

11. Sentences with a Dynamic Resultant Sentence

Summary

A transitive sentence can be constructed whose resultant sentence is that an agent or instrument engages or does not engage in an action. These are termed respectively a causative and a preventive sentence. The sentence includes a causer, generally the subject, which is different from the agent or instrument.

A sentence can be constructed whose resultant sentence is that its subject or object commences, continues, or ceases an action or state. This is termed an inchoative or cessative sentence.

A transfer sentence can be constructed which transfers to or withdraws from a recipient the means, opportunity, compulsion, or desire to carry out an action. This is termed a facilitative sentence. Its resultant sentence is a possession sentence, called a modal, in which the recipient has or has not the ability, necessity, or obligation, to perform the action. Since it is not certain that the action of a modal has occurred or will occur, it is indefinable.

An adoptive sentence can also be constructed which has a modal resultant sentence. In that case, an agent transfers or withdraws from him/herself the ability, necessity, or obligation to carry out an action.

A responsibility is a modal sentence in which a recipient accepts an obligation to carry out an action or task. It can be the resultant sentence of a dative or adoptive sentence in which a third party assigns the task or action to the recipient.

Terms Defined or Introduced

Causative, causation, preventive, prevention, causer, inchoative, inchoation, cessative, cessation, facilitative, facilitation, modal, responsibility.

The Causative Function

In Chapter 6., a transitive sentence is defined as one which alters or affects its object, called its patient. Its operation gives rise to a resultant sentence of which the patient is the subject. In Chapter 6., the examples quoted were of stative resultants, either an attribute or an identification, here marked with “→”:

“The orator excited the audience to a frenzy.”
→ “The audience was in a frenzy.”
“Hitler was appointed Chancellor.” → “Hitler was Chancellor.”

There are in addition transitive sentences in which the action of the verb results in an action by or on the patient. The resultant sentence is therefore a dynamic sentence with the patient as subject:

“I made him write the letter.” → “He wrote the letter.”
“I had the letter written.” → “The letter was written.”
“I made him obey the rules.” → “He obeyed the rules.”

This type of transitive sentence is called *causative*. The commonest form of causative is one in which a human *causer* acts on a different person, the agent, to effect the action. The resultant sentence can be any variety of agential dynamic sentence: transitive, intransitive, participation, dative, or adoptive. In the following three examples, the agent of the resultant sentence is stated:

“I made him go to work.” → “He went to work.”
“I made her give the speech.” → “She gave the speech.”
“I made her read the article.” → “She read the article.”

A causative also includes an action by which another action is started or continued:

“She started the child riding the bicycle.”	→	“The child rode the bicycle.”
“She started the dishwasher.”	→	“The dishwasher washed the dishes.”
“She started the engine running.”	→	“The engine ran”
“She kept the engine running.”	→	“The engine ran.”

In the following examples, the resultant sentence is passive, and the causative sentence does not specify the agent:

“I caused the trees to be felled.”	→	“The trees were felled.”
“I had the rules obeyed.”	→	“The rules were obeyed.”
“I had the speech given.”	→	“The speech was given.”
“I had the article read.”	→	“The article was read.”

In addition to being a person, the causer can be an instrument which induces an agent to act:

“The noise made us jump.”	→	“We jumped.”
“The threat of fire caused us to flee.”	→	“We fled.”

The causer can also be an instrument which causes another instrument to act:

“The wind broke the windshield with a branch.”	→	“The branch broke the windshield.”
“The clouds cleared, allowing the sun to dry the ground.”	→	“The sun dried the ground.”

These are the three classes of causative sentence. The term does not include one in which an agent acts directly on an instrument to effect an action. Such a sentence conforms to the standard pattern for an agential transitive:

“The woodman caused the axe to split the log.”	→	“The axe split the log.”
“The accountant had the computer prepare the spreadsheet.”	→	“The computer prepared the spreadsheet.”

Similarly, a causative does not include one in which there is no agent or instrument for the “causer” to act on. Such a sentence conforms to the standard pattern for an instrumental transitive:

“The sun made the rain dry up.”	→	“The rain dried up.”
“The earthquake made the building fall.”	→	“The building fell.”

In the following sentences there is again no agent or instrument for the “causer” to act on. They are transitive and inceptive sentences with the same stative resultant: “She was awake;” “The hostages were dead”:

“He woke her.”	→	“She awoke.”
“The terrorists killed the hostages.”	→	“The hostages died.”

Of course, the term “causative” could be extended to include all these three classes of sentence. It is sometimes used more widely, to refer to any expression resulting in an attribute or identification.¹ However, to do so would not be useful, since our definitions of “transitive” and “intransitive” clearly covers them and their resultant sentences fully.

¹ See for example Yip & Rimmington, 129.

An extension of this construction expresses the prevention of an action, the resultant sentence being that the action does not take place. This is termed a *preventive* sentence in Chapter 15.:

“I prevented him going to work.” → “He did not go to work.”
“I stopped the letter being written.” → “The letter was not written.”
“She stopped the engine running.” → “The engine stopped.”
“The dam stopped the water falling.” → “The water did not fall.”

In all these examples, the causer is the subject. A causative can also be constructed with the object as subject:

“He was made to write the letter.” “The engine was run.”

A causative sentence may be constructed with an element in focus:

“This is the speech which I made her give.”
“It was I who prevented him from going to work.”
“It was the article that I made her read.”

A causative verb can be general: “I made her go to work on Tuesdays by bus.” In that case, in accordance with the rules for general verbs (Chapter 2., Specific and General Concepts), the resultant sentence of the causative is also general: “She goes to work on Tuesdays by bus.”

Languages generally form a causative in one of three ways. It can be unchanged from an agential intransitive verb, with a construction similar to a transitive:

“He walked the dog.” → “The dog went for a walk.”

An auxiliary verb is used:

German: “Ich ließ mein Pferd vom Hufschmied beschlagen.”
 [I let my horse by the blacksmith be-shod.]

French: “Je fais lire ce livre à mon fils.” “I make my son read this book.”
 [I make read this book to my son.]

The verb of the resultant sentence (the *resultant verb*) is altered to form a causative version:

Hungarian:
“Kivasaltattam az ingemet a férjemmel.” “I had my husband iron my shirt.”
 [Iron-caused-I the shirt-my (accusative) the husband-my-by.]

Arabic: “ʔansāhumu l-kaṯīra mina l-ʔarāʔibi” “It made them forget many strange things.”
 [It-made-forget-them many of strange-things.]

Turkish: “Mektubu müdüre imzalattım.” “I got the director to sign the letter.”
 [Letter (accusative) director-to sign-caused-I.]

Hindi: “maĩ apne bhāi se pustak chapvāũgā” “I shall get my brother to print the book.”
 [I my brother-by book print-cause-shall.]

Indonesian/Malay:
“Saya mencuci pakaian pada wanita itu.”
“I have my clothes washed by that woman.” [I wash-make clothes by woman that.]

Japanese:
“Tomodachi wa watashi ni chippu o harawaseta.” “My friend made me leave a tip.”
 [Friend (topic) me-to tip (object) leave-caused.]

Swahili: “Wasimamishe watoto.” “Make the children stand up.”
[They-stand-cause_(imperative) children.]

Inuit: “Pisariaqartunik ikinngutinnit nassitsippunga.”
“I had my friend send the necessary things.”
[Necessary-being-with friend-my-by send-cause-I.]

In many of these examples, the agent or instrument of the resultant sentence is marked with “by” or its equivalent (Japanese “ni”), which is also used to mark the agent of a passive sentence. This implies that the resultant action is intentional. However, if the resultant action is involuntary or unintentional, its agent or instrument may be marked as a transitive object:

Japanese:
“Chichi wa watashi o aruite kaeraseta.” “My father had me walk home.”
[Father_(topic) me_(object) on-foot return-caused.]

The Inchoative Function

In the previous section, we considered sentences in which a causer effects an action by an agent:

“We had the windows cleaned.” “We made them go indoors.”

We now consider sentences in which there is only one agent or instrument:

“She began to write.”	→	“She was writing.”
“She carried on writing.”	→	“She was writing.”
“The water began to boil.”	→	“The water was boiling.”
“The water continues to boil.”	→	“The water was boiling.”

In the first group of sentences, an agent takes an action (“begin”/“carry on”) whose outcome is another action by her (“write”). In the second, a subject undergoes a change (“begin”/“continue”) whose outcome is another change to it (“boil”). The outcomes can also be stative:

“She began to be happy.”	→	“She was happy.”
“The water continued to be hot.”	→	“The water was hot.”

In causative sentences, a person or object acts on another person or object to initiate or continue an action or state. These examples, the person or object acts on itself, and we can use for them the different term *inchoative*. The relation between causative and inchoative sentence is analogous to that between a transitive and intransitive sentence described in Chapters 6. and 7. We recall that two sorts of intransitive were identified: an agential intransitive sentence, in which an agent acts on him/herself, and an inceptive sentence, in which a subject undergoes an involuntary change:

agential:	“We went to China.”	→	“We were in China.”
inceptive:	“The tree fell.”	→	“The tree was fallen.”

This same distinction applies to our inchoative examples:

agential:	“She began to write.”	→	“She was writing.”
inceptive:	“The water began to boil.”	→	“The water was boiling.”

Note that in conventional terminology, “inchoative” is a synonym for “inceptive”. Since we require “inchoative” in this new sense, we are proposing a separation of the two terms:

- an inceptive sentence is one whose subject undergoes an involuntary change to a resultant action or state;
- an inchoative sentence is one whose subject or object undergoes an intentional or involuntary change to or from a resultant action or state; it may therefore be agential or inceptive.

Inchoative verbs are not limited to variants of “start” and “continue”. The following also express inchoation:

“She hastened to write.” “She persisted in writing.”

As with other intransitive sentences, the subject is the topic unless an element is in focus, for example:

“It was the letter which she started to write.”
“It was she who started to write the letter.”

Inchoatives can be general, and following the rules for a general verb they have a general resultant sentence:

“She got used to writing.” → “She wrote often.”
“She persisted in writing.” → “She wrote often.”

As with causatives, an inchoative is limited to an action whose resultant sentence follows as a fact. This excludes sentences such as: “She tried to write;” “She ventured to write;” “She hesitated to write;” “She prepared to write;” “She wanted to write;” “She intended to write”. The first four of these are discussed in later in this chapter (Adoptive Modals). “She wanted to write” and “She intended to write” are volitions (Chapter 8., The Volition Function; Chapter 9., The Adoptive Sentence).

As noted in Chapter 9. (The Receptive Sentence), an inchoative verb may be used with a possessive resultant sentence:

“We began to feel cold.” → “We felt cold.”
“We continued to have doubts” → “We still had doubts.”

Inchoative general participles in English include “initial”, “final”, “continual”, and “persistent”.

We noted in the previous section a variety of causation in which the resultant action is stopped, called *preventive*:

“I prevented him going to work.” → “He did not go to work.”
“I stopped the letter being written.” → “The letter was not written.”
“The dam stopped the water falling.” → “The water did not fall.”

Similarly, there is a variety of inchoation in which an agent acts so that he or she stops an action, or a subject undergoes a change so that an action by it stops:

“She stopped writing.” → “She was not writing.”
“The water stopped boiling.” → “The water was not boiling.”
“We lost sight of the car.” → “We no longer saw the car.”

This type of sentence is called *cessative*, and can be general:

“She gave up writing.” → “She did not write any more.”

Languages most commonly construct inchoative and cessative sentences by distinguishing between the inchoative or cessative verb and the verb of the resultant sentence. The verb of the resultant sentence can be called the *resultant verb*. In languages with an infinitive, that is used for the resultant verb. In many languages, the infinitive is connected by the directive “to”: English “to”, French “à”; German “zu”; Persian “be”; Japanese “ni”. In Turkish and Hindi, the infinitive takes a dative case “to”: Turkish postposited “-e”; Hindi oblique case “-e”.

French: “Elle a commencé à écrire.” “She began to write.”
“Elle a continué à écrire.” “She continued to write.”

German: “Sie haben begonnen zu lachen.” “They began to laugh.”

Russian: “Ona nachala nakryvat’ na stol.” “She began to set [onto] the table.”

Turkish: “Yürümeğe başladık.” “We began to walk.” [Walking-to we-began.]

Arabic: “sa-yuwāsilu l-kitābata” “He will continue to write.” [He-will-continue the-writing.]

Persian: “šoru? kard be neveštan” “He began to write.” [Beginning he-made to write.]

Hindi: “din lambe hone lage” “The days started getting long.” [Days long be-to began.]

Indonesian:

“Siti mulai menangis.” “Siti began [to] cry.”

“Saya sudah berhenti merokok.” “I’ve stopped smoking.”

In languages which do not use an infinitive, the agent or subject must be repeated in the resultant sentence:

Greek: “Ἀρχισε να γελά.” “He began to laugh.” [He-began that he-laughs _(subjunctive).]
“Συνέχισε να ζει με τους γονείς του.” “He continued to live with his parents.”
[He-continued that he lives _(subjunctive) with the parents-his.]

Arabic: “ʔašbaḥnā nanzuru li-l-ʔamri” “We have started looking at the matter.”
[We-have-started we-are-looking at the-matter.]
“ʔaxaḏat l-surʔatu tazdādu” “The speed started to increase.”
[Started the-speed it-increased.]

An agential inchoative or cessative can also be reflexive, like other agential intransitives:

French: “Il s’est obstiné à venir.” “He persisted in coming.”
[He himself is persisted to come.]
“Il s’est arrêté à venir.” “He stopped coming.” [He himself is stopped to come.]

Arabic: “istamarra yaʔdū ḥattā nqaṭaʔat ʔanfāsuhu”
“He continued running until his breath failed him.”
[He-continued-himself he-ran until failed his-breath.]

An inchoative or cessative can also be formed by modifying the resultant verb or (as also English) by using the gerund of the resultant verb. In the following Japanese examples, “kaku” is “write” and “furu” is “fall”:

“Sensei wa hon o kakihajimeta.” “The teacher began to write a book.”
[Teacher _(topic) book _(object) write-began.]
“Kyūni ame ga furidashita.” “Suddenly it began to rain.”
[Suddenly rain _(subject) fall-began.]
“Wakaranai koto o nōto ni kaite itta.”
“I went on taking notes on things I didn’t understand.”
[Not-understand thing _(object) note-to writing went-on.]

In these Inuit examples, the inchoatives and cessatives are underlined:

“Danmarkimili kalaallisut ilinnialirpuq.”
“He began studying Greenlandic already in Denmark.”
[Denmark-in-already Greenlandic study-began-he.]
“Uqarvigai siniqqittussaastu.” “He said to them that they should carry on sleeping.”
[Sayto-he-them sleep-continue-should-they-_(participle).]
“Tassanngaannaq nirissaarpuq.” “He suddenly stopped eating.” [Suddenly eat-stop-he.]

The Facilitative and Modal Functions

As we have seen above, a causative sentence operates directly on an agent or instrument, and an inchoative sentence operates directly on its subject, to bring the resultant action into effect. This accords with the general concept of transitive and intransitive verbs outlined in Chapters 6. and 7.:

“I made him obey the rules.” → “He obeyed the rules.”
“The water began to boil.” → “The water was boiling.”

In Chapter 8., we defined a transfer sentence as one which does not operate directly on its object, but alters the relationship between the object and an animate third-party recipient, who becomes its possessor:

“Mary lent the book to John.” → “John has the book on loan.”
“Mary taught John geography.” → “John understands geography.”

In these examples, the element transferred or possessed is stative, in the form of a material object or concept. It is also possible to apply the transfer construction to a sentence in which the element transferred or possessed is dynamic, in the form of an action which the recipient is expected to carry out:

“I helped him to write the letter.” → “He can write the letter.”
“I hindered him from writing the letter.” → “He cannot write the letter.”
“I obliged him to write the letter.” → “He must write the letter.”
“I encouraged him to write the letter.” → “He dared to write the letter.”
“I persuaded him to write the letter.” → “He is willing to write the letter.”
“I permitted him to write the letter.” → “He may write the letter.”
“I forbade him to write the letter.” → “He may not write the letter.”

The first in these pairs of sentences transfers or removes from a recipient (“him”) the means, compulsion, or desire to carry out an action (“write the letter”), and in this sense alters the relationship between the recipient and the action. We can call them a *facilitative sentence*. The second sentence of each pair expresses the result, namely the ability, obligation, or motivation that the recipient possesses to carry the action out. These resultant sentences are stative, and are conventionally called a *modal sentence*.

The construction of a facilitative sentence is “agent-verb-recipient-verb-object”. Since the subject of the second verb is the recipient of the first, an infinitive (subjectless) form can be used for the second verb, where that is available. The construction of a modal is “recipient-modal-verb-object”. Since the subject of the verb is the recipient of the modal, the infinitive form can again be used.

It is clear that there are functional differences between a facilitative sentence and a causative or inchoative sentence:

- In a causative or inchoative, the sentence is operating directly on an agent or instrument which is the performer of the resultant action. In a facilitative sentence, the recipient is the expected performer of the resultant action.
- A causative and inchoative result in the direct performance of the action. A facilitative sentence results in a state which enables or hinders the performance; it does not necessarily mean that the action is performed.
- The resultant sentence of a causative and inchoative is a dynamic sentence of which the patient is the subject. The resultant sentence of a facilitative is a modal sentence of which the recipient is the subject.

In the above English examples of a facilitative, it may not be evident that the expected performer of the action is a recipient rather than an object. This is made clearer in languages in which the recipient is in the dative case (“to”) or its equivalent:

German: “Ich habe ihr geholfen, den schweren Korb zu tragen.”
“I helped her to carry the heavy basket.”
[I have to-her helped, the heavy basket to carry.]

Italian: “Il tempo gli ha impedito a venire oggi.”
“The weather prevented him from coming today.”
[The weather to-him has prevented to come today.]

Russian: “Vy ne pomozhete mne naiti moi veshchi?” “Will you help me find my things?”
[You not help to-me to-find my things?]
“Den’gi dali emu vozmozhnost’ puteshestvovat’.”
“The money enabled him to travel.” [Money gave to-him ability to-travel.]

Persian: “be u komak kardand” “They helped him.” [To him help they-made.]

Hindi: “mere pitā jī mujhe sigreṭ nahī pīne dete the”
“My father used not to let me smoke cigarettes.”
[My father to-me cigarettes not smoking-to giving was.]

Facilitative general participles in English include “helpful”, “obstructive”, “encouraging”, “obligatory”, “persuasive”, “permissive” and “prohibitive”.

It is also not always appreciated that modal sentences are possessive in nature. This becomes more evident when other English expressions which express ability or obligation are listed:

“It is up to you to write the letter.”
“He has permission to write the letter.”
“He has a duty to write the letter.”
“You have some explanation to give.”

The last three of these examples use a possession verb. The first three use the indirect recipient construction which was noted in Chapter 8. (The Possession Function) as typical of a possession. Examples from other languages of an indirect recipient modal are:

Italian: “Vi conviene consegnare il compito oggi.”
“You’d better hand in the assignment today.”
[To-you it-is-advisable to-deliver the assignment today.]
“Vi spetta consegnare il compito oggi.”
“It’s up to you to hand in the assignment today.”
[To-you it-is-due to-deliver the assignment today.]

Russian: “Emu ne nuzhno govorit’ dvazhdy.” “He doesn’t need to be told twice.”
[To-him not need to-tell twice.]
“Vam nado budet mnogo pisat’.” “You will have to do a lot of writing.”
[To-you necessary will-be much writing.]
“Nam nel’zya bol’she zdat’.” “We mustn’t wait any longer.”
[To-us mustn’t more wait.]

Finnish: “Hänen täytyi lähteä kouluun.” “She had to set off for school.”
[Of-her it-ought to-set-off to-school.]

Hungarian:
“Gábornak tanulnia kell ma este.” “Gábor must study this evening.”
[To-Gábor studying-his must today evening.]
“Neked nem szabad tejet innod.” “You are not allowed to drink milk.”
[To-you not is-allowed milk drinking-your.]

Welsh: “Bydd yn rhaid i mi godi.” “I shall have to get up.” [Will-be in necessity to me rise.]

Irish: “Tair go luath, más féidir leat é.” “Come early, if you can.”
[Come early, if-is possible with-you it.]

Arabic: “ʔalayhi ʔan yafīya bi-waʔdihī” “He has to fulfil his promise.”
[On-him that he-fulfils (subjunctive) at promise-his.]
“yajību ʔalā l-ṣāʔimi ʔan yamtaniʔa ʔani l-tadẖīni”
“The fasting person must refrain from smoking.”
[It-is-incumbent on the-faster that he-refrains (subjunctive) from the-smoking.]

Hindi: “usko yah nahī karnā cāhie thā” “He ought not to have done this.”
[Him-to this not doing needed was.]
“apkō apnī cābī lānī paregī” “You’ll have to bring your own key.”
[You-to own key bringing will-fall.]

Swahili: “Inanipasa kurudi sasa.” “I ought to go back now.” [It to-me is-right to-return now.]
“Yanibidi kusema hivi.” “I must say this.” [It to-me is-obliged to-say this.]
“Yafaa tuondoke sasa.” “We had better go now.” [It-is-good we-should-go now.]

The Japanese modal is the same as other Japanese topic-comment possession constructions (Chapter 8., The Possession Function):

“Okamoto-san wa roshiago ga dekiru.” “Mr Okamoto can speak Russian.”
[Okamoto-Mr (topic) Russian (subject) is-possible.]
“Tenada-san wa tenisu ga dekiru.” “Mr Tenada can play tennis.”
[Tenada-Mr (topic) tennis (subject) is-possible.]

The “subject-verb-object” construction of the standard English modals “can”, “must”, etc also occurs widely:

French: “Je peux vous comprendre.” “I can understand you.” [I can you understand.]

German: “Ich kann Sie verstehen.” “I can understand you.” [I can you understand.]

Russian: “Ya ne mogu priiti v eto vremya.” “I can’t come at that time.”
[I not can come at that time.]

Hungarian:
“Nem tudom kinyitni az üveget.” “I can’t open the bottle.”
[Not I-can open the bottle.]

Welsh: “Fedri di ddarllen hwn?” “Can you read this?”

Hindi: “mai hindī bol saktā hū” “I can speak Hindi.” [I Hindi speak can.]

Malay: “Dia boleh tidur sehabis-habis lama lapan jam.”
“He can sleep for eight hours at the most.”
[He can sleep at-most long eight hour.]

Chinese: “Nǐ yīnggāi qù shuǐjiào le.” “You ought [to] go [to] bed (aorist).”
“Wǒ yī tiān nénggòu pǎo shí yīnglǐ lù.” “I can run ten miles a day.”
[I one day can run ten mile road.]
“Xiàozhǎng yuànyì tuìxiū.” “[The] headmaster [is] willing [to] retire.”

Swahili: “Aweza kwenda.” “He can go.” [He-is-able to-go.]

In some languages, the modal governs an object sentence, often in the subjunctive. In the following examples, the modal is a personal verb in the case of “can” and impersonal in the case of other modals. Greek and Arabic do not have an infinitive:

Greek: “Μπορούσε να φάει δέκα αβγά για πρωινό.” “He could eat ten eggs for breakfast.”
 [He-could that he-eat (subjunctive) ten eggs for breakfast.]
 “Πρέπει να κόψεις το τσιγάρο.” “You must give up smoking.”
 [It-is-necessary that you-give-up (subjunctive) the smoking.]
 “Μπορεί να πάμε αύριο να του δούμε.” “We may go to see him tomorrow.”
 [It-may-be that we-go (subjunctive) tomorrow that him we-see (subjunctive).]

Arabic: “qadi staṭāʿa ḡan yajida l-ḥalla l-ṣaḥīḥa” “He was able to find the right solution.”
 [He was-able that he found (subjunctive) the solution the-right.]
 “yanbayī ḡan nuyassirahā lahā” “We ought to make it easier for it.”
 [It-is-desirable that we-make-easier-it (subjunctive) for it.]

Persian: “mitavanam beravam” “I can go.” [I-can I-go (subjunctive).]
 “bayad beravam” “I must go.” [It-is-necessary I-go (subjunctive).]
 “šayad beravam” “Perhaps I shall go.” [Perhaps I-go (subjunctive).]

Some Turkish modals are constructed by a suffix to the verb:

“Ancak saat birde yatabildim.” “I was able to go to bed only at one o’clock.”
 [Only o’clock one-at go-to-bed-could-I.]
 “Gazetelere bir ilân bastırmalı idik.”
 “We should have had an advertisement printed in the newspapers.”
 [Newspapers-in an advertisement print-cause-obliged we-were.]

Similarly in Hungarian:

“Itt kaphatunk szép cipőt.” “We can get nice shoes here.” [Here get-can-we nice shoes.]

Also in Inuit, following the pattern for datives, possessives, and adoptives in that language; the suffix is underlined:

“Timmisinnavuq.” “It can fly.” [Fly-can-it.]
 “Aqagu avalatussaavunga.” “Tomorrow I am to go to Denmark.”
 [Tomorrow gotoDenmark-amto-I.]
 “Imirusariaqarputit.” “You must drink more.” [Drink-more-must-you.]

In English, “can” and “must” have a dual sense, according to their supposed source:

- “Can” may refer to an internal ability or to an external lack of constraint. In the latter meaning, it is a synonym of “may”.
- “Must” may refer to a moral obligation or to an external compulsion. In the former meaning, it is a synonym of “ought to”.

Both these meanings generally occur with all the translations of “can” and “must” in various languages, with a few exceptions, for example in German “müssen” is generally an external compulsion while “sollen” is an obligation:

“Man mußte zuerst fragen.” “One had to ask first.” [One had-to first ask.]
 “Man soll viel obst essen.” “One should eat plenty of fruit.” [One should much fruit eat.]

Both of these meanings can be a resultant sentence of the facilitative sentences at the start of this section. Moreover, the two modals are connected in meaning through the use of a double negative:

“He is not able not to write the letter” = “He must/ought to write the letter”;

“He is not obliged not to write the letter” = “He can/may write the letter”.²

Chinese: “Yī gè rén bù néng bù jiǎng lǐ.” “A person must be reasonable”
[One unit person not able not talk reason]

These various modal functions are distinguished further in Chapter 15. (The Ability, Necessity, and Responsibility Sentences).

In the above facilitative examples, the agent is the subject. A receptive construction is also natural, since the recipient is the subject of the expressed or implied resultant sentence:

“He was helped to write the letter.” → “He was able to write the letter.”
“He was hindered from writing the letter.” → “He could not write the letter.”

An element can also be in focus:

“It was I who helped him to write the letter.” “It was the letter which I helped him to write.”

In the above modal examples, the agent is the subject. An object of the object sentence can often be constructed as the topic, and an element can be in focus:

“The letter is what he can write.” “The letter is what he ought to write.”
“It is the letter which he ought to write.” “It is he who ought to write the letter.”

In most grammars and languages, the volition “He wants to write the letter” is described and constructed as a modal. It conforms to the above definition of a modal, since it is a possession relationship between a recipient (“he”) and an action (“write the letter”). It can moreover be the resultant sentence of the facilitative “I persuaded him to write the letter”. However, as we have seen in Chapter 8. (The Volition and Imperative Functions), it is a particular case of a volition sentence, with the meaning “He wants that he should write the letter”. In a volition, the person desired to do something may not be the same as the desirer, as in “He wants you to write the letter”. The latter example is not generally classed as a modal.

The Adoptive Modal Function

As we have seen, a facilitative verb is dative: “I helped him to write the letter.” An agent provides (or withdraws) to a recipient the means, compulsion, or desire to perform an action. We have also seen (Chapter 9., The Adoptive Sentence) that a dative verb may take a particular form in which the agent is the same as the recipient, and transfers an object or benefit to for him/herself: “We imagined what we might do”; “She took advantage of the delay”. The resultant sentence of both a dative and an adoptive is the same possession construction.

Like other transfer sentences, a facilitative verb can also have an adoptive form, which again has a modal resultant sentence. In that case, an agent provides or withdraws to him/herself the means, opportunity, compulsion, or desire to perform an action. We can call this construction an *adoptive modal*:

“He tried to write the letter.” → “He can/cannot write the letter.”
“He hesitated to write the letter.” → “He may not write the letter.”
“He prepared to write the letter.” → “He can write the letter.”
“He undertook to write the letter.” → “He was willing to write the letter.”
“He refused to write the letter.” → “He was unwilling to write the letter.”

As with other facilitatives, the resultant sentence is not that the action takes place, but that the agent/recipient is in a state which enables him/her to perform or hinders him/her from performing the action. The structure is “agent-verb-verb-object”. In languages with an infinitive, that is usually used

² See also Lyons, 787.

to express the second verb, as the indirect object of the adoptive modal. If no infinitive is available, the subjunctive may be used:

Greek: “Προσπάθησα να του αποφύγω.” “I tried to avoid him.”
[I-tried that him I-avoid (subjunctive).]

Hungarian:
“Arra törekszik, hogy új állást kapjon.” “He’s trying to get a new job.”
[Onto-that he-tries, that new job he-gets (subjunctive).]

Arabic: “ḥāwaltu ʔan ʔuʔalliqā bi-biḍʔi kalimātin” “I tried to add a few words.”
[I-tried that I-add (subjunctive) in few words.]

In addition, we noted in Chapter 9. that many adoptives take the form of a dative reflexive. Here are some examples of that construction:

Italian: “S’è preparata ad avviarsi.” “She got ready to set out.”
[Herself she-is prepared to set-out.]
“S’è azzardata ad avviarsi.” “She ventured to set out.”
[Herself she-is ventured to set-out.]
“S’è rifiutata ad avviarsi.” “She refused to set out.”
[Herself she-is refused to set-out.]

Russian: “Chelovek popytalsya vstat’.” “The man tried to stand up.”
[Man tried-himself to-stand-up.]
“Ne stesnyaites’ sprashivat’.” “Don’t hesitate to ask.”
[Not hesitate-yourself to-ask.]
“gotovit’sya ekhat’ za gorod” “to prepare [oneself] to go to [the] country”.

In the above examples, the agent is the subject and therefore the topic. Adoptive modals can be constructed with the object of the object sentence as topic and with an element in focus:

“The letter is what he tried to write.” “It was the letter that he tried to write.”

Adoptive modal general participles in English include “tentative”, “hesitant”, “preparatory”, and “venturesome”.

The Responsibility Function

A *responsibility* is held by a person, often to a third party, for the fulfilment of some task:

“She is responsible to her manager for completion of the project.”
“She is in charge of the project.”
“She has care of the five children.”
“She is liable for the damage.”

The responsibility can be the outcome of a sentence in which the person or body to whom it is due assigns it to the holder:

“Her manager made her responsible for completion of the project.”
“Her manager put her in charge of the project.”
“The Court gave her care of the five children.”
“The aggrieved party held her liable for the damage.”

A sentence can also be constructed in which the holder assigns the responsibility to him/herself, or allows him/herself to have the responsibility:

“She took/accepted responsibility for completion of the project.”
“She took/accepted charge of the project.”
“She took/accepted care of the five children.”

“She took/accepted liability for the damage.”

These sentences show the characteristics of a possession construction. The holder has a relationship with his/her responsibility, expressed by the first group of sentences. The first group are therefore possessions, and “responsible” and “in charge” are recipient participles. These sentences can be the resultant sentence of the second group, which transfer the responsibility to the holder, and which are dative. Alternatively, they can be the resultant sentence of the third group, in which the holder assumes responsibility, and which are adoptive.

The sentences show that the object of the responsibility can be either a stative element (“project”, “children”) or a process which the object undergoes (“completion of the project”), expressed by a transitive, intransitive, or transfer verb or verbal noun. Alternative versions of the second and third possession sentence could be:

“She is responsible for her team completing the project.”

“She is in charge of completing the project.”

“She has care of the upbringing of the children.”

It can be seen that there is an element in these possession sentences which does not occur with others, namely the person or body to whom the responsibility is held, who is the agent in the dative sentences. This agent can also occur in the adoptive responsibility sentences:

“She promised to her manager that the project would be completed.”

“She undertook charge of the project on behalf of her manager.”

“She took care of the five children on behalf of the Court.”

“She accepted liability to the aggrieved party.”

The dative and adoptive sentences include the denial or withdrawal of the responsibility:

“Her manager withdrew from her responsibility for the project.”

→ “She was no longer responsible for the project.”

“She refused to be responsible for the project.”

→ “She was not responsible for the project.”

“She declined liability for the damage.”

→ “She was not liable for the damage.”

Most languages express a responsibility by constructions similar to the above, in the form “subject-verb-object” and “recipient-attribute-object”. However, for adoptive responsibilities the dative reflexive construction may be used by those languages which employ it for other adoptives (Chapter 9., The Adoptive Sentence):

Italian: “S’è assunta responsabilità per il progetto.”

“She assumed responsibility for the project.”

[Herself she-is assumed responsibility for the project.]

“S’è presa cura dei cinque bambini.” “She took care of the five children.”

[Herself she-is taken care of the five children.]

Russian: “Zabotilas’ o roditelyakh.” “She took care of her parents.”

[She-cared-herself about parents.]