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# *Letting in Romance*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The analysis of language allows for a deeper understanding of the interaction between conceptual representations and language structures. Causative constructions are a particularly great example of the relationship between form and meaning. Indeed, there are three main types of causative constructions: lexical, morphological, and syntactic (or periphrastic). All three types are known to form a *continuum* (Shibatani and Pardeshi 2002), in which the simpler ones (lexical) map onto situations of direct causation, while the more complex ones (syntactic) are known to map onto more complex configurations sometimes involving three distinct entities. In this dissertation, I investigate two Romance causative verbs: the French verb *laisser* and the Spanish verb *dejar*. Each of the two verbs have causal meanings (akin to *let*) and can appear in two distinct complex causative constructions, as in (1) below for *laisser* and (2) for *dejar*.

- (1) a. Max laisse Robin conduire.  
Max let.ps Robin drive.INF  
'Max lets Robin drive.'
- b. Max laisse conduire Robin.  
Max let.ps drive.INF Robin  
'Max lets Robin drive.'
- (2) a. Gustavo deja que Javier pinte.  
Gustavo let.ps that Javier paint.INF  
'Gustavo lets Javier paint.'
- b. Gustavo deja pintar a Javier.  
Gustavo let.ps paint.INF ACC Javier  
'Gustavo lets Javier paint.'

While previous work mentions the existence of differences between the two structures (Borel 1972; Kayne 1975; Enghels and Roegiest 2012a, 2012b), there is to this day no clear consensus as to (i) what exactly these structures are, and (ii) in what way they influence the way(s) speakers of each language interpret them. Furthermore, none of the previous approaches seek to further our understanding of LETTING through the lens of Romance languages. While this dissertation addresses the two structures and their (potential) mappings, it focuses on the causal value of the verbs *laisser* and *dejar*, which do not behave like their counterpart *let*.

This dissertation aims at providing a better understanding of the causal notion of LET through two Romance verbs of letting. So far, the literature on causation fail to provide an account for LET: while earlier approaches à la Dowty (1979) do not discriminate between different causal notions, force-theoretic approaches argue for a tripartite categorisation of causal notions, which they split between CAUSE, ENABLE, and PREVENT (Wolff and Song 2003; Wolff 2007). If *laisser* is to be understood as an ENABLE verb, then we expect it to pattern like *permettre*, and yet, I show in this dissertation that it actually does not. Therefore, either ENABLE is too constrained to include *laisser*, or *laisser* is not an ENABLE verb. I argue for a separate treatment of *laisser*, and possibly *let*-verbs in general, in which they are categorised under a causal notion related to but distinct from ENABLE, namely LET.

In turn, this new understanding of LET will further our knowledge of Romance *let*-verbs, which all seem to exhibit different patterns with respect to their complement and argument selections. Indeed, most *let*-verbs across Romance allow for a biclausal construction in which the *let*-verb (be it Italian *lasciare*, Spanish *dejar*, or Portuguese *deixar*) selects for a complementizer clause in the subjunctive. However, French *laisser* simply fails to do so, and instead can only select for non-finite complements. These morphosyntactic differences have received little attention, despite the abundance of work on other types of syntactic causative constructions (mainly *faire*- and *fare*-causatives). Considering that the use of the subjunctive in Romance is a long-standing puzzle in the literature, additional knowledge on verbs that can select for it may shed a new light on the matter.

We will begin, in Chapter 2, by looking at previous approaches to causation, and how they treat the difference between *make* and *let*. We will see that

dependency theories as presented in Lewis (1974) and Dowty (1979) are not quite equipped to treat *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives. Conversely, force theories do allow for more fine-grained divisions between causal notions by including notions like letting, helping, or preventing (Talmy 1988; Wolff and Song 2003; Wolff and Thorstad 2017).

Then, in Chapter 3, we will be taking a closer look at Romance causatives, which have received a lot of attention in the past decades. Indeed, the constructions that Kayne (1975) calls *Faire-Infinitives* (which exist across several Romance languages, mainly French, Italian, and Catalan) realize their embedded subject in an unexpected postinfinitival position. While both *laisser* and *dejar* share this peculiarity, they have nonetheless remained rather undiscussed.

The syntax-semantics interface for *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives will be addressed in Chapter 4. Building on the work of Enghels and Roegiest (2012b), Donazzan, Raffy, and Heusinger (2020), and Donazzan et al. (2021), we will see that the two verbs are able to realize three different types of causal configurations: *authorize*, *not-intervene*, and *dispositional letting*. Whether these interpretations are triggered by the syntactic structure of the constructions will be treated in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 gives the results of the three experiments conducted in order to understand the role played by morphosyntax in the interpretation and processing of *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives.

Lastly, Chapter 6 concludes this thesis. I propose to represent the three configurations encoded by *laisser* and *dejar* using causal models (Pearl 2000a; Pearl and Mackenzie 2018). This allows us to have a unified representation for all three configurations, which include the notions of dispositions, would-be prevention and double prevention introduced in Chapter 2.

The main results of the work undertaken in this dissertation are the following: firstly, there is no deep understanding of the syntax, the semantics, or the syntax-semantics interface of *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives. In Chapter 2, we attempted to compare *LET* to its closest concept, *ENABLE* (as defined in Wolff and Song 2003), but all it did was show that they are, in fact, not as similar as we could have initially thought. Additionally, we describe the two constructions and their interpretations by borrowing terms from other configurations, for instance **would-be prevention** from causation by omission (McGrath 2005), double prevention from *ENABLE* (Wolff and Thorstad 2017). This means that there is a need for a clear understanding of the meaning(s) of *laisser* and *dejar*.

Despite this lack of understanding, this work brings new generalizations about letting that take into account language-specific differences. For instance, *laisser* and *dejar* make their would-be prevention component explicit in the types of *laisseur* that they can select, which English *let* does not appear to do.

Lastly, these new generalizations are accounted for by the model for *laisser* and *dejar* proposed in Chapter 6. This model manages to represent counterfactuality, with an appropriate representation of causation.

## Chapter 2

# Theories of Causation

In this chapter, I will be looking at the differences between existing causal configurations and their available realizations in language. For the time being, the main contrast I am interested in is the one in (3) below:

- (3) The *make* vs. *let* issue:
- a. Sally made Peter clean his room.
  - b. Sally let Peter clean his room.

Both sentences in (3) are syntactic causative constructions (I will define those in more detail in Chapter 3). While these two sentences in appear to be structurally close, we intuitively know that they are not synonymous: Sally's action in (3a) differs from Sally's action in (3b). My goal is to show how the various approaches to causation account for this contrast.

Theories of causation come in two main different flavors. Dependency theories (whether they are philosophical approaches or linguistic ones) present causation as a relation between two objects, in which one causally depends on the other. I will present these in section 2.1. The second type is transference theories (also called *production theories* in Copley and Wolff (2014) or *force theories* in Wolff and Barbey (2015)): force and the transmission of energy are considered central to the very notion of causation. These will be discussed in section 2.2. Finally, in section 2.3, I will discuss how these previous theories inform our knowledge and understanding of *laisser* and *dejar*, and I will present the challenges that we face with these verbs.



## 2.1 Dependency theories

### 2.1.1 A bit of philosophy

#### Lewis' counterfactuals

One way that causation has been defined in the philosophical literature is as a counterfactual relation between two propositions. Counterfactuality is defined as the quality of being contrary to facts: in other words, it means thinking in terms of possible alternatives and different worlds. For this reason, conditionals are often defined as being counterfactual: "If I won the lottery, I could travel the world" refers to situation that does not exist (I have not won the lottery) and its potential outcomes.

To an extent, causal relations can be understood in a similar way. For instance, Von Wright (1963) points out that for a speaker to say that *x opened the window*, she must hold the two following beliefs: (i) that the window was not open (or closed) before *x* acted and (ii) that the window was open after *x* acted. But in order for this relation between *x*'s action and the window becoming open to be a counterfactual one, the speaker must also hold the belief that the window would not have become open if it was not for *x*'s action, and that it would have remained closed. Therefore, one can only say that *c* caused *e* (as in (4) below) in the case that **if *c* had not happened, then *e* would/could not have happened either**, or, in other words,  $\neg c \square \rightarrow \neg e$  (hence (5)).

- (4) a. The poison killed the Queen.  
b. Drinking the poison caused the Queen to die.

For David Lewis (1974), much like for von Wright, causation can be explained in terms of counterfactuals. In fact, he defines **causal dependence** using the following counterfactual conditionals: "if *c* and *e* are (distinct) actual events, [...] then *e* causally depends on *c* iff, if *c* had not been, *e* never had existed" (1974: 635)<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, (4) entails (5) below.

- (5) If the Queen had not drunk the poison, she would not have died.

While we clearly know what is going on in (5) (i.e., that a) the Queen is dead, and b) that she did drink the poison), understanding the mechanism at play

1. Lewis then goes to point out that causal dependence entails causation, in the sense that if *e* would not have happened if it was not for *c*, then *c* is a cause for *e*.

here is not so easy. To do so, we must imagine another world in which the Queen did not, in fact, drink that poison. In that world, she would not have been killed by it. Being mortal, she would probably die later on in life, but at  $t$ , she would still be alive. Having made that connection in our different world in which the poison is absent, we can safely assume, in our current world, that the poison was what killed the Queen (that, added to our knowledge that poison can — and does — kill). Thus, such an approach requires the ability to imagine different courses of events, in order to postulate “what could have been” (or not) if the situation was different. This means that, in the world in which the Queen drinks the poison and die, the dying event is dependent on the drinking event.

In his approach to causation, Lewis (1974) defines it using a counterfactual relation between propositions about events. His idea that counterfactuality should be a decisive criterion is anchored in the following quote from Hume: “We may define a cause to be an object followed by another, and where all the objects, similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to the second. Or, in other words, where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed”<sup>2</sup> (Hume 1748, Section VII).

It is the second part of Hume’s proposal that Lewis takes as the basis for his own approach to counterfactual dependencies, although he slightly refines the definition, notably by adding *possible worlds*. The use he makes of possible-world semantics is one of comparison between possible worlds and the actual world, in terms of *comparative similarity*.

$A \Box \rightarrow C$  is true (at a world  $w$ ) iff either (1) there are no possible  $A$ -worlds (in which case  $A \Box \rightarrow C$  is vacuous), or (2) some  $A$ -world where  $C$  holds is closer (to  $w$ ) than is any  $A$ -world where  $C$  does not hold. In other words, a counterfactual is nonvacuously true iff it takes less of a departure from actuality to make the consequent true along with the antecedent than it does to make the antecedent true without the consequent.

(Lewis 1974: 634)

2. These two principles are, in fact, not quite synonymous, even though Hume presents them as being the same thing “in other words”. The first principle contains the term “all”, which defines a necessary relation between the two objects: in any case where  $A$  appears,  $C$  holds. The second principle makes no such claim, but instead, it introduces the counterfactual relation that Lewis then makes use of.

This means that worlds in which both A and C hold are closer to actuality than the ones in which A occurs without C. Having defined these counterfactual relations, he proposes to apply it to two events that form a causal relation: for two events  $c$  and  $e$ ,  $e$  causally depends on  $c$  if and only if, if  $c$  were to occur  $e$  would occur. Likewise, if  $c$  were not to occur,  $e$  would not occur.

On another note, and while Lewis makes no specific mention to temporality in his paper, this notion of dependence raises the issue of the temporal relation between cause and effect. Indeed, if  $c$  must have occurred for  $e$  to occur, then  $e$  cannot precede  $c$  (they can either be successive or co-temporal).

Lewis' approach to causation sounds quite straightforward. There are nonetheless some issues with it. Notably, Dowty (1979: 104–107) points out several additional issues, mainly based on the fact that painting causal relations as simple, straightforward connections between two events, in which one, when it occurs, is followed by the occurrence of the second, fails to account for more complex scenarios. For instance, Lewis does not propose any explanation for what he calls *epiphenomena*, which occurs when  $c$  and  $e$  have a common cause but are not causally related. Let us imagine I have a very old oven that smokes up the room every time I turn it on. I turn it on ( $x$ ), it smokes up the room ( $c$ ), my cake is baked ( $e$ ). What is predicted by Lewis is that  $e$  counterfactually depends on  $c$ , considering that my cake would not have been baked if there had not been smoke in the room ( $\neg c \Box \rightarrow \neg e$ ). It is true that there would not be any smoke in my apartment if I had not turned my oven on, and, in that regard, the smoke is an effect of my oven being on. Thus, if the appearance of the smoke had not happened, then my cake being baked would not have happened. But no one in their right mind would claim that it is the smoke that caused by cake to be baked, because it is in fact not: here,  $c$  and  $e$  are merely correlated by being effects  $x$  (my oven being on). Therefore, what we want here instead of  $c \Box \rightarrow e$  is  $x \Box \rightarrow c$  and  $x \Box \rightarrow e$ .

Additionally, Lewis' 1974 counterfactual approach does not account for the phenomena of *preemption* and *overdetermination*. Preemption is explained by Dowty in the following way: say there are two persons, Jack and George, trying to kill Zane. To do so, they both choose to put poison in Zane's coffee. But Jack does not know what George is up to, and George does not know either about Jack's plans. Jack pours his poison first ( $c_1$ ), and a couple of minutes later, George does too ( $c_2$ ). George's poison is different from Jack's, and it actually cancels out the effect of Jack's, making it inefficient while remaining itself fully

lethal. Zane drinks the coffee and dies (*e*). While, if asked, most people would say that the cause of Zane's death was George's poison, the counterfactual approach does not yield such results. Indeed, "if *c* had not occurred then *e* would not have occurred either" is not satisfied here: if George had not used his poison, then Jack's poison would not have been made inefficient, and Zane would have died from drinking it. Furthermore, Jack's poison cannot be considered a cause either, since Zane ended up dying without its occurrence. There is thus no proper cause to this effect in such a scenario, unless one adds an additional (covert) event where Zane drinks the poison (*c*<sub>3</sub>), such that if Zane had not drunk the coffee, then he would not have died (as proposed in Dowty).

Overdetermination, on the other hand, occurs when two separate causes can qualify as "the sole cause" because they both are independently sufficient; each of them could individually bring about the result without the occurrence of the other. In a scenario where two fires start at the same time in two different parts of a building, and in which the firefighters fail to get there on time to stop the fire, one can claim the house would have burnt down regardless of the occurrence of either of the two fires – one of them would have sufficed. Maybe the process would have been slower, but without any outside intervention to stop the fire, the building would still have burnt. In later work, Lewis proposes to refine his theory to account for preemption and overdetermination, by introducing the notion of change in the causal relation – that is, that if *c* had not happened, then *e* would not have occurred at all or at a different time or in a different manner than it actually did (2000: 187).

Now that I have introduced Lewis' dependency theory, let us turn again to example (3):

- a. Sally made Peter clean his room.
- b. Sally let Peter clean his room.

If one takes Lewis' definition of causation as the right one, the two sentences above express causal dependencies: in both cases, Peter cleaning his room (*e*) would not have occurred if it was not for Sally's action (*c*). The English verb *let* can thus be understood as causative verb. This is shown in more details in (6) below, in which (6a) entails (6b):

- (6) a. The flight attendant let the passengers get on the plane.
- b. If the flight attendant had not let them, the passengers would not

have gotten on the plane.

We here have a situation quite similar (although less dramatic) to (5) at the beginning of the section: in the actual world, the passengers got on the plane after the action of the flight attendant (who possibly motioned them to board). In the hypothetical world in which the flight attendant had not let them onto the plane (because of a safety concern, for instance), they simply would not have been able to board. However, one might wonder: did the flight attendant **do** anything? She might have motioned them in, or told them to board. But the passengers might have also grown tired of waiting outside in the rain, and they were eager to board, maybe the flight attendant did not “do” anything, and instead, she was content for things to run their course. There is no answer to such a question in Lewis (1974), mainly because Lewis was proposing a definition for causation as a general notion and was not interested in the different causal configurations that exist. Two possible routes can now be taken: either we amend Lewis’ counterfactual approach in order to include the notion of letting, or we need to use a different approach to causation altogether.

### **Causation by omission**

As we saw above with example (6), there are instances in which the **absence** of an event leads to the occurrence of an effect. Let us imagine a situation in which I ask my friend to keep an eye on my food in the oven while I run to the supermarket. I specifically tell them to turn the oven off if they see my food starts being overcooked or burnt, and they agree to do so. While I am gone, my friend falls asleep, and my food burns. If I were to tell someone my story, I could use a sentence like (7) without it being false:

(7) My friend not turning off the oven caused my food to burn.

However, one can contrast (7) with the following sentence in (8): while the event description “my friend not turning off the oven” is acceptable as a subject of verbs like *cause* and *make*, an Agent is not.

(8) #My friend caused my food to burn.

This phenomenon is known as **causation by omission** (Beebee 2004; McGrath 2005); the omission of an event appears to trigger a related event. But can it be said that this omission **caused** the related event? At first glance, it seems to be

an issue for Lewis' theory, much like our plane example above in (6). Indeed, if it is true that "*e* depends causally on *c* iff, if *c* had not been, *e* never had existed" (1974: 635), in which both *c* and *e* are events, then we cannot possibly explain (7), for two different reasons: (i) an omission is not an event, it is actually the absence of one, and (ii) the burning of the food would have happened nonetheless, even if we completely take my friend and their forgetfulness out of the picture.

We may say that I would not have left my house if my friend had not been there, or maybe I would not have put my food in my oven before leaving. So, in actuality, what caused my food to burn was staying in the oven for too long, my friend did not take it, put it on the stove and burn it themselves, neither did they directly burn it with a flamethrower. If I had not asked them to keep an eye on it and had left to the supermarket, my food would have burnt just the same. Thus, technically, the burning of the food is not causally dependent on my friend falling asleep. This leads to what McGrath (2005) calls "the causation by omission dilemma": either there is no such thing as causation by omission — meaning that the omission and the related event in (7) cannot actually be considered to be causally related in the way that Lewis defines it — or it is far more common than we think it is, in which case omissions can be understood as causes under certain circumstances. Lewis' theory can possibly be adapted to account for causation by omission if the cause *c* from Lewis is replaced by an omission *o*, such that  $o \square \rightarrow e$  (McGrath's counterfactual proposal, 2005: 132). McGrath adds that if an actual event  $C_o$ <sup>3</sup> had occurred, then *e* would **not** have occurred. This is exemplified below in (9).

- (9) a. ??My friend turning off my oven caused my food not to burn.  
 b. My friend turning off my oven **prevented** my food from burning.

This gives us three interesting points. Firstly, the perceived primary cause (my friend's forgetting) does not need to be the most direct cause (here, the physical cause of the oven being on); this means that (i) causation is not exclusively physical, so (ii) there are parameters that make a (non-physical) cause more **salient** than another more or equally obvious one. The second point is that McGrath's counterfactual proposal introduces a new notion not previously introduced by Lewis, that of *preventing*, which happens to be a causal concept distinct from (but related to) *causing*. Lastly, the third point we get from McGrath is that the

3. "An omission occurs if *no* event of type  $C_o$  occurs."

contrast between (7) and (8) highlights that causal dependency (as described by Lewis) and causation by omission are not to be lexicalized in the same way.

The first point was not really at issue in Lewis' approach, it is simply never stated explicitly nor really discussed. However, it is addressed by both Beebe (2004) and McGrath (2005); they point out that, under a strictly counterfactual approach, there would be other "possible causes" to why my food burnt. Indeed, my friend did not turn my oven off, but neither did the Pope, Mick Jagger or my great-grandfather. Yet, if told about the situation and asked who was responsible for my food being inedible, it is unlikely that anyone would say it was the Pope's fault rather than my friend's. This highlights another crucial limit to Lewis' counterfactual approach: if one were to rely strictly upon it, then Mick Jagger's not turning my oven off could not be completely ruled out as a cause: if he (despite living in a whole different country and being someone I have never met in my entire life) had turned the oven off, my food would not have burnt (so,  $\neg c \Box \rightarrow \neg e$ ). An additional component thus needs to be added in order to salvage the counterfactual approach. McGrath proposes to add normality (or lack thereof) as a constraint on causation. The definition for normality is below in (10).

(10) It is normal for  $x$  to  $\varphi$  iff  $x$  is supposed to  $\varphi$  (2005: 138)

In the situation described above, it would have been normal for my friend to turn the oven off, since they had agreed to it and thus were supposed to do it. In that sense, their behavior (of not turning the oven off) deviates from the norm. No such thing can be said about the Pope or my great-grandfather, who never agreed to keeping an eye on my food. It is the deviation from normality that makes my friend not turning the oven off a more salient cause than my oven being on for too long. In that scenario, the oven behaves normally, as it is expected that ovens will warm up food until the food is taken out or until the oven is off. My friend, however, did not meet my expectations.

With the notion of normality in mind, we can now address the second point. We take it that it would be normal for an entity  $X$  involved in a situation of causation by omission to not act the way they do. We can thus infer that them acting normally would prevent  $e$  from occurring. This means that, for an entity to be perceived as the cause of an effect in cases of causation by omission, it needs to be a **would-be preventer**, i.e. it needs to be able, in some sense, to

prevent an event *e* from happening. While the notion of (would-be) prevention is not always relevant for concepts like **MAKE** and **CAUSE**, it will be relevant for our definition of **LET**.

The third point is, overall, the most interesting for the work to be presented in this dissertation. It is intrinsically linked to the previous point: not all causative verbs select would-be preventers. *Let* does, and I will develop this further in this chapter.

### 2.1.2 Early linguistic approaches

In order to understand verbal semantics, linguists have centered their work around verbs and verbal constructions that express a causative relation, i.e. a causal link between two propositions (or sentences), as well as what kind of entities can enter such constructions.

(11) Paul broke the window (by throwing a rock at it).

In (11), two entities are involved in the realization of the breaking event: the **Agent** (Paul) which initiates the event, and the **Patient** (here, the window), which undergoes it<sup>4</sup>. The notion of what “causative” verbs are has often remained quite fuzzy. We know there exists different types of causative constructions, and yet, we haven’t explained what exactly made them “causative”. One could go by the definition proposed by Lewis; if a construction gives out the type of counterfactual relation described in section 2.1.1, it is a causative construction. Indeed, (11) entails (12) below.

(12) If Paul had not thrown a rock at it, the window would not have broken.

Yet, I have explained that the counterfactual approach failed to account for other types of causal relations, such as causation by omission. Additionally, it cannot discriminate between *make* and *let* in example (3). For these two reasons, I will focus here on causative verbs and verbal constructions. I will start by looking at lexical causatives.

4. The terms used might differ when it comes to other types of causative constructions like syntactic (or periphrastic) causatives: in the literature, the matrix subject is often referred to as the causer while the lower subject is the causee)



Dowty (1979: 91) observes that the verbs that have generally been described as “causative” in the literature appear to be *accomplishments*. According to him, this is explainable by the fact that accomplishments are to be construed as having the logical structure [ $\varphi$ CAUSE $\psi$ ], in which  $\varphi$  and  $\psi$  are sentences.

Accomplishments are one of the four types of eventualities defined by Vendler (1957), along with activities, states, and achievements. Unlike the other three, accomplishments are dynamic<sup>5</sup>, telic (i.e. they present the event as being complete), and punctual, as in (13):

- (13) Lucy drew a picture of her uncle.

In order to know if a verbal predicate is an accomplishment or not, several tests can be applied. First and foremost, accomplishment verbs hardly ever take adverbial prepositional phrases with *for* – but do much better with *in*-phrases such as (14):

- (14) a. ?Lucy drew a picture of her uncle for an hour.  
 b. Lucy drew a picture of her uncle in an hour.

Another test is that accomplishment verbs can appear as the complement of verbs like *stop* and *finish*, while achievements cannot:

- (15) a. Lucy finished drawing the picture of her uncle.  
 b. ??Lucy finished noticing the picture of her uncle.

Lastly, Kenny (1963) points out that, in the case of accomplishment verbs, saying that Lucy is drawing a picture of her uncle entails that she has not yet drawn the (full) picture of her uncle. Thus, he defines the core meaning of accomplishments as the “bringing about of  $p$ ” for a proposition  $p$ . Can Kenny’s definition of accomplishments be extended to other causative verbs and constructions? In other words, does *X causes Y* entail *X brings about that Y*? If so, then we can define the relation denoted by a causative construction as one in which the Agent’s action brings about a change of state in the referent of the object.

5. I follow Copley (2018b) in defining “dynamic” as having a basic meaning of input of energy. This means that dynamic is not to be understood as encoding a change of state.

**An all-purpose CAUSE operator?**

First of all, it must be said not all causative constructions are created equal. For lexical causatives, some can undergo causative/inchoative alternation, as in (16), while some other apparently cannot (17):

- (16) a. The chair was broken.
- b. The chair broke.
- c. James broke the chair.

- (17) a. \*John was killed.
- b. \*John killed.
- c. Mark killed John.

While (16a) merely represents a state (the chair has the property of being broken/is in the state of being broken), both (16b) and (16c) encode a change of state from “non-brokenness” to that of “brokenness”. Lakoff (1965) assumes the following structures for (16b) and (16c):

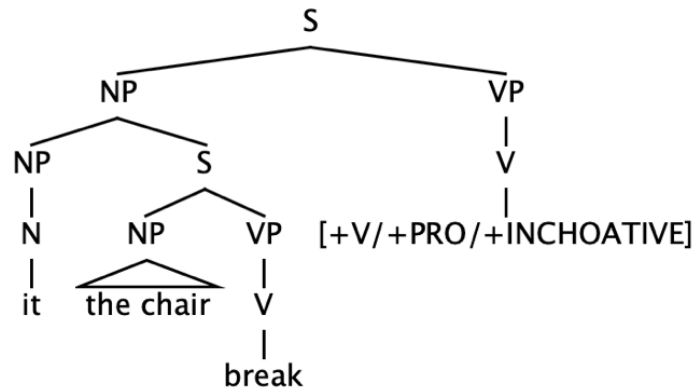


Figure 2.1: Decomposing (16b)

These trees show us two things: a) Lakoff assume several abstract features for verbs, in the shape of +PRO, +CAUSATIVE, +INCHOATIVE and b) the +CAUSATIVE structure in 2.2 actually embeds the +INCHOATIVE structure in 2.1. In other words, (16c) is derived from (16b). However, there appears to be a limit

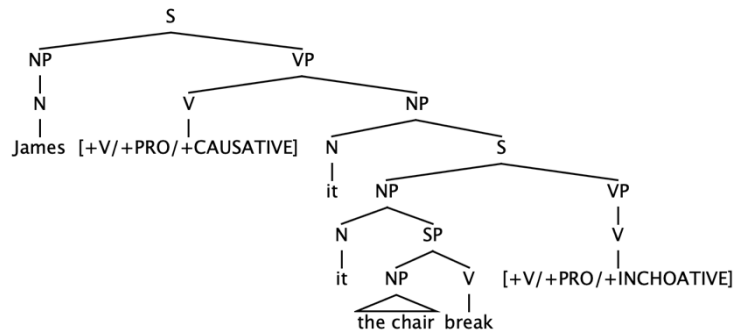
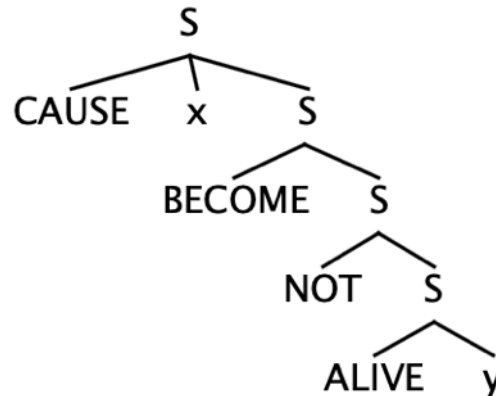


Figure 2.2: Decomposing (16c)

to such an analysis. Indeed, not all English causative verbs have an inchoative form, at least not one as “obvious” as *break* or *cool*. For instance, the verb *kill*, in and of itself, cannot appear in a structure like 2.1. However, it is possible to derive it when decomposing *kill* into finer units. For McCawley (1968), lexical causative verbs ought to possess different components, among which CAUSE and BECOME, defined as abstract relations between entities and propositions. He uses as an example the verb *kill* which can be decomposed into CAUSE, BECOME, NOT, and ALIVE. For the sentence *x kills y* he assumes the underlying structure in Figure 2.3. The present underlying structure seemingly encompasses all the “beliefs” discussed in Von Wright (1963): there is a transition (BECOME) from the state of alive to that of not alive. This change of state is triggered by a cause (here, CAUSE).

Figure 2.3: The decomposition of a the causative verb *kill*

Dowty (1979) proposes that accomplishments (and so, by the same token, causative verbs and constructions) be a relation between two sentences,  $\varphi$  and  $\psi$ , such that  $[\varphi_{\text{CAUSE}}\psi]$ . His **CAUSE** differs from McCawley's (1968) in that it is a two-place **sentential connective** rather than a mere relation between events (an idea that was also proposed by Vendler 1967, McCawley 1971, Givón 1972 among others). In the case of most lexical causatives,  $\psi$  is actually a **BECOME** sentence, which means that it contains a change of state. The structure in McCawley (1968) now looks like (18b):

- (18) a. X kills Y.  
 b. [[X does something]CAUSE [BECOME ¬[Y is alive]]]

Being treated as a sentential operator is an important improvement for **CAUSE**, because it makes it usable in the decomposition of all three types of causative constructions. Causative constructions come in three flavors: lexical causatives (18a), morphological causatives (as in the Korean example (19a), from Park 1994), and syntactic causatives, as in (20a) for French. All of them can be accounted for using Dowty's **CAUSE**:

- (19) a. DNI ai-lo hwenhi tung-ul kulk-hi-ko.  
 I child.INS cool back.ACC scratch-CAUS-and  
 'I made my child scratch my back "cool" (i.e. relieving the itch).'  
 b. [[I do something]CAUSE[my child scratches my back]]

- (20) a. Jean a fait chanter une chanson aux enfants.  
 Jean have make.PF sing.INF a song PREP-the children  
 'Jean made the children sing a song.'  
 b. [[Jean does something ]<sub>CAUSE</sub> [the children sing]]

Dowty (1979: 108–109) and his proposed semantics for *CAUSE* kills two birds with one stone: (i) it defines causal relations in terms of causal dependence, thus following Lewis (1974), and (ii) it fixes the issues of preemption and overdetermination mentioned in 2.1.1, and sets a definition of causation in which possible causes do not cancel out one another.

- (21)  $\varphi$  causally depends on  $\psi$  if and only if  $\varphi, \psi$  and  $\neg\varphi \square\rightarrow \neg\psi$  are all true.  
 (22)  $\varphi$  is a causal factor of  $\psi$  if and only if there is a series of sentences  $\varphi, \varphi_1, \dots \varphi_n, \psi$  (for  $n \geq 0$ ) such that each member of the series depends causally on the previous member.  
 (23) [ $\varphi$  *CAUSE*  $\psi$ ] is true if and only if (i)  $\varphi$  is a causal factor for  $\psi$ , and (ii) for all other  $\varphi'$  such that  $\varphi'$  is also a causal factor for  $\psi$ , some  $\neg\varphi$ -world is as similar or more similar to the actual world than any  $\neg\varphi'$ -world is.

Since some of the problems with Lewis' approach have been solved by Dowty's *CAUSE*-operator, we could be tempted to think that it will also solve our *make* vs. *let* issue in (3).

- a. Sally made Peter clean his room.  
 b. Sally let Peter clean his room.

How are these meant to be decomposed using Dowty's connectives? It seems pretty safe to assume that they would both look something like (24):

- (24) [[Sally does x]<sub>CAUSE</sub>[Peter does y]<sub>CAUSE</sub>[*BECOME*¬[room is dirty]]]

This is quite frustrating, for we know that (3a) and (3b) are not mere equivalents, and, as such, it seems odd to decompose them in the exact same way. We have seen above that both of them satisfied the counterfactual requirement, such that  $c \square\rightarrow e$ , as well as the criteria in (21)-(23). And yet, once again, they cannot be understood or treated the same way. I have explained above in the plane example in 6 that *let* could be understood in two different ways: either the Agent does something that then allows the Patient to proceed with performing  $e$ , or the Agent simply does nothing and simply does not intervene while the

“Patient” does *e* (this second case can be seen as a type of causation by omission).

If we assume the second interpretation for *let*, then the temporal relation between the two events in (3a) differs from that of (3b): in *make*-scenarios, the two events are successive, while in the type of letting that is linked to causation by omission suggest that the two events are, in fact, co-temporal. Moreover, (3b) suggests (regardless of the interpretation for *let* that we adopt) that Peter did want to clean his room, but that he was somehow **prevented** from doing so by something or someone: Sally’s intervention was that of an Enabler. There is no such desire- nor prevention-component in (3a). It ought to be noted that this does not mean that Dowty’s approach is flawed; much like Lewis’, it simply is not concerned with fine-grained distinctions between diverse causal configurations.

My takeaway from trying to apply Dowty’s CAUSE-operator approach to solve the *make* vs. *let* issue is the following: a single CAUSE-operator (or connective) is not fully satisfactory, because there is not only one single type of causal relation. Moreover, the side effect to this is that a single CAUSE-operator approach does not discriminate between Cause(r)s and Enablers. Restricting an analysis of causation to a single connector will lead us to miss out on more fine-grained nuances between these distinct types. Thus, solely basing ourselves and our analysis of causation and causative constructions on Lewis’ or Dowty’s definitions of it leave us unable to solve an important issue: we are here unable to discriminate between (3a) and (3b), despite us knowing they cannot possibly encode two identical causal relations.

### 2.1.3 Statistical dependencies

#### The normality approach

The shortcomings of early approaches to causation such as Lewis’ or Dowty’s (and notably the fact that no distinction was made between *causing* and *enabling*) have been extensively discussed and attempts have been made in order to properly define what it means to *enable* something to happen. One way to do so is to look at the entities (or eventualities) that may enter these relations in order to discern a **Causer** (or cause) from an **Enabler**. Cause(r)s have been described as either “abnormal” (Mackie 1974; Hart and Honoré 1985; Turnbull and Slugoski 1988, and McGrath 2005 for causation by omission) or “going against another entity’s tendency” (Talmy 1988), but Enablers are mere “con-

ditions” whose presence and influence are constant (Cheng and Novick 1991). For Hart and Honoré (1985), a cause is an abnormal condition, while enablers are normal; this is why we enquire about the cause of something: it deviates from a known **norm**. Mackie (1974) argues that causes are “intrusive”, while for a condition to be an enabling one, it has to be “steady”. He even introduces the notion of **causal field**: if we compare several situations, one in which something “abnormal” happens and some in which it does not, the things that are part of all these different situations (which make up the causal field) will be excluded as causes.

Say I go into a forest, have a smoke and throw my cigarette butt on the ground, and a fire breaks out. People will certainly claim that what caused the fire was the cigarette, and not the presence of oxygen. While oxygen is necessary for fires to burn (being part of the causal field), it is also constant in the air, and yet, luckily, fires don’t start all the time. Thus, it must be the “intrusive” presence of the cigarette butt that caused the fire.

### **Focal sets models**

However, the notion of what is “normal” or not is not always agreed upon nor clear-cut, even taking the definition given by McGrath (2005) (see 10) into account; using the notion of normality to discriminate between Cause(r)s and Enablers is tricky. Indeed, we can expect for objects to function a certain way (e.g. it is normal for a kettle to boil water) but what about sentient entities? What is a normal, expected behavior for a human being? Cheng and Novick (1991, 1992) argue against the normality approach. Their main argument against “normality” as a decisive criterion is that it fails to filter out “causally irrelevant factors” (1991: 92): in our forest fire scenario above, oxygen is part of the causal field, but so are bugs. Did the presence of bugs in the forest enable the fire? That sounds highly unlikely. Besides, they argue that not all causes are abnormal, thus taking normality as the main criterion would cause one to disregard some actual causes, as in example (25) below:

(25) The fertilizer I used last month made my plants grow faster.

It is quite expected that fertilizer has positive effects on plants — it is actually the reason why people use it. It is not abnormal for plants to grow faster with fertilizer than without it. One could argue that plants do grow regardless

of fertilizer, if given the right amount of water and sun. Yet, for Cheng and Novick, the fertilizer here is a cause nonetheless. They propose that using probabilistic contrast is sufficient to discriminate between the cause and the enabling condition(s) of an effect over a given “set of events implied by the context” (which they call “focal set”, a notion closely related to Mackie’s (1974) causal field).

$$(26) \quad \Delta P(i) = P(i) - P(\neg i)$$

(Cheng & Novick’s main-effect contrast, 1991:94)

If an effect occurs very regularly in the presence of a given factor *i*, this factor *i* is likely to be the cause of said effect. In (26), they subtract the probability of an effect in the presence of factor *i* ( $P(i)$ ) from the probability of the same effect in the absence of factor *i* ( $P(\neg i)$ ). If it is a cause, then the occurrence of the effect should be higher in its presence than it is in its absence, and indeed, for our scenario in (25), plants do grow faster with fertilizer than they do without.

On the other hand, enabling conditions are slightly more difficult to pinpoint, since they are constantly part of the focal set. This is what makes the fertilizer a cause and not an enabling condition here: the fertilizer is not constant in the focal set, it just creates ideal conditions for a plant’s growth (as opposed to, say, being planted in earth and being watered). The relations between factors (causes and enabling conditions) and effects have also been defined in terms of sufficiency and necessity<sup>6</sup> (Hart and Honoré 1985; Cheng and Novick 1991, 1992; Wolff, Song, and Driscoll 2002).

Accordingly, the verbs *make* and *cause* assign a Causer role to their subjects, as in (27a), while *enable* and *allow* assign Enabler (to the caused event) roles, as in (28b).

- (27) a. The fire **caused** the building to burn down.  
 b. #The fire **enabled/allowed** the building to burn down.
- (28) a. #The oxygen **caused** the fire to start.  
 b. The oxygen **enabled/allowed** the fire to start.

6. I will not go too deep into these notions here, as I will show in Chapter 6 that they fail to account for our *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives. For a more detailed account, see the references cited above, as well as Lauer and Nadathur (2018).



But what do we make of *let*? Considering what we have seen about *let* above, one could think that it is semantically close to *enable* and *allow*. And yet, it does not appear to be able to give out Enabler roles, at least not by the definition(s) given in normality approaches. For instance, we have seen that oxygen was an enabling condition for a fire. And yet, it cannot appear with *let*, as shown in (29) below.

(29) ??The oxygen let the fire start.

Note that it is not completely ruled out, for it is not nonsensical, but rather odd. Indeed, *let* belongs to the same lexical/semantic field as *enable* and *allow*<sup>7</sup>. And yet, we get a feeling that (29) is not quite right. Why is it so? Let us take a look at a different (and, this time, acceptable) *let*-sentence in (30) below:

- (30) a. John let Mary play the piano.  
 b. Yesterday, Mary arrived at John's place. Knowing she loves music, he gave her permission to play on his piano. Today, Mary played her favourite song.

Much like our initial example in (3b), we have a situation in (30a) with two Agents (volitional, force-generating entities). (30b) makes the meaning of (30a) more explicit: John allows Mary to play the piano. As such, he should be understood as an Enabler: if John gives a permission at  $t_0$  to play the piano, and the permission still stands at  $t_1$  when Mary forms the intention to play the piano, then John's action will make it possible for Mary to play the piano. And yet, this is not quite the full picture: Mary can in fact still play the piano *even* in the absence of a permission from John<sup>8</sup> (if she possesses the necessary skills to do so).

Inanimate entities behave similarly: in (31) below, the garden swing chair is expected (as it co-occurs with *let*) to act as an Enabler.

- (31) A garden swing chair lets you sit back and enjoy your garden.

The actual meaning of (31) is that it is the **act** of *sitting* on a garden chair that makes looking at your garden more enjoyable. Unlike in the previous example

7. And they have actually been paired together in more recent approaches to causation, see section 2.2 below.

8. She would probably be considered rude for doing so, and yet, it is not uncommon for people to misbehave.

in 30, the two events cannot occur at different times ( $t_0$  and  $t_1$ ): you must sit in the chair, in order to sit back and enjoy your garden. So, the two events are simultaneous; if the swing chair makes looking at your garden more enjoyable (i.e., if it is a property of the chair), then it will be more enjoyable as soon as you sit on it. This explains the oddness of (32):

(32) #Yesterday, I bought a nice garden swing chair. I brought it home and immediately sat on it. Today, I enjoyed my garden.

Certainly, (32) is not fully ruled out, but it does not yield a reading in which enjoying one's garden is a result of sitting in the chair; it is no longer a causal relation. It is because sitting in the chair creates a *situation* in which looking at one's garden is more enjoyable. Note that it does not mean one cannot enjoy one's garden without the chair; however, sitting in the chair *necessarily* makes looking at one's garden more enjoyable than it would have been in the absence of the chair.

In other words, what *let* does is to create a background situation that makes the occurrence of the caused event possible. But so do *enable* and *allow*; this is actually the whole point of Mackie's causal field: enabling conditions are part of a background situation, while causes are abnormal. Fair enough. However, I have also pointed out that the action performed by the entity denoted by the subject of *let* does not appear to be necessary for the caused event to happen, see the piano-playing example in (30) and the garden chair example (31), both showing that the intervention/action of the first participant only makes the caused event more likely. If one takes out John, Mary can still play the piano. If the garden chair is discarded, one can still enjoy one's garden. But if the oxygen is removed from (28b), the fire cannot start.

In his work, Mackie (1965, 1974) introduces the **INUS condition**: Insufficient, but Necessary part of an Unnecessary but Sufficient condition. He takes the example of a short-circuit that *causes* the burning of a house. In that example, the short-circuit was necessary for the fire to burn in that specific instance, however it was insufficient; if there had been no flammable materials, if the firefighters had arrived on time to stop the fire and/or if there had been sprinklers in the house, the house would not have burnt. All of these conditions combined (the short-circuit, the presence of flammable materials, the absence of firefighters and sprinklers) create a condition that is sufficient for the fire to

start and for the house to burn, but not a necessary one, since the house could have burnt for other reasons. But the flammable materials and the absence of a sprinkler are constant conditions: and yet, they cannot cause a fire on their own — they, too, are insufficient but necessary. And this is actually Mackie’s point: each individual condition in the set is equal to the others with respect to its relation to the effect. Therefore, Enablers in *enable* and *allow* scenarios are necessary but insufficient while the so-called “enabling conditions” in *let*-situations do not seem to be necessary for the occurrence of an effect.

## 2.2 Force theories

### 2.2.1 Understanding *forces*

#### Talmy’s force dynamics

We have now seen that, while useful, dependency theories of causation cannot be used for our account of *laisser* and *dejar* in this dissertation, notably because these theories fail to account for the difference in interpretation between *make*-causatives and *let*-causatives. While seeing causation as a relation between events or sentences does account for part of the “causative issue”, it does not allow for a fine-grained classification of causal relations. Indeed, we saw that it failed to account for our *make* vs. *let* issue in (3), and repeated below in (33).

- (33) a. Sally made Peter clean his room.  
b. Sally let Peter clean his room.

Recall that, in both cases, Peter cleans his room because Sally did something to make him do it. In that sense, in Lewis’ terms, Pierre’s cleaning of his room is causally dependent on Sally’s action(s) in both cases. But what exactly did Sally do to Peter? We appear to be missing some parts of the puzzle: a) how did Sally act on Peter and b) what was Peter’s role in the whole causal chain? In order to understand the difference between these two sentences, one needs to look at both entities that make up the causal relation, as well as the way they interact with one another.

The force dynamics (FD) model was created by Leonard Talmy with the aim of being a “generalisation over the traditional notion of causative in the linguistic literature” (Talmy 1988: 67). It strictly differs from dependency theories of causation, since it describes causation as an interaction between two

or more force-generating entities (also known as a **force interaction**). Using entities that are capable of generating their own force highlights that the balance of said forces (or tendencies) is neither the same in all situations nor constant. Introducing force into our semantics for causation allows for the description of new interactions left undiscussed up to this point, such as the resistance to force, overcoming of it, blocking, and the like.

Accounting for those different configurations yields a more fine-grained categorisation of causative concepts: instead of having a single CAUSE sentential operator, our model now includes primitives like letting, helping or hindering. Such an addition to the notion of causation is necessary for at least two reasons: it helps account for different types of forces (physical, psychological, socio-psychological, . . .), and it provides us with a more precise definition of causation, one in which the opposition between the two entities yields a result based on the way said entities act on their tendencies.

Talmy's force-interactions all involve two entities, the Agonist and the Antagonist, generally distinct from one another, and whose forces are in opposition. In his model, entities have an intrinsic force tendency, either towards motion or towards rest:

- (34) a. The ball was rolling along the green.  
 b. The ball *kept* rolling along the green.

(Talmy 1988: 52)

In force-dynamic terms, (34a) is *dynamically neutral*; the ball is simply moving and is not opposed by any other force. However, what the verb *keep* adds in (34b) is the notion of **opposition** between the grass and some external force, which corresponds to two possible patterns: either the ball has a tendency towards rest, and is made to move by, say, the wind or gravity, or it has a tendency towards motion and it is encountering the resistance of (possibly) the grass.

With the notions of "opposition" and "tendencies" in mind, one can dig deeper into Talmy's model. There are three different types of patterns, each of them realising a different temporal relation to causation:

- Steady-state FD patterns: the two tendencies are in opposition, one of them is stronger, which leads to a resultant state being the outcome toward which that stronger tendency was directed. In these patterns, there is no change in tendency throughout the event. They are exemplified in

(35) below, where, for instance, (35c) has an Antagonist (the ball) with a tendency towards rolling, and it overcomes the blocking of the Agonist (the grass).

- (35)
- a. The ball kept rolling because of the wind blowing on it.
  - b. The shed kept standing despite the gale wind blowing upon it.
  - c. The ball kept rolling despite the stiff grass.
  - d. The log kept lying on the incline because of the ridge there.

- Shifting FD patterns: there is a change through time, these are change-of-state patterns, which are closer to what previous approaches to causation have defined as being “causation”. The Causer (or sometimes Cause) triggers a change in the embedded object; these patterns are exemplified in (36) below.

- (36)
- a. The ball’s hitting it made the lamp topple from the table.
  - b. The water dripping on it made the fire die down.
  - c. The plug’s coming loose let the water flow from the tank.
  - d. The stirring rod’s breaking let the particles settle.

- Secondary steady-state FD patterns: these are similar to steady-state patterns in that there is no change through time. However, the Antagonist’s tendency in those patterns remains unexpressed; it stays remote. Let me make the notion of “remoteness” clearer with the examples in (37): in (37a), the Antagonist (the plug), if it was not loose, could exert a blocking on the Agonist (the water). However, since it is loose, it fails to do so (its tendency to block water from flowing out of the tank is **unexpressed**).

- (37)
- a. The plug’s staying loose let the water drain from the tank.
  - b. The fan’s being broken let the smoke hang still in the chamber.

Talmy introduces two main causal concepts: that of “causation” and that of “letting”. Additionally, he proposes that each of these concepts can be realized in either of two ways: he proposes the notions of onset and extended

causation/letting, which allow for the modification of the two types of causation, and in which onset corresponds to change-of-state expressions (lexicalized by causative verbs like *make* for onset causation and *let* for onset letting) while extended maps onto prepositional expressions introduced by *despite* and *because* (among others). Nevertheless, none of the pattern is restricted to the linguistic expressions used in the examples used by Talmy.

What emerges from 35-(37) is a clear distinction between *causing* and *letting*, which we can neither find in counterfactual approaches to causation like Lewis (1974) nor in later linguistic approaches like Dowty (1979). Accordingly, force dynamics can be used to explain the contrast in (3):

- a. Sally made Peter clean his room.
- b. Sally let Peter clean his room.

Describing causation in terms of force interactions allows us to account for the interpretational differences between the two sentences. There is no doubt that (3a) encodes onset causation. However, we already know that *let* can yield two readings, which makes (3b) ambiguous: either it is a case of onset letting (if we consider that a permission has been given), or it is a situation of extended letting, which roughly corresponds to the plane-boarding example discussed in (6).

Now that I have introduced Talmian force-dynamic notions, I can focus on the concept of *letting*. What is *letting* for Talmy? As mentioned before, he proposes two main types of patterns: the shifting patterns (which are simply change-of-state patterns) and the steady-state patterns (in which there is causation without change). So, there are two distinct letting scenarios: a first one, in which there is a **blocking** that is removed and which is called “cessation of impingement” (or COI – considered by Talmy to be a “prototypical *let*), and a second one, in which there is a potential blocking but it is simply never expressed: this situation is called “leave alone” (or LA). When defined this way, they seem rather different from one another, and yet, they appear to both be able to be encoded by the English verb *let*, as we can see from (36c), (36d), and (37) above. However, these examples are not ambiguous, it is always rather clear which kind of *letting* is at play. In examples (35) to (37), the subject of the causative verb is an event description. Having event descriptions as subjects rather than animate, sentient entities triggers a more complex syntactic struc-

ture, but for Talmy, these cases are also semantically simpler (contra Givón 2009's intuition that simpler structures map onto simpler meanings). According to Dowty (1991: 572), entities that possess any of the following properties can qualify for the Agent Proto-Role: (i) volitional involvement in the event or state, (ii) sentience, (iii) ability to cause an event or change of state in another participant, and/or (iv) movement (relative to the position of another participant). The more of these criteria are met by an entity, the more agentive it is. For instance, the Antagonist in Talmy's "prototypical *let*-scenario" is the plug:

(38) The plug's coming loose let the water flow from the tank.

In this scenario, the plug does not appear to meet most of the criteria to be treated as an Agent: it is non-volitional and non-sentient. While plugs are generally considered to be inanimate, this one can cause an event: it "comes loose" and *allows* the water to flow from the tank. Yet, it looks like there are only two courses of actions available to the plug in this situation: staying on or coming loose. Conversely, entities that are higher on the agentivity scale (volitional entities, for instance) have a wider range of ways to act on other entities (and particularly on other Agents): while non-volitional force-generating entities are limited to physical causation, Agents can but do not have to resort to physical causation, and can create change through psychological or social pressure. Let us briefly go over our *let*-sentence in (3b), repeated in (39) below:

(39) Sally let Peter clean his room.

Unlike inanimate entities, AGENTS have the ability to act volitionally and to bring about change. It is possible for them to act in either of two ways: they can choose to remove a previous blocking, or they can choose not to intervene in the event denoted by the embedded verb. This makes (39) ambiguous, as we can get these two possible readings from it. In both cases, it is likely that Peter's tendency was towards cleaning the apartment (he had a desire to do so). It would thus mean that the locus of variation in meaning is has to do with what Sally does: either Sally gave permission to Peter to clean the flat after he asked her if he could (which is then a case of COI), or Peter started cleaning the flat and Sally, who could have stopped him, decided not to impinge (in which case we have a LA situation).

However, a notion that is central to Talmian force dynamics is that of opposition: the change of state is triggered by one of the two forces being, at *t*, stronger than the other force. While this works really well for event descriptions as subjects, does it work as well on other types of *let*-causatives? Although it is theoretically possible, it seems unlikely that an analysis of (39) requires opposition, not because it is inconceivable that Sally was incredibly opposed to Peter cleaning, but mainly because it appears to be much too strong a notion in the case of *letting*. It is easier to accommodate the idea of opposition for verbs like *make*, *make*, or *prevent*, than it is for *let*, which can actually be the result of mere **indifference** from the Antagonist's (or Causer's) part<sup>9</sup>. Besides, Wolff and Thorstad (2017) point out that Talmy's theory is at the same time too much and not enough; it is redundant while at the same time lacking proper distinctions. For instance, some of the concepts discussed by Talmy (such as helping and letting) could possibly be assembled in one sole primitive (I will discuss the ENABLE primitive in section 2.2.2). Additionally, there is no account proposed for psychological causation, despite Talmy arguing in favor of it; as I mentioned above, his account mostly addresses inanimate entities, for they are easier to deal with since the pattern they follow is a predictable one, unlike sentient entities.

## 2.2.2 Introducing ENABLE

### The three causal configurations

Wolff and Song (2003) follow Talmy in proposing a division of causation into finer notions. Unlike Talmy, however, they argue in favor of three main configurations under which every single causal relation can be categorized: CAUSE, ENABLE and PREVENT. For each of these configurations, there are two participants: the Affector (roughly corresponding to Talmy's Agonist) and the Patient (here again, roughly similar to the Antagonist). The three configurations differ from one another based on the following criteria:

- a) Does the Patient have a tendency for the endstate?
- b) Is there a concordance between the Affector and the Patient or are they in opposition?

9. The notion of indifference is actually a crucial one when it comes to understanding letting, but it is not an easy one to introduce. I will discuss it in more details in Chapter 5.



c) Does a result occur?

The parameters for each configuration are summarized below in Table 2.1. CAUSE and ENABLE differ two points: contra Talmy (1988), ENABLE (under which the verb *let* appears to fall) does not require an opposition between the two entities involved. They both however entail that the result occurs, roughly going back to the roots of our counterfactuals,  $A \square \rightarrow B$ . So, if one states that Lucy let Peter cleaned the flat, it is to be understood that Peter did indeed clean the flat.

	Tendency of P for the result	Opposition between A and P	Occurrence of a result
CAUSE	N	Y	Y
ENABLE	Y	N	Y
PREVENT	Y	Y	N

Table 2.1: the three causal configurations from a force-theoretical point of view (Wolff and Song 2003: 284)

In their work, they address the shortcomings of Talmy’s force dynamics, and propose a simplification of it: *letting* and *helping* are now grouped under one single primitive, ENABLE. Much like Talmy’s, this part of their theory is mainly conceptual, so one might wonder about the linguistic realizations of the three primitives. Here again, they can be lexicalized in many different ways across languages, as well as within one language.

Wolff and Song’s categorization of causal configurations does solve the *make* vs. *let* issue in 3: (3a) is to be understood as a CAUSE situation, in which Peter did not have a tendency (here, possibly a desire or an intention) for cleaning his room but Sally required the room to be cleaned by Peter. In the end, the room is cleaned. Conversely, (3b) encodes an ENABLE scenario, in which both Peter and Sally want or intend for the room to be cleaned by Peter. This leads, if nothing else happens, to the room being cleaned by Peter.

When it comes to syntactic causative constructions, the verbs *let*, *allow* and *enable* appear at first sight to behave in a similar way with respect to the ENABLE primitive:

- (40) a. Joseph let the children read a complicated book.  
 b. Joseph allowed the children to read a complicated book.

- c. ?Joseph enabled the children to read a complicated book.

In all three cases, the children had a desire to read the book, and Joseph either had a desire that the children read the book, or, at the very least, did not object to the children reading the book. However, we can make three observations when comparing different *ENABLE* verbs.

The first one, which I have already pointed out above in section 2.1.3, is that the subject of *let* does not quite seem to receive the same Enabler role as the subject of *allow* or *enable*, which is all the more surprising as they have been grouped under the same primitive, as shown in Table 2.1. Due to that grouping, one could expect them to be able to assign the same type of role to their subjects, and yet, it does not seem to be the case (see the contrast between (28b) and (29) above). When looking at examples in which only animate, sentient entities are involved in the causal chain (like in (40)), the contrast is not really obvious; all three sentences are roughly equally acceptable, despite some minor interpretational differences. It becomes however clearer when adding a *by*-phrase depicting the Causer's action:

- (41) a. By showing them an example, Charles allowed the children to find the right answer.  
 b. ??By showing them an example, Charles let the children find the right answer.

There is something not quite right about (41b): what *let* yields is a reading in which Charles was somehow withholding the answer from the children. Thus, it clashes with the content of the *by*-phrase, which expresses a form of help. There is no such mismatch with *allow*, which is a true *HELP*-verb.

A second observation about *let* is that, contrary to what Wolff & Song state for *ENABLE*, the result is not necessarily entailed. Indeed, it is expected to occur *ceteris paribus*, that is, if no external or internal cause counters it (Copley and Harley 2015). Wolff and Song (2003: 286) even argue that the result being entailed is a given in the case of syntactic causatives. While this claim sounds tempting, it should be nuanced. Let us think back to the analysis of (39). I have argued that the sentence has two readings, roughly corresponding to Talmy's "cessation of impingement" and "leave alone". If one assumes a cessation of impingement (COI) scenario, in which Lucy gives an authorization to Peter, then the entailment of the result is defeasible:

(42) Lucy let Peter clean the flat, but in the end, he decided to play the Sims.

On the other hand, in the leave alone (LA) situation, in which Lucy does not intervene, it is not:

(43) #Lucy let Peter clean the flat, but in the end, he decided to play the Sims.

While the criticism made by Wolff & Song about Talmy’s (over-)division is a valid and fair one, the simplification proposed here seems to fail to account for the differences between different *enable* verbs and for the gap between the two interpretations of *let*. I summarize the observation made about (42) and (43) in Table 3.1 below.

	Tendency of P for the result	Opposition be- tween A and P	Occurrence of a result
ENABLE	Y	N	Y
COI-let	Y	N	(not entailed)
LA-let	Y	N	Y

Table 2.2: the ENABLE configuration vs. letting

Since COI-*let* does not correspond entirely to ENABLE, can it still be considered to be an ENABLE-situation? Were Wolff & Song too hasty in deeming Talmy’s categorization “over-divided”? In order to account for the two interpretations of *let*, we would need a model that includes the distinctions made by Talmy (1988) while at the same time avoiding any redundancy and keeping the concision of Wolff and Song (2003).

### ENABLE as double prevention

In more recent force-theoretical discussion about causation, the scenarios in which a blocking is removed ( $\approx$  “cessation of impingement”), as well as those in which the Affector refrains from using their force ( $\approx$  “leave alone”) have been defined as **double preventions** (Pinker 1989; Wolff, Barbey, and Hausknecht 2010; Wolff and Thorstad 2017). At first glance, it looks like analyzing *let* and its interpretations as cases of double preventions solves all our issues.

The following scenario depicts our first interpretation: say there is a pole holding up a tent and preventing it from falling. If one were to remove that

pole (the wind, by blowing on it, or a human perhaps, by kicking it), the tent would fall. Removing the pole prevents it from preventing the tent from falling (see Wolff, Barbey, and Hausknecht 2010; Wolff and Barbey 2015), thus the tent falls. In that sense, the human’s kicking of the pole enabled the fall of the tent. Wolff and Thorstad (2017) use the following diagram to describe it:

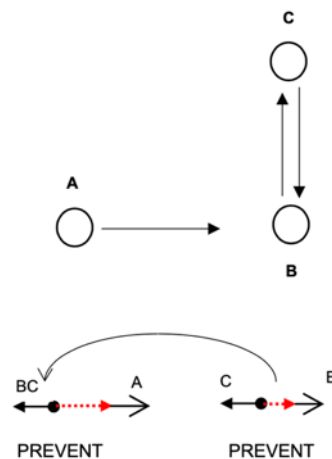


Figure 2.4: A double prevention configuration in Wolff and Thorstad (2017)

In the second one, however, the Affector possesses the intrinsic ability to prevent the caused event from happening, they either choose not to, cannot, or simply do not for whatever reason. This is then a case of “inner prevention”, in which the Affector prevents itself from preventing. Not only does this proposal account for our second interpretation for *let*, but it also gives us the beginning of an answer to the causation by omission dilemma. We were not able to account for causation by omission with simple force dynamics, exactly because it requires a force or energy input, which it cannot get from an absence. However, force theories like Wolff and Thorstad (2017) admit the removal of a force as a vector for causation. This solves the issue with example (7) in section 2.1.1, repeated in (44) below:

(44) My friend not turning off the oven caused the food to burn.

The friend turning off the oven would have prevented the food from burning. But my friend prevented herself (unintentionally in this scenario) from preventing the oven to do so, by forgetting about my food and the promise they

had made. Thus, the lack of an action on my friend's part is not interpreted as a lack of force or influence, but rather, it is presented as the removal of a **possible** force. Interestingly, (7) can actually be paraphrased as (45) (as a reminder, "my friend caused my food to burn" was infelicitous).

(45) My friend let my food burn.

If one characterises letting-relations as situations of causation by omission, they could perhaps be described using double prevention as depicted in figure 2.4. But here again, the verb *let* appears to pose a problem. Let us look back at our garden chair example in (31):

A garden swing chair lets you sit back and enjoy your garden.

It seems a stretch to claim that that situation is a case of causation by omission; there was no absence of an act, because no act was expected. Instead, there is an entity (the chair) that possesses a set of properties (e.g., being a swing chair, being comfortable, ...) that make looking at one's garden more pleasant. So there is one issue left to explain, and it is the idea that the entities that are acceptable subjects of *let* do not need to act (or, in the case of causation by omission, not act) per se, but they require some form of property that makes them good participants to the *letting* causal chain. While Wolff & Thorstad manage to go around the issue of causation by omission, they still seem to run into the problem of **abilities** and **dispositions**: the model is either too simple or too weak to account for anything else than causation. As its purpose is to account for causation, my comment is not a criticism of the model, nevertheless, this means that I cannot use it for my approach to letting. It seems that *let* points us towards what the participants (animate or not) *could* do, rather than what they actually do.

### 2.2.3 Linking ENABLE to English *let*

I have now put forward some crucial facts about let:

(46) Characteristics for *let* (non-exhaustive)

a) *Let* is an ENABLE verb, as defined in Table 2.1

b) Yet, Enablers do not make good subjects of *let*.

c) *Let* does not encode physical causation; it creates a background situation that makes the occurrence of the caused event possible.

In order to refer to the Causer and Causee in *let*-causatives (in English, and later on in French and Spanish), I use the terms *laisseur* and *laissé*; using specific terms allows me to mark a clear distinction between causative constructions that realize CAUSE configurations (*make*-causatives, as well as lexical ones for the most part) and the constructions under study in the present dissertation.

If *let* is never physical, then what kind of force interaction is at play in letting-relations? In (47) below, the horizontal brackets each refer to the event description linked to a given event:  $e_1$  is the letting, while  $e_2$  is the caused event.

(47) For once, the government  $\underbrace{\text{let shop owners open their stores on Sunday}}_{e_1}$ .

$e_2$

In (47), it sounds grotesque to imagine that all the members of government went out and physically helped every single shop owner to open their shop on that specific Sunday. However, a situation in which the government announces that it has decided that shop owners will have the right to open their shops that Sunday (and in which shop owners end up actually opening their stores on Sunday) seems easier to picture. Therefore, the mental state (or mental process) of the members of government impacts that of the shop owners all over the country. One way to reconcile this with the force-theoretical approaches mentioned above is to define the tendencies of the participants to the *let*-chain as “intentions” or “psychological forces” (Wolff 2006, 2007). These are similar to physical forces in that they too achieve a transfer of energy: in (47), the intention of the government leads to some shops being open on Sunday. If intentions are forces, then an entity that acts intentionally can be understood as the cause for an effect, even if they don’t transfer energy to it in a canonical way. Indeed, psychological forces do seem to influence other people’s tendencies, either on a psychological level (mind-to-mind causation) or on a physical level. While this would answer part of our issue, *let* does not always take a volitional Agent as its subject:

(48) This microfiber curtain lets light filter through.

The microfiber curtain cannot act intentionally, neither can it choose to let light filter through or not. Nevertheless, the acceptability of (48) shows that it fits as a participant in a *let*-chain, apparently in that it has the property of being see-through or thin enough that light can filter through, despite some sort of generally accepted expectation that curtains ought to block light.

All of the elements in (46), as well as the puzzle of the selection of the *laisseur* argument, can actually be accounted for all at once, if we consider *let* to be a type of “dispositional causation” (Copley 2018a). A disposition is an intrinsic property that an entity possesses and that is only relevant (or visible) in certain circumstances. Traditionally, they have been defined in terms of counterfactuals in the Simple Conditional Analysis: “an object is disposed to M when C iff it would M if it were the case that C” (see Goodman 1954; Quine 1960). For instance, a vase is said to be breakable if, when some physical force is applied to it, it is bound to break. However, this definition should be nuanced, for not all dispositions require a stimulus in order to be activated – some can exist independently and occur spontaneously (Vetter 2010, Donazzan & Tovena 2015, see also Cohen 2018 for an in-depth classification of dispositions and their realizations in English). In order to avoid such issues about dispositions, I adopt Copley’s “what-can-cause-what” approach (Copley 2018a), which, in the case of *let*, should be a “what-can-prevent-what” approach. In a “what-can-prevent-what” approach, features such as animacy or even dynamicity (as in, input of energy) do not appear to be relevant criteria for the argument selection of *let*, since it appears to reject Causer subjects (e.g. entities that generate or transmit physical force, like natural forces for instance), as in (49) below. And indeed, animacy is not a disposition: an entity is either animate or it is inanimate – it makes no sense to claim it is animate with respect to only some specific events in which animacy would be required. The fact that the wind cannot prevent the boats from moving forward correctly rules out (49):

(49) #The wind let the boats move forward.

If we consider that *let*, being an ENABLE verb, realizes a double prevention (as defined by Wolff and Thorstad 2017), then the *laisseur* argument ought to be understood as a preventer that goes against another prevention, represented by a given norm, rule, or expectation(s). Let us look at (47) again: generally, shops are closed on Sunday in France, it is the law: shop owners are prevented by said law from opening their shops on Sunday. But, since the government intervenes

and prevents the law from applying, then shop owners are allowed to open their shops. The same idea can roughly be applied to our curtain example in (48): there is a general expectation that curtains ought to block light, it is their designed purpose. However, these curtains are made of microfiber, which means that they have been built with this specific material in order to avoid the blocking of light.

## 2.3 From *letting* to “laisser” and “dejar”

### 2.3.1 The puzzle of the constructions

I have now established that English *let* mostly coincides with Talmy’s letting. This was to be expected: even though he defines his notions as being conceptual ones that do not require to be perfectly aligned with their lexical form, their being expressed through common linguistic expressions necessarily creates some form of connection or bias between the two. *Let* also corresponds to Wolff & Song’s *ENABLE*, despite some small minor differences evoked above. Indeed, I pointed out two things: a) *let* realizes two quite-similar-but-distinct relations and one of them differs from the *ENABLE* primitive more than expected, and b) some instances of *let* appear to have more to do with the *possible participation* of the participants rather than said participants’ actual participation to the causal chain; in other words, *let* seems more concerned with **(possible) prevention, abilities and dispositions** than it is with “actual causation” and the laws of physics.

The issue somehow becomes more salient when looking at two Romance languages, French and Spanish. The French verb *laisser* and the Spanish verb *dejar* roughly translate to *let*. However, unlike *let*, both *laisser* and *dejar* can appear in two different types of syntactic causatives. I will be discussing the syntax and semantics of causative constructions in Romance languages in general more in depth in the next chapter.

For French, the embedded verb is always in the infinitive, but the *laissé* argument can appear either before (as in (50a)) or after (such as (50b)) the embedded verb. Spanish *dejar*, on the other hand, can either embed a verb in the infinitive, followed by the *laissé* argument (like (51a), similar to (50b) in French), or it can take as its argument a complementizer (*SUB*) clause in the subjunctive:



- (50) a. Martin laisse Sophie dormir.  
 Martin let.PS Sophie sleep.INF  
 'Martin lets Sophie sleep.'
- b. Martin laisse dormir Sophie.  
 Martin let-PS sleep.INF Sophie  
 'Martin lets Sophie sleep.'
- (51) a. Martin deja dormir a Sofía.  
 Martin let.PS sleep.INF PREP Sofia  
 'Martin lets Sophie sleep.'
- b. Martin deja que Sofía duerma.  
 Martin let.PS that Sofia sleep.SBJV  
 'Martin lets Sofia sleep.'

I have discussed in this chapter the existence of two similar but distinct readings for *let*, which roughly correspond to the two Talmian patterns “Cessation of Impingement” and “Leave Alone”. However, English only has one structure for *let*, which means that speakers have to rely on other clues to figure out which pattern is being conveyed. Unlike English, French and Spanish both display two separate constructions. One of the main questions I will seek to answer in this dissertation is the mapping (or lack thereof) from syntactic realization to conceptual representation.

### 2.3.2 Comparison with English *let*

Additionally, one might wonder to what extent these two verbs behave similarly to *let*. I have sought to characterize the English verb in 46, and I proposed that, while it is an ENABLE verb, it does not appear to like having typical Enablers as its *laisseurs*. Additionally, it fails to encode physical causation. Using the examples in (50) and (51) above, it is rather easy to argue that our two verbs are ENABLE verbs: Sophie/Sofía has a tendency (an intention) towards sleeping, which is not countered by Martin’s (either he wants her to sleep, or he does not care whether she does or not). If nothing else intervenes (e.g. Sophie’s/Sofía’s changing her mind), the end result is reached: Sophie/Sofía sleeps. As far as their argument selection, both *laisser* and *dejar* appear to be stricter than *let*: while the latter seems to marginally accept some *laisseurs* that are not would-be preventers (such as the garden swing chair in (31)), the former completely reject them:

- (52) My wheelchair lets me get out and about.
- (53) #Mon fauteuil roulant me laisse me balader.  
My chair rolling REFL let.PS REFL stroll.INF  
'My wheelchair lets me get out and about.'
- (54) #Mi silla de ruedas me deja desplazarme.  
My chair of wheels REFL let.PS MOVE.INF-REFL  
'My wheelchair lets me get out and about.'

It is expected that wheelchairs will indeed help you get out and about, it is their main purpose. But I have pointed out for *let* that it was not an *HELP*-type verb, unlike *allow* and *enable*. I have explained in the discussion about (31) that *let* simply makes the caused event more likely to happen with the *laisseur*'s intervention than without, but the caused event could occur regardless. In the wheelchair example, it is likely that the wheelchair is actually needed to get out and about, and the person using it could possibly not actually do so without the wheelchair. So it is unclear what exactly makes (52) acceptable, and what makes *let* behave more like *enable* and *allow* in such instances. What matters to us, however, is that the same sentence is unacceptable both in French and in Spanish.

The last point made about English *let* is that it does not encode physical causation. In the same way, both constructions in *dejar* and *laisser* fail to encode it.

- (55) a. #Sidonie a laissé la porte s'ouvrir en la poussant.  
Sidonie AUX let.PF the door open.INF by it pushing  
'Sidonie let the door open by pushing it.'
- b. #Sidonie a laissé s'ouvrir la porte en la poussant.  
Sidonie AUX let.PF open.INF the door by it pushing  
'Sidonie let the door open by pushing it.'
- (56) a. #De una patada, Stefano dejó que la piedra cayera.  
With a kick Stefano let.PF that the stone fall.SBJV  
'With a kick, Stefano let the stone fall.'
- b. #De una patada, Stefano dejó caer la piedra.  
With a kick Stefano let.PF fall.INF the stone  
'With a kick, Stefano let the stone fall.'

The *by*-phrase "en la poussant" in French and the PP "de una patada" in Spanish both indicate direct and unmediated physical contact between *laisseur* and *laissé*. While these two adjuncts would be perfectly acceptable with the

causative verbs *faire* and *hacer* ('to make'), they clash with *laisser* and *dejar*, thus indicating that the two verbs can only be used to describe non-physical types of causal relations (e.g. psychological, psycho-social, by influence, etc.)

I propose the preliminary characterization in (57) for the two Romance causative verbs under discussion.

(57) Characterizing *laisser* and *dejar*

- a) They are *enable* verbs, as defined in Table 2.1
- b) They only accept **would-be preventers** as *laisseurs*.
- c) They cannot encode physical causation and, instead, prefer causation by influence.

Note that this does not mean that *laisser* and *dejar* (although it would have made my work easier) display the exact same behavior. In the following chapters, I will study the two verbs in contrast, both syntactically and semantically, which will allow me to refine the characterization above.

## Chapter 3

# Syntactic causatives in Romance languages

I have ended the previous chapter by introducing the two constructions available for *laisser* and for *dejar*, as well as possible available interpretations for them. I will start here by discussing Romance causatives in *faire/fare/hacer/fazer* (which I will refer to as *faire-causatives*) for two main reasons: first and foremost, they have been extensively discussed in the literature, and secondly, they share (some) similarities with *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives. While the body of work on *laisser/dejar* is much smaller than that on *faire-causatives*, it provides me with important information for the work I am undertaking in this dissertation. I will present previous analyses in section 3.3.

### 3.1 A point on syntactic causatives

#### 3.1.1 Direct vs. indirect causation

Causative constructions have been described as containing two events: a causing event and a caused event (for instance, in Shibatani 1976). These roughly correspond to our cause *c* and effect *e*. These two events can either be encoded by the same verb (in the case of lexical causatives (58)) or can be both overtly expressed (in periphrastic/syntactic causatives (59)).

(58) Violet fixed the car.

(59) Otto made Violet fix the car.

The contrast between (58) and (59) has been defined in terms of **(in)directness**. Indeed, causation has been defined as a continuum, going from the most direct type of causal relation to the most indirect (Shibatani and Pardeshi 2002). Direct causation has mainly been defined in terms of lack of interruption (from another agent or intervening event, see Cruse 1972; Levin and Rappaport-Hovav 1999; Wolff 2003), temporal contiguity (Fodor 1970), “control” over the event denoting the change of state (Smith 1970; Brennenstuhl and Wachowicz 1976), “physical contact” on the Causee (Wierzbicka 1975; Shibatani 1976; Pinker 1989), “intentional” action (DeLancey 1983; Kiparsky et al. 1997), or causal sufficiency (Martin 2018).

It seems that (58) satisfies all these criteria: Violet is *directly* responsible for fixing the car. The most obvious interpretation here is that there was no other intervening entity: she repaired the car with her own hands. Although it is safe to assume she used tools to do so, she is still perceived as the main controller of the event<sup>1</sup> and what we have here is then a case of “manipulative” causation, as Violet directly touches the car, encoded by the lexical causative verb “fix”. Additionally, the causing event and the caused event must be simultaneous, as shown by the oddness of (60). The sentence is not entirely wrong, but it seems odd to consider that the car only “became non-broken” today, when the fixing occurred yesterday.

(60) ??Yesterday, Violet worked on the wheel of the car, as it was broken.  
Today, the car is not broken anymore.

Conversely, in (59), Otto cannot be seen as having any direct physical contact with the car (yet, his influence over the car being fixed is an intentional one); instead he is having Violet do it for him. What (59) yields is a situation of directive causation (hence a non-physical relation), in which we can assume that Otto asked/commanded/forced Violet to fix the car. Moreover, there is no need for temporal contiguity in syntactic causatives, as exemplified in (61) below:

1. The notion of unmediated vs. mediated chains is discussed in Wolff (2003); one could argue that, since Violet used tools to complete the task, the chain was mediated and thus should be seen as indirect causation. And yet, the results of the experiments run by Wolff on sentient Causers and types of intervention show otherwise: participants were more likely to use lexical causative verbs to describe mediated chains that are **intentional**.

- (61) Yesterday, Otto asked Violet to fix the car. She was busy when he came to her shop, but she worked on it later and eventually, the next day, the car was fixed.

This seems to suggest that lexical causatives strictly encode direct causation, while periphrastic causatives favor indirect readings. And indeed, lexical causative verbs appear to prefer to map onto direct causation readings<sup>2</sup> (Ruwet 1972; Wolff 2003). As such, I am going to treat syntactic causatives in *laisser*- and *dejar*-causatives as complex constructions that encode complex relations.

## 3.2 *Faire*-causatives: a single structure?

### 3.2.1 *Faire*-Infinitive vs. *Faire*-Par

In the previous chapter, I have started discussing the existence of two coexisting structures for *laisser* and *dejar*. I will develop the analyses linked to each specific structure later on in this chapter, but I will show that it is unclear what the role played by the structure is exactly. So, in order to try and formulate an answer to this question, one needs to take a closer look at the structures first. Since the work on *laisser* and *dejar* is much less abundant, let us first discuss the syntactic causatives in Romance languages that have received the most attention: *faire*-causatives. The discussion in this section will strictly apply to French; as there are no such restrictions on Spanish *hacer*-causatives, which display a much lower degree of lexicalization (Iglesias Bango et al. 2012, see also Tubino Blanco 2010 for a detailed overview of *hacer*-causatives).

In the previous chapter, I made reference to syntactic causatives when I was discussing the “causative continuum” (Shibatani and Pardeshi 2002); the claim being that syntactic causatives tend to be associated with indirect causation when there is more than one AGENT involved in the chain. I use English to illustrate that point for two reasons: a) a lot of early linguistic research on causation is on and about English, and b) as shown by how I ended the previous chapter, the case of Romance languages appears to be structurally more complex. As a reminder, this is what syntactic causatives look like in English:

2. This however needs some nuance. For instance, Martin (2018) shows that the two events lexical causative verb *kill* need not be temporally adjacent.

- (62) a. Monica makes Richard sing a song.  
 b. Monica has Richard sing a song.  
 c. Monica let Richard sing a song.

The lower subject (Richard) strictly appears *before* the embedded verb. I am contrasting the sentences in (62) to French syntactic causatives, as a lot of work on Romance *faire*-causatives focus on French *faire* and Italian *fare*.

- (63) a. Monique fait chanter Richard.  
 Monique make-PS sing-INF Richard  
 'Monique makes Richard sing.'  
 b. \*Monique fait Richard chanter.  
 Monique make-PS Richard sing-INF.  
 'Monique makes Richard sing.'
- (64) a. Monique fait chanter une chanson à Richard.  
 Monique make-PS sing-INF a song PREP Richard  
 'Monique makes Richard sing a song.'  
 b. \*Monique fait Richard chanter une chanson.  
 Monique make-PS Richard sing-INF a song  
 'Monique makes Richard sing a song.'

Unlike English *make*, *have*, and *let*, French *faire* realizes its internal argument in postverbal position, i.e. after the embedded verb. As we see from (63b) and (64b), the lower subject cannot precede the embedded VP. Moreover, when the embedded verb is *transitive* (and only then!), the embedded subject is introduced by in a prepositional phrase by the preposition "à": this is what Kayne (1975) calls the *Faire-Infinitive* (FI) construction. Alternatively, the Causee argument can appear in an adjunct clause introduced by the preposition *par* (*Faire-Par* (FP) construction).

- (65) Monique a fait chanter une chanson par Richard.  
 Monique AUX make.PF sing-INF a song by Richard  
 'Monique had a song be sung by Richard.'

While the two constructions can at first glance appear rather similar, they actually behave differently in many regards. Firstly, it is observed that the phrase containing the Causee argument in FPs can be omitted, since it is an adjunct, while it cannot be omitted in FIs. Moreover, Burzio (1986: 250) observes for the Italian verb *fare* (which mostly behaves like *faire*) in causative constructions that the embedded object can be bound by the lower subject *only* in FIs, and not

in FPs:

- (66) a. Gianni<sub>j</sub> ha fatto temperare la sua<sub>i,jj</sub> matita a ogni  
 Gianni AUX make-PF sharpen-INF the his pencil PREP-A every  
 ragazzo<sub>i</sub>.  
 boy  
 ‘Gianni had every boy sharpen his pencil.’
- b. Gianni<sub>j</sub> ha fatto temperare la sua matita<sub>\*i,jj</sub> da ogni  
 Gianni AUX make-PF sharpen-INF the his pencil PREP-DA every  
 ragazzo<sub>i</sub>.  
 boy  
 ‘Gianni had his pencil sharpened by every boy.’

The last (but not least) observable difference between FI and FP occurs when looking at *idioms*: nonpassivizable idioms, when embedded under FP, lose their idiomatic reading in favor of a literal one, while both readings remain available in FI (Kayne 1975; Folli and Harley 2007):

- (67) a. Il a fait casser la croûte à sa famille.  
 He AUX make-PF break-INF the crust PREP-A his family  
 ‘He made his family (have a) snack.’
- b. Il a fait casser la croûte par sa famille.  
 He AUX make-PF break-INF the crust PREP-PAR his family  
 ‘He made his family break the crust.’

In (67a), even though the idiomatic reading in which the subject has his family eat something tends to be preferred, the non-idiomatic reading in which the family is made to break an actual crust remains available. It is however impossible to get the idiomatic reading in (67b). Guasti (1996) proposes that FPs do not trigger any inference in terms of Affectedness<sup>3</sup>. In FIs, the Causee is affected, since the event denoted by the embedded verb is geared towards them. Conversely, Causers in FPs focus on reaching the goal encoded by the embedded verb, and the Causee is just treated as mean to an end.

There is much detailed work on the differences (both syntactic and semantic) between *Faire-Infinitive* causatives and *Faire-Par* causatives out there (Kayne 1975; Guasti 1996; Ippolito 2000; Folli and Harley 2007; Torrego 2010,

3. Affectedness is defined by Beavers (2011) as a gradable “persistent change in or impingement of an event participant”. To illustrate the phenomenon, Beavers uses several predicates combined with the object “the apple” in order to show that the object can appear at different levels of affectedness: with “John ate the apple up”, the apple is gone and thus completely affected, while with “John touched the apple” the apple is barely affected at all since it is not impinged.



among others). Both *laisser* and *dejar* can appear in FI-type and FP-type constructions, and it is highly probable that the differences between *laisser*-infinitive constructions and *laisser*-par constructions would be similar to those existing between FIs and FPs. This is however not quite the focus of my work, so I will only be using the FI-constructions to draw a parallel with *laisser*- and *dejar*-causatives.

### 3.2.2 The complex predicate analysis

Despite the several differences pointed out above between FIs and FPs, they still behave similarly with respect to the realisation of their two verbs. Indeed, the Causee argument can never appear between the two predicates, whether it be for FIs or FPs:

- (68) a. Il a fait préparer le dîner à/par son cuisinier.  
 He AUX make.PF prepare.INF the dinner A/PAR his cook  
 'He had his cook prepare the dinner.'
- b. \*Il a fait (à/par) son cuisinier préparer le dîner.  
 He AUX make.PF (A/PAR) prepare.INF the dinner  
 'He makes his cook prepare the dinner.'

This configuration is rare enough to have been pointed out, for it does not follow the regular (and expected) SVO-word order in French. Other Romance languages like Italian can realise *some* subjects in postverbal position in matrix clauses even in not-unaccusative cases<sup>4</sup>, which French cannot do, as shown below by the contrast between (69) and (70)<sup>5</sup>.

- (69) a. Ha telefonato uno studente.  
 AUX phone-PF a student  
 'A student phoned.'
- b. E' visibile uno studente.  
 Is visible a student  
 'A student is visible.'

4. With some unaccusative verbs, the postverbal option is still available, although quite dated. For instance, while both "Pierre est arrivé" and "Est arrivé Pierre" are acceptable in written speech, the latter sounds odd in spoken French.

5. The postverbal position for the matrix subject in Italian is subject to some constraints (Pinto 1994; Longobardi 2000). For instance, postverbal subjects cannot appear in transitive sentences, or with some given subtype of unergative verbs. Moreover, definite DPs cannot be realized in postverbal position. Nevertheless, when the two positions are available for the matrix subject, the postverbal position indicates that the subject is new information (Pinto 1994).

- c. E' stato chiamato uno studente.  
Has been called a student  
'A student has been called (up).'

(from Longobardi 2000: 692)

- (70) a. \*A téléphoné un étudiant.  
AUX phone-PF a student  
'A student phoned.'
- b. \*Est visible un étudiant.  
Is visible a student  
'A student is visible.'
- c. \*A été appelé un étudiant.  
Has been called a student  
'A student has been called (up).'

Surprisingly, we find that this postverbal position for the embedded subject also appears with other verbs, such as **perception verbs** (and *laisser* – which I will come back to later in this chapter); however, unlike *faire*, these verbs allow for their embedded subject to be realized either in *preverbal* or *postverbal* position<sup>6</sup>:

- (71) a. Monique entend chanter une chanson à Richard.  
Monique hear.PS sing.INF a song PREP Richard  
'Monique hears Richard sing a song.'
- b. Monique entend Richard chanter une chanson.  
Monique hear.PS Richard sing.INF a song  
'Monique hears Richard sing a song.'

The proposal made by Kayne (1975) postulates that *faire* in FIs is followed by a sentential complement (*faire* - s[*Richard* - *chanter* - *une chanson*]) and then undergoes a transformation that changes the order of the embedded DP and embedded verb. This does not however explain why *faire* acts differently from perception verbs and from *laisser*. Moreover, this account focuses solely on *faire* as a causative verb, without treating it as encoding a causal relation that requires a Causer, a Causee and a caused event. This shortcoming is fortunately addressed in later work on Romance syntactic causatives; Guasti (1996) follows Alsina (1992) in arguing that *fare* (and so, by extension, *faire* and *dejar*, as well as possibly all verbs that enter syntactic causative constructions) is a

6. It must nevertheless be noted that the postverbal construction with an embedded verb that is transitive is quite uncommon and hardly ever used by native speakers anymore, despite being deemed "grammatically acceptable" (see for instance Kayne (1975: 199–200)).

three-place predicate that requires a Causer (or Agent), a Causee (or Patient), and a caused event. Semantically, this makes a lot of sense, but it seems harder to apply syntactically, mainly because it appears to be impossible to split the “verbal compound” in two, as we saw above in (68b). Henceforth, the interest of FIs lies in their syntactic complexity, as well as in how events are composed and understood.

Semantically, *faire* is to be understood as a **light verb**, which means that it has undergone “semantic bleaching”: it has lost its initial semantic value as a creation verb and thus cannot stand on its own; it is fully “dependent on another syntactic element” (Butt 2010: 21). In the present case, the syntactic element that *faire* needs is the embedded verb: combined with it, *faire* acts as a causative operator that encodes a relation between the Causer, the Causee and the event denoted by the embedded verb. Syntactically, however, the combination of the light verb *faire* with the embedded verb creates a **complex predicate**. Complex predicates are defined by Butt (2005: 1) as “a complex (polyclausal) argument structure that corresponds to a monoclausal functional structure (a single subject; a single primary event predication)”. There are different types of complex predicates, but in the case of syntactic complex predicates (which is what FIs are), Butt adds that those combine a light verb with another (main) predicational element. In other words, it means that it is composed of two or more elements (in the present case, two verbs) that form (i) a single unit of meaning with (ii) one single argument structure. Due to these two factors, it can be said that complex predicates display the behavior of simplex predicates (see Butt (1995, 2010) for detailed work on light verbs and complex predicates). When the embedded verb is intransitive, the resulting complex predicate is a two-place predicate that takes as arguments a Causer and a Causee, and when the embedded verb is transitive, the resulting complex predicate is a three-place predicate that takes a Causer, a Causee and a direct object.

Let us compare our syntactic causatives (72) to a sentence containing a three-place simplex predicate like *donner* (‘to give’) (73), and let us have a look at their behavior with respect to the placement of clitic pronouns:

- (72) a. Sarah a fait lire un livre à Matthias.  
 Sarah AUX make-PF lire-INF a book PREP Matthias  
 ‘Sarah made Matthias read a book.’

- b. Sarah le lui a fait lire.  
 Sarah it-ACC he-DAT AUX  
 make-PF read-INF
- (73) a. Sarah a donné un livre à Matthias.  
 Sarah AUX give-PF a book PREP Matthias  
 ‘Sarah gave Matthias a book.’
- b. Sarah le lui a donné.  
 Sarah it-ACC he-DAT AUX give-PRS  
 ‘Sarah gave it to him.’

We observe that, the arguments of the complex predicate *faire-lire* undergo **clitic climbing**. This means that the arguments of the embedded infinitive verb “climb up” and attach to the matrix verb. If they were part of different clauses, they would not be able to do so.

- (74) a. Sarah a forcé Matthias à lire un livre.  
 Sarah AUX force-PF Matthias to lire-INF a book  
 ‘Sarah forced Matthias to read a book.’
- b. Sarah l’a forcé à le lire.  
 Sarah he.ACC force.PF to it.ACC read.INF  
 ‘Sarah forced him to read it.’
- c. \*Sarah le le a forcé à lire.  
 Sarah it.ACC he.ACC AUX force.PF to read  
 ‘Sarah forced him to read it.’

The observed “permeability” in (72) (which we do not find in (74), where clitics cannot climb out of their clause) hints at monoclausality, which aligns with the idea that the two predicates forming the complex predicate function as a simplex one. Another test for monoclausality is negation: biclausal constructions generally allow for the insertion of lower negation. If only the matrix verb can be negated, then there is only one clause domain.

- (75) a. Sarah n’a pas fait lire un livre à Matthias.  
 Sarah NEG-AUX NEG make.PF read.INF a book PREP Matthias  
 ‘Sarah did not make Matthias read a book.’
- b. #Sarah a fait ne pas lire un livre à Matthias.  
 Sarah AUX make.PF NEG NEG read.INF a book PREP Matthias  
 ‘Sarah made Matthias not read the book.’<sup>7</sup>

7. Note that the sentence with embedded negation is fully available in English, which further highlights the peculiarity of FIs.

As a contrast, the verb *forcer* allows for both placements, as exemplified below:

- (76) a. Sarah n'a PAS forcé Matthias à lire un livre.  
 Sarah NEG-AUX force.PF Matthias to read.INF a book  
 'Sarah did not force Matthias to read a book.'
- b. Sarah a forcé Matthias à NE PAS lire un livre.  
 Sarah AUX force.PF Matthias to NEG read.INF a book  
 'Sarah forced Matthias to not read a book.'

Thus, the presence of this complex predicate in *faire*-causatives automatically makes them monoclausal. However, this does not mean that they should be understood as being monoeventive. The two predicates do nevertheless refer to two separate events (that may be more or less concomitant), which can be individuated. Notably, unlike negation, manner and frequency adverbials in *faire*-causatives can target both the causing event and the caused event.

- (77) Linda fait parler les enfants debout sur la table.  
 Linda make-PS talk-INF the children standing on the table  
 'Linda makes the children talk standing on a table.'

The sentence in (77) above is ambiguous and can be understood in either of the following ways: either (i) Linda is standing on the table and is having the children talk, or (ii) the children are the ones standing on the table while they are being made to talk by Linda. This means that *faire*-causatives should be understood as being monoclausal but bieventive.

### 3.2.3 A preverbal alternative

I have ended the previous section with the understanding that the lower subject of *faire*-infinitives ought to occur in postverbal position due to the postulated light verb status of *faire* (as well as its cognate *fare*; the analysis does not, however, apply to *hacer*).

There is nevertheless more to it than this single-structure analysis. Indeed, *faire* can realize its embedded argument in preverbal position under very constrained circumstances:

- (78) a. J'ai fait manger des épinards à mon fils.  
 I.AUX make-PF eat-INF some spinach PREP my son  
 'I made my son eat spinach.'
- b. \*J'ai fait à mon fils manger des épinards.  
 I.AUX make-PF PREP my son eat-INF some spinach

'I made my son eat spinach.'

- (79) a. Je lui ai fait manger des épinards.  
 I he-DAT AUX make-PF eat some spinach  
 'I made him eat spinach!'
- b. Je l'ai fait manger des épinards.  
 I he-ACC-AUX make-PF eat some spinach  
 'I made him eat spinach!'

I showed above in (72) that in *faire*-infinitives with a transitive embedded verb, the Causee argument received dative case-marking, a case generally assigned to indirect objects in Romance languages. This is replicated in (79a). But (79b) is more surprising: the embedded subject is in the accusative, a case generally assigned to direct objects. But the direct object slot is already filled by “des épinards”. Taking into account the infelicity of (78b), why is (79b) allowed? When (and only when) the Causee is realized as a clitic pronoun, two syntactic structures coexist for *faire*-causatives (Hyman and Zimmer 1976; Authier and Reed 1991; Abeillé, Godard, and Miller 1997). Abeillé, Godard, and Miller (1997) propose that *faire* can actually enter two different causative constructions: the first (and most common) one being what Kayne calls *faire*-infinitives and which Abeillé et al. call a “flat structure” (“structure plate”), and the second (quite constrained) being what they call a “VP-complement structure” (“structure avec complément GV”)<sup>8</sup>. I have discussed at length the former, let us linger on the latter for a moment.

The proposal put forth in their analysis is that the two structures do not merely coexist but are actually in **syntactic competition**; their not being in complementary distribution is made obvious by the sheer absence of one with full-fledged DPs (see contrast in (78)). Besides, they appear to trigger different semantic inferences: Hyman and Zimmer (1976) suggest that the difference between the two is one of “causal directness”, i.e. the former (79a) encodes indirect causation, since the choice to accept and eat the spinach is eventually made by the Causee, while the latter (79b) is direct causation, as the Causer forces the Causee to eat the spinach and leaves her no choice or “control” over the caused event<sup>9</sup>. I have shown in the previous chapter why

8. This analysis does not mention FPs, which generally pattern with FIs in the placement of the embedded subject, as least with intransitive verbs.

9. Additionally, I agree with Abeillé, Godard, and Miller (1997: 66) in saying that the notion of “control” should be used with caution: it seems odd at best to argue that someone performed an

the notions of “direct” and “indirect” causation ought to be used with caution, as many factors come into play when disentangling the two notions, and one given structure is not strictly associated with one or the other. This is why I choose to follow Authier and Reed (1991) in saying that this is not entirely true: while the VP-complement construction is restricted to this coercive reading, the regular *faire*-causative (with the dative clitic) can accommodate for “direct” and “indirect” readings and therefore express situations in which the Causee is forced to eat just as well as situation in which she is being asked to eat. In that sense, one can say that the VP-complement construction is marked (a proposal supported by the actual rarity of the construction), while the other is neutral.

This existence of two co-existing structures for *faire* has been observed in Old French: Martineau (1990) shows that, much like *laisser* as well as perception verbs in Modern French, *faire* used to be able to accommodate both positions for the lower subjects in Old French, even with full-fledged DPs:

- (80) a. ferat l’ost returner.  
 make.FT the-army return  
 ‘He will make the army return.’
- b. Il li fera Le roi d’Engletiere donner Estrelins pour  
 he (she) make.PF the king of-England give Sterling to  
 guerre mener.  
 war lead  
 ‘He will make the king of England pay money to wage war<sup>10</sup>.’

(from 80)

Martineau proposes that Modern French displays two different construction-types when it comes to causative and perception verbs; she calls these two constructions (following St-Amour 1977) “permeable” and “impermeable”. The permeable construction corresponds roughly to our *faire*-infinitives as described by Kayne, while the impermeable one is one in which the lower subject is realized in a preverbal position (as with *laisser* for instance). Such constructions already existed in Old French but appeared to have a different distribution: the word order in (80) would not be acceptable in Modern French.

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action without having any control over it. The notion that should be used instead to characterize the relation of the participants to the causing and caused events, as well as to one another, is that of **authority**. I will come back to it and define it properly in the next chapter.

10. Martineau does not provide a gloss in her work. Being unfamiliar with Old French, I am unable to tell what purpose the pronoun “li” (which I believe to be a feminine one) serves here.

- (81) a. \*Il fera l'armée retourner.  
 He make.FUT the-army return.INF  
 'He will make the army return.'
- b. \*Il fera au roi d'Angleterre donner des Sterlings  
 He make.FUT PREP king of-England give.INF money to  
 pour mener la guerre.  
 lead the war  
 'He will make the king of England pay to wage war.'

This observation is however to be treated lightly: Martineau insists that word order in Old French was rather flexible and the position of the lower subject is not evidence enough to determine which structure we are dealing with. On the other hand, case-assignment tells us what we need to know about the construction at hand: when the embedded verb is transitive, if the Causee is in the dative case, then the construction is permeable, if it is in the accusative, then the construction is impermeable. The table below shows the evolution of the distribution of dative case-marked Causees for two causative verbs (*faire* and *laisser*) and for two perception verbs (*ouyr* 'to hear', and *voir*, 'to see'): the first three columns contain data gathered and analyzed by Pearce (1985), while the last two come from Martineau's analyses of two texts, the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles Anonymes* (CNNA) and the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* by Vigneulles (CNNV).

	until 1125	1150- 1175	1200- 1225	CNNA (1462)	CNNV (1505- 15)
<i>faire</i>	80%	84%	94%	94%	98%
<i>laisser</i>	-	67%	100%	46%	66%
<i>ouyr</i>	-	67%	87%	33%	61%
<i>voir</i>	67%	0%	71%	0%	17%

Table 3.1: Comparison of the percentage of dative case-marked lower subjects (as opposed to accusative case-marked ones) with transitive embedded verbs at several times in Old French (following the work of Pearce (1985) – (Martineau 1990: 88)

We observe a decline of the impermeable construction with *faire* (although it was already quite marginal before then), which goes from 20% to a mere 2%. Conversely, *laisser* appears to fluctuate between the two constructions, with a distribution that seems rather even. The two perception verbs, on the other hand, appear to behave differently from causative verbs as well as differently



from one another<sup>11</sup>. While I can neither account for the partial disappearance of the *pre-V faire*-construction nor explain the reason why the lower subject of *laisser*-constructions can still to this day appear in preverbal or postverbal position, I will try to propose an analysis for the two constructions that exist in both Modern French and Modern Spanish for *laisser* and *dejar*.

### 3.3 Laisser & Dejar

#### 3.3.1 Different levels of lexicalization

I have mentioned on several occasions in different places so far that *laisser* and *dejar* could each enter two distinct constructions. In both languages, the postverbal construction, similar to *faire*-infinitives for Kayne and to the permeable construction for Martineau, is available ((82a) & (83a)). The second construction is where the two languages differ: while French *laisser* follows Martineau's "impermeable" pattern, as in (82b), Spanish opts for a complementizer clause in the subjunctive mood, as in (83b).

- (82) a. Les enfants ont laissé pleurer leur camarade.  
the children AUX let.PF cry.INF their classmate  
'The children let their classmate cry.'
- b. Les enfants ont laissé leur camarade pleurer.  
the children AUX let.PF their classmate cry.INF  
'The children let their classmate cry.'
- (83) a. Los niños dejan llorar a su compañeros.  
the children let.PF cry.INF PREP their classmate  
'The children let their classmate cry.'
- b. Los niños dejan que su compañero llore.  
the children let.PF that their classmate cry.SBJV  
'The children let their classmate cry.'

The pattern is roughly similar when the embedded VP is a transitive verb, although the post-V construction becomes dispreferred in French. Indeed, while it is acceptable grammatically, it makes the construction rather heavy<sup>12</sup>.

11. Kayne discusses interpretational differences between post-V and pre-V constructions with perception verbs.

12. As well as ambiguous: the complement of *laisser* in (84a) can be interpreted as a passive construction, hence meaning that the dress is bought for the daughter by someone else.

- (84) a. La mère laisse acheter une robe à sa fille.  
The mother let.PS buy.INF a dress PREP her daughter  
'The mother lets her daughter buy a dress.'
- b. La mère laisse sa fille acheter une robe.  
The mother let.PS her daughter buy.INF a dress  
'The mother lets her daughter buy a dress.'
- (85) a. La profesora deja leer un libro a los estudiantes  
The teacher let.PS read.READ a book PREP the students  
'The teacher lets the students read a book.'
- b. La profesora deja que los estudiantes lean un libro.  
The teacher let.PS that the students read.SBJV a book  
'The teacher lets the students read a book.'

Additionally, French also differs from other Romance languages like Spanish, Portuguese and Italian: while the pre-V pattern is observable in Spanish<sup>13</sup> as well as in Portuguese, all three other languages allow for a SUB construction, French does not, as shown by the contrast between (86) & (87) and (88).

- (86) Il padre lasciò che il medico esaminasse i suoi figli.  
the father let.PF that the doctor examine.SBJV the his children  
'The father let the doctor examine his children.'
- (87) O pai deixou que o médico examinasse os seus filhos.  
the father let.PF that the doctor examine.SBJV the his children  
'The father let the doctor examine his children.'
- (88) \*Le père a laissé que le médecin examine ses enfants.  
the father AUX let.PF that the doctor examine.SBJV his children  
'The father let the doctor examine his children.'

I will go about discussing the two constructions in the following way: I will first discuss them in isolation, starting with the postverbal ones, since previous research on *faire* (and *fare*, and to an extent, *deixar*) provides some of the tools to understand them. I will then be discussing the two "preverbal" ones, in the event that they are analyzable on the same level (the topic of the subjunctive being a wide and complicated one). Eventually, I will study the four constructions in contrast, in order to see their similarities and differences, which will in turn allow me to propose a general analysis for *let*-type verbs in Romance languages.

13. This construction, while available, is described as "odd" or "marked" by native speakers of Spanish, who tend to favor the other two constructions.

There are good reasons to think (following for instance the work of Martineau mentioned above, as well as Kayne's) that the postverbal *laisser-* and *dejar-*constructions are similar to *faire-*infinitives and that, as such, they contain a complex predicate. Indeed, the arguments of said complex predicates are assigned the exact same cases as the ones in *faire-*infinitives: the *laissé*<sup>14</sup> receives accusative case when the embedded verb is intransitive, and dative case when it is transitive. If it appears as a full-fledged DP, it is introduced by the prepositions *à/a*. If one assumes that the complex predicate analysis is applicable to post-V constructions in *laisser* and *dejar*, then these two constructions ought to license clitic climbing, as shown in (89b) and (90b):

- (89) a. Mélanie a laissé lire son journal intime à sa sœur.  
 Mélanie AUX let.PF read.INF her diary private PREP her sister  
 'Mélanie let her sister read her diary.'
- b. Mélanie le lui a laissé lire.  
 Mélanie it.ACC she.DAT AUX let.PF read.INF  
 'Mélanie let her read it.'
- (90) a. Sofía dejó leer su diario a su hermana.  
 Sofía let.PF read.INF her diary PREP her sister  
 'Sofía let her sister read her diary.'
- b. Sofía le dejó leerlo.  
 Sofía she.DAT let.PF read-it.ACC  
 'Sofía let her read it.'

In both examples above, the *laissé* argument is able to climb up and procliticize on the matrix verb. Here again, this would mean that these two constructions are monoclausal. There is no reason to think that, syntactically, the two post-V constructions are different from *Faire-*Infinitives. On the other hand, the two other constructions (French pre-V and Spanish *SUB*) do not resemble one another, hence they should be treated separately.

I have discussed above the existence of two constructions for *faire*, a common, unmarked one in which the Causee appears in postverbal position (FI), and a marked one which only appears under very specific and constrained conditions in which the Causee is in preverbal position. The latter appears

14. Throughout this dissertation, I will be using Causer/Causee when talking about other types of causative verbs (as these are the terms generally used in the literature), and *laisseur/laissé* when discussing *let-*type verbs.

similar to our pre-V construction in French. It has been argued that these constructions are instances of Exceptional Case Marking, or ECM constructions (Rowlett et al. 2006; Ciutescu 2019; Sheehan 2020). Exceptional Case Marking occurs when the subject of the infinitival embedded complement is treated as an object of the matrix verb, from which it receives accusative case-marking. As such, the pre-V construction fails to license clitic climbing:

- (91) a. Mélanie a laissé sa sœur lire son journal intime.  
 Mélanie AUX let.PF her sister read.INF her diary  
 'Mélanie let her sister read her diary.'
- b. \*Mélanie le l'a laissée lire.  
 Mélanie it.ACC she.ACC-AUX let.PF read.INF  
 'Mélanie let her read it.'
- c. Mélanie l'a laissée le lire.  
 Mélanie she.ACC-AUX let.PF it.ACC read.INF  
 'Mélanie let her read it.'

The inability for the *laissé* argument to procliticize on the matrix verb appears to hint at non-monoclausality. For Rowlett et al. (2006), ECM constructions are to be understood as biclausal, since they license the insertion of lower negation as in (92a), while complex predicates do not allow it, as in (92b):

- (92) a. Mélanie a laissé sa sœur NE PAS lire.  
 Mélanie AUX let.PF her sister NEG NEG read.INF  
 'Mélanie let her sister not read.'
- b. \*Mélanie a laissé NE PAS lire sa sœur.  
 Mélanie AUX let.PF NEG NEG read.INF her sister  
 'Mélanie let her sister not read.'

Finally, the embedded complement of pre-V constructions can be passivized (as in (93a)), while that of post-V constructions cannot (see (93b)). Even though the passive construction below resemble an FP, it should not be treated as such; unlike an FP, it does display passive morphology (*être* + past participle).

- (93) a. Le père laisse ses enfants être examinés (par le médecin).  
 The father let.ps his children be.INF examined (by the doctor)  
 'The father lets his children be examined by the doctor.'
- b. \*Le père laisse être examinés ses enfants (par le médecin).  
 The father let.ps be.INF examined his children by the doctor  
 'The father lets his children be examined by the doctor.'

The Spanish *sub* is also (obviously) biclausal. As such, it should not license clitic climbing<sup>15</sup> (as in (94a)), and allows for sentential negation (see 95):

- (94) a. El padre deja que los examine.  
 The father let.ps that they.ACC examine.SBJV  
 'The father lets him examine them.'
- b. \*El padre lo/le deja que los examine.  
 The father he.ACC/DAT let.ps that they.ACC examine.SBJV  
 'The father lets him examine them.'
- (95) El padre deja que el médico NO examine a sus hijos.  
 The father let.ps that the doctor NEG examine ACC his children  
 'The father lets the doctor not examine his children.'

Therefore, both languages allow for their causative verbs *laisser* and *dejar* to appear in either a monoclausal or a biclausal construction. While the syntactic differences are rather clear, one might wonder what this entails semantically. Indeed, we have observed in section 3.2.3 with the discussion around examples (78)-(79b)) that the syntactic differences for *faire* triggered different semantic inferences (see Authier and Reed 1991; Abeillé, Godard, and Miller 1997). Could we possibly observe similar effects for *laisser* and *dejar*?

### 3.3.2 Different interpretations?

#### French pre-V and intentionality

In the previous chapter, I have started discussing the different values of English *let*, and I developed the idea that it could receive two main readings: a permissive one and a non-interference one. While *let* only licenses one construction, the case of French and Spanish is made complex by to the existence of two distinct structures for both *laisser* and *dejar*. It is, however, unclear what role is played by the structure in the interpretation of our causatives under discussion.

One of the first authors to point out the existence of two structures for French *laisser* is Maurice Borel (1972). In his thesis, he looks at the differences between *faire* and *laisser*, with and without negation. While the interpretational differences between *faire* and *laisser* does not quite fit the frame of this thesis,

15. Yet, it has been observed to happen, see notably Demonte (1979: 193). It is however unclear what licenses it in these specific cases.

he touches on some crucial points regarding the interpretation(s) of the verb *laisser*, in syntactic causatives constructions as well as outside of those.

- (96) Laisse ce couteau, n’y touche pas !  
 Let.IMP this knife NEG-it touch NEG  
 ‘Leave this knife alone, do not touch it!’
- (97) Laisse Jean s’en aller, ne l’en empêche pas.  
 Let.IMP Jean go.INF away NEG he.ACC-it prevent NEG  
 ‘Let Jean go, don’t stop him.’
- (98) Ne laisse pas ce couteau, prends-le !  
 NEG let.IMP NEG this knife take-it  
 ‘Do not leave this knife, take it!’
- (99) Ne laisse pas Jean partir !  
 NEG let.INF NEG Jean go.INF  
 ‘Don’t let Jean go!’

He observes that in both cases in (96) and (97), the value of *laisser* is respectively *NE RIEN FAIRE* (‘do nothing’) or *NE PLUS RIEN FAIRE* (‘stop doing something’); in which the *laisseur* is either not engaged or chooses to disengage (in which case a blocking is removed). The negated sentences in (98) and (99) yield the opposite interpretation: *FAIRE QUELQUE CHOSE* (‘do something’), which he calls a situation of “engagement”. This is for the general meaning for *laisser*. But what does he have to say about the two constructions?

First of all, he points out that the two constructions are neither synonymous nor are they interchangeable, since they are not always felicitous in the same contexts. Observe, as an example, the pair of sentences in (100) (Borel 1972: 31):

- (100) a. Laisse tomber ton arme.  
 Let.IMP fall.INF your weapon  
 ‘Drop your weapon.’
- b. #Laisse ton arme tomber.  
 Let.IMP your weapon fall.INF  
 ‘Drop your weapon.’

His argument is that ((100b)) is infelicitous because the blocking performed by the *laisseur* is unintentional. He makes his argument more explicit with the following sentences:

- (101) J'ai laissé tomber mes lunettes.  
 I-AUX let.PF fall.INF my glasses  
 'I let my glasses fall.'  
 → I was holding my glasses in my hand for any other reason but preventing them from falling (e.g. I was wiping my eyes).
- (102) J'ai laissé mes lunettes tomber.  
 I-AUX let.PF my glasses fall.INF  
 'I let my glasses fall.'  
 → I was holding my glasses with my hand specifically to stop them from falling.

Therefore, in one case (with the postverbal construction in (101)), the glasses' falling does not follow a previous blocking: it simply follows its course as something that was bound to happen (perhaps the glasses have a tendency towards falling when not held back by anything). On the other hand, the preverbal construction in (102) yields a reading where I choose to let my glasses follow their natural tendency, after preventing them from doing so. One could be tempted to argue that this is maybe an effect of the embedded verb, as *tomber* is an unaccusative verb (and as such, could prefer a post-V position for its subject). Borel, however, shows that these two interpretations arise regardless of the type of embedded verb, for instance with the perception verb *voir* 'to see' in :

- (103) a. Baisse-toi, laisse voir la petite dame.  
 Lower-yourself, let.IMP see.INF the little lady  
 'Get down, let the little lady see.'
- b. #Baisse-toi, laisse la petite dame voir.  
 Lower-yourself, let.IMP the little lady see.INF  
 'Get down, let the little lady see.'

The main difference between the two is then one of **intentionality**: in the situations encoded by pre-V structures, the blocking performed is an intentional one. In situations described by post-V constructions, the blocking is unintentional.

The notion of intentionality is to be found again a few years later in the work of Richard Kayne (1975). In his work about *faire*, he raises very briefly the issue of *laisser* and its two structures (as well as that of perception verbs). However, he does not seek to provide an analysis of the structures, nor does

he try to account for the differences between *laisser* and *faire*; he uses *laisser* and perception verbs as a support for his analysis of *faire*. Yet, he makes the same important remark as Borel: the two constructions are syntactically distinct. He takes as an example the following pair of sentences:

- (104) a. Le gardien a laissé les prisonniers s'échapper.  
 The guard AUX let.PF the prisoners escape  
 'The guard let the prisoners escape.'
- b. Le gardien a laissé s'échapper les prisonniers.  
 The guard AUX let.PF escape the prisoners  
 'The guard let the prisoners escape.'

(from Kayne (1975: 222))

Kayne proposes that the pre-V carries an intentional flavor that the post-V lacks. But he does not appear to be placing the expression of the intention at the same level as Borel: while the latter states that the intention (or lack thereof) is in the blocking, Kayne places the intention in the *letting* (perhaps these go hand in hand, but it is likely that they, in fact, do not). This means that, in (104a), the guard can be interpreted as being an accomplice to the prisoners.

L'assignement de structures profondes distinctes à des paires comme : elle a laissé Jean partir (laisser NP S), elle a laissé partir Jean (laisser – S) n'est pas artificielle si on se fonde sur l'interprétation sémantique, car les deux constructions ne sont pas, en vérité, nécessairement synonymes. [. . .] La première semble impliquer un certain degré de collusion, ou une négligence délibérée (. . .). Mais pas la seconde<sup>16</sup>.

While this observation appears to be rooted in some robust intuition (that I also share, as native speaker of French), it does not provide any explanation as to what makes this intentionality component arise. Additionally, I will show in the next chapter that both *laisser* and *dejar* license non-volitional, inanimate entities as their *laisseur*: how can one reconcile the notion of "intentionality" with the lack of volition?

16. The assignment of distinct deep structures to pairs like "elle a laissé Jean partir" (laisser NP S) "elle a laissé partir Jean" (laisser - S) is not artificial if we base ourselves off of semantic interpretation, for the two constructions are not actually necessarily synonymous. The former seems to indicate some degree of collusion, or deliberate neglect. But not the latter.



### Readings across Romance languages

Borel's and Kayne's analyses are both concerned with French, in which both embedded clause are non-finite; however, we have seen that Spanish (along with other Romance languages like Portuguese and Italian) *let*-verbs could take a finite embedded clause in the subjunctive. The first question to ask is: do these languages display a contrast similar to the one observed for French? And the second question whether there is a difference in interpretation between French pre-V and its non-finite complement and Spanish *sub* and its finite one.

One can start to elaborate an answer to these questions by looking at the work done on Portuguese (in which *deixar*, much like *dejar*, licenses three different constructions). Notably, Silva (1999, 2004, 2009, 2012) argues that *deixar* can receive three main interpretations: (a) 'permit', (b) 'not-oppose', and (c) 'let go' or 'release', for which I provide examples in (105) below:

- (105) a. El domingo pasado, el alcalde dejó que los manifestantes utilizaran la vía principal.  
'Last Sunday, the mayor let the protesters use the main road.'
- b. Sophie dejó que su amiga durmiera toda la mañana.  
'Sophie let her friend sleep in all morning.'
- c. Abrió la jaula para dejar volar al pájaro.  
'He opened the cage to let the bird fly out.'

As the line between the three readings can be a thin (and at times blurry) one, even when given examples, Silva uses the Talmian notions of *onset* and *extended letting*, as well as that of *cessation of impingement* that I discussed in Chapter 1, section 2.2.1. He argues that 'not-oppose' is a case of *extended letting* (also defined by Talmy 1988 as a *leave alone* scenario), while 'permit' and 'release' are to be associated with *onset letting* (he notes that 'release' realizes a physical *cessation of impingement*). These notions are actually quite close to what Borel (1972) describes in his work (although he did so before the force-dynamic framework was laid out): the situation encoded by pre-V, in which the blocking is intentional, corresponds to Silva's 'permit' and 'release': the *laissé* was prevented from following its tendency until the situation changes and following said tendency becomes available again. 'Not-oppose', on the other hand, is described as the lack of opposition or intervention to an already-existing event.

Following Silva's work, Enghels and Roegiest (2012a, 2012b, 2014) pro-

pose to analyze three Romance languages in contrast: French, Spanish, and Portuguese. They assume the same interpretations for *dejar* and *deixar* as Silva's: (a) 'permit' (*permitir*), (b) 'not-oppose' (*no oponerse*), and (c) 'let go'/'release' (*soltar*). *Laisser*, however, is to be treated slightly differently. Indeed, the third reading (release) is not generally available with French *laisser*, about which Silva (2012: 521) says the following:

Nevertheless, the French verb *laisser* has a narrower semasiological range than its Romance counterparts. Putting aside other differences in non causative uses, the French *laisser* has lost most of the diachronic prototype of Romance verbs and one of the primitive meanings of the Latin etymon *laxare*, viz. the meaning of 'to let go'. French uses instead the verb *lâcher*.

Note that it can nevertheless resurface in combination with some movement verbs like *tomber* ('to fall'), as in (106).

- (106) Max a laissé tomber son porte-feuille.  
 Max AUX let.PF fall.INF his wallet  
 'Max dropped his wallet.'

However, for this very reason, I will only analyze the two verbs *dejar* and *laisser* in contrast with respect to the two readings that are available across both languages, that is 'permit', which I call *authorize*, and 'no opponerse', which I call *not-intervene*.

For Enghels and Roegiest (2012b), the differences between the two verbs are to be understood in terms of three different parameters: (i) animacy of S1 (the *laisseur*), (ii) animacy of S2 (the *laissé*), and (iii) degree of transfer of energy encoded by the embedded verb. While the first two parameters are rather explicit, the last one requires some context. Enghels & Roegiest assume a scale of dynamicity for verbs (particularly infinitives), which goes as follows:

*Transitive > Unergative > Unaccusative*

The argument is that what is encoded by transitive verbs is a transfer of energy from one entity to another; in the case of change-of-state verbs, the object is even altered (e.g. 'The pirates sunk the ship'). On the other hand, unergative verbs lack an object, therefore no energy is transferred, but it is still generated by the subject of said verb (for instance, 'Luke ran'). Eventually, unaccusative

verbs are treated as non-dynamic, simply because they do not introduce an external argument that could produce energy.

	<i>dejar + que</i> (SUB)	<i>dejar + Inf + S2</i> (post-V)	<i>laisser + S2 + Inf</i> (pre-V)	<i>laisser + Inf + S2</i> (post-V)
S1 [ANIM]	98%	78,1%	92,4%	64,7%
S2 [ANIM]	50,5%	29%	46,7%	17,5%
S2 [-ANIM][-DYN]	35,9%	59%	36,2%	72%
V [TR]	43,4%	1,6%	35,2%	0,4%
V [INERG]	10,1%	14,5%	10,5%	8,7%
V [INAC]	24,7%	83,4%	17,1%	84,7%

Table 3.2: The parameters for *laisser* and *dejar* across the four constructions (adapted from Enghels and Roegiest 2012b: 108)

While Enghels & Roegiest neither propose a strict one-to-one mapping from structure to interpretation nor argue for one structure being more marked than the other (which is what Kayne actually does), the data in Table 3.2 provides key to understanding the four constructions. Indeed, they appear to behave distinctly from one another.

The data about the type of embedded verbs that can be taken by *laisser* and *dejar* confirm my statement regarding ((84a)) and replicates it for Spanish: while the post-V constructions remain marginally available with a transitive verb (1,6% for Spanish and 0,4% for French), they are obviously strongly disfavored. The opposite pattern can be observed with unaccusative verbs in the last row: they mainly pair with post-Vs constructions across both languages. Finally, unergative verbs are evenly distributed over the two constructions.

These factors are in isolation from one another, and there is no way to know for sure if some *laisseur-laissé* combinations prefer a given type of embedded verb. Enghels and Roegiest (2012b: 96) propose to combine these different factors in their analysis of *dejar*. They find that the Spanish post-V mostly corresponds to causal relations with an animate *laisseur* and an inanimate *laissé* performing the event denoted by an unaccusative verb 43,1% of the time. On the other hand, SUB favors configurations with two animate entities and a transitive embedded verb in 29,8% of cases. Unfortunately, no such data is available for French. Therefore, I will investigate in the next chapter the argument selection of *laisser* and *dejar*, and attempt to draw a mapping from structure to conceptual representation.

## Chapter 4

# Understanding *laisser* and *dejar*

Let us take stock. So far, we have seen that *laisser* and *dejar* realize causal relations that seem to overlap with ENABLE-relations (as defined in Wolff and Song (2003)), in that both seemed to realize situations in which the Patient (or *laissé*) has a tendency for the result and in which there is no opposition between Affector and Patient, as opposed to the other two configurations CAUSE and PREVENT. And yet, both *laisser* and *dejar* do differ from ENABLE verbs because the former can only take **would-be preventers** as subjects, while the latter will prefer entities that can be understood as Enablers. Additionally, *laisser* and *dejar* fail to ever encode physical causation. In Chapter 3, I had a closer look at the two constructions and showed that previous approaches to *let*-verbs in Romance had pointed out interpretational as well as selectional differences between the two constructions in each languages. Notably, French pre-V is described as more intentional<sup>1</sup> than its post-V counterpart (Borel 1972; Kayne 1975). The approaches to Spanish do not propose as clear-cut a distinction between the two structures; nevertheless, it has been shown that the Spanish post-V prefers to pair with inanimate entities as *laissés* and with unaccusative embedded verbs. Therefore, the approaches to the two verbs diverge. These facts and differences raise two sets of questions:

- What are the constraints on the argument selection of the two verbs? Do

1. I use “intentional” because the word is used by both authors, however, they argue that intentionality intervenes at two different points of the causal relation.

these constraints apply to the two constructions for each language or are they specific to one? And if they are specific to one construction, why?

- Why is the relation encoded by the pre-V construction in French interpreted as “more intentional” than its counterpart in post-V? Does such an intuition exist for Spanish as well? If not, can the “intentionality approach” be refined in order to fit both languages?

In this chapter, I will propose an answer to these questions by elaborating on the work done in Donazzan, Raffy, and Heusinger (2020) and Donazzan et al. (2021). I will also be comparing my assumptions about *laisser* and *dejar* to the data of Enghels and Roegiest (2012b) in Table 3.2, a version of which appears in Table 4.1:

	<i>dejar</i> + <i>que</i> (SUB)	<i>dejar</i> + Inf + S2 (post-V)	<i>laisser</i> + S2 + Inf (pre-V)	<i>laisser</i> + Inf + S2 (post-V)
S1[ANIM]	98%	78,1%	92,4%	64,7%
S2[ANIM]	50,5%	29%	46,7%	17,5%
S2[-ANIM][-DYN]	35,9%	59%	36,2%	72%

Table 4.1: The animacy of *laisseur* and *laissé* across the four constructions (adapted from Enghels and Roegiest 2012b: 108)

## 4.1 The argument structure of *laisser* and *dejar*

### 4.1.1 Selecting *laisseurs*

Donazzan, Raffy, and Heusinger (2020) make three generalizations about the selection of *laisseurs* in French *laisser*-causatives. To some extent, these roughly match the characterization for *laisser* and *dejar* that I proposed in Chapter 2.

- **GEN1:** Sentient, volitional entities (AGENTS) are always acceptable as *laisseurs* (as long as they hold properties that make them a *would-be preventer*)
- **GEN2:** Non-volitional, force-generating entities (CAUSERS) are **never** acceptable as *laisseurs*.

- **GEN3**: Non-volitional, non force-generating entities (neither *AGENTS* nor *CAUSERS*) are acceptable as *laisseurs*, as long as the *laissé* is perceived as having an even lesser degree of agentivity.

But the question is now whether these generalizations apply to *dejar* as well. Let us first take a look at **GEN1**.

- (107) a. Clara a laissé Catherine cuisiner.  
Clara AUX let.PF Catherine cook.INF  
'Clara let Catherine cook.'
- b. Clara a laissé cuisiner Catherine.  
Clara AUX let.PF cook.INF  
'Clara let Catherine cook.'
- (108) a. Carla dejó que Catalina cocinara.  
Carla let.PF that Catalina cook.SBJV  
'Carla let Catalina cook.'
- b. Carla dejó cocinar a Catalina.  
Carla let.PF cook.INF ACC Catalina  
'Carla let Catalina cook.'

The same can be observed with any inanimate *laissé*, as long as the *laisseur* is an Agent:

- (109) a. Le programmeur laisse son ordinateur s'éteindre.  
The programmer let.PS his laptop shut-down.INF  
'The programmer lets his laptop shut down (by itself).'
- b. Le programmeur laisse s'éteindre son ordinateur.  
The programmer let.PS shut-down.INF his laptop  
'The programmer lets his laptop shut down (by itself).'
- (110) a. El panadero dejó que el pastel se enfriara.  
The pastry-chef let.PF that the cake REFL cool-down.INF  
'The pastry chef let the cake cool down.'
- b. El panadero dejó enfriar el pastel.  
The pastry-chef AUX let.PF cool-down.INF the cake  
'The pastry chef let the cake cool down.'

While they may trigger different semantic inferences (as discussed in Chapter 3), neither of them is deemed less acceptable than the other when the *laisseur* is an Agent. **GEN1** is thus true across all four constructions for Spanish and French.

GEN2 states that *laisser* cannot take a Causer (i.e. an entity that either generate or transmits physical force) as its subject, regardless of the agentivity level of the *laissé*. This matches with my proposed characteristic for *laisser* and *dejar* in (57), in which I explained that these two verbs could not encode causal relations that involved physical force.

- (111) a. #La tempête a laissé les maisons/Agnès rester debout.  
 The storm AUX let.PF the houses/Agnes stay.INF standing  
 'The storm let houses stay up.'
- b. #La tempête a laissé rester debout les maisons/Agnès.'  
 The storm AUX let.PF stay.INF standing he houses/Agnes  
 'The storm let houses stay up.'
- (112) a. #Las olas dejan que los barcos/Ana y Hilda se acerquen.  
 The waves let.PF that the boats/Ana y Hilda REFL approach.SBJV  
 'The waves let the boats get closer.'
- b. #Las olas dejan acercarse a los barcos/Ana y Hilda.  
 The waves let.PF approach.SBJV ACC the boats/Ana y Hilda  
 'The waves let the boats get closer.'

On the same note, derived event nominals also make poor *laisseurs*: Talmy's famous example for onset letting is not acceptable in French, as shown in (113) below.

- (113) a. #Le débouchage de la baignoire a laissé l'eau couler  
 The unplugging of the tub AUX let.PF the-water flow  
 hors du réservoir.  
 out the tank  
 'The unplugging of the tub let the water flow from the tank.'
- b. #Le débouchage de la baignoire a laissé couler l'eau  
 The unplugging of the tub AUX let.PF flow.INF the-water  
 hors du réservoir.  
 out the tank  
 'The unplugging of the tub let the water flow from the tank.'

The same restriction applies to *dejar* across both constructions, as shown in (114) below:

- (114) a. #La destrucción del edificio dejó que los contratistas  
 The destruction of-the building let.PF that the entrepreneurs  
 construyeran un centro comercial.  
 build.SBJV a center commercial  
 'The destruction of the building let the entrepreneurs build a

- mall.'
- b. #La destrucción del edificio dejó construir un centro  
 The destruction of-the building let.PF buil.INF a center  
 comercial a los contratistas.  
 commercial ACC the entrepreneurs  
 'The destruction of the building let the entrepreneurs build a  
 mall.'

This means that **GEN2** holds for both French and Spanish, and here again, for all four constructions. It should be pointed out that (111) and (112) do not entirely pattern with (113) and (114): while the former are simply nonsensical, the latter are made infelicitous by the lack of a **would-be prevention** component. Indeed, it is expected that unplugging the tub will make the tank go empty; that is actually how tubs work. Similarly, chances are that, if one wants to build a mall where a building already exists, they will have to destroy the building in order to be able to proceed with the construction of the mall. French and Spanish speakers will then prefer another *ENABLE* verb that does not require would-be prevention, such as *permettre/permitir*. However, for the sentences in (111) and (112), the main issue is the mismatch between *laisser* and *dejar*, which are verbs encoding **causation by influence** and cannot express physical causation, and Causer subjects which can only cause events through physical force.

The fact that **GEN2** holds does not mean that such Causers can never pair with *laisser* or *dejar*: Donazzan, Raffy, and Heusinger (2020: 66) point out that, instead of an infinitival complement, *laisser* can embed a non-eventive complement clause containing a stative predicate, as in (115). These embedded small clauses resemble the structures in (116), in which the result predicate is introduced by an AdjP or a PP. However, in these cases, the verb *laisser* is translated as the English verb *leave*, instead of *let*, which shows that the values of the two verbs in English are close but are not strictly the same.

- (115) La tempête a laissé les maisons debout.  
 The storm AUX let.PF the houses up  
 'The storm left the houses standing.'
- (116) a. Marc a laissé sa cigarette sur la table.  
 Marc AUX let.PF his cigarette on the table  
 'Marc left his cigarette on the table.'
- b. Laisse - moi tranquille !  
 let.ps - me quiet



'Leave me alone!'

This simply goes to show the interpretations available for *laisser* depend on the construction it appears in: while I am interested in his values as a causative verb (that might have undergone some degree of semantic bleaching) with a syntactic causative construction, it still occurs with its full lexical value in other contexts.

This leads us to **GEN3**, that states that non-volitional, non-force-generating entities (that are neither Agents nor Causers) can be paired with *laisser* and *dejar* in causative constructions under some specific conditions. The constraint stated in **GEN3** is simply that the *laissé* ought to be *less agentive* than the *laisseur*, as shown by the infelicity of the two examples in (117) and (118).

- (117) a. #Le trou dans le grillage laisse le chien sortir.  
 The hole in the fence let.ps the dog go-out.INF  
 'The hole in the fence lets the dog out.'
- b. #Le trou dans le grillage laisse sortir le chien.  
 The hole in the fence let.ps go-out.INF the dog  
 'The hole in the fence lets the dog out.'
- (118) a. #La puerta abierta deja que los clientes entren.  
 The door open let.ps that the customers enter.INF  
 'The open door let the customers flow in.'
- b. #La puerta abierta deja entrar a los clientes.  
 The door open let.ps enter.INF ACC the customers  
 'The open door let the customers flow in.'

Therefore, there seems to be a constraint on the agentive properties of *laisseur* and *laissé*: the *laissé* cannot be more agentive than the *laisseur*. Thus, if the *laisseur* is non-agentive, it will require a non-agentive *laissé*. However, this is not the whole picture: one construction (the post-V, both in French and Spanish) appears to be more felicitous than its pre-V/SUB counterpart with such arguments, as shown by the contrast between the two constructions in (119) and (120).

- (119) a. ??Le mur rongé de salpêtre laisse un peu d'eau suinter.  
 The wall gnawed of saltpeter let.ps a little water seep.INF  
 'The wall, eaten by saltpeter, lets some water seep through.'
- b. Le mur rongé de salpêtre laisse suinter un peu d'eau.  
 The wall gnawed of saltpeter let.ps seep.INF a little water

'The wall, eaten by saltpeter, lets some water seep through.'

- (120) a. ??Las cortinas dejan que la luz pase.  
 The curtains let.ps that the light pass.SBJV  
 'The curtains let the light through.'
- b. Las cortinas dejan pasar la luz.  
 The curtains let.ps pass.INF the light  
 'The curtains let light through.'

Note that the other constructions are not completely ruled out; they are simply highly dispreferred. Indeed, the preverbal position for the *laissé* makes it more agentive; this is supported by the "intentionality" proposals of both Borel (1972) and Kayne (1975). This explains why inanimate *laissés*, paired with inanimate *laisseurs*, tend to prefer a post-infinitival position. This confirms the data of Engels and Roegiest (2012b) in Table 4.1: lower subjects with [-ANIMATE][-DYNAMIC] features are more often found in post-V constructions (59% in Spanish and 72% in French) than in the two biclausal constructions (35,9% for *dejar* and 36,2% for *laisser*).

Yet, one might wonder why any of these are deemed acceptable, since they look rather similar to our examples with Causer subjects above in (111) and (112). And indeed, the *laisseurs* in (119) and (120) are inanimate entities that lack any form of agentive property. But unlike Causers, these do not violate the main properties of *dejar* and *laisser*: they do not generate their own physical force nor do they transfer physical force in these given situations (hence avoiding a mismatch), and in these specific instances, they can be considered would-be preventers. In other words, they are holders of properties that make them acceptable *laisseurs*. Indeed, there are expectation on manufactured artifacts like walls and curtains: walls (unless they are a special type of wall) should not let water seep through, but it is made defective by the saltpeter, which makes it permeable, thus allowing water to seep through. In (120), there is a general expectation that curtains ought to block light; it is their main purpose. The fact that these specific curtains do not is not necessarily relevant: what matters is that, conceptually, the kind *curtain* prevents light from shining into a room all else being equal.

The importance of a possible prevention component is highlighted by the infelicity of a sentence like (121) below: entities that make good *laisseurs* make poor subjects of typical ENABLE verbs like *permettre* ('to allow'). Indeed,

*permettre* realizes causal relations in which the tendencies of the two entities are in agreement, and in which the realization of each of these two tendencies is necessary for the occurrence of the caused event. *Laisser* and *dejar* differ radically from *permettre* (and other ENABLE-verbs) with respect to the causal relations that they encode. This difference, in turn, impacts the argument selection of the verbs: while the strict criterion for the selection of the subject for *laisser* and *dejar* is the possession of a property that makes a possible prevention likely (would-be prevention), other ENABLE verbs strongly disprefer would-be preventers. Let us compare (119) above to (121).

- (121) ??Le mur rongé de salpêtre permet à un peu d'eau de suinter.  
 The wall gnawed of saltpeter allow.PS to a little water to seep.INF  
 'The wall, eaten by saltpeter, allows some water to seep through.'

The reverse observation can be made about subjects of *permettre*: if they are acceptable in a *permettre*-relation, they will make poor *laisseurs*, as *laisser* and *dejar* will try to assign a would-be preventer role to an entity that lacks the relevant properties to be one, as shown by the infelicity of (122b) below.

- (122) a. Ma bouilloire électrique me permet de faire du thé en  
 my kettle electric me allow.PS to make.INF some tea in  
 un instant !  
 an instant  
 "My electric kettle allows me to make tea very quickly!"  
 b. #Ma bouilloire électrique me laisse faire du thé en un  
 my kettle electric me let.PS make.INF some tea in an  
 instant !  
 instant  
 "My electric kettle lets me make tea very quickly!"

#### 4.1.2 Selecting *laissés*

So far in this dissertation, I have insisted on the need to treat the causal relations encoded by *laisser* and *dejar* as relations between two entities, and not between events. Accordingly, we need to take a look at the type of *laissés* that can be used in a *laisser*- or *dejar*-causative. What surfaces from the examples (107)-(120) is that there does not seem to be any animacy constraint on *laissés*. While this could seem self-evident, I will state that the only requirement on *laissé* is that they possess the relevant properties that allow them to perform the event denoted by the VP.

- (123) a. Le peintre laisse la peinture sécher.  
The painter let.ps the paint dry.INF  
'The painter lets the paint dry.'
- b. #Le peintre laisse la peinture gonfler.  
The painter let.ps the paint swell.INF  
'The painter lets the paint swell.'
- (124) a. Miguel deja que Lupe vaya a la biblioteca.  
Miguel let.ps that Lupe go.SBJV to the library  
'Miguel lets Lupe go to the library.'
- b. #Miguel deja que Lupe vaya a la luna.  
Miguel let.ps that Lupe go.SBJV to the moon  
'Miguel lets Lupe go to the Moon.'

I will start with the contrast in (123), which is more self-explanatory: paint, when put on the a surface, will eventually dry on its own. Recall that a disposition is a property in virtue of which an entity behaves a given way under certain conditions: in Chapter 2, we saw that under the Simple Conditional Analysis, "an object is disposed to M when C iff it would M if it were the case that C" (a view that is endorsed by both Goodman 1954; Quine 1960. For Fara (2001), "N is disposed to M when C" is true iff N has an intrinsic property in virtue of which it Ms when C. In that sense, in (123a) above, the paint is *disposed to* dry. On the other hand, I have never heard of a paint that swells when acted upon, no matter what kind of action is performed on it. This explains the incongruity of (123b). The same type of mechanism is at play with (124): there is no restriction on going to the library, if one has a library card, one is free to go. The restrictions on going to the Moon, however, are much stricter: one can only go to the Moon if they are an astronaut. Assuming that Lupe is not an astronaut, then going to the Moon is not an action that is available to her. If, however, Lupe *is* an astronaut, then (124b) is acceptable as long as the reading is one of non-intervention rather than one of authorization. Say that Miguel is Lupe's father; the reading in which Lupe prepares herself for her big expedition on the Moon and her father does not prevent her from doing so is available.

However, the infelicity of (124b) does not simply rely on Lupe not being an astronaut. If Miguel happened to be the head of NASA, he could somehow decide that one citizen should be granted the privilege to go on a space mission with actual astronauts. Adding an authority figure (which can, as such, ensure that occurrence of the caused event) would salvage (124b). I will come back

to the notion of authority, and its importance in *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives in section 4.3.1. From this point, I can propose a new generalization for *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives:

- **GEN4:** Entities (volitional or not) that possess properties that allow them to bring about the event denoted by the VP are acceptable as *laissés* in *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives.

These facts about *laisser* and *dejar* appear to hint at two distinct kinds of letting, one that is agentive (or at the very least, is performed by Agents) and one in which no Agent at all is involved.

## 4.2 Three types of letting

### 4.2.1 Letting and agentivity

The discussion around the argument selection of *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives highlights a need for a better categorization of the causal relations encoded by the constructions. Following Silva (1999, 2009) and Enghels and Roegiest (2012b), and we have seen in the previous chapter, *laisser* and *dejar* can receive two main interpretations: *authorize* and *not-intervene*. I now propose to slightly amend this proposal.

While Agents can appear as *laisseurs* in both constructions, inanimate *laisseurs* are preferred in post-V, as long as the *laissé* is also inanimate. This seems to hint at a need for a subcategorization for *letting*; indeed, it seems unlikely that a volitional entity and a non-volitional, inanimate one can cause events in the same fashion (even though they appear in the exact same structures). While they are both able to appear in *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives as *laisseurs*, due to properties that make them would-be preventers, they cannot be understood as displaying the same type of behavior. Some type(s) of letting appear to be only performable by Agents (either on other Agents or on non-agentive entities), while another type can only occur between specifically non-agentive entities. Thus, I will keep the terms *authorize* and *not-intervene* (as adapted from Enghels and Roegiest 2012b) to refer to *laisser-* and *dejar-*relations with an Agent *laisseur*.

Indeed, the act of authorizing can only be performed by an intentional Agent. This is exemplified in (125) and (126) below by the behavior of the French verb *autoriser* and the Spanish verb *autorizar*. Both verbs require both the matrix subject and the lower one to be Agents<sup>2</sup>.

- (125) Anabelle/#le beau temps a autorisé Antoine à aller faire  
 Anabelle/the nice weather AUX authorize.PF Antoine to go.INF do.INF  
 du vélo.  
 some bike  
 ‘Anabelle/the nice weather authorized Antoine to go biking.’
- (126) Nina/#su pasión por los deportes extremos autorizó a  
 Nina/his passion for the sports extreme authorize.PF ACC  
 Samuel a saltar por la ventana.  
 Samuel to jump.INF through the window  
 ‘Nina/his passion for extreme sports authorized Samuel to jump out  
 the window.’

As we have seen in the previous section, agentivity restrictions also exist for *laisser* and *dejar*, for which any inanimate *laisseur*-animate *laissé* configuration appears to be ruled out. This is shown again below in (127) and (128).

- (127) #Le beau temps a laissé Antoine aller faire du vélo.  
 The nice weather AUX let.PF Antoine go.INF do.INF some bike  
 ‘The nice weather let Antoine go biking.’
- (128) #Su impresionante forma física dejó que Samuel saltara  
 His impressive form physical let.PF that Samuel jump.SBJV  
 por la ventana.  
 through the window  
 ‘His impressive physical form let Samuel jump out the window.’

Conversely, I use *not-intervene* to refer to all *laisser*- and *dejar*-situations in which the *laisseur* is an Agent but its relation to the *laissé* is not one of permission-giving, for any of the following reasons: (a) the *laissé* itself is not an Agent, so it cannot be “authorized” to do anything, (b) the caused event is already happening, it is too late to authorize, or (c) the *laisseur* is not aware of the occurrence of the caused event, and as such, cannot give permission.

Lastly, I add a third type of *laisser*- and *dejar*-relation, which I call *dispo-*

2. However, inanimate subjects in which authority is encoded (‘the law’, ‘the decree’), as well as metonyms for figures of authority (‘the Congress’, ‘the White House’) make good subjects of *authorize*, *autoriser* and *autorizar*.

*sitional letting* and that I use to refer to relations between non-agentive entities. I will start by defining *dispositional letting* in the next section, and will get back to *authorize* and *not-intervene* in section 4.3.

#### 4.2.2 *Dispositional letting*

I refer to this type of *laisser-* and *dejar-*relation as *dispositional letting*, because the relations that are encoded in those specific configurations are not results of choices or intentions<sup>3</sup>, but rather they are descriptions of possible realizations of intrinsic properties.

First and foremost, these sentences tend to be ambiguous. They can either receive a habitual reading or an episodic one, as shown in (129) below:

- (129) a. J'ai acheté ces rideaux parce qu'ils laissent passer la  
 I-AUX buy.PF those curtains because they let.PS pass.INF the  
 lumière.  
 light  
 'I bought these curtains because they let light through.'
- b. Ce matin, je me suis assise dans le salon car  
 This morning, I REFL AUX sit.PF in the living-room because  
 les rideaux laissaient passer (de) la lumière.  
 the curtains let.IMPF pass.INF (some) the light  
 'This morning, I sat in my living room because the curtains were  
 letting (some) light through.'

In (129a), the sentence is understood as meaning that letting light through is a characteristic of the curtains: they are disposed to letting light through if some light is shined at them, but they do not need to be letting light through at the time the sentence in (129a) is uttered for the sentence to be true. Conversely, what is meant by (129b) is that the curtains were letting light through at the time at which the event took place. This habitual vs. episodic ambiguity is also available with *authorize* in imperfective sentences: either of the two scenarios in (130a) and (130b) below is a good paraphrase for (130).

- (130) Didier laisse son fils cuisiner.  
 Didier let.PS his son cook.INF  
 'Didier lets his son cook.'

3. I develop this idea further in section 4.3.

- a. Today, Didier exceptionally gave his son permission to make dinner.
- b. Didier's son is finally old enough to be careful in the kitchen, that's why Didier now allows him to make dinner on his own.

Yet, it is clear that *authorize* differs from dispositional letting, for two main reasons: firstly, in the former, *laisser* can take a perfective aspect, while in the latter, it is unavailable. This is exemplified by the contrast between (131) and (132).

- (131) Didier a laissé son fils cuisiner.  
Didier AUX let.PF his son cook.INF  
'Didier let his son cook.'
- (132) ??Les rideaux ont laissé passer la lumière.  
The curtains AUX let.PF pass.INF the light  
'The curtains let light through.'

Additionally, *laisser* in *authorize* configurations can combine with manner adverbials, as in (133), while *laisser* in *dispositional letting* cannot, as shown in (134).

- (133) a. Didier laisse gracieusement son fils cuisiner.  
Didier let.ps graciously his son cook.INF  
'Didier graciously lets his son cook.'
- b. Didier laisse gracieusement cuisiner son fils.  
Didier let.ps graciously cook.INF his son  
'Didier graciously lets his son cook.'
- (134) #Les rideaux laissent passer la lumière facilement.  
The curtains let.ps pass.INF the light easily  
'The curtains let light through easily.'

Furthermore, it only receives an epistemic reading when embedded under the verb *devoir* ('must').

- (135) a. Didier doit laisser son fils cuisiner.  
Didier must let.INF his son cook.INF  
'Didier must let his son cook.'
- b. Didier doit laisser cuisiner son fils.  
Didier must let.INF cook.INF his son  
'Didier must let his son cook.'



- (136) Ces rideaux doivent laisser passer la lumière.  
 These curtains must let.INF pass.INF the light  
 ‘These curtains must let light through.’

While *devoir*, much like its English counterpart *must*, can express either epistemic or deontic modality, the only reading available in (136) is the epistemic one: it is likely that these specific curtains let light through. On the other hand, (135) can either be understood as “it is likely that Didier lets his son cook” or as “Didier is obligated to let his son cook”.

One could thus wonder why stative situations like these are encoded by the same causative verbs and the same constructions as other types of relations that are more dynamic (in the sense of Copley (2018b)). Indeed, it is fair to assume that *authorize* requires the transfer of some form of energy from the *laisseur* to the *laissé*. This means that there ought to exist a common component for *authorize*, *not-intervene* and *dispositional letting*. What *laisser* and *dejar* appear to be doing is to describe relations in which the two entities are in *opposition* (or, at the very least, possible opposition), in virtue to some preventing property held by the *laisseur*.

For this last reason, *laisser* and *dejar* in instances of *dispositional letting* resemble the two verbs of maintaining *stay* and *keep*. Copley and Harley (2015: 111-112) observe that the two verbs express situations in which two forces are in opposition: as opposed to a sentence like *the door is open*, *the door stayed open* means that there exists an opposing force to the door’s tendency to be closed. In other words, without this intervening force, the door would have closed. As such, there is energy in these configurations, which makes them dynamic. This is shown by their ability to receive an ongoing reading in the progressive and a habitual one in the simple present:

- (137) a. The rock is keeping the door open.  
 b. The door is staying open.
- (138) a. The rock keeps the door open.  
 b. The door stays open.

Such eventuality tests, however, do not work for our *dispositional letting* configurations, which means that they are, in fact, stative. So what is at play here? Consider the following example:

- (139) Los árboles dejan filtrar los rayos del sol.  
 The trees let.PS filter.INF the rays of-the sun  
 ‘The trees let the rays of the sun filter through.’

There are two ways to interpret the letting relation in (139): either the tree is seen as failing to exert a prevention it should be performing (an expected but non-realized opposition), or the force it is exerting is too weak to perform a full blocking and, as such, can only perform a partial one. What I mean by this is that the leaves behave similarly to a funnel: the light is dimmer under a tree than it is outside in the sunlight without any blocking whatsoever. Each of these construals comes with its own share of questions and problems, which I will not be able to address here. I will, however, try to propose a representation for *dispositional letting* in Chapter 6.

### 4.3 From structure to interpretation

In Chapter 2, we defined letting (as encoded by *laisser* and *dejar*) as **causation by influence**. Following Talmy, I use the term “influence” to refer to any type of force that is not physical: intentions, (intra-)psychological pressure, dispositional states, and so on. Let us have a look again at our piano-playing example in ((30a)) in Chapter 2, repeated below as (140):

- (140) John let Mary play the piano.

In a scenario like (30a), the influence exerted by John is motivated by his **intention**: John either intends for Mary to play the piano, or, at the very least, he does not intend that she does not play it (if he intended that she did not play, he could exert a prevention). But what exactly is an intention? It is generally accepted that intention is tightly linked to action: if I say that I intend to tidy up, it means that I eventually expect to bring about the event in which I tidy up (Baier 1970; Thompson 2012). Intentional action is defined by Anscombe (1957) as being an action directed towards a goal, and by Davidson (1963: 5–8) as an action whose “primary reason” is the Agent’s desires and beliefs (as well as other “pro-attitudes”).

This means that, in ((30a)), John’s intention does not go against Mary’s tendency to play the piano. But John’s influence can be understood in two different ways: either John gave Mary permission to play the piano, or Mary was playing the piano and John did not interrupt her. These mirror the two

readings proposed by Enghels and Roegiest (2012b) for *dejar* and *laisser*: *authorize* and *not-intervene*.

Intuitively, we have a rough idea of what each of these two readings might mean. For instance, it is clear that if I give someone permission to do something, they might only start doing that thing **after** I have given them permission to do it. This could be understood, as we saw above, as a situation of *onset letting*, as defined by Talmy (1988): the two situations are successive. On the other hand, it is clear that one can only intervene in an event that is already **ongoing**, which seems to be a case of what Talmy calls *extended letting*, in which cases the two situations must be co-temporal.

### 4.3.1 Authority and the ALT set

In order to understand *authorize* and the notion of **authority**, let us first go back to my example 124, which I am adding again here:

- a. Miguel *deja* que Lupe *vaya* a la biblioteca.  
Miguel let.ps that Lupe go.sbjv to the library  
'Miguel lets Lupe go to the library.'
- b. #Miguel *deja* que Lupe *vaya* a la luna.  
Miguel let.ps that Lupe go.sbjv to the moon  
'Miguel lets Lupe go to the Moon.'

I explained in section 4.1.2 that one of the reasons (124b) was unacceptable was because Lupe, who is not an astronaut, does not have the same access to the Moon as she does a library. I added that if Miguel is, say, Lupe's father, then the sentence remains infelicitous. However, if Miguel is the head of NASA, then it becomes more acceptable, as in. Why is it so? What property does the head of NASA possess that Lupe's father does not?

- (141) Miguel, el jefe de la NASA, *dejó* que Lupe *fuera* a la Luna.  
Miguel the chief of the NASA let.pf that Lupe go.sbjv to the moon  
'Miguel, the head of NASA, let Lupe go to the Moon.'

What 141 conveys is that Miguel allows Lupe to fly to the Moon by virtue of his position of authority: he **authorizes** her to go. As the holder of an authority, Miguel gets to influence Lupe's actions. But what exactly is authority?

Examples of authority relations are easy to find: bosses have authority over their employees, parents have authority over their children, governments have authority over the citizens, and so on<sup>4</sup>. What they *can* do with that authority is what we are interested in here. Holders of authority can do two important things: (i) they can interact with rules and laws ways that are not available to non-holders of authority, and (ii) they can influence the Agents they have authority over. Staraki (2017: 21) proposes that an authority in a conversational context is a participant that gets to “decide on” and “guide” the choices of a second participant. But what are those choices, and what kind of influence does the *laisseur* truly has on the *laissé*'s choice?

For Donazzan et al. (2021), authority is an influence that can only be exerted by Agents on other Agents. The two Agents involved in an *authorize*-relation each possess their own free will; as such, they are free to pursue their own goal(s), which are to be understood as **intentions**. Donazzan et al. propose that goals be represented by a set of alternative propositions (which they note as the “ALT set”), over which free Agents have a choice. These alternative propositions are denoted by non-tensed clauses (Rooth 1992). This means that, when uninfluenced, any proposition that is part of the set is available to them. Therefore, if I intend to watch a movie (and have no further obligation or restriction), I can either end up watching or not watching it, because my alternatives are not restricted by any outside influence. If I *intend* to do it, it is likely that I will follow my intended course of action if unimpeded.

- (142) a. I intend to watch a movie.  
 b. I intend [I watch a movie]  
 c.  $ALT_{ME} = \{I \text{ watch a movie}, \neg I \text{ watch a movie}\}$

As I mentioned at the beginning of the present section, intention and action are related, but intention does not necessarily lead to action. Therefore, as a free Agent, the option to not watch a movie is still available to me. While I only included in (142c) the propositions  $p$  and  $\neg p$ , the ALT set actually contains any proposition alternative to  $p$ <sup>5</sup>. These include, for instance, I read a book, I bake a cake, I clean the kitchen. Since, however, none of these alternative elements appear in the embedded clause, I will take the set of alternatives as containing  $p$

4. Authority should be understood as a context-dependent notion: in a classroom, a teacher has authority over their students. That authority is limited to the classroom environment.

5. As long as they make reference to actions that are available to the Agent, see discussion in section 4.1.2.

and  $\neg p$ . Alternative propositions that belong to the ALT set minimally include the proposition  $p$  expressed by the infinitive predicate and a proposition  $\neg p$ , which is intended as a negation of the  $p$  (I watch a movie).

However, some (although not all) syntactic causative constructions encode relations between two Agents. These Agents may be more or less free, depending on the type of causal relation they are involved in. In syntactic causative constructions, the Causee performs the caused event, but the Causer has control over both the Causee and the caused event. One could expect this control to be observable directly in the ALT set. Donazzan et al. (2021) explain that the influence exerted by the Causer over the Causee's ALT set can be understood using the notion of *preference* as defined by Staraki (2018: 18): "preference on a set of alternative intensional states ALT set is a mapping property of a function from possible alternative-choices  $C_A \subseteq$  ALT set for every alternative  $A \subseteq$  ALT set. Preference assigns to a set ALT set the subset  $C_A$  of chosen alternatives from ALT set". Both Causer and Causee (or *laisseur* and *laissé*) have preferences as intentional Agents, but the holder of an authority also gets to have a preference on the ALT set of the other Agent. This is exemplified in (143) with the verb *make*, which generally encodes a CAUSE-relation. Recall that the CAUSE configuration is defined by Wolff and Song (2003) as a configuration in which the Patient (here, the Causee) has no tendency for the result, while the Affecter (the Causer) has one. In the end, if nothing else intervenes, the Causer gets what she wants<sup>6</sup>.

- (143) a. Pascale made her son Martin take the trash out.  
            $ALT_{MARTIN} = \{p, \neg p\}$   
       b. Pascale sets  $ALT_{MARTIN} := \{p\}$   
       c. #Pascale made Martin take the trash out but he did not do it.  
           'Pascale forced Martin to tidy his room but he did not do it.'

In a situation like the one depicted in 143, there is an expectation that Pascale, being Martin's mother, has authority over him. Donazzan et al. (2021) explain that, in (143) above, Martin had both alternatives available to him before Pascale's intervention. But, since Pascale's preference is for Martin to take the trash out, she gets to exert her influence so that Martin's alternatives are re-

6. This should nonetheless be nuanced: much like ENABLE-verbs, not all CAUSE-verbs behave in the same way. Nadathur and Lauer (2020) point out that *make* triggers a **coercive implication**, in which the Causee does not want to VP, while *cause* does not.

duced, leaving simply one possible action, represented by  $p$ . This explains the infelicity of (143c), in which there is a contradiction since the second conjunct ( $\neg p$ ) is presented as being still available even though it has, in fact, been made unavailable by Pascale's actions.

Authority is relevant when it comes to causal relations because it makes the option of modifying the Causee's ALT set available to the Causer. While some causal configurations remain available with no obvious authority relation, some become completely unacceptable as soon as the authority relation between Causer and Causee is switched around; in other words, if the Causee is the holder of authority while the Causer is not, sentences like (144) become infelicitous:

- (144) #Les enfants interdisent à leurs parents de regarder un film.  
 The children forbid.PS to their parents to watch.INF a movie  
 'The children forbid their parents to watch a movie.'

This means that two of our causal configurations from Wolff and Song (2003), CAUSE and PREVENT, require for their Agent (or Causer) to have authority over their Patient (or Causee). Any other configuration appears to yield infelicity.

### The ALT set and letting

Since both CAUSE and PREVENT require authority, what about ENABLE? For Donazzan et al. (2021: 7), *allow* is to be represented as in (145) below:

- (145) a. Olivier allowed Harriet to eat a biscuit.  
 b.  $ALT_{HARRIET} = \{p, \neg p\}$   
 c. Olivier sets value of  $ALT_{HARRIET} = \{p, \neg p\}$ <sup>7</sup>.

Does *let* function like *allow* when it comes to authority and the ALT set? Considering that *let* differs from *allow* in many ways, one could expect for them not to. And yet, the answer is actually more nuanced. Recall that *let*, similarly to *laisser* and *dejar*, gets (at least) two readings: a permissive one and a non-intervention

7. Although it should be noted that this representation could be subject to change depending on the Causee's abilities. Say that Harriet is a baby who cannot grab the biscuit herself: in that case, her ALT set in the absence of Olivier's intervention should perhaps be simply {not eat a biscuit}. This would match with the proposal that verbs like *enable* and *allow* are closer to HELP-configurations than *let* is.

one. Therefore, if *let* is understood as encoding an *authorize*-relation, it can be understood in a similar way as *allow*, as shown in (146):

- (146) a. Olivier let Harriet eat a biscuit.  
 b.  $ALT_{HARRIET} = \{p, \neg p\}$   
 c. Olivier sets value of  $ALT_{HARRIET} := \{p, \neg p\}$

However, it would seem odd at best to represent a *not-intervene* relation as 146, considering that the caused event is an ongoing one.

But how do we apply this analysis to *laisser* and *dejar*? The two verbs each license two distinct constructions, and we know from the discussion in section 4.1, as well as from the first two chapters of this dissertation, that the two constructions are not quite the same: first, because they are said to trigger different semantic inferences, and second, because not all *laisseur-laissé* configurations are available in both constructions. Donazzan et al. (2021) show that the two constructions in French behave differently with respect to authority relations: their proposal is that the preverbal construction maps to an *authorize* reading, while the postverbal one maps to a *not-intervene* one.

Notably, the preverbal construction appears to be sensitive to authority relations, while the postverbal one is not, as exemplified by the contrast between (147) and (148) below:

- (147) La salle d’audience était silencieuse. Finalement, ...  
 ‘The court room was silent. Eventually, ...’  
 a. la juge a laissé l’accusé parler.  
 ‘the judge let the defendant speak.’  
 b. ??l’accusé a laissé la juge parler.  
 ‘the defendant let the judge speak.’

(Donazzan et al. 2021, 9–11)

- (148) Malgré une forte envie de l’interrompre, ...  
 ‘Despite a strong urge to interrupt him/her, ...’  
 a. la juge a laissé l’accusé parler.  
 ‘the judge let the defendant speak.’  
 b. l’accusé a laissé parler la juge.  
 ‘the defendant let the judge speak.’

In Chapter 2, I observed that the causative entailment for *let* was only defeasible when *let* was understood as encoding a permissive relation. The examples (42) and (43) are repeated below:

- a. Lucy let Peter clean the flat, but in the end, he decided to play the Sims.
- b. #Lucy let Peter clean the flat, but in the end, he decided to play the Sims.

Donazzan et al. make a similar observation for *laisser*: the causative entailment is defeasible, but **only** in preverbal constructions (2021: 10), as in (149a). Conversely, when the *laisseur* is in postverbal position, as in (149b), the entailment is non-defeasible:

- (149) a. La juge a laissé l'accusé parler, mais il est resté muet.  
 'The judge let the defendant speak, but he remained silent.'
- b. #La juge a laissé parler l'accusé, mais il est resté muet.  
 'The judge let the defendant speak, but he remained silent.'

We saw in example (143c) that, in *make*-relations, the ALT set was constrained by the intervention of the Causer, which made  $\neg p$  unavailable. In (149a), both  $p$  and  $\neg p$  are available in the *laissé*'s ALT set. Conversely, choice does not seem to be at stake in (149b).

Donazzan et al. propose that these phenomena are reflected in the syntax of these two constructions. Indeed, intentions (and, by the same token, having choices) are properties of Agents. Considering that choice is only available in the preverbal construction, they propose that the agentive subject of the infinitive is introduced by a VoiceP complement; accordingly, they propose for it the denotation in (150) below. Conversely, in the postverbal construction, the *laisseur* is not realized as an agentive subject (see (151)), which explains the absence of an ALT set in a sentence like ((149b)).

(150)  $[[\text{VoiceP}]] = \lambda s.\text{chooser}(x,s,\text{ALT}([\text{vP}]]) \ \& \ \text{Agent}(x,e) \ \& \ [[\text{vP}]](e)$

(151)  $[[\text{VP}]] = \lambda e.[[\text{vP}]](e)$

Donazzan et al. show that authority relations are visible to grammar: the authority and free choice components are only available when both subjects are



Agents. Similarly to the proposals made by both Borel (1972) and Kayne (1975), this supports the idea of an “intentional flavor” for the pre-V construction (which is not replicated for the post-V one).

The possible combination of the pre-V construction with lower negation, as seen in the previous chapter, as well as with Free Choice Items (FCIs), is evidence for the availability of possible alternatives in pre-V *laisser*-constructions, as in (152a) below with the FCI *n’importe quelle*. On the other hand, the post-V construction in (152b), as well as other causative verbs like *empêcher* (‘to prevent’) in 153 fail to license them.

- (152) a. Le DJ a laissé le public choisir n’importe quelle chanson.  
 the DJ AUX let.PF the public pick.INF any which song  
 ‘The DJ let the audience pick any song.’
- b. ??Le DJ a laissé choisir n’importe quelle chanson au  
 the DJ AUX let.PF pick.INF any which song to-the  
 public.  
 public  
 ‘The DJ let the audience pick any song.’
- (153) #Le DJ a empêché le public de choisir n’importe quelle  
 the DJ AUX prevent.PF the audience to pick.INF any which  
 chanson.  
 song  
 ‘The DJ prevented the audience from picking any song.’

### 4.3.2 A one-to-one mapping from form to meaning?

#### *Laisser*

Let us sum up. So far, it appears that approaches to *laisser*, as opposed to what has been said about *dejar*, lean towards proposing a one-to-one mapping from syntactic structure to interpretation: all three accounts (Borel 1972; Kayne 1975; Donazzan et al. 2021) propose that the pre-V construction has an intentionality component that is not part of the meaning of the post-V one. Interestingly, for each of these three approaches, intentionality intervenes in three different ways. For Borel, it is the **prevention** (or blocking) that is intentional; if the *laisseur* intentionally prevented the *laissé* from VPing, and then lets them VP, then the preferred construction is the pre-V one. For Kayne, the intentionality is in the letting itself. Lastly, the proposal made by Donazzan et al. is that the pre-V position for the *laissé* allows for the introduction of alternative choices,

in the form of the ALT set. Following these various assumptions, it is tempting to propose the following mapping:

- Pre-V → *authorize*
- Post-V → *not-intervene*

And indeed, it seems to match with the data from Enghels and Roegiest (2012b) in Table 4.1: the pre-V construction, in French, appears to be more favorable to Agent-Agent configurations than its post-V counterpart.

### *Dejar*

While the case of French is rather clear-cut (at least so far), it is not quite as easy for Spanish. Indeed, there are inferences to be made from Enghels' and Roegiest's corpus data, but intentionality is not defined as the key difference between the constructions. The first issue we run into, when trying to understand the role of grammar in Spanish *dejar*-constructions, is the subjunctive. Recall that the subjunctive is not available for *laisser*, as the subjunctive in French is mainly understood as a strictly *irrealis* mood. Conversely, it has often been pointed out that the Spanish subjunctive can occur in many different contexts, one of them being in the complement of causative and implicative verbs (Quer 2009; Laca 2010a, 2010b). Nonetheless, Quer (1997, 2009) points out that the fact that the subjunctive can appear in the complement of Spanish causative constructions is surprising, specifically because the embedded proposition is interpreted as factual.

And indeed, subjunctive complements are generally selected by verbs that “do not express commitment to the truth of their proposition” (Giannakidou 2011): for instance, a volitional like *querer* (‘to want’) does not require for the proposition expressed by its complement to be true. As such, (154a) below does not entail (154b):

- (154) a. Paula quiere que compremos un coche.  
 Paula want.ps that we-buy.SBJV a car  
 ‘Paula wants that we buy a car.’
- b. Estamos comprando un coche.  
 We-AUX buy.PROG a car  
 ‘We are buying a car.’

While I cannot offer a full analysis of the Spanish subjunctive, as it is a very wide and complicated topic, I can try to reconcile the nonveridicality view of the

subjunctive with its purpose in *dejar*-constructions, with the help of the work of Donazzan et al. (2021). As we have seen above, Donazzan et al. propose that, in French, the pre-V construction introduces a set of alternative choices that the *laissé* can choose from and in which both *p* and  $\neg p$  are available. Since  $\neg p$  is still available, this means that sentences like (155) introduce no contradiction:

- (155) Fatma a laissé Abdel utiliser son ordinateur, mais il a préféré  
 Fatma AUX let.PF Abdel use.INF her laptop, but he AUX prefer.PF  
 aller faire un tour.  
 go.INF do.INF a round  
 'Fatma let Abdel use her laptop, but he went for a walk instead.'

This means that, if I utter "Fatma a laissé Abdel utiliser son ordinateur", I do not need for Abdel to actually use the laptop for the statement to be true. The same phenomenon is observable with the subjunctive in *dejar*-constructions, as in (156) below:

- (156) Augusto dejó que su hijo fuera a la playa, pero al final fue  
 Augusto let.PF that his son go.SBJV to the beach but in final go.PF  
 al cine.  
 to-the cinema  
 'Augusto let his son go to the beach, but in the end he went to the  
 cinema.'

This means that, in (156), there is no commitment to the truth of the complement because the complement does not, in fact, need to be true. As such, it appears that the subjunctive here is somehow responsible for introducing the ALT set.

Another hint is to be found in Giannakidou's work: she argues that FCIs are only licensed in nonveridical contexts. We have seen in the previous section that Donazzan et al. (2021) show that FCIs are only licensed in the pre-V construction and not in the post-V one. Similarly, FCIs are licensed in the sub construction:

- (157) El profesor deja que los niños jueguen a cualquier juego.  
 The teacher let.ps that the children play.SBJV at any game  
 'The teacher lets the children play any game.'

In other words, the Spanish verb *dejar*, when its complement in the subjunctive, is nonveridical. This means that, at least in this respect, it behaves like *laisser*

in pre-V constructions.

What ensues from this is an additional similarity between the two constructions: both *SUB* and pre-V are dispreferred in dispositional configurations.

This leads me to propose the following mapping for *dejar*-constructions:

- *SUB* → *authorize*
- Post-V → *not-intervene*

In the next chapter, I will present three experiments that aim at testing the proposed mappings for our two causative verbs.

## Chapter 5

# Testing the mapping

In the previous chapter, we saw that there are three types of *letting*: *authorize*, *not-intervene* and dispositional letting. While dispositional letting clearly differs from its two counterparts in that it fails to take Agent *laisseurs* and strictly favors a post-V position for its *laissé*, the other two seem to be able to arise in rather similar environments. Notably, both require Agent *laisseurs*. Yet, the work of Donazzan et al. (2021), along with previous intuitions from Borel (1972) and Kayne (1975), highlights that syntax appears to play a role when it comes to understanding which *laisser-* or *dejar-*relation is at play. Therefore, we tried to draw a one-to-one mapping from syntactic structure to conceptual representation.

In this chapter, we will be testing the mapping proposed at the end of the previous chapter, namely: the two post-V constructions map onto a *not-intervene* interpretation, while the pre-V in French and the Spanish *sub* receive an *authorize* interpretation. To do so, I will be reporting on the experiments carried out together with my colleagues Klaus von Heusinger and Marta Donazzan.

### 5.1 Explaining the experiments

#### 5.1.1 Rationale and hypotheses

I have explained in Chapters 2 and 3 that previous approaches to *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives proposed that the two constructions were distinct from one another, whether it be with respect to their interpretations (Borel 1972; Kayne 1975; Donazzan et al. 2021), or regarding the type of arguments they can take

(Enghels and Roegiest 2012b). I have sought to define the two readings that are available for our two causative verbs, namely *authorize* and *not-intervene*, and I proposed that each of the two constructions for each language receives a preferred interpretation. My goal in this chapter is to try to piece the information together and figure out whether the tentative mapping from Chapter 4 actually stands against native speaker judgment. In other words, the general aim of this chapter is to investigate the link between the morphosyntax of syntactic causatives and their interpretation(s).

Kayne's proposal that a preverbal position for the *laissé* seemed to give it an intentional feature, along with the data gathered by Enghels & Roegiest in 3.2 led to the discussion in Chapter 3. While informative and crucial to understanding the behavior of *laisser* and *dejar*, it is not yet supported by experimental data<sup>1</sup>. I formulate the hypotheses in 158 and 159 arising from the discussion in the previous chapter. While these were formulated on the grounds of earlier research, the particular testable formations are ours.

- (158) **H1: Interpretations** Both *laisser* and *dejar* can equally yield two interpretations, namely *authorize* and *not-intervene*.
- (159) **H2: Structures** There is a clear one-to-one mapping from syntactic construction to conceptual representation:
- With *laisser*, the pre-V is interpreted as an *authorize* relation while the post-V receives a *not-intervene* reading.
  - With *dejar*, the *sub* is understood as encoding an *authorize* relation, and the post-V a *not-intervene* one.

### 5.1.2 Building the items

In order to make this experiment as neat as possible, we aimed at removing as much "additional noise" as possible. Accordingly, the test items were built carefully, with constraints that should prevent participants from finding one construction ill-formed.

Firstly, for all of the items, the embedded verbs were intransitive, as the post-V constructions in French and Spanish do not pair well with transitive verbs, as mentioned in Chapter 3. Generally, (160a) is preferred to (160b) among native speakers.

1. It was nevertheless corroborated by native speakers during casual discussions.

- (160) a. Arthur laisse Thierry ranger sa chambre.  
 Arthur let.PS Thierry tidy.INF his room  
 'Arthur lets Thierry tidy room.'
- b. ??Arthur laisse ranger sa chambre à Thierry.  
 Arthur let.PS tidy.INF his room PREP Thierry  
 'Arthur lets Thierry tidy room.'

Additionally, the embedded verbs were activity verbs. The notions of *authorizing* and *not-intervening* differ radically in the way the two events are temporally construed: in *authorize* relations, the two events are successive, while in *not-intervene* one, they are co-temporal. Activities are dynamic, durative, and atelic. Being atelic (hence unbounded), they are temporally neutral, which should allow us to separate the effect of the embedded verb from that of the syntactic structure. We did not, however, control for tense or aspect; we simply used the two most common tenses for present and past references in French and in Spanish. This means that some items were in the *présent simple/présent*, two tenses with an imperfective aspect, while others were in the *passé composé/prétérito indefinido*, which are perfective tenses.

The second set of constraint concerns the DP arguments and their realizations. I have explained so far that the notion of *letting*, along with those of *authorizing* and *not-intervening*, is to be understood as separate from *enabling* or *allowing*. Indeed, in French, *permettre* ('allow') fully licenses inanimate entities as subjects (as in (161c)), while neither *laisser* nor *autoriser* do. On the other hand, volitional, animate entities are felicitous as subjects with all three verbs, as shown in 162.

- (161) a. #Mes nouvelles lunettes me laissent lire.  
 My new glasses REFL let.PS read.INF  
 'My new glasses let me read.'
- b. #Mes nouvelles lunettes m'autorisent à lire.  
 My new glasses REFL-authorize.PS to read.INF  
 'My new glasses authorize me to read.'
- c. Mes nouvelles lunettes me permettent de lire.  
 My new glasses REFL allow.PS to read  
 'My new glasses allow me to read.'
- (162) a. Mes parents me laissent lire.  
 My parents REFL let.PS read.INF  
 'My parents let me read.'

- b. Mes parents m'autorisent à lire.  
 My parents REFL-authorize.PS to read.INF  
 'My parents authorize me to read.'
- c. Mes parents me permettent de lire.  
 My parents REFL allow.PS to read  
 'My parents allow me to read.'

Additionally, *laisser* and *dejar* both require an volitional, animate *laissé* in order to be able to receive both readings. Inanimate *laissés* appear to not be able to receive the *authorize* reading, as in (163a)<sup>2</sup>.

- (163) a. Diego dejó silbar la tetera.  
 Diego let.PF whistle.INF the kettle  
 'Diego let the kettle whistle.'  
 → Diego did not stop the kettle from whistling.  
 → Diego did something that allowed the kettle to start whistling.
- b. Diego dejó silbar a su hijo.  
 Diego let.PF whistle.INF ACC his son  
 'Diego let his son whistle.'  
 → Diego did not stop his son from whistling.  
 OR  
 → Diego did something (give permission) that allowed his son to start whistling.

Therefore, the design of our three experiments does not allow us to entirely cover the whole range of interactions that can be encoded by the verbs *laisser* and *dejar*: any form of interaction that involved at least one inanimate entity was, for the time being, left aside. As such, the results of the experiments will not be covering the same range as those of Enghels and Roegiest (2012b) in 4.1.

The high-agentivity constraint on *laisseur* and *laissé* comes with its own sub-constraint: the *laissé* **must** be full-fledged DP, and not a clitic pronoun. While clitic climbing is not too big of an issue for Spanish, since the two constructions are distinct enough from one another, it poses a problem in French and its constructions with non-finite complements. When the embedded verb is intransitive (and they have to be, in our experiments, as discussed above), the *laissé*, regardless of its position, receives accusative case. While the posi-

2. Nevertheless, interpretational difference with inanimate *laissés* have indeed been pointed out by Borel (1972). While I agree with his judgement that the two sentences are not synonymous, my intuitions are stronger when it comes to the interactions of two sentient entities, which explains the design of the experiments.



tion of the *laissé* is sufficient to figure out which construction we are dealing with, this clue becomes unavailable with pronouns due to clitic climbing, as exemplified in (164) and (165) below.

- (164) a. Corinne laisse Liliane danser.  
 Corinne let.PS Liliane dance.INF  
 ‘Corinne lets Liliane dance.’  
 b. Corinne la        laisse danser.  
 Corinne she.ACC let.PS dance.INF  
 ‘Corinne lets her dance.’
- (165) a. Corinne laisse danser    Liliane.  
 Corinne let.PS dance.INF Liliane  
 ‘Corinne lets Liliane dance.’  
 b. Corinne la        laisse danser.  
 Corinne she.ACC let.PS dance.INF  
 ‘Corinne lets her dance.’

All of the criteria mentioned above apply to both French and Spanish. In total, four experiments were run in order to understand the relation between structure and interpretation in *laisser*- and *dejar*-causatives: three for French (Experiments 0, 1, and 3) and one for Spanish (Experiment 2).

## 5.2 Experiment 0

I will only discuss Experiment 0 very briefly and will not be discussing its details, as it did not yield any interesting result. However, its inconclusiveness influenced the way we designed Experiments 1, 2, and 3. Additionally, it provided us with some surprising information regarding the distribution of *laisser* in syntactic causative constructions.

Experiment 0 consisted of a forced-choice continuation task, in which participants were shown a scenario that described either (a) a permission being given by the *laisseur*, as in (166) below, or (b) a lack of intervention from the *laisseur* on an ongoing event, such as the scenario in (167). The scenario was then followed by two possible answers: answer A, always following the pre-V pattern, and answer B, following the post-V one.

- (166) Richard ne veut pas que sa fille adolescente Zoé devienne actrice.  
 Quand elle lui parle d’un casting près de chez eux, il est plutôt réticent.

Mais finalement, . . .

'Laurent does not want his teenage daughter to become an actress. When she tells her about a casting nearby, he is quite reluctant. But eventually, . . .'

a. Il laisse Zoé auditionner et l'encourage même à y aller.

b. Il laisse auditionner Zoé et l'encourage même à y aller.

'He lets Zoe audition and even encourages her to go.'

(167) Le directeur de casting a passé toute la journée à voir une ribambelle d'actrices. Quand la dernière commence à présenter, il est épuisé mais par souci d'équité . . .

'The casting director spent his whole day seeing a succession of actresses. When the last one, Zoe, arrives, he is exhausted but cannot send her home, so . . .'

a. Il laisse Zoé auditionner et prend son mal en patience.

b. Il laisse auditionner Zoé et prend son mal en patience.

'He lets Zoe audition and takes it easy.'

As we were testing for both the *authorize* reading as well as the *not-intervene* one, all the scenarios and answers contained two Agents.

There is not much to observe from the results of Experiment 0 but an overwhelming preference for the pre-V pattern, regardless of context. In total, 87,8% of the answers were *authorize* (A) answers, while *not-intervene* answers only constituted 12,2% of the total answers. This discrepancy does not get any better when comparing expected answers to actual answers, as shown below in Table 5.1:

	<i>Authorize</i> answers	<i>Not-intervene</i> answers
<i>Authorize</i> expected	91%	9%
<i>Not-intervene</i> expected	84,7%	13,3%

Table 5.1: Summarizing the results of Experiment 0

While not providing us with more information with respect to the mapping between the two *laisser*-constructions and their interpretations, the results

of Experiment 0 remain telling: there is a strong preference for the pre-V construction among French speakers. This means that the two constructions might be in competition (in the same way that Abeillé, Godard, and Miller (1997) describe for the two *faire*-causatives), and that the pre-V might be overshadowing its post-V counterpart. This showed us that participants were not to be asked to pick between the two constructions but, instead, should be shown either one of the two constructions and then be asked to map it to a given interpretation.

### 5.3 Experiment 1

The results (or lack thereof) of Experiment 0 heavily influenced the design of Experiment 1: in order to test out Hypotheses 1 and 2 (respectively (158) and (159)), we decided not to show participants the two patterns (post-V and pre-V) at once, but rather, to show them in isolation. This means that participants were shown either a pre-V *laisser*-sentence or a post-V one, followed by two scenarios. The first scenario always expressed a permission being given by the *laisseur*, while the second scenario was describing the occurrence of an event and the lack of intervention from the *laisseur* on said event. The test itself consisted of a 2x2 factorial design, with two different constructions and two interpretations.

I have sought to propose a clear and precise definition of *authorize* and *not-intervene* in the previous chapter, based on the discussion around the proposal made by Donazzan et al. (2021). However, not all of it could be developed in short scenarios like the ones we presented to participants, as they only contained a couple of sentences. The definitions of *authorize* and *not-intervene* used to build our scenarios are summarized in Table 5.2.

<i>authorize</i>	<i>not-intervene</i>
e <sub>1</sub> and e <sub>2</sub> successive	e <sub>1</sub> and e <sub>2</sub> co-temporal
<i>laisseur</i> 's act of will	<i>laisseur</i> 's lack of act
<i>laisseur</i> has authority over <i>laissé</i>	authority not relevant

Table 5.2: Characteristics for *authorize* and *not-intervene*

Even though we aimed at making the distinction between the two notions as clear-cut as possible, we decided to make sure that the scenarios were

interpreted as we expected them to, which is why we ran a pretest for Experiment 1 (which is something we never did for Experiment 0, hence making the results more difficult to interpret). Indeed, it is easy for me to discuss openly the two notions, but there was no explicit reference to them in the experiment. Besides, they are both lexicalized by the same verb *laisser*, which might make the line between the two even finer. Running the main test with scenarios that have been approved allowed us to have more robust judgements from participants when mapping the *laisser*-sentence to one of the two scenarios.

### 5.3.1 Pretest

The goal of the pretest was twofold: (i) making sure the scenarios received the correct interpretation, and (ii) keeping 24 good items for the main test. Considering the pretest contained 30 pairs of scenarios, this allowed us to remove six items if those did poorly on both conditions in the pretest. The scenarios tested in the pretest were all built with respect to the criteria in 5.2. The first two lines appear to be quite straightforward, and somewhat simpler to implement. The notion of authority, being a conceptual one, had to be made as obvious as possible. I have introduced the notion in the previous chapters, and have tried to provide a definition for it. However, the idea that a holder of authority is someone (or something) that has the ability to restrict one's set of alternatives cannot be conveyed in a survey like ours (or, I believe, in any survey). A much more straightforward approach to authority had to be used, relying on real-life applications of the concept: for instance, it is known that parents have authority over the children, doctors over their patients, bosses over their employees, and so on.

In the scenarios shown to participants, the role given to the holder of authority was to overrule a norm or rule in place. To an extent, we treated *authorize* as a double-prevention: the established rule prevents the *laissé* from doing X, and the *laisseur* prevents the established rule from preventing<sup>3</sup>.

(168) Item #8

- a. Dora a des problèmes aux genoux, et le chirurgien qui l'a opérée récemment lui a recommandé de ne pas faire trop d'exercice. Mais récemment, son ostéopathe l'a trouvée en grande forme et a

3. I will show in the next chapter that double-prevention is actually too strong to define *laisser*- and *dejar*-relations. However, using that definition ensured that participants understood the task.

décidé d'assouplir les restrictions.

'Dora has bad knees, and the surgeon that operated on her recently has advised that she does not work out too much. But recently, her osteopath has found her to be in great shape and decided to ease the restrictions.'

- b. Dora et son ami Gaspard sont allés en boîte. Après une heure de danse effrénée, Gaspard a mal aux pieds. Il aimerait bien rentrer à la maison mais il ne veut pas casser l'ambiance donc il est allé s'asseoir pendant que Dora dansait toujours.

'Dora and her friend Gaspard went clubbing. After an hour of all-out dancing, Gaspard's feet hurt. He would like to go home but he does not want to ruin the mood so he went and sat down while Dora was still dancing.'

In the *authorize* scenario in 169, the rule is explicit: it is embodied by the surgeon, who prevented Dora from working out (but is not a part of the *laisser*-interaction). The *laissé* (here, the osteopath) cancels out that rule. Conversely, there is no such rule or norm in (168b), and there is no mention of an authority-relation between Gaspard and Dora.

The pretest was run with 30 pairs of scenarios, each pair with an *authorize* condition and a *not-intervene* one (see (168) above), distributed over two lists A and B. For each list, only one of the two conditions was shown to participants; in other words, participants asked to rate the *authorize* scenario for item #1 did not rate the *not-intervene* scenario of the same item. More importantly, none of the participants saw any of the *laisser*-sentences. Each scenario was followed by three possible answers, always displayed to participants in a randomized order. Let us take the *authorize* condition in 169 as an example<sup>4</sup>.

- (169) Dans cette situation, qu'a fait Gaspard vis-à-vis de Dora ?  
'In this situation, what did Gaspard do with respect to Dora?'  
Dora a des problèmes aux genoux, et le chirurgien qui l'a opérée récemment lui a recommandé de ne pas faire trop d'exercice. Mais récemment, son ostéopathe l'a trouvée en grande forme et a décidé d'assouplir les restrictions.

4. Note that, for each item, the names in the initial question were changed to fit the scenario participants were being shown.

‘Dora has bad knees, and the surgeon that operated on her recently has advised that she does not work out too much. But recently, her osteopath has found her to be in great shape and decided to ease the restrictions.’

- a. Il lui a donné sa permission.  
‘He gave her permission.’
- b. Il n’est pas intervenu.  
‘He did not intervene’
- c. Aucun des deux.  
‘Neither’

The 14 French participants (8 in list A and 6 in list B) were recruited among acquaintances and took the 15-minute survey on the Qualtrics platform without being paid, after receiving the link in an email or message. They were informed of their rights and data protection, and were asked a few personal questions about their age, gender and mother tongue. Finally, the task of the pretest was briefly explained to them, along with an example to make sure the instructions were understood.

The results of the pretest were analyzed with respect to the following criteria: we considered an item “good” if both scenarios had received high enough ratings (over 75% for list A and over 67% for list B) as well as low numbers of wrong answers ( $\leq 1$ ). Average items had higher numbers of neither-answers but still quite low numbers of wrong answers ( $\leq 2$ ). Finally, we discarded the bad items, which either did very poorly one of the two conditions ( $\geq 3$  wrong answers) or across both.

In total, the French pretest had 20 good items, 3 average ones, and 7 bad ones. Since 24 items were to be kept for the main test, one whole new item was added to Experiment 1.

	Average for <i>authorize</i> -contexts			Average for <i>not-intervene</i> contexts		
	<i>authorize</i> answers	<i>not-intervene</i> answers	neither-answers	<i>not-intervene</i> answers	<i>authorize</i> answers	neither-answers
ALL 30 ITEMS	86,7%	1,4%	11,9%	67,6%	5,2%	27,2%
KEPT ITEMS ONLY	88,3%	0,6%	11,1%	78,1%	2,5%	19,4%

Table 5.3: Results for pretest of Experiment 1

It should be noted that participants had a strong and clear understand-

ing of the different contexts, which is shown by the relatively low numbers of wrong answers. The higher levels of neither-answers, particularly in *not-intervene* contexts, were potentially due to the question that participants were being asked. It was potentially incongruous for participants to link scenarios encoding the lack of an act to a question about “doing”.

### 5.3.2 Design

The test contained the 24 critical items from the pretest, along with the exact same number of filler items (16 being plain filler items and 8 control items). Participants who failed to answer correctly more than two control items were eliminated from the survey.

- (170) Elle a laissé Sarah prier. ‘She has let Sarah pray.’
- a. En France, on ne prie pas dans les lieux publics. Mais Mme Martin est très soucieuse du respect des libertés individuelles dans son école, alors lorsque Sarah lui a demandé si elle pouvait aller se recueillir, elle a bien évidemment accepté.  
‘In France, one cannot pray in public places. But respecting people’s individual liberties in her school is very important to Ms. Martin, so when Sarah asked her if she could go and pray, she obviously accepted.’
  - b. Quand Joëlle est arrivée dans la chambre de Sarah, celle-ci était en train de faire sa prière du soir. C’est pas grave, elle lui lirait son histoire plus tard.  
‘When Joëlle came into Sarah’s bedroom, she was doing her evening prayer. No big deal, she will come back later to read her a bedtime story.’

The pattern was exactly the same for filler items, in which both answers were completely acceptable as well as plausible (as in (171)):

- (171) Ils ont été saluer Patricia.  
‘They went to greet Patricia.’
- a. Après plusieurs heures de route, les Dupont sont arrivés dans leur maison de vacances. Les enfants avaient envie de se détendre un peu, mais leur mère les a envoyés dire bonjour à leur voisine, Patricia.

‘After several hours in their car, the Duponts have arrived in their country house. The children wanted to chill for a bit, but their mother sent them to greet their neighbor, Patricia.’

- b. Alors qu’ils déjeunaient sur leur terrasse, les Dupont ont aperçu leur voisine Patricia dans son jardin. Ils pensaient tous qu’elle était partie en vacances ! Ravis de la voir, ils ont donc traversé la route pour lui claquer la bise.

‘As they were having lunch on their terrace, the Dupont saw their neighbor Patricia in her garden. They thought she was on holiday! They were so happy to see her that they went and crossed the road to give her a kiss.’

On the other hand, control items always contained an incoherent answer (here, (172)), which allowed us to filter out participants who were not attentive to the task:

- (172) Elle a quitté Tristan.  
She AUX leave.PF Tristan  
‘She broke up with Tristan.’

- a. Après avoir consulté une voyante, Mélanie a conclu que sa relation ne la satisfaisait plus. Sans aucune hésitation, elle a envoyé un texto à Maxime pour lui annoncer qu’elle le plaquait.

‘After seeing a fortune teller, Mélanie realized that she was no longer happy in her relationship. Without any hesitation, she sent Maxime a text to tell him they were over.’

- b. C’est en discutant avec ses amies que Mélanie s’est rendue compte que Tristan était un pervers narcissique. Celles-ci l’ont alors urgée de rompre avec lui et de couper tout contact. Après de longues tergiversations, elle a annoncé à Tristan qu’elle préférerait qu’ils se séparent.

‘While chatting with her friends, Mélanie realized that Tristan was a manipulative narcissist. Her friends urged her to break up with him and to cut all ties. After hesitating for a while, she told Tristan that it would be better if they went their separate ways.’

Critical items and filler items were all randomized and distributed over two separate lists (A and B) in a Latin square design, which means that for each individual critical item, each list only contained either one of the two structure



condition. Each list contained 48 items in total (24 critical, 24 fillers) The questionnaire was implemented with the online survey software Qualtrics, and items were presented one at a time. For each item (critical or filler), participants were simply asked to click the box containing the context that seemed to be the “best” paraphrase to the sentence that they were being shown.

Elle laisse parler Arthur

La maîtresse veut que les élèves participent à la leçon, surtout ceux en difficulté. Ce matin, elle leur pose une question de maths, et seul Arthur, le meilleur élève, lève la main. Après une courte hésitation, elle lui donne la parole.

Ce matin, Arthur est une vraie pipelette ! Alors qu'elle est occupée, il commence à raconter à sa mère une histoire abracadabrantésque. Plutôt que de l'interrompre, elle l'écoute d'une oreille distraite en pelant ses oignons.

The 38 native speakers of French that took part in Experiment 1 (32 women, 6 men – 4 were rejected for failing to answer control items correctly) were recruited randomly. They were first informed about their personal rights and data protection. After answering some personal questions (gender, age, and native language), they were informed about the task of the experiment.

### 5.3.3 Results

Inspection of the data shows that both interpretations are available to participants. Therefore, these results support Hypothesis 1 (158): *laisser* can either be interpreted as *authorize* (in roughly 37% of the cases) or as *not-intervene* (for about 63% of all items). However, what these percentages highlight is an imbalance: the two interpretations are not on an equal distribution, and *not-intervene* is more prevalent, across both constructions. While the percentage of *not-intervene* answers is slightly lower in the pre-V condition (63,7%, for 65% in the post-V condition), that difference is not significant. As such, these results fail to support Hypothesis 2 (159).

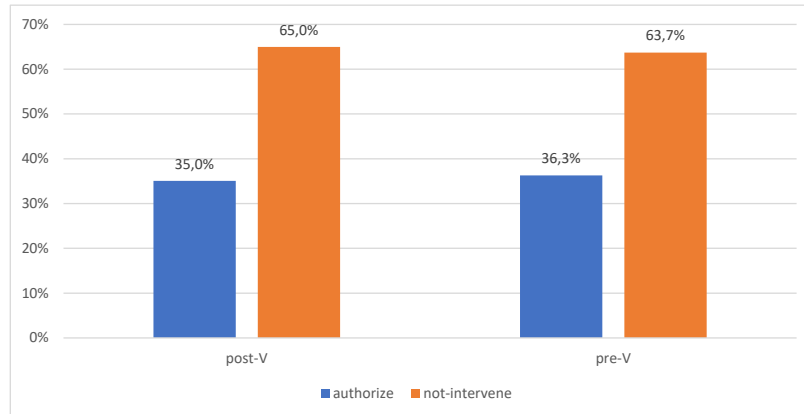
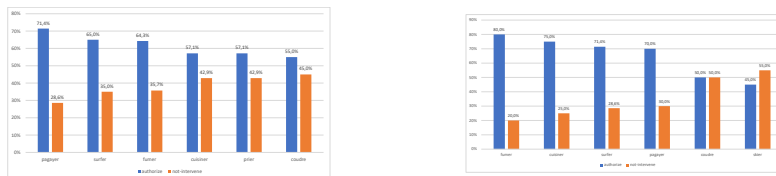


Figure 5.1: the distribution of authorize vs. not-intervene answer per construction

Surprisingly enough, this 1/3rd vs. 2/3rd distribution did not replicate across all items; 5 of the 24 items display higher numbers of *authorize* answers (over 55% of *authorize* answers), namely the items #5, #15, #16, #18, and #23 (the embedded verbs for the *laisser*-sentences in these items being respectively *fumer* 'to smoke', *cuisiner* 'to cook', *surfer* 'to surf', *coudre* 'to sew', and *pagayer* 'to paddle'). Nevertheless, and as exemplified below in Tables ?? and ?? below, this non-conformity does not seem to arise from syntactic differences, as the results appear to be replicated across both conditions. More surprising even, the numbers of *authorize* answers are even higher when participants were shown a post-V *laisser*-sentence.



(a) Pre-V condition

(b) Post-V condition

Figure 5.2: Nonconforming items in Experiment 1

What made these scenarios stray from the general pattern for *laisser*, and what do they have in common? The first plausible explanation is one of scenario-likelihood. It is possible that participants found one of the two scenarios they were shown more likely to happen in real life than the other one, which in turn prompted their preference for that one over the other. A second reason is that these five items are all in the imperfective present tense, while most of the other ones are in the perfective past (a parameter that we did not control for when creating the items). One might thus wonder to what extent these results would be replicated with an imperfective past tense (like the *imparfait*). And if that is the case, then what is the role played by aspect in the interpretation of *laisser*-causatives? I have discussed in Chapter 4 the preference for imperfective tenses with dispositional letting configurations. However, it is clear that those constructions cannot receive an *authorize*-reading. So, it is quite unclear what aspect contributes to the processing of *laisser*-causatives.

The last factor that I am taking into account to try to explain these results is a conceptual one. As such, it is slightly less tangible than the other two, but *letting* is also a conceptual notion. I mentioned above that all the scenarios that we created for the *authorize* condition contained two levels of authority: an established one (rule or norm) and an overruling one, embodied by the *laisseur*. In most scenarios they were different from one another, in some others the *laisseur* cancelled out a rule that they had put in place themselves. What we did not take into account is the authority (im)balance between these two holders of authority when they were two distinct entities. In most of our scenarios (such as (168) for instance), the two are roughly on the same level, as the surgeon and the osteopath are both medical professionals. However, in three of our five examples, the norm is embodied by a different person than the *laisseur*, and is

actually a much higher authority. Let us have a look at item #5:

- (173) Il laisse les employés fumer/Il laisse fumer les employés.  
'He lets his employees smoke.'
- a. La loi interdit de fumer dans les espaces publics. Toutefois, le patron du restaurant sait que tous les membres de son équipe ont besoin d'une pause-clope de temps en temps, et aujourd'hui il souhaite qu'ils puissent se relaxer après le rush du soir.  
'The law forbids people to smoke in public places. However, the restaurant owner knows that all of his team needs a cigarette break once in a while and today he wants them to be able to relax after the evening rush.'
  - b. Tout le monde est parti en pause-clope. Le patron, Bertrand, ne fume pas, et aimerait avancer sur plusieurs tâches. Il commence alors sans eux, et attend qu'ils reviennent.  
'Everybody went on cigarette break. The boss, Bertrand, does not smoke, and would like to move on with several tasks. He starts without them and waits for them to come back.'

In (173), the norm is not clearly expressed, it is an implicit one that is simply part of our world-knowledge: it is the European law that states you cannot smoke in public buildings. The *laisseur*, on the other hand, is the restaurant owner. The main effect of his authorization is that employees **can** smoke. But it gives us an additional effect: he and his employees are breaking the law, which is typically frowned upon. Somehow, *authorize*-scenarios which contained a bigger gap between the established rule (or norm) and the *laisseur*'s action were more likely to be picked than their *not-intervene* counterpart and other types of *authorize*-scenarios. Besides, the *laisser*-sentence shown to participants contained an explicit authority relation: "the employees" are necessarily understood as being under the authority of their boss in the context of work. It is, here again, rather unclear why a scenario which was perceived as straying further from the norm was more likely to be picked as the preferred paraphrase for the *laisser*-sentence.

If anything, Experiment 1 yielded few answers and many questions. While it made it clear that *laisser* is mostly associated with *not-intervene* relations, the reason(s) why these associations are made remain obscure.

## 5.4 Experiment 2

The exact same experiment was run for Spanish *dejar*, which means that the goal was to test for Hypotheses 1 and 2 ((158) & (159)). Since it can embed two radically different constructions (one being finite and the other not), we assumed that the contrast would perhaps be starker, and the intuitions more robust. Here again, a pretest was run to ensure said scenarios were interpreted by native speakers of Spanish as either *authorize* and *not-intervene*. For the most part, the items presented in the pretest and the main test were the same as for Experiment 1, but translated into Spanish<sup>5</sup>. The minor changes are explained by the need to make it as colloquial and idiomatic for a native speaker as possible.

### 5.4.1 Pretest

The items having been translated into Spanish rather than created from scratch explains why the pretest for Spanish contained only 28 pairs of scenarios (even though the pretest for Experiment 1 contained 30): some verbs that were used for French do not exist in Spanish, hence they could not be included in our items.

Here again, the method for the pretest of Experiment 2 was in all points similar as for that of Experiment 1: the scenarios were all randomized and distributed over two lists in a Latin square design. The 18 participants (9 in list A and 9 in list B) were recruited anonymously and randomly among native speakers of Spanish, and took the survey on the Qualtrics platform. The way the questions were shown to them was similar to that of Experiment 1, see

(174) En esta situación, ¿qué hizo Javier con respecto a sus hijos? Javier llegó a casa muy tarde esta noche y, cuando llegó, sus hijos habían terminado de cenar y estaban jugando a las cartas, aunque deberían estar en la cama. Pero, como estaban a punto de terminar, subió a ducharse sin regañarlos.

'Javier arrived home very late tonight and, when he got home, his children had finished dinner and were playing cards, even though they should be in bed. But, as they were about to finish, he went upstairs to take a shower without scolding them.'

5. Many thanks to Antonia Braun and Dr. Diego Romero for their precious help with the translations.

- a. Dio su permiso.  
'He gave his permission'
- b. No intervino.  
'He did not intervene.'
- c. Ninguno de los dos.  
'Neither of the two'

The same number of items was needed for Experiment 2 as in Experiment 1, so that the two experiments could be compared to one another. This means that four of the items could be discarded in the event that they did poorly on both conditions. Here again, we made a very basic division between good, average, and bad items: good the items received over 67% of correct answers across both conditions, along with very low numbers of wrong answers ( $\leq 22\%$ ), while average items had a higher number of neither-answers but  $\leq 33\%$  incorrect answers. Eventually, bad items had over 44% of incorrect answers either on one condition only (mainly *not-intervene*) or on both. In total, the Spanish pretest had 12 good items and 9 average ones. Unlike for French, where we discarded all the bad items, the 3 that did slightly better than the other bad ones were kept for the main test of Experiment 2.

	Average for <i>authorize</i> -contexts			Average for <i>not-intervene</i> contexts		
	<i>authorize</i> answers	<i>not-intervene</i> answers	neither-answers	<i>not-intervene</i> answers	<i>authorize</i> answers	neither-answers
ALL 28 ITEMS	83,7%	4,3%	12%	58,7%	15,9%	25,4%
KEPT ITEMS ONLY	84,3%	5,1%	10,6%	63,9%	10,6%	25,5%

Table 5.4: Results for pretest of Experiment 2

Participants had a strong and clear understanding of both the task at hand and the two contexts that were given to them. This is more obvious for *authorize*-contexts (with less than 5% of wrong answers). We make for *not-intervene*-scenarios the same supposition we made for Experiment 1: it is possible (and even likely) that participants were confused by the question "what did *laisseur* do w.r.t *laisse*?". Indeed, it has been shown that the Spanish verb *hacer* has not gone through as much grammaticalization and semantic bleaching as the French verb *faire* (Silva 2012): in such conditions, associating an action verb like *hacer* to scenarios encoding the *laisseur*'s lack of act might have seemed incongruous to participants.

### 5.4.2 Main experiment

The test contained 48 items in total: the 24 critical items selected after the pretest, along with 24 filler items (among which 8 were control items). The fillers displayed the same pattern as the critical items: they consisted of a sentence followed by two plausible paraphrases. All 48 items were then divided into two lists (list A and list B): each list contained either one of the two conditions for each critical item (*authorize* or *not-intervene*), while both lists contained the exact same filler items. Therefore, all filler items were shown to all participants, while critical items were in complementary distribution.

The 49 participants in Experiment 2 (27 women, 21 men, 1 other – 2 of them were rejected for failing to answer control items correctly) were randomly recruited through Qualtrics. They were first informed about their personal rights and data protection. After answering some personal questions (gender, age, and native language), they were informed about the task of the experiment. We aimed at fully mirroring Experiment 1 here, thus the procedure was the exact same: we were testing Hypothesis 1 (interpretations hypothesis) and Hypothesis (2b) (mapping hypothesis). Participants who answered more than two control questions wrong were eliminated from the survey.

Each participant was shown a mix of *dejar*-sentences and random sentences, all of them followed by two plausible paraphrases. They were asked to indicate their preference for one answer: to do so, they simply had to click the box which contained the context they deemed to be the best paraphrase of the *dejar*-sentence.

(175) Deja que Francisca camine/Deja caminar a Francisca.

'He lets Francisca walk.'

a. Desde su accidente de moto, Francisca no ha podido caminar bien. Sin embargo, ha estado esforzándose mucho en la rehabilitación y esta mañana quiere dar un paseo, así que llama a su médico y ese le confirma que puede caminar un poco.

'Since her motorbike accident, Francisca has not been able to walk properly. However, she has been working hard on her rehabilitation and this morning she wants to go for a walk, so she calls her doctor and he confirms that she can walk a little.'

b. Esta mañana Pedro va al trabajo en coche. En un semáforo en rojo ve a su compañera Francisca caminando por la acera. Podría

llevarla al trabajo, pero la odia. Así que se aleja, fingiendo no verla.

'This morning Pedro is driving to work. At a red light he sees his colleague Francisca walking along the pavement. He could give her a ride to work, but he hates her. So he walks away, pretending not to see her.'

Much like in Experiment 1, the filler items consisted of a short sentence, followed by two possible paraphrases. In simple fillers, both answers were plausible, there was therefore no wrong answer:

(176) Fue a ver a Santino.

'She went to see Santino.'

a. Debido a la cuarentena, Maite no había visto a sus amigos en semanas. Cuando los parques volvieron a estar abiertos de nuevo, trató de organizar un picnic con cinco amigos. Desafortunadamente, cuatro ya tenían planes, pero al menos Santino vino.

'Because of the lockdown, Maite had not seen her friends for weeks. When the parks were open again, she tried to organise a picnic with five friends. Unfortunately, four already had plans, but at least Santino came.'

b. Ayer no vi a Maite en absoluto. Desde que la cuarentena terminó, nunca está en casa y nunca sé lo que está haciendo. Tal vez fue al parque, tal vez fue de compras, o tal vez vio a su amigo Santino. 'Yesterday I didn't see Maite at all. Since the lockdown ended, she is never home and I never know what she is doing. Maybe she went to the park, maybe she went shopping, or maybe she saw her friend Santino.'

Control items behaved similarly, except one of the two answers was expected to be downright incorrect (as in (177)):

(177) Habrá derrotado a Nadal.

'He will have defeated Nadal.'

a. No he visto la final de Roland Garros, pero he oído esta mañana en la radio que Djokovic fue el ganador. Me sorprendió, Nadal gana casi todos los años, pero aparentemente Djoko triunfó esta



vez.

'I haven't seen the Roland Garros final, but I heard this morning on the radio that Djokovic was the winner. I was surprised, Nadal wins almost every year, but apparently Djoko triumphed this time.'

- b. Aposté todo mi dinero a Djokovic este año. Pero cuando llegó a la final, desgraciadamente perdió contra Federer. Perdí todo mi dinero y estoy muy enfadado...

'I bet all my money on Djokovic this year. But when he reached the final, unfortunately he lost to Federer. I lost all my money and I'm very angry...'

### 5.4.3 Results

The results of Experiment 2 show a higher level of *authorize* answers as a general tendency, in that it represents 55,4% of all answers. Additionally, we observe that those results roughly replicate across both conditions: post-V received 56,2% of *authorize* answers, and sub 54,7%. There appears to be no significant difference between the two structures, at least not with respect to these given results, as shown in 5.3.

Overall, Hypothesis 1 is supported by these results: native speakers of Spanish agree that *dejar* in syntactic causatives can be interpreted either as *authorize* or as *not-intervene*, almost to an equal degree (55% *authorize* for 45% of *not-intervene*), or at the very least without too strong a preference for one interpretation over the other. However, there is here no evidence for Hypothesis 2: not only do we find a preference for *authorize* in both post-V and sub environments, there were also slightly more *authorize* answers in post-V context (56,2% for 54,7%). There is thus no mapping from sub to *authorize*, at least not in the way it is hypothesized in (159).

Much like with Experiment 1, however, we observed that some items did not follow the general tendency; out of our 24 items, 8 have a majority of *not-intervene* answers, and 4 of those received over 65% of *not-intervene* answers. In Experiment 1, we assumed that three possible factors were to be looked at when trying to account for non-conforming items: (i) scenario-likelihood, (ii) tense (and by the same token, aspect), and (iii) high authority imbalance between the norm and the *laisseur*

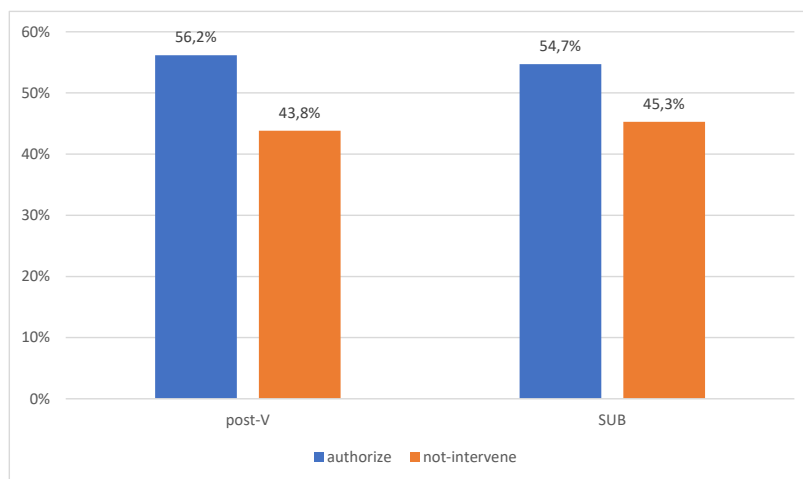


Figure 5.3: the distribution of authorize vs. not-intervene answer per construction in Experiment 2

The four verbs that did not conform contained the embedded verbs *leer* ('to read'), *trabajar* ('to work'), *correr* ('to run'), and *meditar* ('to meditate'). The factor in (i) is easy to account for: for instance, the *trabajar*-item contained an *authorize*-scenario in which an employee was sad not to be able to work after the building she worked in was shut down; chances are that this scenario was deemed less likely to happen in real life than one in which someone seems busy at work and therefore is not interrupted<sup>6</sup>. The tense-factor in (ii) is not relevant for Spanish, even though the parameter was not controlled for either: the nonconforming items were a mix of both tenses. The authority factor in (iii) does not apply either here, as *not-intervene* scenarios did not contain any authority relation. However, taking a closer look at the embedded verbs of these four items makes the contrast with the nonconforming items from Experiment 1 starker: while *fumar* ('to smoke') can be perceived as negative, activities like meditating, working and reading are rather uncontroversial. Indeed, they are generally regarded as morally neutral, or even morally positive. And this is

6. As a side note, most of these items also received very low *authorize* ratings in Experiment 1 for French

enhanced by the difficulty to picture a situation in which a strict rule against meditating (as opposed to, say, smoking) would have to be enforced.

Here again, Hypothesis 1 is supported while Hypothesis 2 is not; structure does not appear to be responsible for the interpretation of *dejar*-sentences. Since both interpretations are available, there must be some factor that makes it possible for Spanish speakers to interpret a *dejar*-causative as a *not-intervene* relation, but the data from Experiment 2 does not seem to provide us with more details as to what this factor might be.

## 5.5 Contrasting the results

Despite our efforts to analyze French and Spanish in a similar fashion all through this dissertation, the results of Experiment 1 and 2 appear to fail to support my approach. Both verbs can indeed receive the two interpretation *authorize* and *not-intervene*, which means that they are conceptually close; this should come as no surprise, seeing that they are both *ENABLE* verbs (as per Wolff 2003). Yet, they are still distinct, since *laisser* is strongly associated with *not-intervene* while *dejar* moderately favors an *authorize* interpretation. This further proves that *enable*, as a primitive, might not be fine-grained enough to discuss micro-variation in Romance.

The results also appear to fail to support (at least at first glance), the intuitions discussed in Borel (1972) and Kayne (1975): the pre-V pattern was not construed as “more intentional” than its post-V counterpart. If anything, *laisser* was mostly interpreted as a lack of engagement (see the discussion about Borel in Chapter 3). These results are however not to be interpreted as null: despite not being what we (along with previous researchers) expected them to be, they provide us with important information regarding let-type verbs across Romance languages. Mainly, it is clear that, although both construals are available, there is in each language a bias for one over the other. If the construction is not the main factor of interpretation, then what is?

Let us review the reasons listed above. I have discarded factor (ii) (tense and aspect) for Spanish, and factor (iii) (moral value of the embedded verb) would require a whole new type of experiment. There are ways, however, to eliminate the scenario-likelihood effect. In Experiment 3, we decided to opt for impoverished context, so that participants would not be able to find one more likely than the other. Doing so would also force them to rely mostly on the

syntactic structure of the *laisser*-sentence.

## 5.6 Experiment 3

### 5.6.1 Design

While Hypothesis 1 was largely supported by the results of Experiment 1 and 2, there was no evidence for Hypothesis 2, as these results fail to show any mapping from structure to interpretation. Experiment 3 aimed at testing Hypothesis 2 for *laisser*; namely, the pre-V construction maps onto an *authorize* reading while the post-V one receives a *not-intervene* one. Since scenario-likelihood was suspected to have interfered in the results, we opted for simple one-sentence answers, hence forcing participants to rely on (i) the meaning of *laisser*, and (ii) the complement that *laisser* embeds. The aim of it was to observe whether the participants did indeed use the structure that *laisser* is in to decide on which interpretation they give it, or if, on the contrary, they actually did not use the structure as much as we expected them to and instead relied on other tools.

### 5.6.2 Method

Experiment 3 contained the same test items as Experiment 1, but no filler or control items. The *authorize* and *not-intervene* scenarios tested in the pretest of Experiment 1 were replaced by two one-line answers. These critical items were then randomized and distributed over two lists in a Latin square design. The 50 participants (20 women, 30 men) were recruited anonymously and randomly through the platform Prolific, and they received 3.96€ for their participation to the survey, which was expected to take them approximately 20 minutes. They were then re-directed to Qualtrics, where they were informed of their rights and data protection, following both French and German laws. They were then asked a few questions (gender, age, mother tongue and country of residence). We chose to exclude from the questionnaire any native speaker of French that was not from France or had not lived in France for a long time, in order to avoid issues related to language uses differences across francophone countries.

The test consisted of a forced-choice task: participants were shown one of the two *laisser*-sentence, followed by two possible answers, as in

(178) Franck laisse Rosie pagayer/Franck laisse pagayer Rosie.

'Franck lets Rosie paddle.'

- a. Il donne sa permission.  
'He gives his permission.
- b. Il n'intervient pas.  
'He does not intervene.

As such, Experiment 3 is rather similar to the pretest, except that we are directly testing for the *laisser*-sentences, and that no "neither" answer is available. Experiment 3 was only run on French; any conclusion that comes out of it cannot be applied to Spanish, as it has been made clear by the previous results that the two verbs could not be treated similarly.

### 5.6.3 Results

The results of Experiment 3 replicate those of Experiment 1: there is an overwhelming general preference of native speakers of French for the *not-intervene* reading for *laisser* (67,4%), even though *authorize* remains marginally available (32,6%). This preference appears to replicate over both the pre-V and the post-V conditions, with respectively 66,2% and 68,2% of *not-intervene* answers.

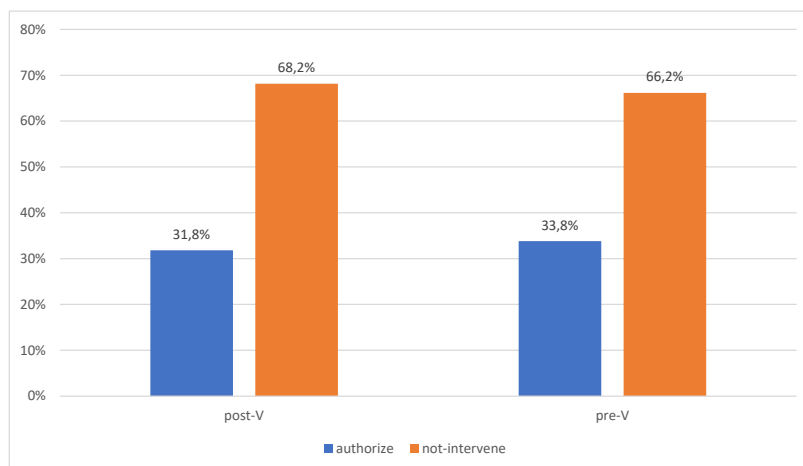


Figure 5.4: the distribution of authorize vs. not-intervene answer per construction in Experiment 3

Here again, Hypothesis 2 is not supported. Indeed, even though there are slightly more *authorize* answers under the pre-V condition (33,8%, as opposed to 31,8% in post-V contexts), this difference is not significant and therefore does not prove that the construction that *laisser* enters is the leading factor in the interpretation of *laisser*-causatives.

#### 5.6.4 Discussion

Here again, some items still received higher *authorize* ratings than *not-intervene* ones, despite the general preference for *not-intervene*. Five items stood out with over 50% of *authorize* answers. Much like with the nonconforming items of Experiment 1, we tried to find similarities between these items in order to figure out what might have made them stand out for the test-takers. Since there was no context that participants could rely on, we looked at the embedded verb for each of these items: *conduire* ('to drive'), *fumer* ('to smoke'), *nager* ('to swim'), *picnique* ('to picnic'), and *skier* ('to ski'). Both *jouer* ('to play') and *surfer* ('to surf') received the 50% of *authorize* answers and 50% of *not-intervene* ones.

As a brief reminder, we were left with three possible explanations for the items that behaved differently in Experiment 1: (i) scenario-likelihood, (ii) tense and aspect, and (iii) high authority imbalance between the norm in place and the *laisseur*. Considering that the contexts had been removed in Experiment 3, neither (a) nor (c) could apply here. And in Experiment 3, (b) does not stand anymore, since only one out of the five odd items is in the present tense (the other four being in the *passé composé*). Interestingly enough, the only item that received over 70% of *authorize* answers in both experiments is also the only one that is in the present tense among the odd items of Experiment 3: the *fumer*-item (see the discussion about (173)). However, because the other items in the present did not receive more *authorize* answers here in Experiment 3, it seems likely that this was not the decisive factor for the choice of an *authorize* interpretation over a *not-intervene* one. Rather, it seems that different factors come into play: for the *authorize* items of Experiment 1 (except the *fumer*-item), we believe it was purely an effect of scenario-preference of the participants' behalf: one scenario must have seemed more plausible than the other, hence it was favored over the other one. In Experiment 3, however, participants were never shown any scenario; they could thus neither rely on them nor find one more likely than the other.

It is clear, looking at Table 5.4, that structure is not the leading factor for interpretation in *laisser*-causatives. If it is neither an effect of scenario-likelihood, tense and aspect, nor authority imbalance, then what is it? The discussion about Spanish results in Experiment 2 could perhaps help: because (iii) could not apply to our Spanish nonconforming items, we looked at the "moral" value of the embedded verb. We proposed that participants assigned a negative or positive value to the embedded verb, which then allowed them to see if a situation in which preventing someone from performing said activity was available.

Therefore, the preference for an *authorize* reading (which goes against the general tendency for *laisser*) is an effect of the embedded verb, and of whatever value is attributed to it by participants. For *fumer* ('to smoke'), we have proposed above that construing a situation in which smoking is not permitted is rather easy: smoking is indeed not permitted in public buildings in countries of the European Union, for instance. As a contrast, the *réviser*-item, with the embedded verb *réviser* 'to review', received 100% of *not-intervene* answers: as opposed to smoking, which can be viewed as both negative and a breaching

of the law in some contexts, reviewing one's lesson is quite uncontroversial and is even perceived as a positive trait (as it linked to seriousness and being a hard-working student).

The results of Experiment 3 confirm the intuition we got from Experiment 1: the position of the lower subject is not the main factor when it comes to the use and processing of *laisser*-causatives. It is plausible that it still plays a role (as we do still agree with Kayne's intuition with respect to the pair of sentences in (104)), however, if it is a relevant factor, it is not the primary one. Thus, Hypothesis 2 in 159 is not supported: not only is there no clear one-to-one mapping from structure to interpretation, but there is also no absolute distinction between the two constructions (at least not in the way intended by Kayne).

In order to try to tease the factors for interpretation of *laisser*-causatives apart, we ran a short **nonce-word pilot** as a follow-up to Experiment 3. This means that the pilot was presented to participants of Experiment 3 as a "second part", for which the design and the task were exactly the same as in the first part (refer to subsection 5.6.1 above). In this pilot, participants were shown *laisser*-sentences, followed by two possible answers: (i) *il/elle donne sa permission* 'he/she gives his/her permission' or (ii) *il/elle n'intervient pas* 'he/she does not intervene'. The only difference with Experiment 3 is that the embedded verbs of the *laisser*-sentences in the pilot were made-up words that resembled French verbs (for instance, they all had an -er ending), see item #28 below:

- (179) Carine laisse Valentin **prabasser**/Carine laisse **prabasser** Valentin.  
 'Carine lets Valentin **prabasser**.'
- a. Elle donne sa permission.  
 'She gives her permission.'
  - b. Elle n'intervient pas.  
 'She does not intervene.'

The aim of removing the embedded verb was twofold: (i) it forced participants to rely solely on the structure (pre-V or post-V) that they were being shown, and (b) it allowed us to have a clearer picture when it comes to the importance of the embedded verb in the interpretation of *laisser*-causatives. The results match our suppositions: all of our 8 nonce-words items received between 64% and 76% of *not-intervene* answers, and none of them strays from that pattern,



as opposed to what was observed in the previous experiments. This further highlights the importance of the embedded verb, which we discussed above for the nonconforming items. Besides, and despite a slight increase in ratings, the number of *authorize* answers was not made much higher by the *laissé* being in pre-V position, as shown in Figure 5.5 below.

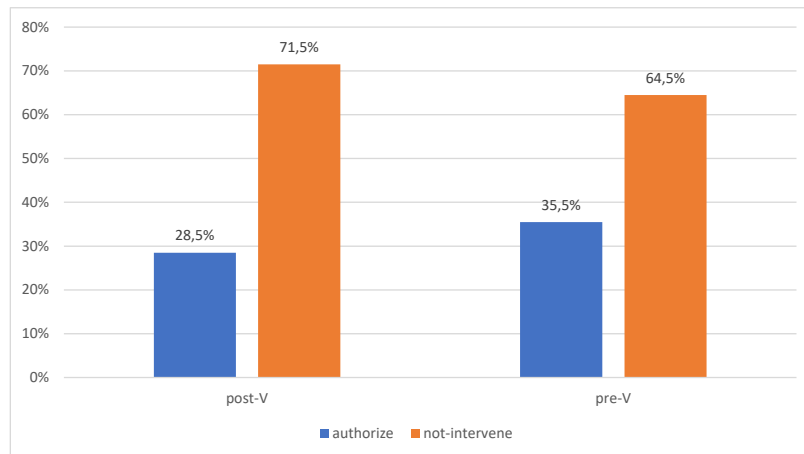


Figure 5.5: the distribution of authorize vs. not-intervene answer per construction in nonce-word test

This confirms that *laisser*, regardless of any other factor, tends to be interpreted as *not-intervene* by native speakers of French. Additionally, these results also confirm our suspicion from the previous experiments: participants appear to rely mostly on whatever value they assign to the embedded verb in order to make a decision regarding the interpretation of a *laisser*-causative.

## 5.7 General discussion

To sum our results briefly, one could say that the results obtained in Experiment 1 and 3 for French and in Experiment 2 for Spanish do match Hypothesis 1 in 158, in that both *laisser* and *dejar* can receive either an *authorize* and a *not-intervene* reading. However, there is no equal distribution for each reading: we noticed a strong preference in French for a *not-intervene* reading for *laisser*, and a weaker preference in Spanish for an *authorize* reading for *dejar*. This could be due to different factors; perhaps *authorize-laisser* is in competition with too many other *authorize* predicates (such as *permettre* ‘to permit’, *autoriser* ‘to authorize’, *donner la permission* ‘to give one’s permission’, and more distantly, *accepter* ‘to accept’, *acquiescer* ‘to acquiesce’ and *approuver* ‘to approve’, which all encode configurations in which the *laissé*’s desire to perform the event denoted by the embedded verb is the driving force of action). Silva (2012) also mentions that the verb *laisser* has a “narrower range than its Romance counterpart”, in that the *release* reading that exists for Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese is not available in French. Since *release* is close to *authorize*, in that it encodes the removal of a prevention, it is possible that it is this loss of the *release* reading has made the associated *authorize* reading less accessible.

The results for Spanish should also be treated carefully: the lack of an experiment like Experiment 3 for Spanish does not allow us to clearly claim whether *authorize* is the main interpretation for *dejar* or if that preference was simply an effect of the scenarios shown to participants.

Nevertheless, our results currently fail to support Hypothesis 2: there does not seem to be a clear one-to-one mapping from syntactic structure to conceptual representation, despite it being a prediction following from the observations of Borel (1972), Kayne (1975), and Donazzan et al. (2021) for French. Additionally, the data presented in Enghels and Roegiest (2012b) for Spanish, as well as the proposals made for the *SUB* construction of *dejar* seemed to support

these assumptions. Actually, it would seem that structure is not the leading factor of interpretation of *let*-causatives in these two Romance languages. Indeed, we pointed out that only a few items did not follow the general tendency discussed in the previous paragraph. While it might be simply an effect of scenario-preference for Spanish, Experiment 3 for French allowed us to show that it was more complex than that: five items did not follow the preference for a *not-intervene* interpretation for *laisser*, one of them (fumer-item) had already received more *authorize* answers in Experiment 1. This would thus mean that the value of the embedded verb is more important in the processing of *laisser*-causatives than the position of the *laissé* in the sentence. Indeed, even inspection of particular verbs did not show a contrast, and both types are distributed rather evenly. The results of the nonce-word pilot, in which none of the 8 items received a majority of *authorize* answers, confirm this hypothesis: since participants could not give any positive or negative value to the embedded verb (because they simply did not exist), they went with what they assume to be the default interpretation for *laisser*, which is the *not-intervene* one.

It should be made clear that this does not mean that Kayne (1975) is completely wrong in saying that the pre-V construction is to be interpreted as more intentional than its post-V counterpart. While do agree with him for the example that he gives, we think it ought to be approached with a bit more nuance. Let us take one last look at Kayne's guard example in (104), repeated below:

- a. Le gardien a laissé les prisonniers s'échapper.  
The guard let.PF the prisoners escape
- b. Le gardien a laissé s'échapper les prisonniers.  
The guard let.PF escape the prisoners  
'The guard let the prisoners escape.'

There are two additional factors in (104) that Kayne fails to mention: (i) the *laisseur-laissé* pair explicitly describes an asymmetrical authority relation (it is common world knowledge that guards have authority over prisoners), and (ii) *s'échapper* 'to escape', in this context, has a negative and abnormal connotation: guards are paid to see to it that their prisoners actually do not escape. While it appears that structure does play a role in this specific instance, it does not to the same extent with there is no authority relation between *laisseur* and *laissé* and

when the event denoted by the embedded verb is not deemed as going against the norm.

Furthermore, I do not wish to exclude the possibility that it is, perhaps, our very understanding of the verbs *laisser* and *dejar* and the LET configuration in general that is at fault here: in fact, these two verbs appear to realize rather complex causal relations. We have seen in Chapter 3 that the *authorize*-reading is where LET and ENABLE appear to overlap; accordingly, we have presented to participants *authorize* scenarios that realized strictly ENABLE configurations. It is likely that even the *authorize*-reading of *laisser* and *dejar* differs from the *authorize*-reading of verbs like *permettre* and *permettre*. In Chapter 6, I will attempt to propose a representation for *laisser*- and *dejar*-relations using causal models.

## Chapter 6

# (Re)defining LET

As seen in the previous chapter, the experiments were rather inconclusive as far as our tentative mapping is concerned. The question is why: was it the design of the experiments that failed to account for the distinctions between the two constructions, or is it simply that our understanding of LET is somehow lacking? I believe that the issue was actually tackled backwards: while I have attempted to single out possible interpretations for *laisser* and *dejar*, I have not sought to propose a unified representation for all LET-relations that the two verbs encode. Therefore, the real issue arises from the lack of an accurate representation of the key components of the lexical value of *laisser* and *dejar*. I have argued throughout this dissertation that much of the work done on causation in general, and on ENABLE (and *letting* for Talmy) in particular, fails to account for *laisser* and *dejar*, as most of these approaches rely on notions like those of *control*, *opposition*, and *prevention*. Taking such a route is tempting: these notions seem to pair well with that of **authority**. Yet, the authority required in some LET-relations is not quite expressed through control or actual prevention; as a reminder, the *laisseur* does not restrict or expand the *laissé*'s ALT<sub>SET</sub>. I would also add that not all LET-relations require authority, which makes it harder to argue that the aforementioned notions of control/opposition/prevention are necessarily embodied by the holder of authority.

In this chapter, I show that the previous approaches to LET as a subtype of ENABLE are somewhat misleading: *laisser* and *dejar* (and, to some extent, *let*) are not synonyms of *permettre*, *permettre*, or *enable/allow*. As such, any analysis of ENABLE, no matter how good it is, cannot be used for LET, even though it can inform our definition of it. I propose that the notion of **(double)-prevention**

that is crucial to *ENABLE* is also central to *LET*: thus, it ought to be kept in the definition for *LET*. However, where *ENABLE* requires two realized preventions, *LET* actually requires the combination of a *possible* prevention with an actual one. The model I initially propose in this chapter serves as a basis: all of the distinct relations can then be derived from the main model.

I am opening this chapter with a brief overview of causal models, what they are, and how they are useful for the work undertaken in this dissertation. Then, I introduce the unified model for *LET*. In a third part, I explain how this model can be used for both *authorize*- and *not-intervene*-relations, with slight amendments.

## 6.1 Introducing causal models

### 6.1.1 Some basic notions

Causal models are not introduced in Chapter 2, because they are not part of a particular approach to causation; rather, they are formal representations of causal relations. But what exactly is a causal model? Causal models are directed acyclic graphs (or DAGs) that represent causal influences (Pearl 2000a; Pearl and Mackenzie 2018). They are built using *variables* (in the shape of nodes), each corresponding to a proposition<sup>1</sup>. These nodes may or may not be connected to one another by arrows, which represent dependencies. Variables with no arrows directed at them are called exogenous variables, while variables with arrows pointing at them are endogenous. The value of these endogenous variables can be evaluated through the values of the variables that they depend on. The nodes are to be understood as functions that can have different values. Say that I want to model the situation described in (180) below:

(180) This food made me sick.

In 180, two variables have to be represented: whether I eat bad food (*F*), and whether I am sick (*S*). If we consider that eating bad food is the cause of my being sick, then there ought to be an arrow from *F* to *S*. The arrow means that the value of *F* directly influences the value of *S*, thus if  $F = 1$ , then  $S = 1$ , and if  $F = 0$  then  $S = 0$ .

1. Nodes need not correspond to propositions for Pearl, but here they will.

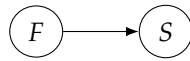


Figure 6.1: Representing (180)

$F$  = whether I eat bad food (1 if I do, 0 if I do not)  
 $S$  = whether I am sick (1 if I am, 0 if I am not).

So far, this is quite straightforward. Yet, things get slightly more complicated when there are more than one influence. For Pearl (2000b), the value of one node is to be determined through probability: (discuss//see what B. says about it). Recall that *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives are used to refer to situations in which the *laisseur's* action appears to be neither sufficient nor necessary. In that sense, calling the *laisseur's* action the “actual cause” for a result would be a stretch, as he acts merely as a would-be preventer. What *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives give us is a perceived causal relation rather than an actual one. Therefore, we are not looking to represent actual causal relations here, nor are we trying to see the value of  $R$  (the result node) in the absence of  $Lr$  (the *laisseur's* node). Indeed, we already know that the value of  $R$  cannot depend on that of  $Lr$ , since it is neither sufficient nor necessary. Therefore, probability models are not required to represent LET.

Instead of probability, I will be using **efficacy** (Copley and Harley 2015: 121): “a situation  $s_0$  is efficacious just in case its *ceteris paribus* successor situation occurs”. Even though we are not using situations here, we can easily apply that to our nodes and their values: a function between two nodes is efficacious just in case it alone gets to set the value of the endogenous node. Following Copley and Kagan (2021), I will assume that the function mapping one variable to another can be either **stimulatory** (marked +) or **inhibitory** (marked -). When the function is stimulatory, the value of the second node correlates positively with that of the first, and it correlates negatively when the arrow is inhibitory as exemplified in the tables below:

$A$	$B$		$A$	$B$
1	1		1	0
0	0		0	1

Table 6.1: Stimulatory influence vs. inhibitory influence

This slight amendment allows us to account more easily for situations in which the two influences are in contradiction. We have seen in Chapter 2 with the force-theoretic approach of Wolff and Song (2003) that both CAUSE and PREVENT required an opposition between *laisseur* and *laissé*. Let us now picture a PREVENT situation in which Victoria wants to go to Guatemala but her mother will not allow it, as expressed in (181) below.

(181) Victoria’s mother prevented her from going to Guatemala.

The model to represent such a situation requires at least three variables: one representing Victoria’s mother’s intention ( $I_m$ ), another one representing Victoria’s intention ( $I_V$ ), and the last one representing the result ( $R$ ). Additionally, it requires for both  $I_m$  and  $I_V$  to influence  $R$ , and these two influences need to be in opposition. The function from  $I_m$  to  $R$  is to be understood as an inhibitory one, while that from  $I_V$  to  $R$  is a stimulatory one.

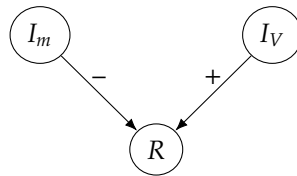


Figure 6.2: Representing (181)

$I_m$  = whether V’s mother exerts a prevention  
 $I_V$  = whether V intends to go to Guatemala  
 $R$  = whether V goes to Guatemala

The two variables happen to be in competition for setting the value of  $R$ . However, we are not here trying to understand the probability of Victoria’s going to Guatemala given that she intends to go and her mother does not intend for her to go: we are merely looking to represent (181). Two things can be inferred from (181): (i) Victoria’s mother has authority over Victoria, and (ii) Victoria did not go to Guatemala. Therefore,  $I_m$  “wins” and gets to set the value of  $R$ , regardless of the value of  $I_V$ .



$I_m$	$I_V$	$R$
1	1	0
1	0	0
0	1	1
0	0	0

Table 6.2: Truth table for (181)

It appears clear that the only case in which Victoria’s intention to go to Guatemala wins is in the absence of the inhibitory influence of her mother’s intention (which corresponds to the third row). This means that Victoria only gets to go to Guatemala when her mother does not exert any form of prevention. Any other time, if  $I_m = 1$ , then  $R = 0$ .

Recall that *laisser-* and *dejar-*causatives do not deal with actual causation, they deal with would-be prevention (and, in some cases, authority). This is why I will keep using efficacy models throughout this chapter.

## 6.2 Addressing the LET issue

### 6.2.1 Criteria for LET

We have seen in Chapter 4 that *laisser* had different properties than *permettre* ‘to allow/enable’, which prevented them from appearing in similar contexts. Indeed, unlike *permettre*, *laisser* requires a would-be preventer as its subject, i.e. an entity (animate or not) that possesses properties that are relevant to prevent the result from occurring. This means that the notion of (possible) prevention must appear somewhere in our model for *laisser*-relations: I call this the **Prevention criterion**.

The second factor that must be taken into account is that the *laissé* of *laisser*-relations is able to bring about the result on his own; while the two forces are needed in *ENABLE*-relations, the *laissé* can be responsible for it on his own in *laisser*-relations. We can go even further and say that the *laissé* can go **against** the *laisseur*’s tendency and still bring about the result. This shows that the *laisseur*’s tendency does not influence that of the *laissé*, which must be shown by the model: this is the **No-Influence criterion**.

The last factor concerns the structure of *laisser*-causatives. Despite the apparent “uselessness” of the *laisseur*’s action, which does not appear to have as much control on the result as he does in other types of causal relations, it would

be counterproductive to remove the node representing the *laisseur's* force from our model. Firstly, removing the *laisseur's* node would not be faithful to the morphosyntax of *laisser*-causatives. Secondly, it would remove part of the core meaning of *laisser*-relations; it is clear that uttering (182b) does not carry the same weight as uttering (182a).

- (182) a. La mère de Victoria l'a laissée partir au Guatemala.  
 The mother of Victoria she-has let leave to Guatemala  
 'Victoria's mother has let her leave to Guatemala.'
- b. Victoria est partie au Guatemala.  
 Victoria has left to Guatemala  
 'Victoria left to Guatemala.'

The very reason behind that is that getting rid of the *laisseur* removes two key components of *laisser*-relations: would-be prevention and indifference. Therefore, an accurate model for a given *laisser*-relation ought to remain as faithful as possible to the syntax of the corresponding *laisser*-sentence. This is the **Fidelity criterion**.

(183) Criteria for representing *laisser*-relations

- **Fidelity criterion:** the model should remain faithful to the syntax, as far as possible: it ought to contain *at least* three nodes: one for the *laisseur's* force, another for the *laissé's*, and one for the result.
- **Prevention criterion:** the notion of prevention (or possible prevention) must be included and visible in the model.
- **No-influence criterion:** the model must represent the lack of influence the *laisseur* has on both the *laissé* and on the result, in order to represent indifference.

The first two criteria come with an already defined representation, but the third one require some clarification with respect to indifference. While the notion of indifference is intuitively clear, it needs a proper definition in order to be representable.

### 6.2.2 Not caring or the notion of indifference

Let us now make the notion of indifference clearer with an example. Say that I have the opportunity to destroy the Eiffel Tower: the fate of the tower is in my hands only. My attitude towards it can be either one of the following three: I can either have (a) the intention to do it ( $I_{\text{destroy}}$ ), (b) the intention not to do it ( $I_{\text{-destroy}}$ ), or I can simply (c) not care about whether or not the tower gets destroyed. If I am the sole decider, and I have the intention to destroy the Eiffel Tower (in which case  $I_{\text{destroy}} = 1$ ), then the tower will be destroyed ( $E = 1$ ); my intention has a stimulatory influence over the destruction of the Eiffel Tower, as in Table 6.3 below:

$I_{\text{destroy}}$	$E$
1	1
0	0

Table 6.3: Intention to destroy the Eiffel Tower

$I_{\text{-destroy}}$	$E$
1	0
0	1

Table 6.4: Intention not to destroy the Eiffel Tower

Conversely, as shown in Table 6.4, in the case that I have an intention not to destroy the Eiffel Tower, then my influence over the destruction will be an inhibitory one. If I intend for the tower not to be destroyed ( $I_{\text{-destroy}} = 1$ ), then the destruction will not occur ( $E = 0$ ).

In *laissez-* and *dejar-*relations, the attitude of the *laisseur* towards the result (and the performance of the result by the *laissé*) is one of indifference, which is the third possible attitude towards the destruction of the Eiffel Tower in our example (attitude c). Let us now say that I generally am indifferent to the Eiffel Tower, so I do not care if it gets destroyed or not. My attitude towards both  $I_{\text{destroy}}$  and  $I_{\text{-destroy}}$  is 0, which means that I neither intend to destroy the Eiffel Tower nor intend not to destroy it. Therefore, it supersedes the bottom lines in Tables 6.3 and 6.4, as shown in the two tables in 6.5 below.

$I_{\text{destroy}}$	$E$	$I_{\neg\text{destroy}}$	$E$
1	1	1	0
0	{0,1}	0	{0,1}

Table 6.5: The indifference “influence”

This shows that indifference makes the functions from  $I_{\text{destroy}}$  to  $E$  or from  $I_{\neg\text{destroy}}$  to  $E$  *neither* stimulatory nor inhibitory<sup>2</sup>; somehow, having an intention neither for nor against the destruction appears to “cancel” any outside influence on the *laissé*. As a result, the value of  $E$  is independent from that of  $I$  in the case where my attitude is one of indifference. This means that its value ends up depending on that of the other nodes (if any) that it depends on.

The remaining question now concerns the implementation of such a notion: how is it to be represented in causal models? What do we make of an influence that is neither stimulatory nor inhibitory? And, more importantly, how do we represent cancelled-out influences? The next section is an attempt at answering these questions.

### 6.2.3 Building the model

This section introduces a general model for LET; as such, the subnotions of authorise-letting, not-intervene-letting, or dispositional letting will not be treated here. I will get back to these in section 6.3. I am using as an example a sentence that can receive either an authorise or a not-intervene interpretation, which allows me to treat it neutrally.

- (184) Corinne a laissé Marc bouquiner.  
 Corinne has let Marc read  
 ‘Corinne let Marc read.’

To represent the relation encoded by the sentence in (184), one could be tempted to turn to the most obvious representation: a chain. Recall that, in a typical chain with three variables  $A$ ,  $B$ , and  $C$ , the value of  $C$  is only influenced by that of  $A$  through the value of  $B$ , which acts as a *mediator* for the A-C relationship.

2. (the brackets indicate that both values for  $E$  are available; this mirrors the observations made for the ALT<sub>SET</sub> by Donazzan et al. 2021).

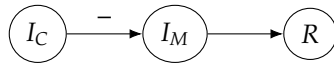


Figure 6.3: Representing (184) – take 1

$I_C$  = whether Corinne exerts a prevention  
 $I_M$  = whether Marc intends to read  
 $R$  = whether Marc reads

Initially, this looks like a nice starting point. Not only does it seem to have all of our variables, but the chain even seems to follow the word order of *laisser-causatives*: there is (i) a *laisseur*, represented by  $I_C$ , that acts on (ii) a *laissé*, which we find in  $I_M$ , and that interaction of the two gives way to (iii) a result (encoded by the embedded verb in the infinitive), which is our event node in  $R$ . Therefore, the Fidelity criterion seems to be respected. Additionally,  $I_C$  has an inhibitory influence on  $I_M$ , as well as on  $R$  through  $I_M$ , therefore the Prevention criterion seems to be satisfied as well. Yet, there is an issue with this model. Indeed, the value of the variable  $I_M$  cannot depend on that of  $I_C$ : whether Corinne chooses to exert a prevention or not does not influence Marc’s intention to read (driven by his own desires and motives), it can only influence his actual reading. Thus, there cannot be an arrow going from  $I_C$  to  $I_M$ , which would violate the No-Influence criterion. Thus, Figure 6.3 is ruled out.

Fidelity	Prevention	No-Influence
✓	✓	×

Table 6.6: Testing Figure 6.3 against the three criteria

Since the main issue with Figure 6.3 is the influence of  $I_C$  over  $I_M$ , one could try to solve it by using a collider, as in Figure 6.4 below. In this new model,  $R$  acts as a collider, in that it is causally influenced by both  $I_C$  and  $I_M$ . Since Corinne can only prevent Marc from reading and not from *intending to read*; removing the arrow from  $I_C$  to  $I_M$  and replacing it with an arrow from  $I_C$  to  $R$  should solve this problem.

$I_C$  = whether Corinne exerts a prevention  
 $I_M$  = whether Marc intends to read  
 $R$  = whether Marc reads

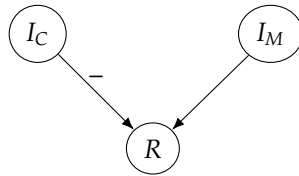


Figure 6.4: Representing (184) – take 2

But this does not feel satisfactory either: recall that, in *laisser*-relations, the *laisse* can bring about the caused event on his own, sometimes even in spite of the *laisseur*'s (opposite) force. Having the two influences represented in the model on what appears to be an equal footing feels somehow counter-intuitive. Besides, it goes against No-Influence, since there is an arrow connecting  $I_C$  to  $R$ .

Fidelity	Prevention	No-Influence
✓	✓	×

Table 6.7: Testing Figure 6.4 against the three criteria

So far, the issue appears to be the No-Influence criterion: it is seemingly complicated to add an influence on the result that is neither stimulatory nor inhibitory and that is not as necessary as the other influence that influences the result. In order to salvage the No-Influence criterion, we could be tempted to turn  $I_C$  into a completely disconnected node, as in Figure 6.5 below:

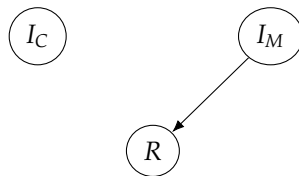


Figure 6.5: Representing (184) – take 3

$I_C$  = whether Corinne exerts a prevention  
 $I_M$  = whether Marc intends to read  
 $R$  = whether Marc reads

What is represented in Figure 6.5 is that Marc is solely responsible for whether he reads or not, which could perhaps fix our No-Influence issue. But such a model is not viable: firstly, it is not possible to have a floating node without any arrow connecting it to any other node. If such a node is not causally related to any other, what is the point of having it in the model? Besides, it has been made clear from the discussion in the introduction that *laisser* does indeed encode a causal relation between a *laisseur*, a *laissé*, and a caused event. Therefore,  $I_C$  having no connection whatsoever to any other node violates the Fidelity criterion. Moreover, if the *laisseur* has no influence on either the *laissé* or the caused event, how is he to exert any form of prevention? This new model also goes against the Prevention criterion. It is thus ruled out.

Fidelity	Prevention	No-Influence
×	×	✓

Table 6.8: Testing Figure 6.5 against the three criteria

So far, none of the models has managed to account for all three criteria, and No-Influence seems to be the main obstacle. And there is a very good reason behind it: it appears to clash with the other two criteria. Indeed, how can one represent a causal relation with a prevention **without** representing an influence? Therefore, it seems that causal model as we know them from Pearl (2000b) and Pearl and Mackenzie (2018) lack the tools to represent accurately the relations encoded by *laisser*. There are two main reasons for it: the first reason is that they predict that the intervention of the *laisseur* is both unnecessary and insufficient (which repeats to shortcomings of Mackie 1965, see also Cheng and Novick 1991, 1992), and secondly, they fail to represent the notion of No-Influence (ironically, by making the *laisseur*'s involvement much stronger than it ought to be). There is thus a need for a new type of model, as none of the ones we tried above appeared to satisfy more than two of our criteria listed above, as shown in Table 6.9 below.

	Fidelity	Prevention	No-Influence
Figure 6.3	✓	✓	×
Figure 6.4	✓	✓	×
Figure 6.5	×	×	✓

Table 6.9: Non-conclusive models vs criteria for LET

Recall that we consider that models satisfy the Fidelity criterion if at least  $I_C$ ,  $I_M$ , and  $R$  are in the model, and if there is an arrow going from  $I_C$  to  $R$  (representing the causal relation). Prevention is met if there is an arrow from the node representing the *laisseur* to the node representing the result, and that arrow is associated with an inhibitory function. Lastly, No-Influence requires for  $I_M$  to be an exogenous node, as the influence of  $I_C$  (on any other variable) is understood as being “possible yet non-realized” (to represent indifference). None of these models are able to fulfill all the requirements at once, as influences of one variable over another one are either stimulatory or inhibitory. How can we then represent an influence that appears to be neither? This highlights the need for a solid and accurate representation for **indifference**.

Here, three possible routes can be taken to resolve this issue. The first route is to treat variable  $I_C$  as having three possible values: +1 if Corinne has a strong intention for Marc to read (odd, but acceptable), 0 if she is indifferent, and -1 if she really strongly opposes his reading.

$I_C$	$I_M$	$R$
+1	1	1
+1	0	0
0	1	1
0	0	0
-1	1	{0,1}
-1	0	0

Table 6.10: Three-valued logic for *laisseur*'s intention in (184)



Creating a third value that is different from +1 for *ENABLE* and -1 for *PREVENT* allows the integration of the notion of indifference, encoded by *LET*. However, this does not provide any help with how this node, when set to 0, interacts with the other nodes (which is shown by the similarity between the three sets of rows).

The second route arises from the observation that the *laissé* may still pick a different course of action in *laisser*-relations, even when the *laisseur* appears to be exerting a prevention, as exemplified in 185 below. Conversely, such an option does not seem to be available for the relation(s) encoded by the causative verb *empêcher* ‘to prevent’, as in 186. This could be taken as a hint that the negation of *laisser* encodes some form of weaker prevention.

- (185) Corinne n’a pas laissé Marc bouquiner, mais il a quand  
 Corinne NEG-has NEG let Marc read but he has when  
 même lu en cachette.  
 even read in hiding  
 ‘Corinne did not let Marc read, but he still read on the sly.’
- (186) ??Corinne a empêché Marc de lire, mais il a quand même  
 Corinne has prevented Marc to read but he has when even  
 lu en cachette.  
 read in hiding  
 ‘Corinne prevented Marc from reading, but he still read on the sly.’

If Corinne decides to reward Marc by giving him permission to read at  $t_0$ , then the permission must still be standing at  $t_1$  when Marc starts reading, else he will be misbehaving (which, as a reminder, he can still choose to do). If we assume that Marc is generally honest and will respect Corinne’s decision either way, then Marc reading is more likely to happen with Corinne’s permission than it is *without* it.

As seen in section ??, some previous approaches to causation have attempted to categorise causes in terms of *sufficiency* and *necessity* (Mackie 1965; Lauer and Nadathur 2018; Baglini and Siegal 2020, 2021). As a reminder, these terms fail to describe accurately the *laisseur*’s force in *laisser*-relations, as it would be categorised as both insufficient and unnecessary. Fischer (2005: 284) proposes that “an unnecessary and insufficient force or condition is a cause of an injury if it joins with other forces or conditions to cause an injury.”. While he is talking about law and the justice system, perhaps his proposal can be adapted

to our *laisser* cases. The approach taken by Baglini and Siegal (2020, 2021) is to treat periphrastic causatives using Mackie’s (1965) INUS condition: Insufficient but Necessary part of an Unnecessary but Sufficient set. They propose that causal sufficiency is a property of sets conditions rather than of individual conditions. If we assume a joint set that contains Marc’s intention to read and Corinne’s lack of a prevention (intention not to prevent?), then this set is sufficient for the occurrence of the reading event. I will not be pursuing this approach here, as I do not think it will fully allow us (or at least, not as far as I know) to represent the notion of indifference that, I believe, is crucial to LET.

The last route is inspired by Talmy’s representation of *onset letting* (Talmy 1988), which he defines as a situation of *cessation of impingement*, or, in other words, removal of a blocking. In such a situation, the *laisseur*’s (or Antagonist’s) force is removed, which allows the *laissé* (Agonist) to proceed with his tendency. Talmy illustrates it with the following sentence, which is pictured in the diagram in 6.6.

**The plug’s coming loose let the water flow from the tank.**

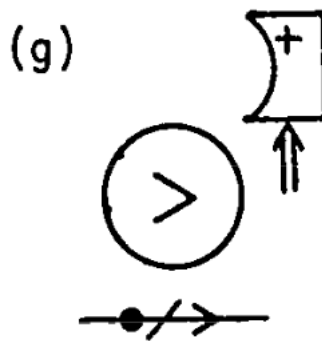


Figure 6.6: Onset letting for Talmy (1988: 57)

When exemplifying his diagrams, Talmy (1988) did not use sentient entities, as they are presumably harder to deal with. However, many of his diagrams can be used with a few small amendments to describe causal relations between Agents. Based on Talmy’s insight for *cessation of impingement*, we can now represent LET. In his diagram, Talmy shows that the blocking (what I have referred to as a prevention) is being removed. The blocking and the removal

can be operated by the same entity (in cases of intra-psychological causation, for instance) or by two separate entities, it does not matter for Talmy. In our *laissez*-cases, the removal of the blocking is done by the *laisseur*. The prevention, however, might be a pre-existing one (e.g the law) or can have been exerted by the *laisseur* himself up until the letting started (mostly true in authorize cases). Therefore, one node representing the standing prevention must be added, in order to account for cases in which they are embodied by two distinct entities. The *laisseur* removes the standing prevention, which erases the arrow from the node representing the prevention to the *laissé*'s node. This means that the *laissé*'s node is now independent, and the result node depends only on the value of the *laissé*'s node. This independence from the *laisseur* corresponds to the expectation set by the definition for indifference in section 6.2.2.

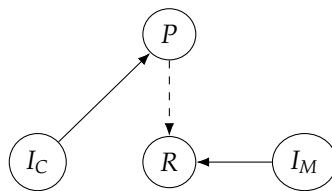


Figure 6.7: Representing 184 – take 4

$P$  = whether a standing prevention is exerted  
 $I_C$  = whether Corinne removes the prevention  
 $I_e$  = whether Marc intends to read  
 $E$  = whether Marc reads

This appears to be the right thing to do: (i) all the nodes are present, and  $I_C$  influences  $R$  through  $P$  (in an indirect way, since the arrow is erased), which satisfies the Fidelity criterion, (ii) the prevention is represented by the node  $P$ , so the Prevention criterion is met, and (iii)  $I_M$  is independent,  $R$  is freed from the direct influence of  $I_C$ , which both solves the influence asymmetry issue and fulfills the No-Influence criterion.

But if we were to do this, we would be rushing into things and forgetting the basic rules of causal modelling. Indeed, in a situation in which Corinne lets Marc read, the model in Figure 6.7 could potentially work. As there is no law in France against reading books, it is clear that the “standing prevention” would be a rule in Corinne’s household, hence created and enforced by Corinne

herself. Therefore, one could argue that Corinne being indifferent to whether Marc reads or not is her cancelling her standing rule. But it is not quite so. Instead, she is *overruling* it through her letting, not entirely discarding it (and making it stop existing). To make this clearer, let us take a look at an example from our experiments, in which the prevention and the *laisseur* are two separate entities:

- (187) Le patron a laissé ses employés fumer à l'intérieur.  
 The boss has let his employees smoke at the-inside  
 'The boss let his employees smoke inside (the building).'

Here, it is common knowledge that there is a law in the European Union that prevents people from smoking inside in public spaces. Therefore, the prevention is this European law. The *laisseur*, on the other hand, is the boss. Say that the boss is indifferent to his employees smoking or not, and, as such, he suspends the standing prevention. His letting his employees smoke will not make the law against smoking disappear. Therefore, there cannot be an arrow from the *laisseur's* node to the prevention node, because the value of the *laisseur's* node simply cannot set that of the prevention node. The *laisseur's* action is to be understood as removing (or at least strongly lessening) the influence the prevention has on the whether the result occurs or not. Therefore, the *laisseur's* influence is not on the prevention, but on the **influence** the prevention has on the result. The resulting model is the following in Figure 6.8:

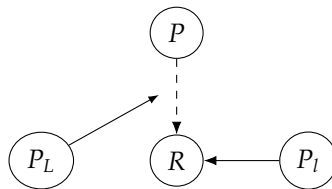


Figure 6.8: Causal model for *x laisse y p*

- $P_L$  = whether the *laisseur* has preventing properties
- $P$  = whether a standing prevention is exerted
- $P_I$  = whether the *laissé* has relevant properties for the result
- $R$  = whether the result occurs

By being indifferent to the course of action the *laissé* chooses to take, what the *laisseur* does freeing the *laissé* from possible inhibitory influences that could

go against his intention or tendency for the result. The only way he gets to do this is through his own preventing properties. The term *would-be preventer* ought to be understood in two ways: not only can the *laisseur* prevent the result from occurring by upholding the standing prevention (which is done through authority or abilities for an Agent, through preventing properties like dispositions in an inanimate object), but he can also prevent the standing prevention from applying. What this means for our model is that if (and only if) the value of  $P_L$  is 0 (recall that this means that he is indifferent), then the arrow from  $P$  to  $R$  will be erased. If the value of  $P_L$  is set to 1 (i.e the *laisseur* exerts a prevention), then the arrow remains, setting the values of  $R$  to 0, given that the *laissé* behaves.

	Fidelity	Prevention	No-Influence
Figure 6.7	✓	✓	✓

Table 6.11: Testing Figure 6.7 against the three criteria

Thus, we must find a new way to describe these functions. We proceed somewhat in the spirit of Pearl (1993; 2000a: 70–73) by treating “influencing an influence” as altering the *function* that corresponds to the arrow between  $P$  (the prevention node) and  $R$  (the result node). As a reminder, each arrow between two nodes is associated with a corresponding function. For instance, the arrow from  $P$  to  $R$  is associated with the function  $f_{\vec{P}\vec{R}}$ , which is (without the intervention of  $P_L$ , the node representing the *laisseur*’s preventing properties) an inhibitory function, marked  $f^-$ . In turn, this means that the arrow from  $P_L$  is a function that takes as arguments the value of  $P_L$  and the function  $f_{\vec{P}\vec{R}}$ . Instead of giving out a value, it yields a relation, marked  $R_{\text{indep}}$ .

$f^-$	
$P$	$R$
1	0
0	1

Table 6.12: Influence of  $P$  on  $R$  in the absence of  $P_L$

$$\begin{array}{c|c}
 & R_{\text{indep}} \\
 P & R \\
 \hline
 1 & \{0,1\} \\
 0 & \{0,1\}
 \end{array}$$

Table 6.13: Influence of  $P$  on  $R$  in the presence of  $P_L$

Recall that the brackets in the second table mean that the two values are still available for  $R$ , they are used as an abbreviation for OR. The relation  $R_{\text{indep}}$  should remind the reader of our “indifference influence” in Table 6.5. In short, what the data in Table 6.13 tells us is that  $P$  does not influence the value of  $R$  anymore because  $R$  is made independent from  $P$  by the intervention of  $P_L$ . As such, the value of  $R$  does not depend on that of  $P$  anymore, which explains the curly-bracket notation: both values might be available for  $R$ , depending on the value of the other variables it depends on (in Figure 6.8, that would be  $P_l$ ). While it is likely that  $P$  would be efficacious for  $R$  in the absence of  $P_L$ , the influence of  $P_L$  has made  $P$  **unable to prevent**. Because the two variables are now independent from one another (and there is no remaining arrow between them), the relation between them cannot be treated as a function anymore. Even though it is still a relation, I will refer to the relation between  $P$  and  $R$  (noted  $PR$ ) in the presence of  $P_L$  as  $R_{\text{indep}}$ : the **independence relation**. I make this explicit below in Table 6.14:

$$\begin{array}{c|c}
 P_L & PR \\
 \hline
 1 & R_{\text{indep}} \\
 0 & f^-
 \end{array}$$

Table 6.14: The independence relation

What we have in Table 6.14 is the function that *laisser* and *dejar* encode. The inhibitory function from the node representing the properties of the *laisseur* to that representing the event description is **erased** through the influence of a third variable.

## 6.3 Implementing the model

Let us now see what this model for general LET can do for our three interpretations for *laisser* and *dejar*, namely (a) *authorize*, (b) *not-intervene*, and (c) dispositional letting. As a reminder, the first two were tested simultaneously in the experiments, as they both require volitional entities as both *laisseur* and *laissé*: this allows us to apply the notion of indifference. The latter, on the other hand, seems harder to deal with, as it requires both *laisseur* and *laissé* to be non-volitional, non-force-generating entities. This makes the indifference claim questionable: how can we apply it to entities that simply cannot choose anything? In this section, I will attempt to provide an adapted model for each reading, based on the model for general LET in Figure 6.8.

### 6.3.1 Authorise

My approach to *authorise* is based around the analysis made for *authorise-laisser* in Donazzan et al. (2021), discussed above: the *laisseur* is a holder of authority that can influence the *laissé*'s set of alternatives, but he does not because he is indifferent to the outcome. What this entails is that the *laissé* has **free choice** over his alternatives: he is not made to pick one or the other and can act according to his own tendencies (desires, beliefs, intentions, abilities). Therefore, an additional criterion must be added in order to represent *authorise-laisser*: the **Choice criterion**.

(188) Criteria for *authorise-laisser*

- **Fidelity criterion:** the model should remain faithful to the syntax, as far as possible: it ought to contain *at least* three nodes: one for the *laisseur*'s force, another for the *laissé*'s, and one for the result.
- **Prevention criterion:** the notion of prevention (or possible prevention) must be included and visible in the model.
- **No-influence criterion:** the model must represent the lack of influence the *laisseur* has on both the *laissé* and on the result, in order to represent indifference.
- **Choice criterion:** free choice and free will must be represented in the model for *authorise*.

What this means for *authorise-laisser* is that the model ought to be modified in two ways. Firstly, it must include an arrow from the node representing the *laisseur's* force to the node representing the *laissé's*, in order to represent authority (which is a subpart of the Prevention criterion). Secondly, the node representing the *laissé's* force will need to be an independent one, in order to satisfy the Choice criterion. Let us now represent in Figure 6.9 the sentence in (187), which is to be interpreted as meaning that the boss gave his employees overt permission to smoke inside.

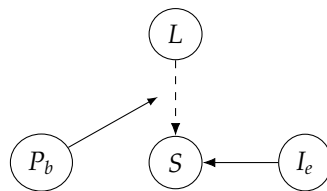


Figure 6.9: Causal model for *authorise-laisser*

- $P_b$  = whether the boss is indifferent
- $L$  = whether the law against smoking inside applies
- $I_e$  = whether the employees intend to smoke inside
- $S$  = whether the employees smoke inside

The model for general LET can be fully applicable to *authorize*: as explained above at the end of section 6.2.3, through his authority over his employees, the boss can (partly) override the EU law that prevents them from smoking inside. Therefore,  $S$  is freed from any outside influence.  $I_e$  remains exogenous: it is neither influenced by  $P_b$  nor by  $L$ . The independence of  $I_e$  satisfies both the No-Influence Criterion and the Choice criterion.

Fidelity	Prevention	No-Influence	Free Choice
✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 6.15: Testing Figure 6.9 against the three criteria

### 6.3.2 *Not-intervene*

Now that it is established that the model fits *authorize*, let us turn to *not-intervene*. Recall that *not-intervene* refers to situations in which there is an ongoing event



performed by the *laissé* that is not being interrupted by the *laisseur*; in those cases, no alternative set is introduced, as the event is ongoing. This means that, while the question of free choice is not relevant for *not-intervene*, the issue here is that of the ongoingness of the caused event. Therefore, our general LET model in Figure 6.8 ought to be adapted in order to represent ongoingness.

(189) Criteria for not-intervene-laisser

- **Fidelity criterion:** the model should remain faithful to the syntax, as far as possible: it ought to contain *at least* three nodes: one for the *laisseur*'s force, another for the *laissé*'s, and one for the result.
- **Prevention criterion:** the notion of prevention (or possible prevention) must be included and visible in the model.
- **No-influence criterion:** the model must represent the lack of influence the *laisseur* has on both the *laissé* and on the result, in order to represent indifference.
- **Ongoingness criterion:** the model must represent the result node as encoding an ongoing event.

Let us keep our smoking example, and let us interpret it as meaning that the employees were already smoking inside, and the boss simply chose not to interrupt them. Suddenly, the question of the EU law is not quite relevant anymore; what we care about is the possibility for the boss to interrupt them (possible prevention).

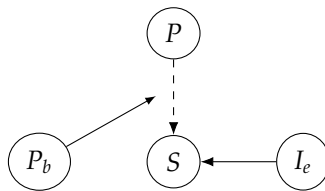


Figure 6.10: Causal model for not-intervene-laisser

$P_b$  = whether the boss is indifferent

$P$  = whether the boss holds preventing properties

$I_e$  = whether the employees intend to smoke

$S$  = whether the employees smoke

This looks similar to our model above in Figure 6.8, and, at first glance, it does not seem to meet the requirements for the Ongoingness criterion. The issue is that the most basic causal models we have been using do not represent time; because of that, they can never satisfy the Ongoingness criterion. The most obvious way to go about representing such a scenario is to actually represent it as in Figure 6.11 below, by treating the node as a constituent that is large enough to include aspect. In short,  $S$  is simply to be treated as  $S =$  whether the employees *are smoking*.

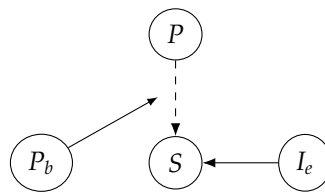


Figure 6.11: Causal model for not-intervene-*laisser*

$P_b$  = whether the boss is indifferent

$P$  = whether a prevention is actually exerted

$I_e$  = whether the employees intend to smoke

$F$  = whether the employees are smoking

Tweaking the result node makes the initial model for general LET completely applicable to *not-intervene*. This highlights that there is indeed a common denominator for *authorize* and *not-intervene*, which is that they both encode causal relations that require the combination of a possible prevention with an actual one. Such an observation will allow us to inform our representation and understanding of dispositional letting.

### 6.3.3 Dispositional letting

Let us now move on to dispositional letting. I mentioned at the beginning of this section that it was distinct from its two counterparts: the main reason for it being that it cannot be understood through the notion of indifference, which is an attitude that only volitional entities like Agents can have. The term “dispositional letting” refers to situations in which both *laisseur* and *laissé* are non-volitional and non-force generating entities, such as in ??, repeated below in 190:

- (190) Ces rideaux laissent passer la lumière.  
 These curtains let pass the light  
 'These curtains let light through.'

It is clear that the situation encoded by (190) can neither be understood as being an *authorize* one nor a *not-intervene* one, because curtains certainly cannot choose to prevent light from being inside the room or not. Curtains are non-sentient entities; therefore, they cannot act with indifference towards a situation or, in this case, what seems to be a state of affairs. If curtains cannot choose, this means that they cannot “switch” between being a would-be preventer and an actual preventer. Actually, in (190), it seems that they are neither.

This appears to be a problem, not only for our model, but for our whole understanding of *laisser* (and LET): how did the curtains even make it as a *laisseur* without apparently fitting the one requirement for *laisseurs* in *laisser-causatives*?

I propose that what is at play here is a comparison between the very object that enters the *laisser*-relation and the artifact kind that it belongs to. Curtains are artifacts: they are the product of human labour and are manufactured objects. This means that they are built with a purpose in mind, and a given set of properties to serve this purpose. In that sense, they are the expression of an intention (Thomasson 2003). Objects that are part of that given kind supposedly all share the same purpose: if I buy a lamp, I buy it with the expectation that it will make light. In order for those objects to fulfill that purpose, they are built with some specific properties, or “K-relevant features”.

“Necessarily, for all  $x$  and all artifactual kinds  $K$ ,  $x$  is a  $K$  only if  $x$  is the product of a largely successful intention that  $(Kx)$ , where one intends  $(Kx)$  only if one has a substantive concept of the nature of  $Ks$  that largely matches that of some group of prior makers of  $Ks$  (if there are any) and intends to realize that concept by imposing  $K$ -relevant features on the object”.

(Thomasson 2003, 600)

Curtains have two main purposes: the first (and certainly main) one being to block light from entering houses, and the second one being to be decorative. Therefore, if the intention is to block light, then the relevant  $K$ -feature is opacity. On the other hand, if the intention is to be decorative, then the relevant  $K$ -feature

will be, perhaps, prettiness. However, the fact that curtains can be intended as being decorative is irrelevant to our current question. What we are interested in is the notion that curtains, as artifacts, ought to block light. But the curtains in (190) do not. There is thus a mismatch between the properties of the kind curtain (being opaque) and the properties of these actual curtains; this means that the curtains in (190) are **defective** with respect to the artifact kind that they belong to.

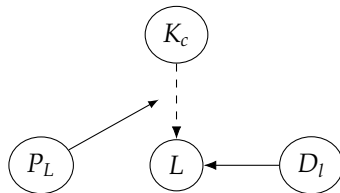


Figure 6.12: Treating dispositional letting

$P_L$  = whether the curtains have relevant properties to let light through

$K_c$  = whether the kind *curtain* has relevant properties to block light

$D_l$  = whether the light has a disposition towards spreading

$L$  = whether the light is in the room

In general, the node  $K_c$  should have a value of 1, which is what we have seen above in the form of “there is an expectation that curtains ought to block light”. That notion of prevention is expressed in the form of an inhibitory influence of  $K_c$  on  $L$ , such that if  $K_c = 1$  then  $L = 0$ . What the influence from  $P_L$  does it that it **prevents** that prevention from applying. Therefore, the model manages to treat dispositional letting without any issue only in the case that we consider that *laisser*, in such instances, introduces a comparison between an actual artifact and the artifactual kind that it is a part of. Unlike with authorise and not-intervene cases, in which the standing prevention actually exists, the prevention in dispositional letting cases is to be found in the properties of the artifact kind. In sum, *laisseurs* of dispositional letting relations are not would-be preventers but **should-be preventers**.

## 6.4 Wrapping up

The existence of this chapter was initially motivated by a misconstruing of the causal notion of *LET*, which so far had not even been treated as its own individual

notion. While I insisted throughout the dissertation on discriminating between ENABLE and LET, I made the mistake to treat the two interpretations for *laisser* and *dejar* as ENABLE configurations, which was bound to yield mixed results. This chapter is thus an attempt at better defining LET, as encoded by *laisser* and *dejar*.

I believe that the model for a general LET not only highlights that LET differs from ENABLE, but it also provides us with the core value of LET. Indeed, LET configurations are situations in which a possible prevention is rendered **unable to prevent** through either the indifference of a volitional *laisseur* or through the defectiveness of a non-volitional non-force-generating *laisseur*. This sheds light on the necessity to include perceived – but not realized – properties (such as would-be prevention) in our representation of causal relations: the situations encoded by *laisser*- and *dejar*-causatives appear to be more concerned with possible prevention rather than actual causation. This is particularly obvious in cases of dispositional letting: in the curtains example in (190), the curtains are definitely neither sufficient nor necessary for the light being in the room. In other words, they act neither as a cause nor as an enabling condition. Their only reason for appearing in a causative construction is their perceived defectiveness and the preventing properties of the kind that they belong to.

All in all, this chapter builds a case for the representation of possible, non-realized properties in causal modelling. However, they need appropriate representation. Here, I have chosen to represent the inability to prevent with an arrow pointing at another arrow, hence making it dashed; this is the representation of influencing an influence. By allowing such interactions into our causal models, we make space for more nuanced representations of more fine-grained causal notions, such as they are expressed in natural languages. The case Romance let-verbs is surely not an isolated one,

## Chapter 7

# Conclusion

The goal of the research presented in this dissertation was to address the gap in knowledge about the causal notion of *LET*, as encoded by the two Romance *let*-verbs *laisser* and *dejar*.

This work tackled two main issues which had so far been treated separately. The first issue was the lack of understanding of what it meant to let someone do something, or to let something happen. In other words, there was no clear definition for a causal notion of *LET*, despite being one of the main force interactions for Talmy (1988) (who included *causing*, *letting*, *helping*, and *hindering* in his Force Dynamics). I believe that it is this difficulty to categorise *letting* that made later force-theorists choose *ENABLE* instead: *ENABLE* relations, as encoded by *allow* in English, *permettre* in French, and *permitir* in Spanish, realise clear configurations in which the Causer's force is insufficient but necessary to the occurrence for the result, hence following the definition for enabling conditions. The *laisseur* of *laisser*-relations cannot be understood as being necessary, and that makes *laisser*, *dejar*, and by extension *LET* much harder to define.

The second issue was that of the constructions entered by *laisser* and *dejar* and their mapping(s) to conceptual representations. On the French side, both Borel (1972) and Kayne (1975) point out the existence of two constructions, and had proposed that the position of the embedded subject influenced the interpretation of the *laisser*-sentence. Yet, the treatment of said interpretations had remained quite observational. On the Spanish side, however, Enghels and Roegiest (2012b) had discussed the existence of several interpretations for *dejar* (following Silva 1999) and treated the argument selection of both *dejar* and

*laisser*. Yet, what made each interpretation arise remained unclear.

The answer to the first question finds its answer in 6, in which I proposed a causal model representation for *x laisse y p*. This representation highlights the impossibility to treat *laisser* and *dejaras* ENABLE verbs: even in relations where LET seems, at first glance, to overlap with ENABLE (as with *authorize*, for instance), the two causal configurations appear to differ with respect to **would-be prevention**. We have seen that *laisser* and *dejar* can realize three separate types of relations, namely *authorize*, *not-intervene* and *dispositional letting*. Even though I was looking for differences, I ended up proposing a unified view for all three types of relations encoded by *laisser* and *dejar*. I propose that the two verbs are instances of double prevention that differ from the double prevention analysis for ENABLE in Wolff and Thorstad (2017): instead of having an entity canceling out the tendency of another, we have an entity **modifying** an *influence* by acting directly on the function between two nodes. As such, the causal relation between *laisseur* and caused event is removed.

Unfortunately, I was unable to show that there was any form of mapping from structure to conceptual representation, which I addressed in Chapters 4 and 5. Once again, this does not mean that it does not exist; as a native speaker of French myself, I do share these intuitions. What is even more puzzling is that French speakers, when shown the two constructions, agree that they are different. Additionally, it is striking that the contrast is starker when both *laisseur* and *laissé* are inanimate entities (in *dispositional letting* configurations). The unexpectedness of the results of our experiments could either be due to the design of the experiments, or to the “disappearance” of the post-V construction in French, which can also be observed with perception verbs. Perhaps this new unified representation of *laisser* and *dejar* could give us a promising start to build a new experiment to test for the structures.

There are, obviously, remaining questions. I would even say that there are, perhaps, more questions now that we have a working representation for *laisser*- and *dejar*-relations. The first question concerns the syntax-semantics interface: how do we map a causal model to the syntactic structure? Having a causal model like the one proposed above in Figure ?? might help with understanding what exactly the post-V construction, for which there does not seem to be a consensus as of yet, is contributing. The second question concerns the value of  $R_{\text{indep}}$ : the absence of a function shows a relation that is not causal

between the node that represents the node that represents the *laisseur*'s properties and the node that represents the event denoted by the VP. Indeed, what the relation  $R_{\text{indep}}$  actually expresses is the following counterfactual relation: if  $x$  had not prevented the prevention from applying,  $p$  would not have occurred. In fact,  $p$  would not have been **able** to occur, considering it needs a specific set of conditions (as described in Chapter 6) in order to be realized. In the end, that would mean that counterfactuals and causation are two sides of the same coin (Copley and Wolff 2014).

Another question to be addressed is that of the relationship between LET and PREVENT. Recall that the meaning of *let*, *laisser*, and *dejar* is based around the notion of **would-be prevention**, and that the three verbs realize relations that can be thought of as double preventions, even though it is a slightly modified version of the double preventions presented in Wolff and Thorstad (2017). As such, one could think that manipulating the node representing the *laisseur*'s properties (hence removing one of the two preventions) would result in a PREVENT configuration. As such, (191) below could be expected to be synonymous with (192):

- (191) El agente no dejó que los peatones cruzaran.  
 The agent NEG let.PF that the pedestrians cross.SBJV  
 'The officer did not let the pedestrians cross.'
- (192) El agente impidió que los peatones cruzaran.  
 The agent prevent.PF that the pedestrians cross.SBJV  
 'The officer prevented the pedestrians from crossing.'

It is true that these two sentences encode situations that are conceptually quite close. And yet, we are tempted to believe that they are not quite synonymous, considering that the former is in the negative form while the other one is not. Applying the proposed model for *laisser* and *dejar* should allow us to prove why  $\neg$ LET is NOT PREVENT.

Lastly, these observations about PREVENT raise the question of negation, which has been carefully left aside in this dissertation. Both *laisser* and *dejar* can receive two interpretations, does a similar contrast exist in negative contexts? In other words, can  $\neg$ LET be divided between two subnotions, namely *not-authorise* (as exemplified by 191) and *not-not-intervene*? And if so, how is *not-not-intervene* to be understood? While it is logically the same thing as *intervene*, I firmly believe that they are conceptually distinct.



These remaining questions highlight the importance of proposing a fine-grained categorisation of causal notions: not discriminating between *ENABLE* and *LET* would have led us to miss the distinction between *NOT-LET* and *PREVENT*. While it is tempting to group related verbs under the same concept, it is their differences that make native speakers use one over the other. Therefore, I believe more attention should be paid to the smaller nuances between causal concepts, which is what I choose to do for my future research.

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