Scope interactions and their implications for the argument structure of the causative construction in Italian

In this talk I try to contribute to our understanding of the argument structure of the causative construction (exemplified in (1)), with particular reference to Italian.

To do so, I consider two syntactic properties – the structural relations between arguments and the scope interactions between arguments. Scope ambiguity and frozen scope are indeed able to detect whether two arguments are part of the same quantificational domain – syntactically speaking, a vP (see Hornstein 1995, Johnson and Tomioka 1998, Johnson 2000).

Data related to binding show that in Romance causative structures the causer c-commands the causee and the causee c-commands the internal argument of the infinitival verb (if any). Data concerning scope show that inverse scope holds between the causer and the causee and between the causee and the object, but not, crucially, between the causer and the object (see examples (2)-(4)).

Integrating the data related to binding and the data related to scope I show that the object and the causee are arguments of the infinitival verb, whereas the causer is introduced in a higher projection, a conclusion that is compatible with some of the previous proposals on the argument structure of causative (Burzio 1986, Guasti 1996, Cinque 1998, Folli and Harley 2007) and that explains why the object is able to take scope over the causee though not over the causer. Moreover, I claim that the causee must be raised in order to check Case to a position in the functional domain of the causative structure, as Kayne (2004) originally claimed. This guarantees that the causee takes scope over the causer and over the object.

(1) Gianni ha fatto leggere il libro a Maria.
Gianni has made read the book to Maria
‘Gianni has made Maria read the book’.

(2) Almeno un insegnante ha fatto leggere a ogni studente questo libro.
∃∀; ∀∃
At least one teacher made read to every student this book.
‘At least one teacher made every student read this book.’

(3) Almeno un insegnante ha fatto leggere a Gianni ogni libro.
∃∀; *∀∃
At least one teacher made read to Gianni every book.
‘At least one student made Gianni read every book.’

(4) Ho fatto leggere ad almeno uno studente ogni libro.
∃∀; ∀∃
(I) made read to at least one student every book
‘I made at least one student read every book.’

References