

We focus on a construction gone, to our knowledge, largely overlooked in the literature, though it has key implications for the study of argument structure and verb formation/derivation. This object-less causative (I(ntransitive)C) (1) has a subject (inanimate entity) interpreted as cause of a potential change-of-state [COS] with semantically and syntactically unrealized *undergoer*.

- (1). a. *Smoking kills.* b. *Bleach disinfects.* c. *Alcohol dehydrates.* d. *Rice constipates.*  
 e. *Shaving creams irritate.* f. *Sunlight oxidizes and discolors.* g. *Normal dryers wrinkle.*  
 (2). a. *Fumar mata.* b. *La lejía desinfecta.* c. *El alcohol deshidrata.* d. *El arroz estriñe.*  
 e. *Las cremas de afeitador irritan.* f. *La luz solar oxida y destiñe.* g. *Las secadoras arrugan.*

ICs challenge major generalizations: namely, **(a)** the widely-shared assumption that the internal argument is a *constant/invariable* constituent in the causative alternation (Hale&Keyser 2002 *i.a.*); **(b)** the prediction that unique arguments in COS verbs are by default interpreted as themes (i.e. *Default Linking Rule* [DLR], Levin&Rappaport 2005). ICs show that a defective *cause* interpretation of unique arguments in causative verbs is possible/natural. While similar variants are attested in Romance (2) and Greek (Alexiadou 2014; M. Rasia 2018), and even if not fully (freely) productive, English shows systematic patterns deserving to be explored. **E.g., we note:**

**1. CROSS-LANGUAGE CONSISTENCIES** setting ICs apart (as a sufficiently different construction)

**A.** ICs pattern as **stative** (individual-level (ILP)) predications. ICs cannot appear in perception reports (3), be located in space (4), license habitual readings (5), are odd in *what-x-did* frames (6) and contexts forcing eventive reading (7); modals give epistemic (not deontic) readings (8).

(3). *#I saw smoking kill.* (vs. *I saw John kill Tom*) (see Maienborn 2005, Rothmayr 2007)

(4). *#Shaving creams irritate in the bathroom.*

(5). *Smoking (#regularly) kills.* (vs. *John (regularly) kills animals*)

(6). *#What alcohol did was dehydrate.*

(7). *#What happened was that rice constipated.*

(8). *Smoking must kill.* (<sup>OK</sup>Smoking probably has property x | <sup>#</sup>It is under obligation to kill)

**B.** Consonant with stativity, restriction to **generic tenses** (shared with middles) is nontrivial (cf. *\*Smoking killed/#Alcohol dehydrated/#Shaving creams irritated*). Still, ICs are different from middles as the sole DP is not an internal but an external argument: the property is not attributed to the *undergoer*, but to the *cause*. Yet, like middles, ICs do not entail a deontic reading, but report a property of the subject (cf. Lekakou 2005 *dispositional generic*). A similar contrast obtains between ICs and Levin's intransitives given by Null/Unspecified Object Alternation (9)c, in line with data (11)-(13), supporting a distinct (non-Null/Arb object) structure.

(9). a. *He helps homeless people.*

b. *Chromic acid burns (that is why it has never been used yet).*

c. *This dog bites (#but it hasn't bitten anybody yet).* (pro-Arb Object Altern., Levin 1993)

**C.** The distinct meaning of ICs reflects the definition of **dispositional causation** *qua* a predicate that relates a disposer *y* (holder of a property), a dispositional state *e*, a manifestation *e'*, and a (non-episodic) eventuality description *p*. This captures consequent restrictions noted in ICs (e.h. subject must have the relevant property to produce COS associated with the verb, Fara 2001).

(10). *Dispositional causation: (a) y is the holder of e, (b) e is a state that directly causes e' ceteris paribus, (c) e' instantiates p (d) y is disposed toward p.* (Copley 2018: 13)

**CROSS-LANGUAGE ASYMMETRIES** in productivity **A.** Specific constraints: In Romance, a set of COS verbs (like *break*) systematically fail to yield ICs. Apparently, the externally-caused COS verbs factor into two classes wrt structures allowed: while COS verbs like (1) allow (stative) eventualities brought about by an inherent property of the causer, verbs like *break/destroy* resist such eventualities (*\*These roots break/\*Earthquakes destroy*). Non-productive IC verbs seem to line up with core internally-caused COS (ICO) verbs (Levin&Rappaport 1995), insofar as the eventuality denoted comes about as a consequence of an internal property of the **internal argument (COS undergoer)**. As in ICs potential to exert COS lies in the **causer**, and no theme

