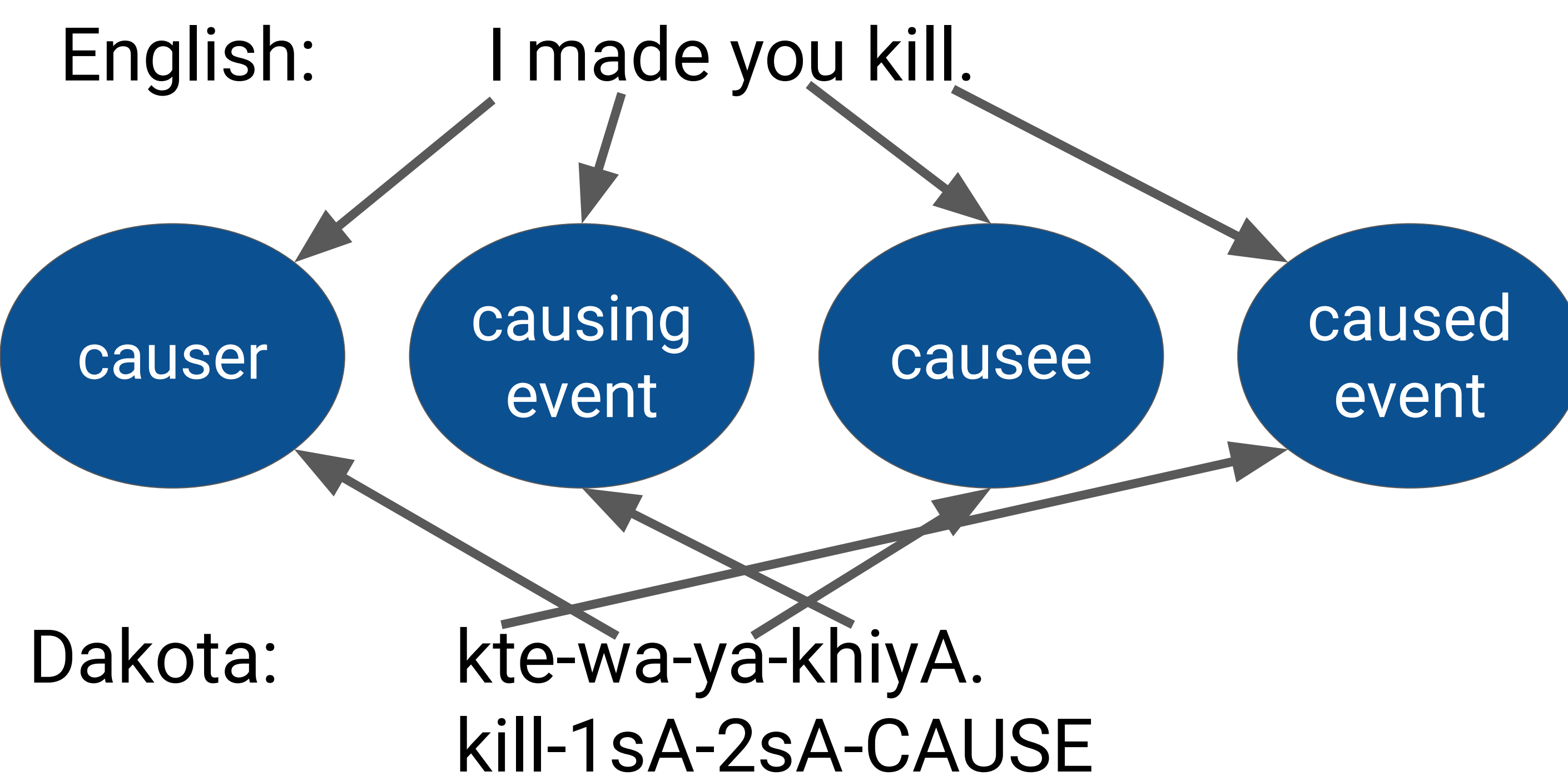# A Minimalist Approach to Causative Structures in Dakota

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Abstract

Dakota is an endangered polysynthetic Siouan language with a dwindling number of native speakers. In accordance with the Dakota Language Project, this project documents the behavior and patterns of causatives in Dakota, specifically the Santee dialect spoken by the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate at the Lake Traverse Reservation. I determine that both the direct causative (*-yA*) and the indirect causative (*-khiyA*) are morphological under Comrie's typology, meaning they are productive and can be applied recursively. I provide evidence that the causatives are best analyzed as verb stems rather than suffixes because they take pronominal affixes like verbs. I argue for a Minimalist analysis of Dakota causatives, specifically under Pylkkänen's (2002) CAUSE head model. I suggest that both Dakota causatives are Voice-bundling and don't allow causative constructions without an external argument. Finally, I argue that Dakota causatives are not root-selecting because they allow some elements of verbal morphology to intervene between the causative and the root. Due to limited data, I was unable to determine whether Dakota causatives should be considered verb-selecting or phase-selecting. However, I give suggestions for future research that can contribute to this debate.

English: I made you kill.

causer   causing event   causee   caused event

Dakota: kte-wa-ya-khiyA.
            kill-1sA-2sA-CAUSE

Background

Liina Pylkkänen in her 2002 dissertation posited a model of causatives that includes a functional CAUSE head. This head introduces the causer when causatives are Voice-bundling. Additionally, her model includes a selection parameter that determines what the complement of the CAUSE head is. Her two parameters are summarized in the table below.
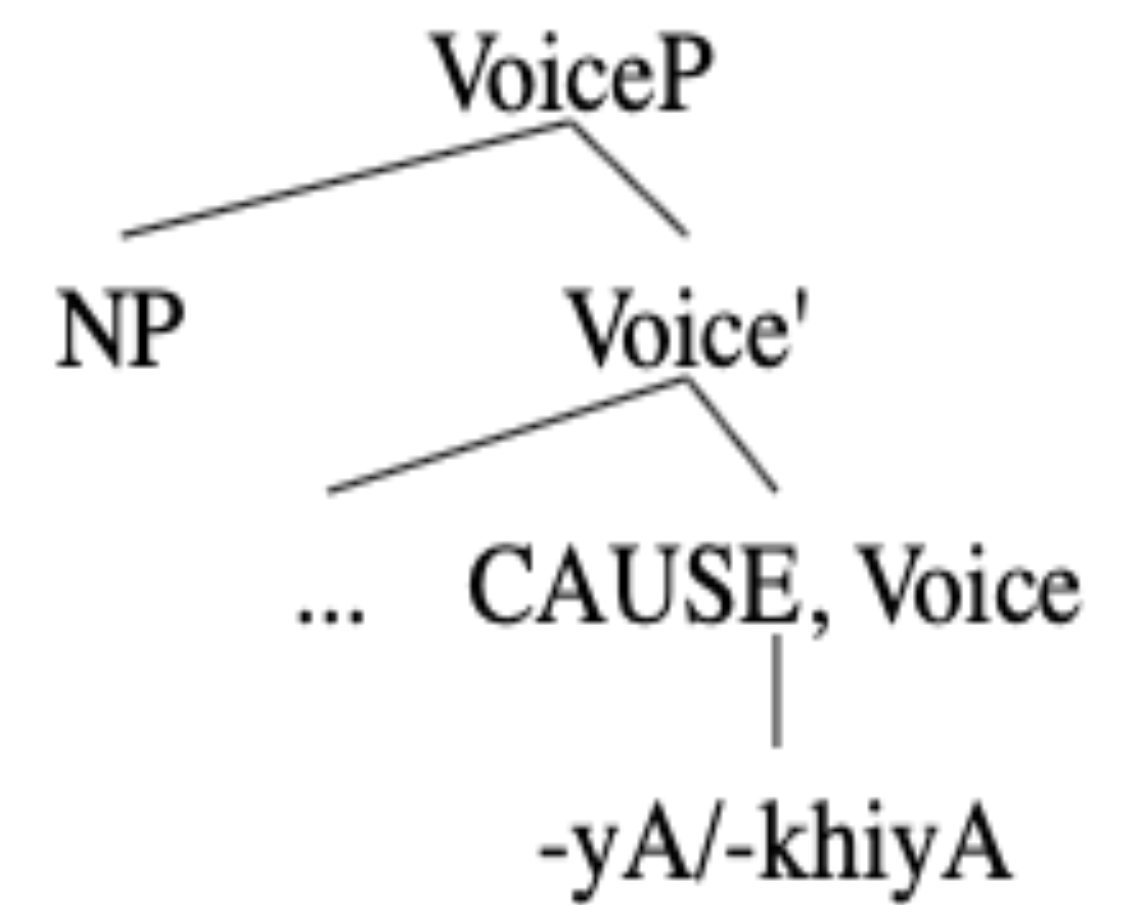
	Voice-Bundling	**Non-Voice-Bundling**
Root-Selecting	·No verbal morphology can intervene between the root and CAUSE head ·Unaccusative causatives are impossible	·No verbal morphology can intervene between the root and CAUSE head ·Unaccusative causatives are possible
Verb-Selecting	·Verbal morphology can intervene between the root and CAUSE head ·Non-agent-oriented adverbs below CAUSE allow scope ambiguities ·Unaccusative causatives are impossible	·Verbal morphology can intervene between the root and CAUSE head ·Non-agent-oriented adverbs below CAUSE allow scope ambiguities ·Unaccusative causatives are possible
Phase-Selecting	·Verbal morphology can intervene between the root and CAUSE head ·All adverbial modification below CAUSE allows scope ambiguity ·Unaccusative causatives are impossible	·Verbal morphology can intervene between the root and CAUSE head ·All adverbial modification below CAUSE allows scope ambiguity ·Unaccusative causatives are possible

Research Question

How does Dakota function in terms of the two parameters from Pylkkänen's model?
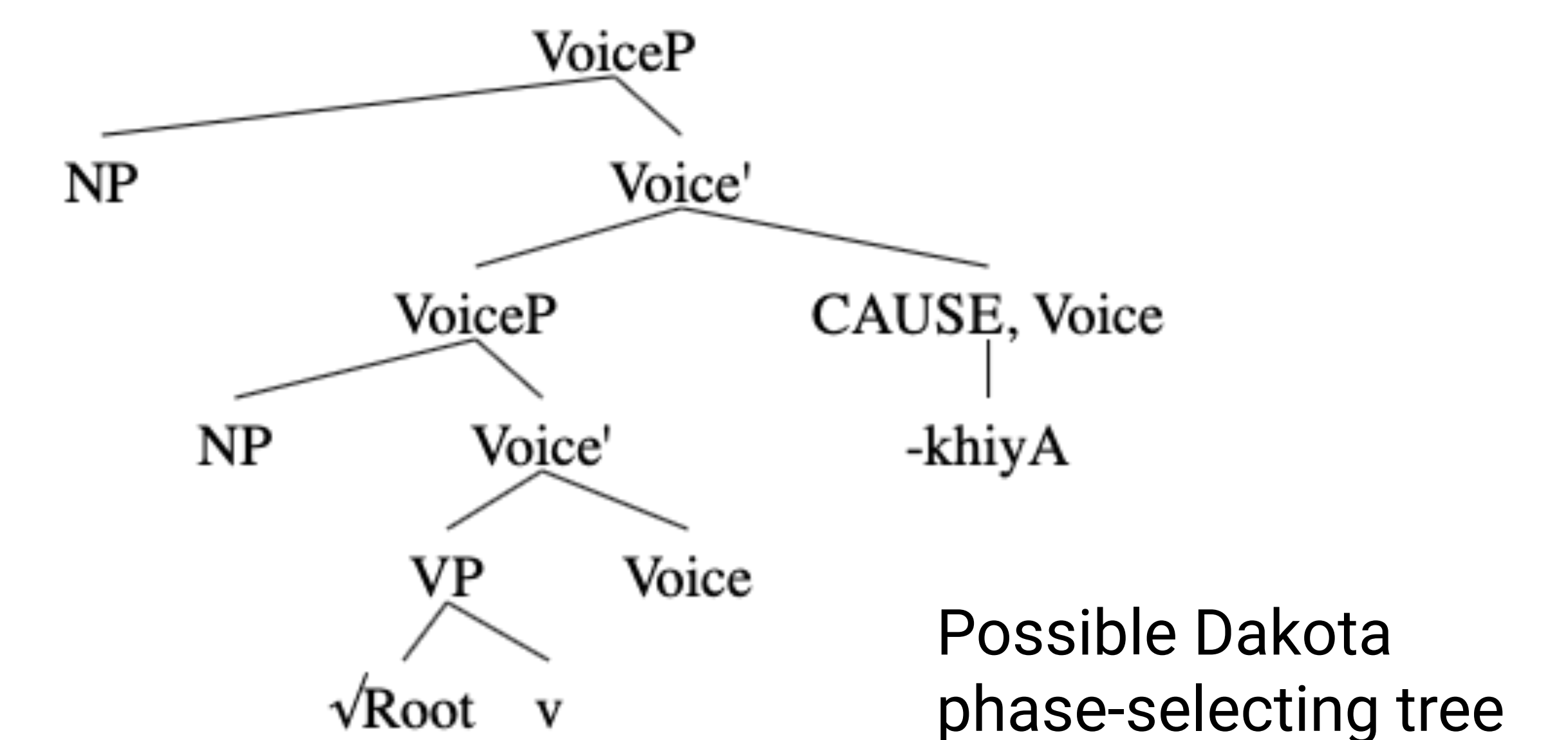
Bundling Parameter

Dakota causatives must be Voice-bundling because they are active verbs and active verbs require external arguments in Dakota. Additional evidence comes from the fact that non-Voice-bundling causatives are cross-linguistically very rare.

Selection Parameter

Dakota causatives are not root-selecting because they allow verbal morphology to intervene between the CAUSE head and the root, seen in (1) below. I was unable to distinguish between verb-selection and phase-selection for Dakota, due to time constraints, but one might use scope ambiguities of agent oriented adverbs, such as the hypothetical example in (2).

(1) iyokp-iċi-ya   uŋ
    happy-REFL-CAUSE are
    'Make yourself happy.'

(2) ciŋȟca kiza-khiye
    eagerly fight-CAUSE
        (a)   ? 'He eagerly caused her to fight.'
        (b)   ? 'He caused her to fight eagerly.'

Possible Dakota phase-selecting tree