the applicative construction is well defined operationally, as this allows us to follow strict criteria for establishing and comparing ACs across languages and also allows us to separate true ACs from what Z and C aptly call “lookalikes”. At the same time, there is a worry that the proposed operational criteria are too restrictive and may force us to miss some generalizations. In what follows, I will discuss each criterion in turn (§§ 2–4), and it is my hope that this discussion will stimulate further debate about the nature of applicative constructions both empirically and theoretically.

2 Generalized applicative: Applicatives and causatives as two subtypes of nucleatives

All definitions of applicatives, no matter how narrow or wide, are constructed in such a way that the subject, the agent, or the most agent-like argument is not affected by applicativization. Informally, that means that applicativization involves operations on structurally lower arguments: non-subjects. In addition to this constraint, one that refers to grammatical relations, the applied argument does not associate with agent-like interpretation. In keeping with this reasoning, Z and C further distinguish causativization and applicativization as two distinct ways of introducing a core argument:

[A]pplicativization is a subtype of verb-coded valency alternation: it is a special case of NUCLEATIVIZATION, an operation that allows participants not encoded as core terms in the base construction to be encoded as such in the derived construction. More precisely, applicativization is an instance of NON-S/A NUCLEATIVIZATION: applicatives target participants that have a non-S/A role in the derived construction, unlike operations where nucleativized participants have an S/A role, like causativization (which target an instigating Agent that appears in A role) and several other cases of non-causativizing alternations (which target other participants, like obliques or possessors).

I agree with Z and C in assuming that nucleativization (their term) amounts to adding a new argument, one that is not going to be external in the resulting applicative construction. Thus, there is an operation that increases valency by adding a non-subject argument to a particular verb. However, in contrast to Z and C’s approach, I would like to treat this valency-increasing operation as a more general mechanism, one that does

not distinguish between causativization and applicativization. I see several arguments in favor of this more general approach.

The first two arguments are empirical; they have to do with the cross-linguistically common SYNCRETISM of applicative and causative and with the INTERPRETATIVE VAGUENESS of the newly added argument in a number of cases. I discuss these two arguments in Sections 2.1 and 2.3. The other two arguments, discussed in Sections 2.2 and 2.4, have to do with the conceptual premises of grammatical theory and with the interpretation of the causee role.

2.1 Generalized applicative: Applicativization as addition of a syntactic object

Quite a few languages use the same affix to form causatives and applicatives (Dixon 2012: 332, 336). This phenomenon has been described as “causative/applicative syncretism” (Shibatani and Pardeshi 2002: 116): a single morpheme has two different functions, typically distinguished based on the semantics of the verb it combines with; see also Zúñiga and Kittilä (2019: Ch. 2). Alternatively, this phenomenon can be referred to as GENERALIZED APPLICATIVE or, to follow Z and C’s terminology, as UNSPECIFIED NUCLEATIVE. It appears that such unspecified nucleativization is as common as the more specified applicativization, and the two can actually co-occur within a single language, as I show below. Early studies of applicatives were very much inspired by Bantu applicatives, and those are typically distinct from causatives, so there may also be an element of tradition in separating the two processes.

Just a cursory look across the globe shows that causative-applicative syncretism is not limited to a genetic or areal grouping. Austin (2005) and Austin (this volume) discuss a range of Australian Aboriginal languages where the same affix can have different syntactic effects depending on the verb root that it attaches to. In Pitta-Pitta, for example, the affix *-la-* forms causatives when added to non-volitional intransitives (such as ‘fall’) but forms applicatives when added to volitional intransitives (such as ‘play’) (Austin 2005: 12). In Arawakan languages, the applicative reading is only one of the functions of a particular exponent, “and probably a secondary one, as its main function is causative” (Van Gijn, this volume). The causative-applicative syncretism is observed in several Austronesian languages: Javanese (Hemmings 2013), Old Malay, colloquial Indonesian (Arka et al. 2009), several languages of Western Indonesia (McDonnell and Truong, this volume), Mori Belait (Himmelman 2005: 170), Kambera (Klamer 1998), Kapampangan (Zúñiga and Kittilä 2019: Ch. 2), Boumaa Fijian (Dixon 1988; Creissels, to appear: Ch. 14), Niuean (Massam 1998, 2020), and Tongan (Ball 2008). It is also reported in Hakha Lai, spoken in Myanmar (Peterson 2003; 2007). In the Papua New Guinean language Tauya, the same marker introduces causees and applied objects (Creissels, to appear: Ch. 14). Foley (this volume) also notes the syncretism of applicative and causative marking in Papuan languages. Mithun (this volume) mentions that the addition of the general

applicative marker *-ute-* to the verb in Yupik can signal a variety of roles, including causee.² In Chukchi, the same prefix *r-/n-*, which combines with intransitive verbs, can have either the causative or the comitative/instrumental applicative meaning (Dunn 1999: 198–201, 210–212); a similar syncretism is observed in the closely related language Alutor (Koptjevskaja-Tamm and Muravyova 1993). Kartvelian languages use a number of prefixes (also known as character vowels, pre-radical vowels, thematic prefixes, or versionizers, the term I use below; see Tuite, this volume, for an extensive discussion and examples) that typically indicate an increase in valency (Boeder 1969; Lomashvili 2011; Nash 2020; Tuite, this volume). Among them, the versionizer *a-* is ambiguous between causative and locative applicative; see also Tuite (this volume); Creissels (to appear: Ch. 14), and consider example (2) below. The causative-applicative syncretism is found in some Uto-Aztecan languages (see Álvarez González and Estrada Fernández, this volume; Thornes on Numic, this volume; Harley 2017; Langacker 1977; Tuggy 1983) and in the isolate spoken in the Pacific Northwest, Ktunaxa (also known as Kutenai), as discussed by Gatchalian (submitted) and illustrated in examples (5) and (6) below. In the Yuman language Hualapai, the syncretic verbal marker encodes applicativization on transitive verbs and causativization on intransitive verbs (Peterson 2007: 64–66). This list is far from exhaustive, but it is genetically and areally quite diverse.

On the lumping approach, one that treats causativization and applicativization as different manifestations of the operation that adds a (non-subject) argument, causative-applicative syncretism is expected, as the two phenomena are different facets of adding an object and thus increasing valency; the interpretation of the applied object (its semantic role) is a separate process. If, however, the two processes are considered different, the causative-applicative syncretism is accidental and needs to be explained using some other tools.

An argument against the lumping approach comes from the observation that both syncretic and non-syncretic applicatives are robustly present worldwide and can even co-occur in the same language. Given this co-occurrence of patterns, one can propose the splitting approach to causatives and applicatives. Under this approach, we should distinguish between two kinds of phenomena: (i) those in which causatives and applicatives constitute two competing readings of one and the same structure (syncretism), and (ii) those in which the causatives and applicatives are alternative structures with their own conventionalized readings.³ The splitting approach is based on the tacit assumption that the addition of an object argument and its semantic-role assignment are parts of the same grammatical operation. I turn to this issue in the next section, 2.2, and also offer further considerations in Section 2.3.

² However, the markers for causative and applicative are different in Inuktitut and Kalaallisut (Michelle Yuan, p.c.).

³ I am grateful to Fernando Zúñiga for suggesting this alternative to me.

As we try to distinguish between these analytical alternatives, it is worth bearing in mind that the splitting approach is less economical and specifically requires that we make predictions as to where phenomenon (i) or phenomenon (ii) is expected. Overall, the choice between lumping and splitting leads to further questions, including the interpretation of the applied argument, which I will address in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

2.2 Syntactic objects versus bearers of semantic roles

In addition to the empirical arguments, which have to do with causative-applicative syncretism and the vagueness of the interpretation when it comes to the applied object, we should also consider a conceptual argument, one that relies on the separation of form and meaning. Adding an argument to a clause/verb is a purely morphosyntactic operation, one that increases the transitivity of a predicate or leads to the rearrangement of its arguments. What all the instances of this operation share is that the added argument in the applicative construction is not the subject (highest external argument). If we separate this operation from the operation of interpreting the applied object as the bearer of a particular semantic role, the syncretism between causativization and applicativization again becomes quite expected.

Next, we can account for cross-linguistic differences between languages whose applicative or causative markers are distinct and languages with syncretic markers in a straightforward manner. A morphological exponent can be specified only for its function as adding an argument without any reference to the semantic role of that argument; in other words, its only function is to signal that a new non-subject argument is added. This is the characterization of a GENERALIZED APPLICATIVE. In Section 2.3, I will introduce data from Wixárika whose verbal exponent *-ri(e)*, which can introduce either causees or beneficiaries/maleficiaries, occurs only with two-place verbs. This is an indication that its distribution is sensitive to the number of arguments in the base construction and not to their semantic interpretation. Numerous examples of such sensitivity to the number of arguments are found throughout this book, lending further support to the purely structural nature of generalized applicatives.

In contrast to a generalized applicative, a morphological exponent can be specified both morphosyntactically and semantically; in such a case, not only does it mark the addition of a new argument, it also signals the role of that argument: causee, beneficiary, source, instrument, location, or the like. Such a situation is also common across languages. For instance, in Hiaki (Uto-Aztecan), there are separate exponents that introduce the causee and the benefactive applicative, and these can co-occur:

- (1) Hiaki (Harley 2017: 12)

Maria uusi-ta aa ham-ta-ria-k.
 Maria child-ACC 3SG.ACC break-TR.CAUS-APPL-PRF
 ‘Maria broke it (made it break) for the child.’

Finally, we can also expect to find an applicative marker that specifies a semantic role of a clausal constituent without adding such a constituent as an object argument. In their chapter on applicatives in European languages, Zúñiga, Arkadiev, and Hegedűs (this volume) specifically note that in “some instances in English, German, and Hungarian, [applicatives] can be valency-neutral (or even valency-reducing, like with some *be*-verbs in German)”. Similarly, Toba (Qom) adds the applicative affix to the transitive base without increasing verbal valency (Censabella, this volume). More generally, the separation of semantic-role indexing from the valency-increasing function may be characteristic of X- or D-applicatives (per Z and C’s classification); an adpositional phrase (PP) becomes obligatory without turning into a syntactic object; hence, it is something like an obligatory adjunct. Distinguishing arguments from adjuncts is a difficult problem, and to determine whether a particular expression that does not look like a direct object is an argument or an adjunct, one needs to examine language-specific characteristics such as binding, scope, subextraction, and control.⁴

In sum, separating two functions of applicative exponents, namely, marking a particular semantic role and marking the general addition of an argument, allows for a more adequate typology of applicative encoding.⁵

2.3 The interpretation of the argument role under causative-applicative syncretism

Related to the syncretism of verbal marking that adds an object to the structure is the observation that there is often vagueness in the interpretation of the applied argument’s role. It can be interpreted as a causee, location, possession, comitative, experiencer, recipient, or source. Consider some examples. In Georgian, the applied object in the *α*-version can be interpreted either as a causee/location (Nash 2022) or as a causee/comitative-sociative (Nash 2020):⁶

⁴ We can also expect to see lexicalized applicatives where the use of an applicative marker on the verb is no longer associated with argument addition.

⁵ In formal accounts of applicatives, the co-occurrence of applicative markers is explained in terms of the structural dominance of individual functional heads and arguments introduced by these heads (among others, Pylkkänen 2000, 2008; Jung 2014; Harley 2017). This ordering is only partially related to the issue discussed in this section; it also bears on another issue: the hierarchical relation between the applied object and the base object.

⁶ See also Tuite (this volume), who characterizes locative applicative as superessive, and Creissels (to appear).

(2) Georgian (Nash 2022)

mzia-m txilamureb-i ertmanets mi-a-magr-a.
 Mzia-ERG skis-NOM each.other.DAT PRV-VERS-strong-AOR.3SG
 ‘Mzia made the skis stick together.’
 ‘Mzia fixed the skis to each other.’

In Korean, the dative object added by the generalized applicative *-I-*, which surfaces variously as *-i*, *-hi*, *-li*, or *-ki*, can be interpreted as adding either a causee or a location:⁷

(3) Korean (Kim 2009: 25)

emma-ka ai-eykey os-ul ppaliip-hi-ess-ta.
 mother-NOM child-DAT clothes-ACC wear-APPL-PST-DEC
 ‘Mother dressed the child (made the child wear clothes).’
 ‘Mother had the clothes put on the child.’

This generalized applicative cannot co-occur with the specialized benefactive applicative *-ecwu-*, which indicates that they compete for the same position in the verb structure:

(4) Korean (Jung 2014: 50)

**Yenghi-ka Chelswu-eykey ai-eykey chak-ul ilk-hi-ecwu-ess-ta.*
 Yenghi-NOM Chelswu-DAT child-DAT book-ACC read-APPL-APPL-PST-DEC
 (Intended: ‘Yenghi made Chelswu read the book for the child.’)

In Ktunaxa, an applied animate argument can be interpreted as a causee or a beneficiary/maleficiary, as shown in (5).⁸ Note that morphologically, there are two exponents: the suffix glossed as causative and the suffix *-t-*, which specifically marks the addition of an argument.⁹

(5) Ktunaxa (Gatchalian, submitted: Ex. [51a])

?ik-?i-t-ap-ni kanuhusnana.
 eat-CAUS-VAL-1SG.OBJ-IND apple
 ‘Someone made me eat the apple.’
 ‘Someone ate the apple on me.’

⁷ Glosses modified from the original.

⁸ Bella Coola (Salishan, western Canada) has similar generalized structures (Davis and Sanders 1997). The two languages are not related but areal similarities may also be behind the common use of generalized structures.

⁹ Ktunaxa also has an unambiguously applicative marker that adds a beneficiary (Gatchalian, submitted). Thus, there is a rich inventory of argument-increasing exponents in this language, which makes the observed causative-applicative syncretism even more remarkable.

- (6) Ktunaxa (Gatchalian, submitted: Ex. [51b])
mu=hun=hukup-ɕi-t-is-ni *kikil̥*
 PST=1SG.SBJ=be.cooked-CAUS-VAL-2SG.OBJ-IND food
 ‘I made you cook food.’
 ‘I cooked food for you.’

If nucleativization involves different operations, the ambiguity or vagueness of the interpretation associated with the applied object seems unexpected; in contrast, on the assumption that the applicative exponent simply adds an object, rather than an argument with a particular semantic role, such ambiguity is unsurprising.

Potential support for the interpretive vagueness of the applied object may also come from diachrony. For example, as observed by Petersen (2007: 135), parallel grammaticalization of the same verb ‘give’ in a causative periphrasis and in an applicative periphrasis may be a possible source of the applicative-causative syncretism.

If the causative and applicative marking are linked, as I propose here, we should expect the following diachronic developments:

- i. narrowing: generalized applicative marker turning into a more specialized marker of causative or of applicative
- ii. expansion: dedicated causative marker assuming the functions of a generalized applicative marker, or dedicated applicative marker assuming the functions of a generalized applicative marker

I am not aware of either diachronic development, which could be equally a sign of my ignorance or, in a more promising way, of an area in comparative linguistics that warrants further investigation.

Assuming the syncretism of causative and applicative marking, one wonders if it is possible to make predictions concerning the semantic role of the argument introduced by a generalized-applicative marker. As an illustration, let us consider the suffix *-ri(e)* in the Uto-Aztecan language Wixárika, also known as Huichol (Bierge 2017: 257 ff.). The main function of this suffix is to introduce a beneficiary, recipient, or maleficiary; based on the discussion and examples in Bierge (2017), these participants are always added to a two-place verb. In the following example, the applied beneficiary object is cross-referenced in verbal agreement, and this cross-referencing involves the non-subject exponent *mats*:

- (7) Wixárika (Bierge 2017: 258)
pini ne-mats-u-ti-wewi-rie.
 dress 1SG.SBJ-2SG.NSBJ-VIS-PL-make-APPL.INCOMPL
 ‘I made you a dress.’

On the other hand, the same affix *-ri(e)* is also used to introduce a causee; consider (8), where the causee is cross-referenced in the verb by the same type of non-subject

marker as in (7) (the persons are different) and the verb is again transitive, with the inanimate base object:

(8) Wixárika (Bierge 2017: 261)

haa me-nets-u-xi-ri-ri-xi.

water 3PL.SBJ-1SG.NSBJ-VIS-heat-RES.COMPL-APPL.COMPL-PFV

‘They made me boil water.’

It is worth noting that the two variants of the applicative affix differ in their aspectual value, with the true applicative being associated with incomplete aspect or possibly lack of telicity, and the causative *-ri(e)* being associated with completive aspect/telicity. At this juncture, it is unclear how strong these correlations are for Wixárika, but they do not seem to be limited to that single language.

In the analysis couched in terms of Cognitive Grammar, Tuggy (1983) makes a connection between the choice of the causative or applicative meaning and aspect.¹⁰ To paraphrase his analysis, if the semantics of the affixal predicate represents and emphasizes the end result of an event, the polysemous suffix is interpreted as causative, and the argument introduced by the generalized applicative is interpreted as causee. This causee is viewed as the Ground (topic), and the eventuality is its Figure, and this emphasis on the outcome of the event is tied to the telic interpretation.¹¹ Conversely, if the representation of the affixal predicate emphasizes the process, the polysemous suffix is likely to be interpreted as applicative; the argument added by the generalized applicative is interpreted as Figure, and the eventuality corresponds to Ground. The outcome is less likely, which explains the atelic nature of the event or at least the lack of specification in terms of telicity.

Based on these preliminary observations, causativization is partially correlated with telicity, and applicativization is either free of such correlation or is partially correlated with a lack of telicity. If this is on the right track, the two interpretations are in a privative opposition, where the values for the causatives are more specified. On this interpretation of the data (which need to be probed further), causative-applicative syncretism is more predictable; the choice of the causative interpretation is specified, and the applicative interpretation is a sort of elsewhere condition.

¹⁰ Z and C also note possible correlations between applicativization and aspect or manner (see § 1.2.2 of their chapter) but tend to consider them only under the rubric of lexicalized applicatives.

¹¹ See Talmy (1978; 2000: Ch. 5), Langacker (1993) on the notions of Figure and Ground.

2.4 How agentive is the causee?

Z and C's rationale for separating causativization from applicativization may stem from the need to maintain the non-agentive interpretation of the applied object; a causee on the other hand is agentive, interpreted as S or A. But is this distinction so strong that it forces us to consider the process of causativization to be completely separate from applicativization? Causatives constitute a broad set of constructions, of course — consider the distinction between *faire*-infinitif and *faire-par* causatives in Romance (Folli and Harley 2007; Ippolito 2000; Kayne 1975, among others);¹² the discussion below only relates to the former type.

First, there is a subset of causees that have fewer agentive properties than the prototypical external argument. This lack or deficiency of agentive properties has been noted, in particular, with respect to causatives of verbs of cognition and perception (whose subject is not agentive to begin with and is likely to be interpreted as experiencer). If a generalized applicative adds such an argument as causee, it is hard to tell it apart from other types of recipients, and assigning it the agentive interpretation is problematic.

Going beyond the experiencer subtype, many discussions of causative constructions suggest that a causee is inherently less agentive than a prototypical agent/causer; after all, the event in which the causee appears as S or A is instigated by another participant, and causee may share properties with a comitative or patient (e.g., Bisang 2006; Dowty 1991; Gerdts 2003; Nash 2020; Shibatani and Pardeshi 2002; Wali 1981, to name a few).

In particular, causees in causatives of transitives are often interpreted as being similar to the instrument, comitative, or associate argument; consider the discussion of “sociative causatives” by Shibatani and Pardeshi (2002). This is not surprising, and there are at least two considerations related to this ambiguity of the causee role. First, causer-related causation already includes the external argument, whose semantic role is identified as the external initiator of the caused event. The causee is not acting fully on its own volition; rather, the initial motivation for the event comes from the causer, and the causee is more of an “associate”. This is related to the second consideration, one that has to do with the decomposition of semantic roles into proto-properties (Dowty 1991). Among other properties, a prototypical agent causes an event or change of state in another participant, whereas a prototypical patient is causally affected by another participant (Dowty 1991:572). In causative constructions, the causee is construed as affected by the causer, which can lead to de-agentivization of the former.

¹² The two types of causatives differ in a number of ways, including the encoding of causee (the causee of a transitive embedded verb is marked with dative case in *faire*-infinitif and by a preposition in *faire-par* causative) and the omission of causee (it can only be omitted from *faire-par* causatives); see Folli and Harley (2007), Kayne (1975) for a detailed list of differences.

As noted by Kittilä (2013: 126; see also Kittilä 2009),

the result of causation is a division of agentive features, but the degree of ‘overall agency’ is maintained. Because the original agent—the causee in the caused event—is made to act by an external causer, causation deprives it of certain agentive features and makes it more patient-like. . . . The participant in question is somehow affected by the event it partakes in, which is also manifested in case marking.

If we accept that causees are less agentive than prototypical agents, that removes the original consideration for treating causativization as a separate process of nucleativization by Z and C. And in fact, considering causatives in the context of applicatives may allow us to better understand the properties of a subset of causees.

3 Overt marking of the predicate in the applicative construction

3.1 Types of applicative markers

Another criterial feature of applicativization has to do with overt marking of the applicative on the predicate of the applicative construction. In their chapter, Z and C distinguish four ways in which the predicate of the base construction can differ from the predicate of the applicative construction (see Table 1 in Z and C’s chapter); I have slightly modified their wording:

Table 1: Morphological valency alternation types (after Z and C).

	Overt voice marking on the predicate	No overt voice marking on the predicate
Asymmetrical	Applicative overtly marked compared to the base predicate	—
Symmetrical	Both base and applicative predicate overtly marked	Labile verbs

For Z and C, it is crucial that the applicative predicate show greater morphological complexity than the base predicate (asymmetrical overt marking). This is an important observation, one that implicitly reflects the diachronic sources of applicativization, which often arises either (i) when an adposition or case marker is incorporated into a verb¹³

¹³ The synchronic presence of adpositions in a given language is irrelevant for this process, as an adposition may have been reanalyzed into an applicative marker on the verb at prior stages of the history of

or (ii) when a verb in a serial verb construction gets reanalyzed as an applicative morpheme (see Censabella, this volume, for the latter grammaticalization route). As evidence of these routes to applicativization, the same or similar exponents can coexist in a single language as applicative morphemes and adpositions. As an example, consider Amberer (this volume) on what he analyzes as the prepositions *la-* and *ba-* and applicative markers *ll* and *bb* observed in Amharic. This transparent correspondence between prepositions and applicative markers may be an instantiation of diachronic path (i) in that language. Likewise, applicatives in Northwest Caucasian languages, which make wide use of the D-type (meaning dative-like), are typically analyzed as predicates that incorporate an adposition and an agreement marker attached to it (see Letuchiy 2007; O’Herin 2001).¹⁴ (Note, however, Arkadiev, Lander, and Bagirokova, this volume, who discuss non-adpositional sources of applicatives.)

In principle, the distinction between applicative markers that trace their parentage from adpositions and those that derive from grammaticalized verbs in serial verb constructions should be relatively straightforward — as long as we are not dealing with morphologically impoverished languages where distinguishing between lexical categories takes more work. Polynesian languages are a good case in point. In a number of these languages, the instrumental/applicative marker *Caki* coexists with the preposition (*ʻaki*). Researchers are divided on the analysis of this marker, some analyzing it as a preposition incorporated into the predicate (e.g., Massam 1998, 2009, 2020), others considering it a verb (Ball 2008). The case of Tongan applicatives considered in detail by Ball (2008) is particularly instructive. An ergative language, Tongan has three types of constructions with the instrumental expression: the base construction with a prepositional instrumental phrase, as in (9a); the applicative construction whose predicate is overtly marked by *ʻaki*, exemplified by (9b); and the so-called double construction, where *ʻaki* appears twice, shown in (9c):¹⁵

(9) Tongan (Sisilia Lutui, p.c.)

- a. *Naʻe tofi ʻe he fafine ʻa e mā ʻaki*
 PST cut ERG DET woman ABS DET bread INS
 ʻa e *hele*.
 ABS DET knife
 ‘The woman cut (the) bread with the knife.’

that language. The development of applicative markers from adpositions has been extensively discussed in analyses of Bantu (see, among others, Creissels, this volume; Pacchiarotti, this volume; Baker 1988; Nakamura 1997; Buell 2003, 2004; den Dikken 2023).

14 For other sources of applicative marking, see Peterson (2007), Creissels (to appear).

15 The examples here are similar to those used in Ball (2008: 315–319) but instead of proper names, I use two common nouns.

- b. *Na'e tofi 'aki 'e he fafine 'a e hele*
 PST cut INS.APPL ERG DET woman ABS DET knife
'a e mā.
 ABS DET bread
 'The woman cut (the) bread with the knife.'
- c. *Na'e tofi 'aki 'e he fafine 'a e mā 'aki*
 PST cut INS.APPL ERG DET woman ABS DET bread INS
'a e hele.
 ABS DET knife
 'The woman cut (the) bread with the knife.'

With respect to examples such as (9b), Ball (2008: 319) writes:

The term applicative '*aki* construction for [(9b)] is due to the fact that it resembles applicatives in other languages. This construction has an applicative marker close to the verb. . . , and there is an added core argument, the instrument.

As Ball shows, '*aki* does not pattern with other Tongan prepositions, though. First of all, its complement appears in the absolutive (see [9a] and [9c]), which is unusual of prepositions in general and of Tongan prepositions in particular. In addition to its argument realization, '*aki* patterns with verbs based on its co-occurrence with conjunctions, various kinds of morphological alternations, and its co-occurrence with negation (Ball 2008: 321–327). On the other hand, unlike regular Tongan verbs, '*aki* cannot be transitivized or causativized (Ball 2008: 327–330). It appears closer to a grammaticized serial verb than a preposition, thus instantiating diachronic route (ii) toward applicativization mentioned above. At the same time, this discussion is intended to demonstrate that careful distributional analysis is needed to reach one conclusion or the other in each particular case. Assuming that '*aki* is synchronically an applicative marker, one can hypothesize that the applicative argument in (9b) corresponds to P-applicatives in Z and C's classification, while the double construction (9c) creates an interesting challenge for their classification: the verb is marked as applicative but the instrumental marker does not change. Based on the discussion in Ball's work (2008), the prepositional instrument in the double '*aki* construction in (9c) has properties of an oblique object, while the applied instrument in (9b) has direct object properties. So we are left with the open question of what criteria of applicativization to use in accounting for the double construction.

To wrap up the discussion of pathways to applicative marking (including the diachrony of such marking), it is worth noting that the incorporation of adpositions/case markers and reanalysis of serial/secondary verbs may both be available within a single language, as these two routes are not mutually exclusive. If so, a question may arise, one for future research, as to which semantic roles associated with applied arguments are more likely to be introduced by adpositions, and which by serial/secondary verbs.

3.2 Dedicated applicative marker on the verb?

So far, I have been discussing the privative opposition that Z and C posit for true applicatives: the verb in the base construction is not marked, but the one in the applicative construction is. (The equipollent marking, where the base verb and the applicative verb are marked in different ways, is something that Z and C set aside. I will not pursue it further, especially since there are no attested cases of the equipollent marking in transitives and applicatives.)

Two other issues that I would like to address have to do with inconsistent applicative marking and the role of agreement as applicative marking. With respect to the former, one can imagine that applicative marking may occur on a subset of verbs but not on others, thus leading to what may be called “masked applicativization”. As Dixon (2012: 301) states, some applicative derivations are found only with a subset of verbs, and it may well be that the overt applicative marker simply alternates with a silent one. I will return to this issue in Section 4, as I discuss some Tswana examples.

The other question raised by Z and C’s classification that is worth addressing has to do with the role of agreement as applicative marking. On the current classification, Z and C consider only those predicates that are overtly marked to be true applicatives. But the Tongan example shows that it is not always clear what the nature of the applicative marker is synchronically. In principle, valency alternations, of which applicativization is one type of instantiation, can be marked in a number of ways: via a dedicated verbal exponent, as in Z and C’s definition, via the indexing of verbal arguments (agreement, cliticization), via the incorporation of the internal argument (I will not discuss this last strategy here).

Finally, one may expect that the verbs in the base construction and the applicative construction are equally unmarked, that is, lacking an overt affix that sets them apart. The difference between the base and the applicative construction in such a case is solely determined by three-way comparisons: (i) between the base object and the applied object, (ii) between the object-like argument and a PP, and (iii) between the presence and absence of object (primarily in case of applicatives of intransitives). On such an approach, any construction that includes a dative/accusative argument could count as applicative (see Marantz 1993 for such a view). The downside is that we then lose the contrast between true ditransitives and applicative ditransitives, whose respective dative/accusative arguments do not always have the same properties (see, for example, Landau 1999). Further still, languages with the so-called symmetrical ditransitives (where the two objects behave alike in tests like passivization, pronominalization, scope, or sub-extraction) can vary in symmetry depending on the combination of semantic roles or subtypes of applicatives (see van der Wal 2017 for an insightful discussion and further references).

I will set aside the case where there is no marking whatsoever distinguishing applicative verbs from base verbs; doing so brings the position discussed here closer to that of Z and C and also allows me to flag the issues of “masked applicativization” and

“flexible symmetry”, in van der Wal’s terms. But I would like to offer some considerations on the requirement that the applicative-construction predicate have a dedicated applicative marking, as I find this requirement unnecessarily stringent.

Imagine a situation where the verb is not marked for applicativization but the added applied argument triggers agreement on the predicate; thus, the agreement patterns could look like this (Table 2):

Table 2: Agreement in base and applicative constructions.

	Base construction	Applicative construction
Agreement with only one object	Agreement with base object	Agreement with applied object
Multiple agreement	Agreement with base object(s)	Agreement with base and applied object

All it takes to separate the privative marking of applicativization from marking applicativization by agreement alone is the applicative marker being null. Amharic, which I already mentioned above, may illustrate the case in point, if we assume the analysis by Baker and Kramer (Kramer and Baker 2013; Baker and Kramer 2014), who argue that Amharic applicatives are marked on the verb by a unitary morpheme, which consists of a case marker plus a non-subject agreement marker of gender, number, and person. The evidence in support of this analysis comes from morphosyntactic properties of the applicative marker, which it shares with the regular object-agreement marker; namely, in clauses that contain both a main verb and an auxiliary verb, such an agreement marker attaches to the main verb; there can only be one non-subject agreement marker, and the object agreement marker and the applicative marker cannot co-occur, indicating that they compete for the same position. Applicative agreement, like regular object agreement, is possible only with semantically specific noun phrases and induces a semantic interpretation of emphasis. All these empirical observations suggest that Amharic may actually instantiate applicativization with agreement and no special marking; depending on how strictly one would like to apply Z and C’s marking criteria, the Amharic applicative may either be banished to the land of lookalikes or be used to expand the proposed typological classification. Verbal applicatives in Cushitic, discussed by Vanhove (this volume), also seem to be indexed by verbal agreement.

Cliticization may be another sign of an applicative construction, and it may again occur in the absence of dedicated applicative marking on the verb. For example, in Romanian, the beneficiary of a transitive can appear in the dative form either when it is cross-referenced by the clitic on the verb, or not, as shown in (10a) and (10b), respectively. Only when the recipient/beneficiary is cross-referenced by the clitic on the verb, as in (10a), does it have the properties of an argument, and it is structurally higher than the direct object, which is manifested in a number of morphosyntactic properties such as binding or scope (Diaconescu and Rivero 2007).

(10) Romanian (Cornilescu 2020: 123)

- a. *Mama le=a copt prăjituri copiilor.*
 mother.DEF 3PL.DAT=has baked cakes children.DEF.DAT
 ‘Mother has baked the children cakes.’
- b. *Mama a copt prăjituri copiilor.*
 mother.DEF has baked cakes children.DEF.DAT
 ‘Mother has baked cakes for the children.’

These empirical data suggest that in addition to dedicated applicative marking, the difference between base and applicative constructions can also be diagnosed by systematic differences in agreement and cliticization.

I will return to the relevance of dedicated applicative marking in the next section, where I address possible sources of the applied object.

4 Applied objects: Their source and structural size

In setting up the distinction between high and low applicatives, Pylkkänen (2000, 2008) argues that in high applicatives, the applied object stands in a relation to the entire event denoted by the predicate, whereas in the low type, the relationship between the applied and base objects is that of possession or inclusion. Setting aside the implementation of such an idea (theoretical models can differ widely), we still have a valid empirical observation: the referents of the two objects form a tight relation, which can be described as possession or a part–whole relation. Assuming that the referent of the base object denotes a possessed entity, the referent of the applied object can receive that entity (hence it can be goal, recipient, or beneficiary), be affected by the loss of that entity (malefactive, source), or stand in static possession of that entity (location, possessor).¹⁶ Given the tight relation between the referent of the base object and the referent of the applied object, it is not surprising to find an alternation between a possessor, which is a subconstituent inside a noun phrase denoting the base object, and a free-standing applied object. The former is present in the base construction, while the latter is found in the applicative construction.

Alternations of this kind (as well as the alternation between a possessor of S/A and a free-standing argument) are known in the linguistic literature under different terms. EXTERNAL POSSESSION is a common, and also theory-neutral term: a nominal is syntactically expressed as a dependent of a verb but is semantically understood as the posses-

¹⁶ The instrument and comitative can also be interpreted as being part of the possession/inclusion relation as long as this relation is construed as spatial, involving proximity between the two entities (see Landau 1999; 2007).

sor of one of its co-arguments in a clause (Deal 2017).¹⁷ POSSESSOR RAISING (or possessor ascension, a term that goes back to Relational Grammar) is one of the most common analyses of external possession. The idea is that the applied argument originates as a genuine possessor in one of the verbal arguments and then gets “promoted” (raised, advanced) to an independent argument position. The argument position may be that of subject (subject possessor raising) or that of object (object possessor raising). Such promotion may or may not be accompanied by special marking on the verb, and the case of the raised possessor can vary accordingly.

In their definition of applicativization, Z and C include the criterion according to which the applicative expression “either requires a non-core coding different from its coding in the [applicative construction] or cannot be expressed at all in the [base construction]”. The way I understand this definition, it allows for object possessor raising as a type of applicativization, because the possessor in the base construction appears in “non-core coding”. If one were to exclude external possession from the range of applicative constructions, the definition proposed by Z and C would have to be modified to exclude expressions that do not originate as verbal co-arguments.

The connection between external possession and applicativization is reinforced by the observation that quite a few languages use the same verbal exponent (if any) to mark genuine applicatives and external possessors. For instance, in Chickasaw, the addition of a dative argument is indexed by what seems to be the generalized applicative prefix on the verb (glossed as III in the literature on Muskogean), and this marker accompanies regular possessor raising and beneficiary applied objects. Thus, example (11) is ambiguous:

- (11) Chickasaw (Munro 1984: 640)
hattak-at iho-a chipota i-sho'ka-tok.
 man-SBJ woman-NSBJ child APPL-kiss-PST
 ‘The man kissed the woman’s child.’
 ‘The man kissed the child for the woman’s benefit.’

Thus, it may be desirable to include subcases of external possession under the rubric of applicativization. Adopting the classification of applied objects proposed by Z and C, and following their desideratum that the verb be marked, we can expect exter-

17 Creissels (to appear: Ch. 13), following Van de Velde (2020), proposes replacing the notion of an external possession construction with that of a concernee–concern construction, one that is broader in scope:

Two NPs in the construction of the same verb form a concernee–concern construction if the involvement of the referent of one of them (the concern) in the event denoted by the verb is determined by its syntactic role in the construction of the verb, whereas the involvement of the referent of the other one (the concernee) is simply a consequence of a relationship it has with the concern independently of the particular event referred to.

nal possessors qua applied objects to be encoded as D-applicatives (i.e., dative-like) or P-applicatives (i.e., preposition-like), and this applicativization is likely to be optional.

The Chickasaw example has an overt applicative marker, but what happens when such a marker is present only on some occasions? This issue goes back to the discussion that I started in Section 3.2. How does the on-off applicative marking interact with the requirement proposed by Z and C that having an applicative marker on the verb is a necessary condition on applicativization? Consider the Bantu language Tswana, which is featured prominently in this collection (see the chapter by Creissels, and also the chapters by Pacchiarotti and by Z and C). In Tswana, the construction with an external object possessor appears without verbal marking if the relationship between the base and applied object is part-whole or inalienable possession, but includes applicative marking in all other cases of external possession (Creissels, this volume; Creissels to appear: Ch. 14). Compare the following pair:

(12) Tswana (Creissels to appear: Ch. 14)

- a. *kì-rém-i-lé* *sí-t^hàrì* *dì-kà:là*.
 1SG.S/A-chop-PRF-FV SG-tree.CL17 PL-branch.CL10
 ‘I chopped (the) branches off the tree.’ (part-whole possession, no applicative marking on the verb)
- b. *Mp^hó* *’ó-dǝ-éts-í* *’kítsó* *dí-nà:wá*.
 Mpho(CL1) 1s/A.CL1-eat-APPL-PRF-FV Kitso(CL1) PL-beans(CL10)
 ‘Mpho ate Kiso’s beans.’ (alienable possession, applicative marking on the verb necessary)

It appears that when such verb-marking alternations are present in a language, it makes sense to group the entire construction under a single category — but that in turn makes one revisit the requirement of a dedicated applicative marker on the verb as a necessary condition on applicativization (see also the discussion in § 3.2).

So far, the examples I have discussed in this section showcased what applicatives are supposed to do: add an applied argument. However, the connection with possessors opens up another dimension of typological variation: a decrease in valency where the argument that could appear as an applied object is coded as the possessor of an internal argument. This anti-applicativization is found in Mayan languages where the beneficiary, recipient, and sometimes locative and source are expressed as possessors.

Details vary, but in broad strokes, the generalization for several Mayan languages is that prepositions introducing indirect arguments cannot combine with pronouns (nor can they combine with some nominals with determiners), which suggests that they take nominals of reduced structure (Pleshak 2022). As a consequence of the restriction against preposition-pronoun combinations, there are two ways of introducing pronouns into clausal structure: (i) as direct arguments (P-applicatives in Z and C’s terminology) or (ii) as possessors, which means that they are treated as a subconstituent of another argument. The former strategy is found, for example, in Tsotsil, where first- or second-per-

son pronouns in the indirect object position must be expressed as the primary object (see Aissen 1983, 1987; Pye 2007; Montgomery-Anderson, this volume). For instance, in (13), 'for me' cannot be expressed as a PP and instead becomes an applied argument in the absolutive, such that the verb agrees with it (see 1SG.ABS exponent before the root); the base object 'my children' is not referenced on the verb at all.

- (13) Tsotsil (after Aissen 1987: 181, 205)

L-i-s-k'el-be-ik *j-ch'amaltak* *li* *Xune.*
ASP-1SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-watch-APPL-PL 1SG.POSS-children DET Juan
'Juan watched my children for me.'

Strategy (ii), which can be characterized as anti-applicativization, is illustrated by Q'anjob'al where the first/second person pronouns cannot occur with prepositions introducing indirect objects or as complements of relational nouns. Consider the contrast in the examples in (14). In (14a), the indirect object is a third-person referent, expressed by male or female classifiers *naq* and *ix* respectively, and these classifiers can be complements of a preposition; as (14b) shows, the first-person pronoun cannot occur in this complement position and is instead expressed as the possessor of the noun 'food', hence 'my food' (14c).

- (14) Q'anjob'al (Pedro Mateo Pedro, p.c.)

- a. *Hoq-Ø* *y-aq* *xim* *loy* *b'ay* *naq/ix*.
 POT-3SG.ABS 3SG.ERG-give CLF food to CLF[MALE]/CLF[FEMALE]
 'S/he will give food to him/her.'
- b. **Hoq-Ø* *y-aq* *xim* *loy* *b'ay* *ahim*.
 POT-3SG.ABS 3SG.ERG-give CLF food to 1SG
 (Intended: 'S/he will give me food.')
- c. *Hoq-Ø* *y-aq* *hin-lob'ej*.
 POT-3SG.ABS 3SG.ERG-give 1SG.POSS-food
 'S/he will give me food.' (Lit. 'S/he will give my food.')

I would like to underscore that anti-applicativization involves only a subset of arguments (personal pronouns in case of Mayan languages), yet its presence is another indication that possessors (or more broadly speaking, concernees) should be included in considerations of applicatives. Another take-home message from the Mayan data is that in considering the possible roles of applied arguments (comitatives, instruments, sources, beneficiaries, possessors) we should also be cognizant of structural constraints on direct and indirect complements occurring in a clause, in particular: can these complements be expressed by pronouns, determiners, proper nouns, or just common nouns.

5 Conclusions

This chapter builds on the overview of applicative constructions presented by Z and C and proposes some refinements to their definition of the construction. Their operational definition includes three criterial properties: (i) applicativization alters the status of non-agentive/non-subject arguments; (ii) the predicate in the applicative construction has overt morphological marking that sets it apart from the base-construction predicate; and (iii) the applied phrase is “a noun phrase in a role other than S or A, . . . which refers to a participant that either requires a non-core coding different from its coding in the AC or cannot be expressed at all in the BC”.

While generally in agreement with these criteria, I have proposed some adjustments to these criterial properties. In particular, with respect to the non-A/S status of the applied argument, I have suggested combining applicativization and causativization, the two processes of nucleativization that Z and C treat as separate. While distinct applicativization and causativization are found in a number of languages, quite a few unrelated languages have generalized applicatives, ones that allow for causative-applicative syncretism.

The typological options we can anticipate depend on the way lines are drawn between two functions: the introduction of an object argument and the identification of the semantic role associated with that argument. The former function is carried by generalized applicatives (which can also be called unspecified nucleatives, following Z and C’s terminology). The identification of a particular semantic role associated with the applied object leads to the separation of applicativization and causativization.

Generalized and specialized applicatives can co-exist within a single language. Thus, the morphology of applicativization can range from syncretism (generalized applicatives) to what can be called extreme anti-syncretism whereby semantically different types of applicatives (benefactive, instrumental, locative, etc.) are marked distinctly. The question remains whether or not we should follow morphological marking, in which case the syncretic and non-syncretic options are to be held separate? On this approach, which can be thought of as “splitting”, the crucial assumption is that the two functions, that of adding an argument and that of interpreting it, are inexorably linked.

An alternative approach, which can be called “lumping”, relies on the assumption that grammar allows us to add an argument; the interpretation of that argument can vary widely, and we should not expect a one-to-one match between form and meaning.¹⁸ This is the approach I have advocated in this chapter. On this approach, the starting point is whether the operation in question adds an object to the syntactic structure. If the answer to this question is affirmative, the next question is whether or not the

¹⁸ See also Arkadiev and Letuchiy (2021: 507 ff.) for this option and the discussion of its cross-linguistic distribution.

semantic role of the added object is (fully) specified. If yes, we get a distinction between causatives and applicatives, with possible further distinctions within applicatives. If the role of the applied object is not specified, then we can speak of a generalized applicative. If no syntactic applied object is added, the construction is not applicative whatsoever but may allow for what Z and C refer to as X-applicatives. The chart in Table 3 illustrates the criteria for the lumping approach and the results this approach predicts.

Table 3: Separating the functions of argument addition and semantic-role marking.

	Object argument added	No new argument added
Role of applied argument specified	Applicative, causative	X-applicatives, D-applicatives
Role of applied argument not specified	Generalized applicative	

The recognition of the causative-applicative syncretism raises at least two questions that I would like to flag here. The first has to do with agentivity of the causee role. Z and C's rationale for separating causativization from applicativization may stem from the need to maintain the non-agentive interpretation of the applied object; causee on the other hand is agentive, interpreted as S or A. At the same time, many discussions of causative constructions suggest that the causee role is inherently less agentive than that of a prototypical agent/causer; after all, the event in which causee appears as S or A is instigated by another participant, and causee may share properties with a comitative or patient. Considering causatives in the context of applicatives may allow us to better understand the properties of causees.

The second question has to do with the predictability of a particular interpretation when a generalized applicative is used. In some languages, the choice of the causative vs. applicative interpretation is lexically determined, being associated with a particular verb or subclass of verbs. Cataloguing lexical restrictions is an important empirical task. In some other languages, one and the same verb can receive the causative or applicative interpretation, and factors that determine the choice of a particular interpretation are yet to be understood.

Turning to the overt morphological marking of applicatives, we observe that the applicative exponent on predicates may not always show up even within a single language; it can be present only on some predicates but not on others. Furthermore, we find that it is sometimes difficult to separate verbal exponents with a non-applicative function from those that are specifically intended to mark applicatives. Finally, giving equal weight to property (ii) on par with the other properties runs the risk of missing some data from morphologically impoverished languages. Thus, the question of the overt marking that signals applicativization on predicates may need more scrutiny.

With respect to the status of the applied argument in the base construction —criterial property (iii) mentioned above—, my proposal is to include constructions with an external object possessor (object possessor raising constructions) in the range of applicatives. Such constructions often have the same verb marking as applicative constructions proper. Including external possessors among applied objects also captures the observation that the referents of the original (base) and applied object are understood to be in a semantic relationship that resembles possession or inclusion.

Abbreviations

ABS	absolute
AOR	aorist
APPL	applicative
CAUS	causative
CL	noun class
CLF	classifier
COMPL	completive
DAT	dative
DEC	declarative
DET	determiner
ERG	ergative
FV	final vowel
INCOMPL	incompletive
IND	indicative
INS	instrument(al)
NOM	nominative
NSBJ	non-subject
OBJ	object
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
POT	potential
PRV	preverb
PST	past
RES	resultative
SBJ	subject
SG	singular
VAL	valency morpheme
VERS	versionizer
VIS	visible / speaker's area

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