

## Syntactic Causative Constructions in Vietnamese: A Typological Perspective<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*Causative constructions in Vietnamese has been mentioned by several Vietnamese researchers (Nguyễn Kim Thân 1964, Nguyễn Thị Quy 1995, Diệp Quang Ban 2005, Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương 2010, Nguyễn Hoàng Trung 2014). However, their opinions on how to define it varies based on how to differentiate causative construction with other syntactic constructions such as manipulative or agentive. Using the typological theory of causative constructions and syntactic/periphrastic causative construction (in particular Comrie 1981/89, Song 1996, Dixon 2000, Song 2013), this article will establish the criteria for identifying Vietnamese syntactic causative constructions and distinguishing typical syntactic causative construction from less-typical syntactic causative construction in Vietnamese. The article will cover three main contents:*

- *Providing an overview of previous studies on syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese.*
- *Establishing a theoretical background for studying Vietnamese syntactic causative constructions from the typological perspective.*
- *Proposing a new approach for identification and classification of syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese.*

**Keywords:** Causative Construction, Syntactic Causative Construction, Vietnamese Language, Vietnamese Syntax, Syntactic Typology

### 1. Introduction

In Vietnamese, there are constructions NP1 V1 NP2 V2 (or NP1 V1 V2 NP2), which denote two events in a causative –resultative relationship, as in the example below:

1)	a.	N1	V1	N2	V2	
		<i>Nó</i>	<i>làm</i>	<i>cái</i>	<i>ly</i>	<i>vỡ.</i>
		3s	make	CL	glass	broken
		‘He	broke	the	glass.’	
	b.	N1	V1	V2	N2	
		<i>Nó</i>	<i>làm</i>	<i>vỡ</i>	<i>cái</i>	<i>ly.</i>
		3s	make	broken	CL	glass
		‘He	broke	the	glass.	

Note: N1=Noun of Causer, N2=Noun of Causee, V1=Verb of Cause, V2=Verb of Effect, CL= Classifier, 3s = Singular 3rd person (M)

These constructions are referred to by different terminologies in Vietnamese linguistics, such as: causative constructions/verbs (Nguyễn Kim Thân 1977, Nguyễn Hoàng Trung 2014), causative–resultative constructions (Nguyễn Thị Quy 1995, Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương 2010), sentences with a causal subject (Diệp Quang Ban 2005). In this article, from the perspective of syntactic typology (see Section 3 below), they are called syntactic causative constructions and abbreviated sometime as causative constructions. Although being different in terminology, Vietnamese linguists are in unanimous in agreement of the syntactic-semantic structure of causative constructions in Vietnamese. Accordingly, the Vietnamese causative construction is often defined as an expression of a macro-event, which consists of two micro-events: the first one is a causing event (which is expressed by N1 – V1) and the second one is a caused event (which is expressed by N2 - V2), with two alternative order variations, as illustrated in (1). However, when it comes to identifying specific constructions, the opinions of researchers are different in how they differentiate causative construction with other syntactic constructions such as manipulative or agentive.

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Using the typological theory of causative constructions and syntactic/periphrastic causative construction (in particular Comrie 1981/89, Song 1996, Dixon 2000, Song 2013), this article will establish the criteria for identifying causative constructions in Vietnamese and distinguish typical causative construction from less-typical causative construction in Vietnamese.

## 2. Literature Review

Nguyễn Kim Thân (1977) is perhaps the first Vietnamese researcher who studied the syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese, through the description of the causative verbs. According to him, causative verbs are verbs which express causal activities such as motivation, permission, help, or prevention of other activities, playing as a main verb (V1) in the basic causative construction, type N1 V1 N2 V2 (1977: 147). This group of verbs could include “truly causative verbs” (for example: *khiến* ‘cause’, *làm* ‘make’, *cho* ‘give’, ect) as well as manipulative verbs (such as: *sai* ‘order, send’, *bảo* ‘tell’, *yêu cầu* ‘request’, *đề nghị* ‘propose’, ect), and some other transitive verbs which may be used as temporary causative verbs (for example: *chờ* ‘wait for’, *đập* ‘beat’, *điều động* ‘transfer’, *hạn chế* ‘limit’, ect). However, based on the ability to ‘lead the cause,’ he accepted only four “truly causative verbs”, which are: *để* ‘let’, *cho* ‘give’, *làm (cho)* ‘make (for)’, *khiến (cho)* ‘cause (for)’.

Unlike Nguyễn Kim Thân, Cao Xuân Hạo (1991/2004) distinguished causative constructions from manipulative constructions (which he called directive constructions). According to Cao, “causative sentences express agentive activities which cause a realistic resultative event, while directive sentences has no such perlocutionary force”, and the structural difference between them can be verified by the following transformation:

- 2) a. \* *Nam phóng cây lao bay qua tường, nhưng nó không bay.*  
 Nam threw a spear fly over wall but 3s not fly  
 ‘Nam threw a spear over the wall, but it didn’t fly.’  
 b. *Nam sai thằng em đi mua thuốc lá, nhưng nó không đi.*  
 Nam send brother go buy cigarette, but 3s not go  
 ‘Nam sent his brother to buy cigarettes, but he didn’t go.’

(Cao Xuân Hạo 2004: 436)

However, Cao Xuân Hạo's concept that “causative sentences express agentive activities which cause a realistic resultative event” seems to contradict his distinction between the action [+ control] and process [-control], and raises the question of whether causative constructions express only causative actions (as in 3a), not causative processes (as in 3b):

- 3) a. *Nam đập vỡ cái ly.* (+control)  
 Nam beat broken CL glass  
 ‘Nam broke the glass.’  
 b. *Nam làm vỡ cái ly.* (- control)  
 Nam make broken CL glass  
 ‘Nam broke the glass.’

In other words, while distinguishing clearly the causative constructions from manipulative constructions, Cao Xuân Hạo didn’t make a clear distinction between causative constructions and agentive constructions of Vietnamese.

Following Cao Xuân Hạo’s definition, Nguyễn Thị Quy (1995: 70-71) distinguished causative constructions from manipulative constructions by using 7 specific criteria (see below), based on the syntactic properties and relationships of constituents in these constructions. However, she argued that the main verb (V1) of the causative constructions is any transitive verb (for example: *làm (cho)* ‘make (for)’, *khiến (cho)* ‘cause (for)’, *bước* ‘force’, *bẻ (gãy)* ‘break’, *đánh (gục, chết, bại, sập, vỡ...)* ‘beat (to fall, to die, to fail, to fall, to be broken...’), which may be an active/agentive verb or a progressive verb, not only “an agentive verb” as Cao Xuân Hạo’s opinion (1995: 70). Nguyễn Thị Quy's view was adopted by Nguyễn Thị Thu Hương (2010) in her study contrasting English and Vietnamese causative constructions.

Diệp Quang Ban (2005) examined the Vietnamese causative constructions which are called ‘sentences with a marked causal subject’ (for example: *Bão làm đổ cây.* ‘Storms knock down trees.’) and differentiated them from ‘sentences with an unmarked subject’ (for example: *Bão đổ cây* ‘Storms knock down trees’). According to Diệp Quang Ban, in these causative constructions, the main verb (V1) is a ‘common’ transitive verb which often are prepositional, such as *làm (cho)* ‘make (for)’, *khiến (cho)* ‘cause (for)’, *gây (ra)* ‘cause (out)’, *giúp (cho)* ‘help (for)’. The order of the noun of cause (N2) and the verb of affect (V2) can be interchanged (2005: 135-138). It is worth noting, that unlike Nguyễn Thị Quy (1995), Diệp Quang Ban (2005) differentiates causative constructions from agentive constructions (such as, *Giáp uốn cong cây sắt* ‘Giáp bended the iron bar’, *Giáp đánh thắng/bại đối phương.* ‘Giáp defeated the rival.’). Duffield (2011) and Trang Phan (2014) also share similar views of causative constructions in Vietnamese.

Disagreeing with Diệp Quang Ban, Nguyễn Hoàng Trung (2014) presents a broader notion of the Vietnamese causative constructions, which includes not only constructions with typical causative verbs (*làm (cho)* ‘make (for)’,

*khiến* (cho) ‘cause (for)’ but also different constructions with transitive verbs, such as request verbs (*cho* ‘give’, *cho phép* ‘allow’, *bắt buộc* ‘force’...), action verbs (*bẻ* ‘break’, *bôi* ‘paint’, *quăng* ‘throw’, *quật* ‘knock down’...), caused motion verbs (*lôi* ‘haul’, *đẩy* ‘push’, *kéo* ‘pull’...).

The above literature review shows that previous approaches to identification of the Vietnamese syntactic causative constructions (in respectively, Vietnamese causative verbs) are varied in how they distinguish between the three following constructions:

- A. Transitive constructions with V1 being a typical causative verb, such as *làm* ‘make’, *khiến* ‘cause’, etc.
- B. Transitive constructions with V1 being a non-typical causative verb, i.e. an agentive verb denoting activity which cause positions or characteristics of cause, such as *lôi* ‘haul’, *đẩy* ‘push’, *kéo* ‘pull’ *bẻ* ‘break’, *bôi* ‘paint’, *quăng* ‘throw’, etc.
- C. Transitive constructions with V1 being a manipulative verb, such as *sai* ‘send, order’, *bảo* ‘tell’, *ra lệnh* ‘command’, *đề nghị* ‘request’, etc.

As previously mentioned, Nguyễn Kim Thân (1977) accepted all three these constructions as causative constructions, with the A construction being most typical. Cao Xuân Hạo (1991) Nguyễn Thị Quy (1995) accepted as causative constructions only A and B, while C is considered a manipulative construction. In opposition, Diệp Quang Ban considered only A as a causative construction, which he called the ‘unmarked causative construction’.

We will revisit this through a discussion of the theoretical basis for identification of syntactic causative constructions Vietnamese, below.

### 3. Typological theory of syntactic causative construction

To establish the theoretical basis for studying syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese, we will review below typological theory of causative constructions and syntactic causative construction in languages.

Causative construction has been examined and defined in many works of linguistic typology (Shibatani 1976, Comrie 1981/89, Dixon 2000, Song 2001/2013). According to these authors, causative construction is often defined as a linguistic expression which denotes a complex situation consisting of two component events: (i) the causing event, in which the causer does or initiates something; and (ii) the caused event, in which the caused carries out an action, or undergoes a change of condition or state as a result of the causer’s action. For example, the English sentence *Elizabeth made the chef eat the leftovers* denotes a causative situation, in which the causer (*Elizabeth*) did something, and as a result of that action the caused (*the chef*) in turn carried out the action of eating leftovers (Song 2001).

In terms of expression, causative constructions are often distinguished by three main types in languages: lexical, morphological and syntactic. A causative construction is considered as:

- a lexical causative if the causation and effect are both expressed in a lexical unit as a transitive verb. For example, English lexical causative constructions such as *John killed Bill.*; *I have broken the cup.*
- a morphological causative if the meaning of ‘causing’ is expressed by a morphological process of an intransitive verb. For example, in the Turkish language, the causative verbs are usually derived from intransitive verbs by affixation as a morphological process, e.g: *Hasan öl – dii.* ‘Hasan died.’ *Ali Hasan’öl-düendü.* ‘Ali caused Hasan to die./ Ali killed Hassan.’ (Comrie 1989: 175).
- a syntactic causative if the causation and effect are expressed in two separate predicates: a predicate expressing the causation and a predicate expressing the effect, as in the English example *I caused John to go.* (Comrie 1989: 167).

The Vietnamese causative construction which is referred to here is a syntactic causative, in accordance with the above mentioned classification.

Typological studies of syntactic causatives show two different types of syntactic causative constructions in languages:

- Syntactic causative construction which predicates V1 and V2 in different clauses, such as in the English sentence *I (N1) caused (V1) John (N2) to go (V2)*. This is called an analytic causative construction (Comrie 1989), or a periphrastic causative construction (Dixon 2000, Song 2013).
- Syntactic causative construction which predicates V1 and V2 are in the same predicate to form a complex predicate of clause, such as the French sentence: *J’ai (N1) fait (V1) courir (V2) Paul (N2)*. ‘I made Paul run.’ (Comrie 1989). This is called as an intermediate causative construction between the syntactic and morphological causative constructions (Comrie 1989), a complex predicate causative (Dixon 2000), or a ‘non-periphrastic causative’ (Song 2013).

Song (2013) has given specific criteria to identify these syntactic causative constructions in languages. The periphrastic causative construction (as referred by Song) has three properties: i) V1 and V2 are in 2 different

clauses, in other words, it is a bi-clausal construction; ii) The causing clause (N1 - V1) must be "foregrounded", and the resultative clause (N2 - V2) must be "backgrounded". It means that N1 is the subject of the whole causative construction, and V2 appears in the main clause of that construction. In contrast, N2 appears in a non-subject position, and V2 is included in the nominalized (subordinate) clause; iii) V1 has no specific meaning as V2, that means it is a purely causative verb. The non-periphrastic causative construction has three properties: i) Both V1 and V2 must be in the same predicate, in other words, it is a mono-clausal construction; ii) N1 must be in the prominent position (i.e. in the subject position as in the example above), relative to N2 (in the object position); iii) Unlike V2, V1 has no specific meaning but only causative meaning.

#### 4. Typology of syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese

##### 4.1 Identification of syntactic causative construction in Vietnamese

Based on Song's conception of periphrastic causative constructions, we propose the following two criteria to identify a syntactic causative construction in Vietnamese:

(1) Formal criteria: It has a syntactic form N1 V1 N2 V2 or N1 V1 V2 N2.

(2) Semantic criteria: V1 is a purely causative verb without specific meaning.

The formal criteria is established based on the combination of properties (i) and (ii) and the semantic criteria is established based on the property (iii) of the periphrastic causative construction in Song's conception. Now, we will proceed to apply these criteria to identify syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese and distinguish them from other syntactic constructions. As discussed in Section 2, different opinions of Vietnamese researchers in identification of Vietnamese causative constructions revolve around 3 following constructions:

- The A-construction with an unintentional causative verb as V1, such as *làm* 'make', *đánh*<sup>2</sup> 'beat',  *khiến* 'cause'. For example:
  - 4) a. *Nó làm em ngã. / Nó làm ngã em.*  
3s make child fall 3s make fall child  
'He made the child fall.'
  - b. *Nó đánh vỡ cái ly.*  
3s hit broken glass  
'He broke the glass'
  - c. *Thời tiết khiến tôi mệt mỏi.*  
weather cause 1s tired  
'The weather causes me tired.'
- The B-construction with an intentional causative verb as V1, such as *đánh*<sub>1</sub> 'knock', *đập* 'beat', *xô* 'push', *đẩy* 'push', ect. For example:
  - 5) a. *Nó đánh tôi ngã.*  
3s knock 1s fall  
'He knocked me down.'
  - b. *Nó đập vỡ cái ly.*  
3s beat broken CL glass  
'He broke the glass'
  - c. *Họ đẩy tôi đi.*  
3pl push 1s go  
'They pushed me way.'
- The C-construction with a manipulative verb as V1 such as *sai* 'order', *bảo* 'tell', *khuyến* 'advise'
  - 6) a. *Ông ấy sai tôi làm.*  
3s order 1s do  
'He ordered me to do.'
  - b. *Nó bảo tôi đi.*  
3s tell 1s go  
'He told me go away.'
  - c. *Bác sỹ khuyến tôi bỏ thuốc lá.*  
doctor advise 1s quit cigarettes  
'The doctor advised me to quit smoking.'

<sup>2</sup> ĐÁNH<sub>1</sub> is an unintentional causative verb (*Tôi vô ý đánh<sub>1</sub> vỡ cái ly.* 'I accidentally made the glass broken.'). ĐÁNH<sub>2</sub> is an intentional causative verb (*Tôi đánh<sub>2</sub> vỡ cái ly bằng búa.* 'I broke the glass by a hammer.')

First of all, it's not difficult to find that the C-construction does not satisfy both the formal and semantic criteria of a typical syntactic causative construction. Particularly, in terms of formal characteristics, as indicated by Nguyễn Thị Quy (1995.id.), it appears only in the form N1 V1 N2 V2 (*Ông ấy sai tôi làm*. 'He ordered me to do. '; *Nó bảo tôi đi*. 'He told me go away. '), but not in the form N1 V1 V2 N2 (*\*Ông ấy sai làm tôi*.; *\*Nó bảo đi tôi*.) as the A- and B- constructions. In terms of meaning, the V1 predicate of C- construction doesn't have the semantic feature [+causative] but has the semantic features [+ manipulative] and [+ saying]. Nguyễn Thị Quy pointed out seven different characteristics between a manipulative construction (corresponding to the C-construction) and a causative construction (corresponding to A- and B-constructions as mentioned above)<sup>3</sup>. In agreement with the analysis of Nguyễn Thị Quy, I suppose that the C-construction is not a causative, but a manipulative construction.

Thus, the recognition of the causative constructions of Vietnamese are related only to constructions A- (of which V1 is an intentional causative verb such as *làm* 'make', *đánh<sub>1</sub>* 'hit', *khuyến* 'cause') and B- (of which V1 is an intentional causative verb, i.e. an agentive verb such as *đánh<sub>2</sub>* 'knock', *đập* 'beat', *xô, đẩy* 'push', ...). These constructions share the following formal and semantic characteristics of a causative construction: Formally, both constructions are capable of appearing in the forms N1 V1 N2 V2 (*Nó làm cái ly vỡ*. 'He made the glass broken.') and/or N1 V1 V2 N2 (*Nó làm vỡ cái ly*. 'He broke the glass.'). Semantically, the V1 of both constructions have the causative meaning (i.e. expresses the causing). However, there is also a semantic-syntactic difference between A- and B-constructions:

- a) The V1 of A-construction usually is an unintentional causative verb, while the V1 of B-construction is usually an intentional causative verb. Compare the examples in 4 (a, b, c) and 5 (a, b, c) above to see the difference:
  - Because the V1 of A-constructions in examples 4 (a, b, c) is an unintentional verb (*làm* 'make', *đánh<sub>1</sub>* 'hit', *khuyến* 'cause'), these A-constructions cannot be used in a manipulative sentence. And if they are used, the V1 can be understood as an intentional verb: *Nó làm em ngã*. 'He made the baby fall.' → *\*Anh bảo nó làm em ngã đi!* 'Let him to make the baby fall!'. *Nó đánh<sub>1</sub> vỡ cái ly*. 'He broke the glass.' → *\*Anh bảo nó đánh<sub>1</sub> vỡ cái ly đi!* 'Let him to break the glass!'). Also, given that it is an unintentional verb, the V1 of A-constructions cannot be accompanied with an instrumental role (*Nó đánh<sub>1</sub> vỡ cái ly*. 'He broke the glass.' → *\*Nó đánh<sub>1</sub> vỡ cái ly bằng búa rồi*. 'He broke the glass with a hammer.'). And if they are accompanied together, V1 must change from an unintentional verb into an intentional verb (*Nó đánh<sub>2</sub> vỡ cái ly bằng búa*. 'He broke the glass with a hammer.').
  - Because the V1 of B-constructions in examples 5 (a, b, c) is an intentional verb (*đánh<sub>2</sub>* 'hit', *đập* 'beat', *đẩy* 'push'), these B-constructions can appear normally in a manipulative sentence, such as: *Nó đánh<sub>2</sub> tôi ngã*. 'He knocked me down.' → *(Anh) bảo nó đánh<sub>2</sub> tôi ngã đi!* 'Let him knock me down!'; *Nó đập vỡ cái ly*. 'He broke the glass.' → *(Anh) bảo nó đập vỡ cái ly đi!* 'Let him break the glass!'. Unlike unintentional verbs in A-constructions, the intentional verbs in B-constructions can also combine with a semantic role of instrument: *Nó đánh<sub>2</sub> tôi ngã*. 'He knocked me down.' → *Nó đánh<sub>2</sub> tôi ngã bằng một cái gậy*. 'He knocked me down with a stick. '; *Nó đập vỡ cái ly*. 'He broke the glass.' → *Nó đập vỡ cái ly bằng búa*. 'He broke the glass with a hammer'.
- b) The V1 of A-constructions have only the causative meaning, while the V1 of B-constructions have both causative and transitive meaning. This means that the V1 of A-construction is purely causative verbs (i.e., a non-agentive causative verb) while the V1 of B-constructions is a transitively causative verb, i.e. an agentive causative verb. This difference accounts for why the V1 of A-constructions only appear in the typical form of a causative construction (N1 V1 N2 V2 or N1 V1 V2 N2) as in example 4 (a, b, c), but not in the typical form of a transitive construction (N1 V1 N2): *Nó làm em ngã*. 'He made the baby fall' →

<sup>3</sup> Seven different characteristics between a manipulative construction and a causative construction (Nguyễn Thị Quy 1995: 70-72):

1. The manipulative construction appears only in the form N1 V1 N2 V2; the causative construction appears in both forms N1 V1 N2 V2 and N1 V1 V2 N2.
2. The V1 of manipulative constructions is a "saying" verb; V1 of the causative construction is any transitive verb: *làm (cho), khuyến (cho), buộc, bẻ (gậy), đòi (cháy), đánh (gục, chết, sập, vỡ)*.
3. Logic subject (N2) of the construction is an animate entity which is agentive; logic subject (N2) of the causative construction can be either animate or inanimate.
4. The V2 of the manipulative construction is an intentional verb, the V2 of the causative construction is usually an unintentional verb, i.e. a progressive or stative verb.
5. In manipulative constructions, the effect of requesting (expressed by V2) is a realistic result (which may be negatively expressed by *không, chẳng, chả* 'no, not'); in causative constructions, the effect of causing (expressed by V2) "is only a desire, but not a realistic result" (may be affirmatively expressed by *hãy* 'let', *nên* 'should', and negatively expressed by *đừng, chớ*, not by *không, chẳng, chả*).
6. In manipulative constructions, it can't be added any word between N2 and V2, except of modal verb *phải* (if V1 is *bắt, ra lệnh, cho, đòi*) and *được* (if V1 is *cho phép*); in causative constructions, it can be added a negative word *không* 'no, not', *chưa* 'not yet' or a purpose word *cho* 'for'.
7. In manipulative constructions, logic subject of V2 is only an object of V1; In causative constructions, logic subject of V2 may be a subject of V1, i.e. causer of V1 (e.g. *Ta đánh bại quân giặc*. vs *Ta đánh thắng quân giặc*).

\**Nó làm em* 'He made the child'; *Nó đánh vỡ cái ly.* 'He broke the glass.' → \**Nó đánh cái ly.* 'He hits the glass'; *Thời tiết khiến tôi mệt mỏi.* 'The weather caused me tired.' → \**Thời tiết khiến tôi.* 'The weather caused me'. In the contrary, the V1 of B-constructions appear not only in the typical form of a causative construction as in example 5 (a, b, c) but also in the typical form of a transitive construction (N1 V1 V2): *Nó đánh tôi ngã.* 'He knocked me down.' → *Nó đánh tôi.* 'He beat me.'; *Nó đập vỡ cái ly.* 'He broke the glass.' → *Nó đập cái ly.* 'He hit the glass'.

- c) The V1 of A-constructions have only the causative meaning, but no specific meaning, and the V1 of B-construction have not only the causative meaning, but also the specific meaning which is related to the manner or the means of action. In particular, the V1 (*làm* 'make', *đánh<sub>1</sub>* 'beat', *khiến* 'cause') of the sentences in 4 (a, b, c) only indicate the causation of the results in V2 (*ngã* 'fall', *vỡ* 'break', *mệt mỏi* 'tired') but do not indicate the manner or the means of causing. In contrast, the V1 of the sentences in 5 (a, b, c), apart from the causative action, also indicate the specific manner or means of causing, such as: *đánh<sub>2</sub>* (by hand), *đập* 'hit' (by a stick), *đẩy* 'push' (by hand + force of body), etc.

The above analysis shows that:

- The A-construction satisfies both formal and semantic criteria of a syntactic causative construction: Formally, it has the syntactic pattern N1 V1 N2 V2 or N1 V1 V2 N2. Semantically, the V1 is a purely causative verb, i.e., it has weak causativemeaning and no specific meaning (such as, the manner or the mean of causing).
- The B-construction satisfies fully all formal criteria, but only partially satisfies the semantic criterion of a syntactic causative construction. Formally, it has the syntactic pattern N1 V1 N2 V2 or N1 V1 V2 N2, like the A-construction. However, the V1 semantically is a transitively causative verb. In addition to the causative meaning, it has also agentive and manner meanings which express intention, mode, and mean of causing.

Thus, if the causative construction is understood in the broadest sense as a construction expressing two component events "causing" and "caused", then both A- and B- constructions should be considered as causative in Vietnamese. But, if we follow the formal and semantic criteria of the syntactic causative construction as presented above, only the A-construction would be considered typical causative, while the B-construction would be considered less typical causative in Vietnamese.

#### 4.2 Classification of syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese

From the above analysis, Vietnamese syntactic causative constructions can be classified into subtypes according to the following criteria:

- According to the semantic difference of V1, as described above, syntactic causative constructions can be classified into typical syntactic causative constructions (with V1 being purely causative verbs such as *làm* 'make', *đánh<sub>1</sub>* 'hit', *khiến* 'cause') and less typical syntactic causative constructions (with V1 being agentive verbs which has the causative meaning, such as *đánh<sub>2</sub>* 'knock', *đập* 'beat', *xô, đẩy* 'push', etc.).
- According to the order difference of V2, syntactic causative constructions can be classified into bi-clausal syntactic causative constructions: N1 V1 N2 V2 (*Nó làm em ngã.* 'He made the child fall.'; *Nó bẻ cái que gãy.* 'He made the stick broken.'), and syntactic causative constructions with complex predicate: N1 V1 V2 N2 (*Nó làm ngã em.* 'He made fall the child.'; *Nó bẻ gãy cái que.* 'He broke the stick.').
- According to the possibility that a causative marker CHO 'for' appears after V1, syntactic causative constructions can be classified into unmarked syntactic causative constructions (*Nó làm em ngã; Nó bẻ gãy cái que*) and marked syntactic causative constructions (*Nó làm cho em ngã; Nó bẻ cho gãy cái que.*).

The formal and semantic similarities and differences of these constructions reflect the ongoing grammaticalization of causative constructions in Vietnamese. Because of the length limitation of this article, I will return to this topic on a later date.

#### 5. Conclusion

Based on a review of past literature and different theoretical backgrounds of syntactical typology, the article has identified and classified syntactic causative constructions in Vietnamese. The analysis shows that, just as be pointed out in the typological theory of causatives, the Vietnamese syntactic causative constructions are also linguistic expressions which denote a complex situation consisting of two component events: the first one is a causing event (which is expressed by N1 – V1) and the second one is a caused event (which is expressed by N2 - V2). However, besides these common characteristics, Vietnamese causative constructions have certain formal and semantic differences. The semantic difference is shown by the contrast between the typical and less typical causative constructions, and the formal difference is shown by the contrast on the hand between the bi-clausal causative construction and the causative construction with complex predicate, and on the other hand between the unmarked and marked causative constructions.

Continuing to deepen the description of syntactic and semantic characteristics of these constructions will certainly contribute to the clarification of the causative constructions of Vietnamese, a typical isolating language.

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