ARGUMENT STRUCTURE OR EVENT STRUCTURE?
– THE CASE OF JAPANESE AND KOREAN CAUSATIVES –

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Since the time of the generative semantics controversy in the 70’s, studies of Japanese causative constructions have yielded particularly interesting results concerning the argument structure and grammatical relations of morphological causative constructions. In particular, the scope of adverbial modification and the reflexive construal phenomenon have presented compelling evidence that productive morphological causative constructions involve a complex embedding underlying structure with two distinct subjects despite their simplex surface structure with a single subject nominal. The evidence from reflexive construal has been especially convincing for the bi-clausal analysis of morphological causatives, for it unambiguously refers to a syntactic fact, namely, the relationship between the grammatical relation of subject and the reflexive anaphor.

This presentation attempts a critical reassessment of the past evidence in light of a comparative study of causative constructions in Japanese and Korean, which together cover the entire spectrum of causative type, ranging from lexical to periphrastic constructions with morphological causatives of varying degrees of productivity in between. The results indicate that there is no uniform correspondence between form and syntactic fact. Rather, the relevant syntactic evidence responds to different kinds of event structure more abstract than syntactic argument structure. Especially significant is the situation where a factor not representable in syntactic terms holds a crucial key in the interpretation of the reflexive anaphor. A new reflexive-construal rule is offered that obviates the need to posit bi-clausal underlying syntactic structures for morphological causatives.