THE USAGE OF CAUSATIVES IN CLASSICAL CHINESE: A REVIEW

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Abstract

Many scholars have looked into relevant problems concerning the usage of causatives in their studies of Classical Chinese grammar. They find that, unlike the derivational system found in most Indo-European languages, the system of word-derivation in Classical Chinese (causative usage included) reveals that certain grammatical and semantic contrasts are regularly associated with tonal contrasts. In spite of such findings, we still consider it rather difficult to separate those derivational causative verbs from the general causative usage to which the syntactic structure is ascribed, not to mention the even harder task of distinguishing the causative usage from the putative one given their similar surface structure.[2] Thus, beside the review and summary of causative usages in previous works, this paper re-analyzes certain problematic cases of causatives using different linguistic factors (i.e., phonological, morphological, and syntactical) together with relevant context clues. Although we have yet to come up with a satisfactory explanation concerning the distinction between causative and putative usages, we maintain that the contrast between realis and irrealis can be employed as a means to clarify those subtle differences in the putative usage.

Introduction[3]

When one reads a Classical Chinese text, one might become confused that some word classes, such as intransitive verbs, adjectives, or even nouns, which are known for normally not having an object or complement[4] after them in Modern Mandarin, appear to be followed by an object or complement (N/NP)[5] from time to time, especially in the form of 之 *zhi*.[6] Earlier scholars then introduced and employed two special types of usage, namely, the causative usage (使動用法 *shidong yongfa*) and the putative usage (意動用法 *yidong yongfa*), as a way of explaining this kind of peculiar phenomena.

As far as the relationship between the verb and object is concerned, we generally

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[2] For "putative," see Norman (1988: 91): "when intransitive verbs have an object, the verb must be understood in a causative or putative sense (consider X as Y)."

[3] Since Chinese characters will be given throughout this article, we use a broad Pinyin transcription with no tone marks.

[4] Some might argue that, structurally speaking, either an adjective or a noun can also appear before another noun. In that case, however, adjectives and nouns are both functioning as modifiers of their head noun, not in the sense that we discuss in this paper.

[5] Here we are assuming a version of X-bar theory; the binary branching projection of any category used as a head (e.g., a noun, a verb, etc.) represents the positions for specifier and complement.

[6] *Zhi* is a third-person pronominal form (代詞 *daici*) typically used as an object pronoun. It can also be used as a particle (助詞 *zhuci*) or a verb (動詞 *dongci*).

regard the object as a 'patient' or 'theme' of the preceding verb. Nonetheless, this kind of thematically 'patient' role does not always obtain in Classical Chinese. For instance,

(1) 間涉不**降楚**。(史記 – 項羽本紀)[7]

  Jianshe bu *xiang*   *Chu*
  Jianshe not surrender Chu

  'Jianshe did not surrender (himself to) (King Xiangyu of) Chu.'

(2) 欲因此時**降武**。（漢書 – 蘇武傳）

  yu   yin   ci   shi *xiang*   *Wu*
  desire with this time surrender Wu

  '(单于 Chanyu) would like to take this opportunity to allow (Su) Wu to surrender.'

Sentence (1) is understood to mean that the agentive subject Jianshe did not surrender to King Xiangyu of Chu (间涉不投降项羽 *Jianshe bu touxiang Xiangyu*). Its structure conforms to the typical SVO word order. In comparison, in sentence (2), the post-verbal NP object/complement, (Su) Wu, is the person performing the action *xiang* 'surrender.' That is to say, sentence (2) is read as having a causative sense. The omitted agentive subject of the sentence, Chanyu, would like to have the object, Su Wu, carry out the action expressed by the verb *xiang,* 'surrendering himself.'

In the putative usage, the NP following the adjective[8], or in some cases, the noun does

not fill the so-called 'recipient' role but instead possesses certain characteristics designated by the preceding adjective or noun.

(3) 不**貴難得**之**貨**。（老子）

  bu *gui*   *nan de zhi huo*
  not valuable hard get REL commodity

 'Do not think of these rare commodities as valuable.'

(4) **友風**而**子雨**。（荀子 – 賦）

  you feng er *zi yu*
  friend wind and child rain

  'Think of the wind as (one's) friends and think of the rain as (one's) children.'

In other words, the perceived objects, *nande zhi huo* 'rare commodity' in (3) and *feng* 'wind' and *yu* 'rain' in (4), reflect the view that people have toward it, being characterized as 'without value' in (3) and 'friends' and 'children' in (4).

The purpose of this paper is to review and summarize previous work on the usage of causatives in Classical Chinese. In the majority of cases, we employ different linguistic factors (i.e., phonological, morphological, and syntactical) together with relevant context clues to re-analyze and clarify these problematic instances. However, as seen in the above examples, it is quite difficult to distinguish causative usage from putative based solely upon their structure. Thus, it is necessary for us to make certain comparison between these

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[7] Source documents for the examples given hereafter are cited in parentheses.

[8] In addition to their use as modifiers, adjectives in Chinese can be used as verbs.

two usages in order to gain more insight into those ambiguous cases as well.

Causativity as related to phonological changes

Using the notion of cognate words and tonal changes suggested in earlier studies, scholars such as G. B. Downer (1959), Wang Li (王力) (1958, 1982), and Chou Fa-kao (周法高) (1962) have all tried to re-analyze the so-called derivative words (滋生詞 *zisheng ci*) and their grammatical usage, an analysis which can, more or less, help our understanding of word formation in Classical Chinese and provide the means to establish an even more elaborate system of word classes.

Unlike derivatives in Indo-European languages, most derivative words in Chinese (if one believes such morphological processes exist at all) are not attributed to typical derivational or inflectional affixes but rather to an internal change of sound within a single word or syllable itself. Sometimes these changes even reflect or correspond to an alternate form of written Chinese character.

Predicated upon this kind of morphophonemic-like process, both Downer (1959) and Chou (1962) come up with a range of principal word classes, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, which (given relevant contents) can convert in their usage from one to another. However, while members of some word classes seem to alter or cross-over from one part of speech to another, members of the verb class tend to behave differently.[9]

That is to say, not only can a verb convert to other word classes, it can also function in two special applications, namely, the causative and putative usages.[10] The only difference which can be drawn between these two particular functions is that the putative usage, especially in the case of an adjective, tends to be less associated with phonological changes, whereas the causative usage (of verbs) is usually related to them.

Starting from a slightly different ground, Wang (1982) perceives the causative as either a reflection of a morphological process or a representation at the structural level. He suggests that, in the latter case, there is no difference in terms of features between the basic verbal form and its causative counterpart,[11] whereas, in the former case, what we call a derivational causative seems to have some connection with its basic verb in terms of sound features.

In such case, the differences of those sound features can be illustrated by

a) using the same form of characters (字形相同 *zixing xiang tong*),

b) changing from the same form of characters to different ones (由字形相同變爲不同 *you zixing xiang tong bian wei bu tong*), or

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[9] Broadly speaking, adjectives can be included in the verb class due to their predicative nature.

[10] Sometimes both nouns and adjectives can engage in the putative and causative usages, as well.

[11] Here Wang (1982) uses the term 自動詞 *zidong ci* (basic verbal form) as an antithesis to the term 使動詞 *shidong ci* (causative verb via morphological derivation). Regardless of whether the verb is transitive or corresponds to its causative counterpart, it is regarded as the basic verbal form (自動詞).

c) using different forms of characters (字形不同 *zixing bu tong*). Nevertheless, it is necessary in all three cases for the basic verbal form and its associated causative to be concomitant alliteratives (雙聲 *shuangsheng*）and rhymes (叠韵 *dieyun*).[12] This means that the derivational causative verb can be formed by any one of three phonological changes, namely, the initial (聲母 *shengmu*), the final (韵母 *yunmu*), and the tone (聲調 *shengdiao*), or sometimes even from a combination of any of them.

With regard to the tones, most of Wang's (1982) examples illustrated a relationship between the *qu*-tone (*qusheng* 去聲) reading and the causative form.[13] From a historical perspective, it has been suggested that the causative form of verbs was originally made by adding a causative suffix to the verbs. Later on, the suffix was lost and replaced by the *qu* tone.[14]

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[12] Wang (1982) also includes the homorganic initials (旁紐 *pangniu*）and hedge rhymes (旁韵 *pangyun*）in the above requirement.

[13] Although there are also a few examples which have a *qu* tone reading for the basic verbal form, Wang (1982) suggests that this might reflect the old hypothesis of the comparatively late origin of the *qu* tone. Once people get this kind of reading, they simply apply it to match up with the other existing tone.

[14] According to Downer (1959: 263), this is not to claim that all *qu* tone words are derivative forms. In fact, there are two morphologically different kinds of words under the rubric *qusheng*, (a) those like 大 *da* 'big,' 面 *mian* 'face,' 卦 *gua* 'divinatory symbol,' and 賤 *jian* 'lowly, cheap,' which are basically *qusheng* words, and (b) words like 好 *hao*, which are *qusheng* by derivation from words of other tones.

Subsequently, most causative verbs have the *qu* tone, and there is only a handful of words for which the causative verb is in one of the other tonal categories, namely, the *ping* (平聲 *pingsheng*), *shang* (上聲 *shangsheng*) and *ru* (入聲 *rusheng*) tones. Examples for all of these possible tonal changes are as follows:

1. causative forms with the *qu* tone [15]

Basic form	Causative form
飲 'to drink'	飲 'to give to drink'
視 'to look at'	視（示）'to show'
見 'to see'	見（現）'to appear'
入 'to enter'	入（內）'to take in'
食 'to eat'	食（飤）'to feed'
買 'to buy'	賣 'to sell'
啖 'to eat'	啗 'to give to eat'
藏 'to hide, store'	葬 'to bury'
瘳 'to recover one's health'	療 'to cure, treat'
垂 'to droop, hang down'	縋 'to let down with a rope'
回 'to circle, return'	運 'to circulate, turn'

2. causative forms with the *ping* tone

Basic form	Causative form
到 'to arrive, reach'	招 'to attract, incur'
順 'to comply, obey'	馴 'to domesticate, tame'
淫 'damp, wet'	漸 'to dip, immerse, soak'
壞 'to collapse'	隳 'to destroy'

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[15] The graph in brackets below is an alternate form of the given Chinese character.

3. causative forms with the *shang* tone

Basic form	Causative form
敬 'to be cautious, to be serious, to respect'	警 'to warn, alarm'

4. causative forms with the *ru* tone

Basic form	Causative form
趣 'to rush, flee'	趣（促） 'to hasten'

Among the 24 homorganic initials given in this article, Wang Li claimed that 15 of them were examples of the contrast between voiced and voiceless initials.[16] Usually, the basic verbal form had the voiced initial, while its causative counterpart possessed the voiceless one.[17]

Basic form	Causative form
敗 'to defeat'	敗 'to cause to be defeated'
折 'to break off, become separated'	折 'to break, cause to be broken'
別 'to leave, depart'	別 'to cause to be separated'
著 'to cling, adhere'	著 'to put on, wear'
解 'daybreak, to understand'	解 'to untangle, intercede
效（俲） 'to effect, imitate, render'	教 'to instruct, indoctrinate
糴 'to buy grain'	糶 'to sell grain'

進 'to go forward, advance'	引 'to lead, draw, drag, fetch'
藏 'to hide, store'	葬 'to bury'
窮 'poor, end, thoroughly'	鞫 'poor, end, interrogate a prisoner'
移 'to change, move, shift'	推 'to push, shove, decline'

Another interesting feature with respect to the initial is the contrast between palatal sibilants and retroflex stops as applied to the basic verbal form and the causative form, respectively. Although these pairs of words (such as 至 'to arrive, reach'：致 'to attract' and 出 'to send out'：黜 'to dismiss') were of small numbers, they did substantiate the idea that both palatal sibilants and retroflex stops share the same 'dental stop' origin with a difference in terms of medials during an earlier period.[18]

In case of the finals, we were not able to find a consistent pattern for the alternation between these two verbal forms. Nevertheless, one condition that we should keep in mind is the similarity or closeness of rhyme groups (韵部) to which the related words belong.[19] Below are some examples of hedge rhymes (旁轉 *pang zhuan*, 對轉 *dui zhuan*) mentioned by Wang (1982):[20]

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[16] Such contrast is no longer true for Modern Mandarin, where the major contrast of certain initials is determined by the difference in aspiration.

[17] Nonetheless, besides the relationship between voiced/voiceless distinction and basic/causative verb contrast, there are still other kinds of morphophonemic-like processes in word formation in Classical Chinese.

[18] A medial refers to an element which could occur between the syllable onset, or the initial, and the rhyme proper, which contains nuclear vowel and final consonant or offglide.

[19] Old Chinese rhyme groups can be divided into two major categories, namely, (a) 阳 *yang* groups, those that end in a nasal, and (b) 阴 *yin* groups, those with non-nasal endings (Norman, 1988: 47).

[20] The term *pangzhuan* is used to refer to cases for which a *yin* rhyme group converts in its

	Basic form	Causative form
東　陽 旁轉	動 'to move, oscillate'	蕩 'to swing, shake, loaf'
文　元 旁轉	存 'to survive, store, exist'	全 'save from damage'
歌　微 旁轉	移 'to change, move, shift'	推 'to push, shove, decline'
幽　宵 旁轉	瘳 'to recover one's health'	療 'to cure, treat'
緝　談 旁轉	淫 'damp, wet'	漸 'to dip, soak immerse'
微　文 對轉	回 'to circle, return'	運 'to circulate, turn'

Wang's (1982) attempt to separate derivational causative verbs from other general causatives making use of sentence structure may help shed light on the nature of the Classical Chinese verb class. In our view, however, it is still doubtful whether the phonological change should be ascribed to only the morphological interpretation or to both the morphological and the syntactic representation.

In addition, Wang (1982) himself admitted that some derivational causative verbs, such as 縋 *zhui*, 警 *jing*, and 鞠 *ju* had a narrower meaning than their basic verbal counterparts. This kind of semantic discrepancy thus led to the question of how it is possible to justify the criteria used to determine the range of meanings of all the relevant entities as we try to

compare and categorize them.[21] And so far, we have not come up with a more satisfactory explanation concerning this kind of lexical problem.

Syntactic representation and causativity

Generally speaking, in Chinese grammar the only type of content word (實詞 *shici*) which can take a noun or noun phrase as its object is the transitive verb. However, if an intransitive verb or a member of another non-verbal word class, such as adjective or noun, is structurally followed by an object, it is considered to be being used in one of two ways, namely, causative and putative, which signify a change in the relationship between the subject and its predicate. What is even more interesting is that a transitive verb can also assume these two functions. For instance,

(5) 嘗人，人死；食狗，狗死。（呂氏春秋）

Chang ren, ren si; *shi* [22] *gou*, gou si.
taste man, man die; eat dog, dog die

'. . . had a person taste (food), that person died; . . . fed the dog, the dog died.'

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[21] As Downer (1959: 261) has pointed out, the many existing cognates make positing a one-to-one correspondence between *qu* and non-*qu* forms problematic at best.

[22] In Modern Mandarin, the character 食 is usually pronounced as *shi* (with second tone) with the meaning of 'to eat' or 'food.' However, it can also be read as *si* (with fourth tone) meaning 'to feed.'

(6) 孟嘗君曰：　"**食之**，比門下之客"
（戰國策 – 齊策）

Meng Chang jun yue: "*shi zhi*,
Meng Chang lord say: "eat him,

bi　　men　　xia　zhi　ke"
compare household under of　guest"

'Lord Meng Chang said: "Feed him the same way as (we) provide to other retainers."'

(7) 沛公旦日**從百餘騎**來見項王（史記 – 項羽本紀）

Pei gong dan　　ri　*cong　bai*
Pei duke morning day　follow hundred

yu　　ji　　lai　jian Xiang　wang
excess cavalry come see　Xiang　king

'On that day the Duke of Pei had more than a hundred cavalry follow him to meet King Xiang (of Chu).'

(8) 吳王濞反，欲**從閩越**，閩越未肯行
（史記 – 東越列傳）

Wu wang Bi fan,　yu　*cong Min*
Wu king　Bi rebel, desire follow Min

Yue, Min Yue wei ken　　　xing
Yue, Min　Yue　not　willing to walk

'King Bi of Wu rebelled and wanted the Min and Yue to follow him, (but) Min and Yue were not willing to go.'

Compare these examples with the following:

(9) 君賜食，必正席先**嘗之**。（論語 – 鄉黨）

Jun ci　　shi, bi　zheng xi
King bestow food, must proper seat

xian *chang　zhi*
first　taste　it

'The King gave (Confucius) food, (he then according protocol) had to taste the food placed before him first.'

(10) 吾**從衆**。（論語 – 子罕）

Wu　*cong　zhong*
I　　follow crowd

'I followed the public.'

Structurally speaking, there is no difference in the pattern "verb + object" as shown (in boldface) in all the above examples. The transitive verbs *shi* 'eat,' *chang* 'taste,' and *cong* 'follow' are followed by objects like *ren* 'man,' *gou* 'dog,' *zhi* 'him or it,' *bai yu ji* 'hundred excess cavalry,' etc. Given the relevant context clues, however, we can see that the patient role which is supposed to belong to the object constituent, as in examples (9) and (10), no longer obtains in examples (5), (6), (7), and (8). Instead, all post-verbal objects in these examples are considered agents, or persons who perform the action.[23]

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[23] The object pronoun *zhi* in (9) refers to 'the food which was bestowed by the king.' And Confucius was the person who, following past practice, would taste the food to guarantee food safety for the king. In contrast, the post-verbal objects *ren* and *gou* in (5) and *zhi* in (6) did not refer to 'things being eaten' here, but rather the 'agents who performed the eating action.'

Although some of the verbs, like 食 *shi*, 飲 *yin*, and 見 *jian*, have two different readings to distinguish one meaning from the other, one cannot avoid relying heavily upon the context clues to get the precise story. Thus, this might again raise the issue of whether the phonological change occurred with only the morphological process or with both morphological and syntactical levels of representation.

Furthermore, when a transitive verb is followed by two objects, namely, direct and indirect objects, we usually interpret the thematic role of the indirect object as either a goal or a source related to the preceding verb. For example,

(11) 遺趙王書。（史記－廉頗藺相如列傳）

    wei *Zhao wang* shu
    send Zhao king letter

    '. . . sent King of Zhao a letter.'

(12) 公攻而奪之幣。（左傳－哀公二十六年）

    Gong gong er duo   *zhi* bi
    Duke attack and take away them coin

    'The Duke attacked and took away their money.'

The indirect objects 趙王 *Zhao Wang* in (11) and 之 *zhi* in (12) are considered the 'goal' and the 'source' of the verbs *wei* 遺 and *duo* 奪, respectively. However, there are some instances in Classical Chinese in which the indirect object no longer fills these 'source' or 'goal' roles. Instead, it is thought to develop a causative sense

related to the preceding verb, as in examples (13), (14), and (15).

(13) 均之二策寧許以負秦曲。（史記－廉頗藺相如列傳）

    Jun   zhi er ce   ning
    compare this two scheme rather

    xu   yi fu   *Qin* qu
    promise with bear/carry Qin false

    'If you compare these two schemes, I'd rather promise (the jade) in order to put the blame on Qin.'

(14) 國老皆賀子文，子文飲之酒。（左傳－晋楚城濮之戰）

    Guo lao jie he   Ziwen,
    state old all congratulate Ziwen,

    Ziwen yin *zhi*   jiu
    Ziwen drink them wine

    'Senior statesmen all congratulate Ziwen. Ziwen (then) had them drink wine.'

(15) 晋侯飲趙盾酒。（左傳－宣公二年）

    Jin hou   yin *Zhao Dun* jiu
    Jin marquis drink Zhao Dun wine

    'Marquis of Jin made Zhao Dun drink wine.'

In example (13), the verb 負 *fu* in the double object construction 負秦曲 *fu [Qin] [qu]* is read as having the meaning of 'causing someone (i.e., *Qin*) to carry/bear the blame (*qu*).' In examples (14) and (15),

the verb 飲 *yin* in 飲之酒 *yin [zhi] [jiu]*,[24] and 飲趙盾酒 *yin [Zhao Dun] [jiu]* are read as 'having all senior statesmen drink wine' and 'making/having Zhao Dun drink wine,' respectively.

Instead of viewing the above three instances as having a double object construction, we might to some degree perceive each of them as being a serial verb construction, a structure which consists of two or more verb phrases or clauses juxtaposed without any marker indicating what the relationship is between them.[25] Or we might even view them as having a pivotal construction, whereby the direct object of the first verb is simultaneously the subject of the second verb.

NP   V₁   **NP**   V₂ (NP)

The surface sentence structures like *fu Qin qu, yin zhi jiu*, and *yin Zhao Dun jiu* in the above cases should be construed as having a causative sense. Thus, semantically speaking, *fu Qin qu* is, in fact, <u>*shi Qin fu qu*</u> 'have Qin bear the blame,' *yin zhi jiu* is also <u>*shi zhi yin jiu*</u> 'have all senior statesmen drink wine,' and *yin Zhao Dun jiu* is actually <u>*shi Zhaodun yin jiu*</u> 'make Zhao Dun drink wine.' The causative usage in examples (13)–(15) results from the contiguity of the implied or insinuated verb 使 *shi* 'to cause'[26] and its clausal objects (i.e., 秦負曲 *Qin fu qu* 'Qin

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[24] *Zhi* used here is an object pronoun referring to 'all senior statesmen.'

[25] The definition of serial verb construction here accords with Li and Thompson (1981: 594).

[26] Or we may think of this implicit *shi* as a zero causative morpheme.

bearing the blame,' 之 (which is 國老) 飲酒 *zhi yin jiu* 'All senior statesmen drinking wine,' and 趙盾飲酒 *Zhao Dun yin jiu* 'Zhao Dun drinking wine').

The most common causative usage is known to occur with intransitive verbs. Although some people have tried to resolve this unusual structure (i.e., intransitive verb + object) via a semantic approach, it is still difficult to determine the range of inclusive meanings which can be accepted. Hence, we are inclined to ascribe to a causative syntax which views a causative form or phrase as a valency-increasing voice operation adding one argument. Thus, if the original verb is intransitive, then the causative construction as a whole is transitive.[27]

The causative usage usually triggers a change in the relationship between the post-verbal noun and its role in the sentence, as seen in (16)–(20):

(16) 野人莫敢入王。（史記－楚世家）

yeren   mo gan *ru* wang
wild-man not dare enter king

'None of the peasants dared to let the king come in.'

(17) (華元) 登子反之床，起之。（左傳－宣公十五年）

(Hua Yuan) deng   Zifan zhi
(Hua Yuan) mount/step up Zifan of

chuang, *qi*   zhi
bed,   rise up him

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[27] Likewise, if the original verb is transitive, the causative is ditransitive, i.e., to eat (something) → to make (someone) eat (something), to feed someone something.

'(Hua Yuan) climbed up Zifan's bed, made him wake up.'

(18) 進不滿千錢，坐之堂下。（漢書 – 高帝紀）

jin　bu　man　qian　　qian,　*zuo*
enter not　full　 thousand money, sit

zhi　tang　xia
them hall　under

'(Those who) sent less than a thousand (in coins?), seated them in the courtyard.'

(19) 畢禮而歸之。（史記 – 廉頗藺相如 列傳）

bi　　li　　　er　*gui*　zhi
conclude ceremony and　return him

'(After) the ceremony was concluded, (they) sent him back.'

(20) 項伯殺人，臣活之。（鴻門宴）

Xiang Bo sha ren, chen　　*huo*　zhi
Xiang Bo kill man, vassal　alive　him

'Xiang Bo killed a man, but I spared his life.'

In examples (16)–(20), since the verbs *ru* 'enter,' *qi* 'get up,' *zuo* 'sit,' *gui* 'return,' and *huo* 'alive' are all intransitive, they are not supposed to be followed by an object. From context clues, however, we know that the post verbal nouns and/or pronouns, such as 王 *wang* in example (16) and 之 *zhi* [28] in examples (17)–(19) are all

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understood as the agents who carry out or perform the action.

In example (20), 臣活之 *chen huo zhi*,[29] if we were to omit the pre-verbal noun *chen* 臣,[30] the sentence would then turn into the pattern "intransitive verb + N/NP" (活之 *huo zhi*) just like those found in (16)–(19). And if we go even further and reverse the order of such structure so that it reads as "N/NP + intransitive verb" (之活 *zhi huo*), we find that there is no change in the agent role played by the N/NP *zhi*.[31] The only difference between *zhi huo* and *huo zhi* lies in the causative reading of *huo zhi*. While 活之 *huo zhi* (in this case, *huo Xiang Bo*) conveys the causative reading *shi Xiang Bo huo* 'have Xiang Bo stay alive,' the reversed order phrase 之活 *zhi huo*, which can be read as *Xiang Bo huo*, meaning 'Xiang Bo stays alive' lacks this causative sense.

Based on the above observation, it seems that we need to advance our analysis to explain some of the even more problematic cases. Take examples (21)– (24):

(21) 擊李曲軍破之。（史記 – 曹相國世 家）

ji　Li Qu jun　*po*　zhi
strike Li Qu army break them

'. . . attacked Li Qu's troops and defeated them.'

(22) 破宋肥讎，而世負其禍矣。（戰國策 – 燕策）

po Song fei   chou,   er   shi
break Song fatten enemy, and world

fu   qi   huo   yi
bear/carry its calamity PRT[32]

'. . . defeated Song, fatten the enemy, then the world suffered from this disaster.'

(23) 楚人敗徐于婁林。（春秋 – 僖公十五年）

Chu ren   *bai*   Xu yu Loulin
Chu people defeat Xu at Loulin

'The people of Chu defeated Xu at Loulin.'

(24) 公子友帥師敗莒師于酈。(春秋 – 僖公元年）

Gongzi You shuai shi   bai   Ju
Gongzi You lead army defeat Ju

shi   yu Li
army at Li

'Gongzi You led troops and defeated the troop of Ju at Li.'

In Modern Mandarin, since neither 破 *po* nor 敗 *bai* can usually appear by themselves, they are considered bound morphemes signifying some sort of resultative complementation. In Classical

Chinese, however, not only can each of them function as a real intransitive verb, they tend to behave like a transitive verb by carrying with them an NP object. Hence, most people prefer to interpret the latter structure as employing a causative usage.

Unlike many scholars, Cikoski (1970) approaches these ambiguous cases from another standpoint. By taking a closer look at the nature of the verb itself, he concludes that it might not be necessary to treat some types of verb as either intransitive or transitive. Instead it could be regarded as another type of verb, namely, ergative.

Given the above-mentioned semantic relationship between the intransitive verb and its post-verbal NP object, we find that Cikoski's (1970) suggestion quite attractive. To illustrate the connection between these two concepts, let us take the following patterns as examples:

(25) X 敗 Y； X 破 Y
    X *bai* Y； X *po* Y
'X defeats Y' or 'X causes Y to be defeated.'

(26) Y 敗；   Y 破
    Y *bai*；   Y *po*
'Y is defeated.'

As is the case in example (20), the pattern *X bai Y* and *X po Y* in (25) conveys a causative meaning. Thus, *X bai/po Y* is indeed 'X defeats Y' or 'X causes Y to be defeated.' If, by the same token, we omit the subject X in (25), then both sentences can be read as 敗 *Y bai Y* and 破 *Y po Y*, respectively. And if we further reverse the order of *bai Y* and *po Y* in (25), as suggested earlier, the result would be *Y 敗*

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Y bai and *Y 破 Y po*, which comprises the exact same 'N/NP (here is Y) + verb' pattern seen in (26) with the only difference being an implied causative sense in the case of (25).

That is to say, in both (25) and (26), regardless of the placement of the verbs 敗 *bai* and 破 *po* before or after the object Y, the object Y still carries the same thematic role referring to the person who is in a state of being defeated. By using this kind of analogy, we might be able to distinguish the intransitive verb from the ergative one. And verbs like *bai* and *po* can be thought of as ergative verbs bearing a certain relation to the causative usage. Now let us consider another example:

(27) 臣能令君勝[33] (史記 – 孫子吳起列傳)

    chen neng ling jun sheng
    vassal can cause lord win

    'I can make you win.'

If an analogous causative reading were to apply to the verb 勝 *sheng* 'to win'[34] in (27), we might come up with a sentence structure like 臣能勝君 *Chen neng sheng jun*. But the meaning of such a sentence would be 'I can win against/surpass you,' without any causative meaning.

In this case, it is apparent that we cannot place the verb *sheng* before or after the NP 君 *jun* at will since the required agent role

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[33] In sentence (27), the causative reading is marked explicitly by the verb 令 *ling* 'to cause' which is equivalent to the verb *shi*.
[34] Its meaning is opposite to that of *bai* 敗 'to be defeated.'

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of *jun* in (27) would no longer be maintained in the structure *Chen neng sheng jun*. Hence, the verb *sheng*, considered the antonym of *bai*, could not be considered an ergative verb and thus bears no relation to the causative usage.

Because Chinese tends to allow the omission of subjects and objects, there are some cases where verbs like *po* and *bai* seem to lose their related arguments (i.e., subject and object), as in examples (28) and (29):

(28) 起兵與吳西攻梁,**破**棘壁。（史記 – 楚元王世家）

    qi   bing yu Wu xi
    build/set up troop with Wu west

    gong Liang, *po* Jibi
    attack Liang break Jibi

    '. . . set up troops and cooperate with Wu, attacked Liang in the west, and defeated it at Jibi.'

(29) 伐魏,**敗**縁澤。（史記 – 趙世家）

    fa   Wei, *bai* Yuanze
    attack Wei defeat Yuanze

    '. . . attacked Wei and defeated it at Yuanze.'

Some people try to resolve such problems by using the so-called progressive (順裁) or regressive (逆裁) ellipsis (Yu, 1986: 110–111). However, there is often no consensus on the allocation of words in dispute. In view of the real nature of these presumed ergative verbs (*po* and *bai*), we see that their related arguments—梁 *Liang* in (28) and 魏 *Wei* in (29)—would still

hold the same meaning and thematic role no matter what types of ellipsis we apply.

The other two word classes which are used in causative constructions are adjectives and nouns. Yet both types of words also have a putative usage. Since the structural pattern of the causative and putative usages is quite similar, we have to rely on the context to resolve some equivocal interpretations.

In the case of the adjective, trying to employ phonological changes to distinguish its putative usage from the causative one is of little use. Compare examples (30)–(34):

(30) 工師得大木則王喜，... 匠人斲而**小**之，則王怒。（孟子－梁惠王下）

gongshi   de   da   mu   ze
work-teacher obtain big wood then

Wang xi, ...   jiangren zhuo
king pleased, ... workman carve

er   *xiao* zhi, ze   wang nu
and small it, then king angry

'A craftsman got a large tree, so the king was pleased, . . . the carpenter carved it and made it small, then the king was furious.'

(31) 孔子登東山而**小**魯, 登泰山而**小**天下。（論語）

Kongzi   deng   Dongshan er
Confucius ascend Dongshan then

xiao Lu, deng   Taishan er
small Lu, ascend Taishan then

xiao tianxia
small world

'Confucius ascended Dongshan and thought the country of Lu was small; he ascended Taishan and thought the world was small.'

(32) 管仲，世所稱賢臣， 然孔子**小**之。（史記－管仲傳）

Guan Zhong, shi   suo   cheng
Guan Zhong, world by which praise

xian   chen, ran Kongzi
worthy vassal, but Confucius

xiao zhi
small him

'Guan Zhong – the world praised him as a worthy vassal, but Confucius thought little of him.'

(33) **少**君之費，**寡**君之欲，雖無糧而乃足。（莊子－山木）

shao jun zhi fei,   gua
little lord of consumption, decrease

jun zhi yu,   sui   wu liang
lord of desire, although no grain

er   nai   zu
and then sufficient

'Reduce your expenditure, decrease your desire. Although there were no provisions, you still felt sufficient.'

(34) 左右素習知蘇秦， 皆**少**之，弗信。（史記－蘇秦列傳）

zuo you su   xi   zhi
left right originally accustom know

Su Qin, jie *shao* zhi, fu   xin
Su Qin, all little him, not trust

'The attendants had known Su Qin for a long time. All of them thought

little of him, and they did not believe in him.'

As far as the context is concerned, examples (30) and (33) are considered to have a causative usage, whereas examples (31), (32), and (34) make use of a putative construction.

From the words 小 *xiao* and 少 *shao*, which are relatively close in meaning, we notice that the range of meanings in their putative usage is much broader than that in their causative usage. In all the putative cases, i.e., (31), (32), and (34), the meanings of *xiao* 'small' and *shao* 'few, little' have been extended to denote almost a different word, 'despise or look down upon.' The causative usages in (30) and (33), on the other hand, seem to cling to the original meaning of both words. Nonetheless, we are still not certain whether this kind of distinction can be replicated in all cases.

With respect to the noun, the discrepancy between its causative and putative usages is much more refined. Let us consider the following examples:

(35) 爾欲吳王我乎？（左傳－定公十年）

er yu *Wu wang* wo hu?
you desire Wu king me PRT?[35]

'Do you want to let me be King of Wu? (causative reading)'
'Do you want to regard me as King of Wu? (putative reading)'

(36) 孟嘗君客我。（戰國策－齊策）

Meng Chang jun *ke* wo
Meng Chang lord guest me

'Lord Meng Chang let me be his retainer. (causative reading)'
'Lord Meng Chang regards me as his retainer. (putative reading)'

Even given a relevant discourse context,[36] there is still disagreement on whether these two sentences are being used in a causative or putative manner. This might be attributable to the characteristics of the Chinese language itself. As Norman (1988: 84–87) has pointed out, "in the virtual absence of morphology, grammatical processes in Classical Chinese are almost totally syntactic." Even though most people posit the existence of word classes, most words in Classical Chinese may function as more than one part of speech depending on their place in the sentence,[37] which results in the possibility of multiple interpretations of a single structure.

Besides, the ambiguity regarding the two usages might be further complicated by the equivocal definitions of the putative usage itself. As suggested by Chou (1962) and He and Yang (1992), the pattern of the putative usage in relation to the object can be further divided into two kinds, namely, the pattern 視/以賓（爲）動 *shi/yi bin (wei) dong* 'to regard an object as' and the

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[35] *hu* is used as an interrogative particle here.

[36] The term 'discourse' here is broadly defined as "the context in which a given sentence occurs, whether it is a conversation, a paragraph, a story, or some other kind of language situation" (Li and Thompson, 1981: 100).

[37] There is also the possibility of 'class overlap,' referring to cases where some words may belong to more than one class simultaneously (Norman, 1988).

pattern 稱 賓 爲 *cheng bin wei* 'to call/name an object as.'

In our view, however, there is no significant difference between the definitions of the two patterns above. And we are not certain that such a distinction within the putative usage will help resolve the following instances:

(37) 縱江東父兄憐而王我，我何面目見之（史記－項羽本紀）

zong Jiangdong fu xiong
though Jiangdong father elder brother

lian er *wang* wo, wo he mian mu
fond and king me, I how face eye

jian zhi
meet them

'Even though those elders and/or brothers cherish me and regard/name me as king, how can I go back and confront them? (i.e., I am too ashamed to go back and confront them.)'

(38) 先破秦入咸陽者，王之。（史記－項羽本紀）

xian po Qin ru Xianyang
first break Qin enter Xianyang

zhe, *wang* zhi
REL, king him

'The person who defeats Qin and enters Xianyang first will be regarded as/named king.'

There is also disagreement on whether the two sentences (37) and (38) are being used in a causative or putative manner despite relevant context clues. Provided that the examples (37) and (38) are read with a putative interpretation, we might apply the notion of contrast between irrealis and realis [38] as a means of explaining their subtle distinction. And either of the interpretations should be pertinent to the subject to whom the meaning of the verb 以 爲 *yiwei* 'to regard, consider' is assigned. That is to say, the event 王之 *wang zhi* expressed in (38) is *unrealized* or *might happen*, whereas the event 王 我 *wang wo* expressed in (37) is *realized*, or it is considered real as far as the subject (i.e., *zhong jiang dong fu xiong*) of the first verb is concerned.

Conclusion

As seen in the above discussions, even given the possible word-derivation explanation of the causative in Classical Chinese, it is still very important to make use of all different linguistic factors (i.e., phonological, morphological, and syntactical), together with relevant context clues or discourse, as ways to re-analyze and differentiate problematic instances of causative usage. Even though we have yet to find a more elaborate account of the distinction between causative and putative usages, the contrast between realis and irrealis might be employed as a means to clarify the subtle differences in the putative usage.

Due to the limitations of our scope and of the materials obtained so far, we suspect there are still other cases of the causative usage not covered by this paper. Nevertheless, we hope that some of the arguments presented here may, to a certain

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[38] To borrow the terms used by Li and Thompson (1981: 611–621).

extent, be useful in the further study of causative usage in Classical Chinese.

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