

**Harvard Linguistics Talk Series**  
**October 11, 2024, 12-1:30 pm**  
**Fong Auditorium, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Boylston Hall**

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**Cyclic spell-out and biclausal words**

**Abstract:**

Causative constructions show varying degrees of biclausality, as has been discussed since the 1970s, ranging from “Floyd broke the glass” to “Floyd made it so that the glass broke”. One faultline runs between inner and outer causatives (e.g., North Sámi *buori-d-it* “good-cause-inf” ‘improve’ vs. *buori-d-ahtt-it* “good-cause-outer.cause-inf” ‘cause to improve’), closely related to the distinction between direct and indirect causation. Simply put, inner causatives show little sign of biclausality, while outer causatives pass more tests which point in the direction of biclausality.

Since Marantz (1997, 2001), the head introducing the external argument---usually called Voice these days---has been recognized as a significant boundary in variations on the theory of cyclic word spell-out. Outer causatives provide clear morphophonological evidence of this boundary, while inner causatives do not consistently do so.

The pattern can be explained if outer causatives involve recursion of Voice (possibly with one or more layers of structure between the two Voice heads) and if recursion of Voice forces cyclic word spell-out of material below Voice. The contrast with inner causatives suggests, however, that cyclic word spell-out is not forced by non-recursive Voice. I discuss the implications for the word and the clause.