Luana DeBorst & Adam Abebe
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Season 4, Episode 2
The Causative - Direct and Indirect

Hello dear learners and welcome to Episode 2 of the fourth Season of Bereka Buna. Today we'll go over another element of Amharic grammar known as The Causative. Remember, you can always support your learning by viewing the episode transcript which can be found at berekabuna.org. Let's get right into it!

The Causative, as the name implies, refers to actions which wouldn't happen of their own accord and so must be caused to occur. For example, the direct causative of መጣ (he came) would be አመጣ (he brought). An object cannot move itself, so in this case someone (or something) must cause the object to come. In English we use different words to say "come" and "bring", but in Amharic these two concepts are connected by modifying a shared root.

Listen to a few more examples of the Direct Causative to notice the pattern:

ወጣ	He went out	ገባ	he entered	በላ	he ate	ወረደ	He went down
አወጣ	He took out	አገባ	he brought in	አበላ	he fed	አወረደ	He took (it) down

The Indirect Causative follows a similar patter but is used when the causative is applied to another person rather than an object. The prefix used here is አስ. So, for example: መጣ (he came) would be አስመጣ (he caused someone to come, or he had someone come). This form may sound a bit odd to an English speaker at first, but just try to listen to the construction and then we'll make more sense of these forms through example sentences.
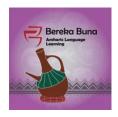
ወጣ – he went out	በላ – he ate	ገባ – he entered
አስወጣ – he caused something/someone to go out	አስበላ – he caused someone to eat	አስገባ – he caused someone to enter

In the infinitive, causative verbs always start with ማ rather than መ

መጣ – መምጣት	ገባ – መግባት	በላ – መብላት
አመጣ – ማamጣት	አገባ – ማግባት	አበላ – ማብላት
አስመጣ – ማስመጣት	አስገባ – ማስገባት	አስበላ – ማስበላት

As with many elements of the Amharic language, not all verbs can be used in exactly the same way. In this case, there are verbs that sound as if they would be Direct Causatives, but which are actually used as active verbs and for which the basic form is not in use.

For example, አደረገ/ማድረግ (he did/to do) is an active not a causative verb and it does not have a basic form since ደረገ is not a word. Listen to the following examples of verbs that work in a similar way. Note that these verbs could still have an Indirect Causative form. We'll start by listing the Simple Verb, followed by the Infinitive, then the Basic Form or root and finally the Indirect Causative.

Verb	Infinitive	Basic Form	Indirect Causative
አነበበ – he read	ማንበብ – to read	ነበበ – not in use	አስነበበ – he caused someone to read
አነሳ – he took/lifted/picked up	ማንሳት – to lift or pick up	ነሳ – not in use	አስነሳ – he caused something/someone to be picked up
አጸዳ – he cleaned	ማጽዳት – to clean	ጸዳ – not in use	አስጸዳ – he caused something to be cleaned
አገኘ – he found	ማግኘት – to find	ገኘ – not in use	አስገኘ – he caused something to be found

There are also some verbs which sound like Indirect Causatives, but which function as active verbs. These may not have an obvious basic form nor a Direct Causative.

For example, አስቀመጠ/ማስቀመጥ to place or set something down. In this case ቀመጠ, which would theoretically be the basic form is not used, and አቀመጠ is not a word either.

Sometimes these verbs can have a proximate root that is related but separate. For አስቀመጠ, for example, the verb ተቀመጠ (to sit) could be considered a proximate root. If something is made to sit down, it is placed or set down, አስቀመጠ. Similar examples include:

Verb	Infinitive	Basic Form	Proximate root
አስመለሰ – he threw up	ማስመለስ – to throw up	መለሰ – he gave back	ተመለሰ – he returned
አስነጠሰ – he sneezed	ማስነጠስ – to sneeze	ነጠሰ – not in use	None
አስተማረ – he taught	ማስተማር – to teach	ተማረ – to learn	None

There are also many verbs that do not have a Direct Causative, but which could still have an Indirect Causative. For example:

Verb	Indirect Causative	Infinitive	Infinitive of Indirect
ጸለየ – he prayed	አስጸለየ – he made someone pray	መጸለይ – to pray	ማስጸለይ – to have someone pray
ቆረጠ – he cut	አስቆረጠ – he made someone cut	መቁረጥ – to cut	ማስቆረጥ – to have someone cut
ሰበረ – he broke	አስሰበረ – he made someone break	መስበር – to break	ማስበር – to have someone break
ደገመ – he repeated	አስደገመ – he made someone repeat	መድገም – to repeat	ማስደገም – to have someone repeat

Knowing which verbs are used in each causative form or whether the verb acts as an active verb (despite sounding like a causative) is just a matter of practice, and sometimes an exercise of common sense.

Fortunately, causative verbs mostly follow the same conjugation pattern as regular verbs (i.e, መጣሁ/አመጣሁ/አስመጣሁ፣ መጣህ/አመጣህ/አስመጣህ፣ ትመጪለሽ/ታመጪለሽ/ታስመጪለች, etc).

Great, now that we've covered the construction and variations with causative verbs, let's practice with a few examples. We'll say the Amharic slowly twice, followed by the English translation. Remember you can always pause and repeat the sentence before moving on.

Practice Example: translate from Amharic to English

1. እባከህ መጽሃፉን አምጣልኝ : Please, can you (m) bring me the book?
2. ዛሬ ጠዋት አልጋቸውን አነጠፉ : They made their beds this morning
3. እናትየዋ ልጅዋን ታበላለች : the mother will feed her child
4. አትክልተኛው አበቦቹን አጠጥቷቸዋል : The gardener has watered the flowers
5. ነገ ሙሉ ቀን አስተምራለሁ : Tomorrow I will teach all day
6. ዝናብ እየዘነበ ነው፣ እባክሽ ልብሶቹን አስገቢ : It is raining, please (f) bring the clothes inside
7. አንብቦ ሲጨርስ፣ አዲሱን ጋዜጣ ለእህቱ አሳያት : Having finished reading, he showed the new magazine to his sister
8. ከሰአት ውሾቹ መሽናት ስላለባቸው፣ከቤት እናስወጣቸው : since the dogs need to pee this afternoon, let's take them outside
9. መጥፎ ልጅ ትንሽ እህቱን ማስፈራት እና ማስለቀስ ይወዳል : The bad/naughty boy likes to scare his little sister and make her cry.
10. ዛፎች ካሳደግን አለማችንን እናድናለን : If we raise (grow/cause to grow) trees, we will save our planet.

Practice Table: For the indirect causatives, we'll say the English meaning for the first three verbs, and then let you figure out what the others mean by following a similar pattern. The ፊደል and English translation can always be found in the episode transcript.

Regular Form	Direct Causative	Indirect Causative
ለበሰ to wear	አለበሰ to dress someone or something	አስለበሰ to make someone be dressed
ወረደ to come down (i.e. descent the stairs)	አወረደ to bring someone or thing down	አስወረደ to have an object brought down
ደረሰ to arrive	አደረሰ to deliver/take something to a destination	አስደረሰ to have something arrive at its destination
ደረቀ to dry (or be dry)	አደረቀ to dry something	አስደረቀ to have something be dried
ደከመ to tire (or be tired)	አደከመ to weaken or tire someone or thing	አስደከመ to make something be tired
ጠገበ To fill	አጠገበ to fill something or someone	አስጠገበ to cause something to be filled

ፈጠነ to be fast	አፈጠነ to hasten something or someone, cause it to be faster	አስፈጠነ to cause something or someone to be sped up
ጮኸ to shout	አጮኸ to make someone or thing shout	አስጮኸ to cause something to be made to shout
ለማ to be fertile	አለማ to grow something or make someone or thing be fertile	አስለማ to make something be grown or be made fertile
በቃ to be enough	አበቃ to finish	አስበቃ to cause something to be finished
ጠፋ to be lost	አጠፋ to make someone or thing be lost or make an error	አስጠፋ to cause someone or something be made to err or get lost
ቆየ to wait or stay	አቆየ to make someone or thing wait or stay	አስቆየ to have someone or thing be made to wait
ሞቀ to be warm/hot	አሞቀ to warm up something	አስሞቀ to have something be warmed up
መሸ to become evening	አመሸ to stay up late at night	አስመሸ to make someone stay up late at night
ዞረ to go round in a circle	አዞረ to make someone or thing go in a circle	አስዞረ to have something be made to turn

Notice how the direct causative words below do not have a root regular form verbs, but they can be conjugated into indirect causative by adding a "ስ" following the "አ".

አጠበ - to wash	አሳጠበ - to have or get something washed
አረሰ - to farm or plough	አሳረሰ - to have the land farmed/ploughed
አደረ - to spend the night into morning	አሳደረ - to let someone or thing sleep over a night

አሰበ - to think	አሳሰበ - to make someone think
አለቀስ - to cry	አስለቀስ - to make someone cry
አደረገ - to do	አስደረገ - to make someone or thing do something

In contrast, also notice that the words below cannot be conjugated into the direct causative form but can be conjugated into the indirect causative like any verb.

መታ - to hit/beat	አስመታ - to cause someone to be hit or beaten
ለየ - to differentiate/separate	አስለየ - to have something be separated/sorted
ጠረገ - to sweep	አስጠረገ - to have something swept
ፈቀደ - to permit/allow	አስፈቀደ - to get permission or get someone to allow
ቆላ - to roast	አስቆላ - to have something roasted
ጠራ - to call out for someone	አስጠራ - to have someone called

And that's all for this episode. Thanks for joining us and hope you're finding your learning slowly progressing. Best of luck and until next time, goodbye.