

# Argument structure and causativization in Tamazight Berber<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*Affixally-mediated verb causativization in Berber is analyzed as involving a lexical morphological word formation process, whereby the lexical conceptual structure of a base verb merges with that of the causative prefix ss- creating a morphologically and semantically complex derived verb with the syntactic properties and argument structure of a simple verb. This approach is shown to provide a reasonable basis for explaining various restrictions on causativization that have been recognized in previous work on Berber. The fact that a limited, semantically characterizable class of transitive bases can undergo ss- causativization is attributed to a thematic constraint on the dative preposition that provides Case to a second direct internal argument. The failure of ss- affixation with intransitive bases that have morphologically simple causative counterparts is attributed to a version of Aronoff's (1976) blocking constraint on word formation rules. The impossibility of causativized passive verb forms is shown to follow from the syntactic atomicity of causativized verbs in conjunction with standard government-binding theory assumptions concerning passivization. Drawing on evidence from the causativization of a certain class of psych verbs and the interaction of causativization with noun formation and anti-causativization, the proposed approach is argued to be preferable to a syntactic derivation or verb incorporation approach of the sort advocated in Baker (1988) and Li (1990).*

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