The Icelandic Causation of Experience Construction
Implications for Syntax and Semantics

Anton Karl Ingason

University of Pennsylvania

ingason@ling.upenn.edu

The Icelandic Causation of Experience construction (CEx), shown in (1), inolves a triggering event that causes a morphosyntactically nominal 'experience event' where the experiencer can be mentioned as a dative argument of the experience denoting noun. Its passive variant contains a *by*-phrase, which is obligatory in contrast to the *by*-phrase of clausal passives (and other adjunct material, more or less).

(1)   a.   Dansinn   var [stelpunum   (góð)   skemmtun].   (CEx, Predicate)
                  dance.the.NOM was [girls.the.DAT (good) entertainment.NOM]
                  'The dancing entertained the girls (well)'
        b.   Stelpunum   var [skemmtun   *(af dansinum)].
                  girls.the.DAT was [entertainment.NOM *(by dance.the)] (CEx, Passive)
                  'The girls were entertained by the dancing'
        c.   Stelpunum   var [skemmt   (af dansinum)].
                  girls.the.DAT was [entertained.PASS (by dance.the)] (Clausal Passive)

The requirement that the causing event is expressed overtly in the nominal variant provides a window into the difference between clauses and noun phrases in the context of causatives. The causing event in the clause is associated with structurally present material which introduces the causer (or an overt manifestation of the causing event itself) (cf. Parsons 1990, Pylkkanen 2008). From the point of view of adjunct syntax, an obligatory *by*-phrase is surprising. Therefore, I pursue an explanation in terms of an ill-formed introduction of the causing event in the noun phrase variant. This approach may offer independent evidence for what it takes to license existential closure of a Davidsonian event variable.

The CEx construction also has consequences for the theory of Appl-introduced experiencers (as developed by Pylkkanen 2008). The construction robustly and productively licenses such arguments in a noun phrase context, without a transparent mapping from all the potentially corresponding verbal structures, suggesting independence of Appl and verbs. Finally, I consider the behavior of the CEx construction in intensional contexts and how these relate to the overall analysis.