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Old English Causative Alternation: The Transitivity of *openian* and *dryʒean*

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to take a position in an ongoing debate over the direction of the derivation in the causative alternation. Since the solutions offered by synchronic linguistics carry with them certain problems, the research presented here accounts for the issue from the diachronic perspective, thus combining methods of corpus and theoretical linguistics. The results obtained from the quantitative analysis of the frequency of occurence of two Old English 'change of state' verbs in transitive and intransitive structures seem to support the detransitivization claim for at least one of the verbs. The qualitative study of the nature of the Old English causative alternation, in turn, indicates two different patterns according to which 'change of state' verbs may have alternated in the past. On the basis of this observation, the paper suggests a hypothesis about the temporal and directional diversification among the members of the group of 'change of state' verbs. This initial hypothesis offers solutions to certain problems for synchronic approaches to the direction of the derivation in the causative alternation.

Keywords: causative alternation, detransitivization, causativization, Old English

1. Causative alternation: theoretical background

Languages of the world allow their users to form sentences having different syntactic derivations as a result of different operations. Some of these operations follow a clearly defined syntactic mechanism and display a clear trigger for their occurrence. One of them is passivization, a syntactic operation that occurs due to a uniform and clear trigger, namely the lack of case assigning properties of the passive participle and the requirement that all nouns receive case.

However, not all structures seem to be caused by obvious triggers. One of them, exemplified in (1), is the causative alternation.
1) a. John broke the window.
   b. The window broke.

As shown in (1), the pairs of verbs that take part in the alternation consist of a transitive (causative) and an intransitive (inchoative) member. The verbs are semantically related to each other. The intransitive variant denotes a change of state. The transitive variant can be roughly described as 'cause to V-intransitive' (Levin 1993: 27). Thus, in (1b) above, *break* denotes a change of state in which the window becomes broken. *Break* in (1a), in turn, describes the cause of the window becoming broken.

The verbs that take part in the causative alternation may be described as 'verbs of change of state or change of position' (Levin, 30). Given that the two variants are related by a predictable semantic relation, it is expected that they are also related derivationally. Unlike in passivization, however, the form of the verb in the causative alternation remains the same. It is therefore impossible for the object NP *window* to move to the subject position for case reasons. In fact, even the claim that the intransitive structure is derived from the transitive one due to an unknown trigger seems to be too far-reaching.

The question related to the direction of the derivation, namely whether the causative variant is the source of the inchoative clause, or conversely, whether the inchoative clause is the underlying structure has been addressed by many contemporary linguists. Consequently, a variety of hypotheses regarding the direction of the derivation have been developed. Since the exhaustive analysis of these hypotheses is beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that each of them poses certain problems for the synchronic study. However, in order for the reader to understand the controversiality of the issue, two representative approaches along with the questions they raise will be presented below, namely the causativization approach and the detransitivization approach. The discussion of the problematic issues concerning the two hypotheses is based on Alexiadou, Agnastopoulou & Schäfer's (2006) argumentation.

The causativization process assumes the transitive variant of the verb to be the basic one and the intransitive variant of the verb to be the derived one (Figure 1). Detransitivization model involves the opposite direction of the derivation (Figure 2).
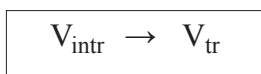
$$\boxed{V_{intr} \quad \rightarrow \quad V_{tr}}$$

Figure 1: Causative formation
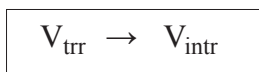
$$\boxed{V_{trr} \quad \rightarrow \quad V_{intr}}$$

Figure 2: Detransitivization process

The first issue that needs to be addressed when considering the causativization approach is related to special morphology marking, which is generally considered

to be an indication of a derived form of the verb. According to Haspelmath's (1993) research carried out on 21 languages, the tendency to mark inchoative variants of the verbs with special morphology is predominant. Thus, for instance, Polish *otworzyć się* may be expected to be derived from *otworzyć*.

> 2) *otworzyć — się*   'open' (intr.)
>   *otworzyć*   'open' (tr.)

This fact is problematic for the supporters of causativization claim, for whom *otworzyć się* is the basic form.

Another problem for the causativization approach is the fact that it provides no explanation for the existence of certain verb restrictions (Alexiadou et al., 2006: 192–193). As shown in (3), whereas any transitive verb can be passivized, only a number of verbs can participate in the causative alternation.

> 3) a. The ship sank.
>   The ship was sunk.
>   b. *The meat cut.
>   The meat was cut.

It is therefore very difficult to accept the causativization approach without taking into consideration the problems mentioned above. However, detransitivization also raises certain questions. First, it must be borne in mind that even though the tendency to mark inchoative variants with special morphology is predominant in the sample of languages examined by Hapselmath (1993), there are also languages that morphologically mark the causative variant of the verb, Georgian being one of them (Haspelmath 1993: 91).

> 4) a. *duγ-s*   'cook' (intr.)
>   b. *a-duγ-ebs*   'cook' (tr.)

Another problem for the detransitivizaition process results from the fact that there is a group of verbs that have no causative counterpart[1] (Levin & Rappaport-Hovav 1995: 97).

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[1] According to Haspelmath (1993) and Levin & Rappaport-Hovav (1995) the problem of cross-linguistic variation of the 'change of state' verbs participating in the alternation is related to their meaning. As Alexiadou explains, "productive patterns might be related to the availability of more than one classification cross-linguistically, i.e. seemingly corresponding verbs do not mean the same thing in all languages" (2010: 178). Alexiadou et al. (2006: 190) present the following classification of verbal meanings:
    a) √agentive (murder, assassinate)
    b) √internally caused (blossom, wilt)
    c) √externally caused (destroy, kill)
    d) √cause unspecified (break, open)

    However, in their subsequent work the authors admit that this classification may pose certain problems (cf. Alexiadou, Agnastopoulou & Schäfer 2015: 55). Therefore, for instance, they decide to describe verbs such as *break*, *open* or *dry* (previously labeled cause unspecified) as simply standing "lower in the spontaneity scale" than *wilt* or *blossom* (2015: 57).

5) a. The cactus blossomed early.
   b. *The gardener blossomed the cactus.
   c. * The warm weather blossomed the cactus.

At this point of the discussion, at least three questions may arise, namely: (i) whether there is a way to solve the problems posed by the restrictions mentioned above, (ii) whether there exist some additional arguments in favour of any of the approaches, and (iii) whether any alternative hypothesis can be developed. However, if the issue is to be addressed adequately, it seems necessary to adopt a new perspective of investigation. Apparently, the here and now of the English language is not sufficient to provide answers to the questions this paper addresses. Therefore, it seems justified to look for the solutions in the past. Due to the difficulties that synchronic linguistics faces with proposing a precise definition of the nature of the derivation in the causative alternation I have decided to account for this subject by means of a diachronic analysis.

The tendency to employ diachronic methods to explain synchronic phenomena has experienced a considerable increase in popularity over the last twenty years (Fuß & Trips 2004). First, it proves to be particularly beneficial for the linguists who seek to explain sychronic generalizations which are frequently consequences of diachronic processes (cf. Alexiadou & Fanselow 2001, 2002). Second, as Fuß & Trips point out, it is often "used to re-evaluate and reshape synchronic analyses of certain syntactic phenomena that resist satisfying analyses in purely synchronic terms" (2004: 19). The diachronic analysis of the causative alternation, which combines the instruments of corpus and theoretical linguistics, seems to stand in accordance with the latter area of the diachronic generative study.

2. Diachronic study: aims, methods and sources

The aim of the study was threefold. A quantitative analysis of the frequency of occurrence of transitive and intransitive forms of two Old English (OE) 'change of state' verbs has served as a means to determine the basic historical variant of the alternating structures. Were a prevailing number of intransitive forms of the verbs to be found in the corpus search results, it would offer an argument to treat the intransitive form as the basic one, thus supporting the causativization approach. On the other hand, if the detransitivization approach was to be supported, the number of transitive variants would have to be the prevailing one.

The idea of employing the quantitative study into the process of search for the basic forms stems from the statement advocated by Haspellmath (2008), according to which "spontaneous verb meanings tend to occur more frequently as inchoatives; agent-caused verb meanings occur more frequently as causatives. Due to economic motivation, the rarer elements tend to be overtly coded" (2008: 5). The elements marked by special morphology, therefore, appear less

frequently cross-linguistically. At the same time, "any derivational approach that derives one version of the causative/anticausative alternation from the other states that the derived version is more complex, since it is formed by an extra operation on some computational level of grammar" (Alexiadou et al. 2006: 190–191). The conclusion which may be drawn from these two statements is that verbs which are considered derived (due to the special morphology marking) appear less frequently cross-linguistically. On the other hand, the basic forms (i.e., forms which lack any overt code) appear more frequently. Moreover, as the analysis concerned the *initial* stage of the development of the English language as such, it may additionally be assumed that it was the basic variant that would be used first. It is important to emphasize that the research focuses only on the instances of clear dominance of one form over another, in which the less frequent form may be assumed not to have been fully developed yet.

Another objective of the study was an attempt to find the solution to the problems enumerated by Alexiadou et al. (2006) for the causativization and the detransitivization approaches. In their study, the authors decide to abandon the idea of the derivational relationship between the causative and the inchoative form. By this means they also successfully avoid facing the problems resulting from any of the derivational approaches. Although their work is certainly of great value, the following article leans towards a slightly different perspective. We would like to formulate a tentative hypothesis, according to which the problems enumerated by Alexiadou et al. (2006) may be addressed without giving up the idea of the derivational relationship between the two forms in causative alternation. Although they seem insolvable for the synchronic linguistics, the diachronic perspective has offered new ways of approaching the issue.

In the course of research, I have undertaken the following steps: (a) selection of 'change of state' verbs to be examined, (b) collection of the sufficient data from the corpus, (c) translation of the data into Present Day English (PDE), (d) quantative and qualitative analysis of the data. The analyzed data have been obtained from *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (Taylor et al. 2003), later referred to as *YCOE*.

I have examined the occurrence of the OE equivalents of two 'change of state' verbs: *open* and *dry* (*openian* and *drygean*, respectively). The choice of the verbs was determined for two main reasons. First, these verbs appear in Levin's (1993) classification of 'change of state' verbs and they indeed participate in the alternation in PDE. Second, they were expected to have been frequently used in OE since they describe everyday activities.

3. Corpus search results: quantitative analysis

As for the OE *openian*, two types of structures have been found in the entries obtained from YCOE. The first structure, the example of which is presented in (6), has been classified as transitive.

6) and   þæt   cweartern$_{ACC}$ geopenade$_{VBD}$ mid   his   handa$_{GEN}$ hrepunge
   and   that   prison$_{ACC}$ open$_{VBD}$ with   his   hand$_{GEN}$ touch

'And [he] opened that prison with the touch of his hand.'

Ælfric's Lives of Saints

The second structure, which is far more peculiar, is presented in (7). Let us use the label 'other' for this type for the time being.

7) Hwæt   ða   færlice   geopenode$_{VBD}$ seo   eorðe   [hi$_{ACC}$
   Why   then suddenly open$_{VBD}$ the   Earth$_{NOM}$ [him/it$_{ACC}$

sylfe$_{ACC}$]$_{RFL}$
self$_{ACC}$]$_{RFL}$

'Why, then, did the Earth suddenly open itself?'

Heptateuch

The analysis of the corpus search results has provided two types of structures, containing the OE predecessor of *dry*. The first type, exemplified in (8), has been labelled 'intransitive.'

8)   on   þæm   dæge$_{DAT}$ sæ$_{NOM}$ adrugaþ$_{VBPI}$
     on   them day$_{DAT}$ sea$_{NOM}$ dry$_{VBPI}$

'During the day the sea dries.'

Blickling Homilies

The second structure type, presented in (9), has been classified as transitive.

9)   he   geseah   Godes$_{GEN}$ engel$_{ACC}$ stondan   ond   drygan$_{VB}$ mid
     he   saw   God$_{GEN}$ angel$_{ACC}$ stand   and   dry$_{VB}$ with
     sceatan Sancti   Laurentius$_{GEN}$ limu$_{ACC}$
     cloth   Saint   Lawrence$_{GEN}$ limb$_{ACC}$

'He saw God's angel who was standing and drying St. Lawrence's limb with cloth.'

Martyrology, III

The results of the quantitative analysis, presented in Table 1, indicate certain differences between OE counterparts of *dry* and *open* in terms of the prevailing verb form.

Table 1: Quantitative analysis: results

	OPEN		DRY	
	#	%	#	%
TRANSITIVE	19	90.5%	12	52%
OTHER	2	9.5%	0	0
INTRANSITIVE	0	0	11	48%

When analysing the results for *open*, a conclusion has been drawn that this verb did not license causative alternation in OE at all. 90.5% of the translated passages contain the transitive variant of the verb *openian*, which may be thus concluded to be the basic one. Structures classified as 'other', which will be the subject to the subsequent qualitative analysis, are relatively rare. As far as the intransitive variant of the verb is concerned, none of the examined passages contains such a verb. The second conclusion which may be drawn after taking into consideration the results for *open* is the fact that its prevailing occurrence in transitive sentences may serve as an argument supporting the detransitivization approach.

As far as the results for *dry* are concerned, it licensed causative alternation already in OE. 52% of the translated passages contain the transitive variant of this verb, as opposed to 48% of intransitive constructions.

4. Open: qualitative analysis

Let us now come back to the variants of *open* which have been classified as 'other'. These examples seem to deserve particular attention due to their exceptional behaviour. The first issue concerning the example in (7) which is puzzling is the RFL label that is applied to [*hi sylfe*] by YCOE.

As Millward & Hayes claim, reflexive pronouns as such did not exist in OE. Instead, to indicate reflexivity, OE used personal pronouns marked for accusative or dative case. They proceed with explaining that "OE *sylf* 'self' was not a true reflexive but an emphatic pronoun or pronominal adjective" (2012: 173). However, when analysing (7), it may be noticed that these are the whole phrases rather than pronouns themselves, that are labelled 'RFL' by YCOE. Where, then, does this discrepancy come from?

One of the possible solutions to this problem could be to treat the 'RFL' label as an indication of a certain functional category. Interestingly, in the structures classified as 'other' both the pronouns and the adjectives are marked for accussative case, which was used by OE speakers to indicate "the direct object of verbs, the object of prepositions expressing movement in time or space, and some adverbial expressions of time and space" (Millward & Hayes, 99). On the basis of this observation, it is possible to draw a conclusion that the NP *hi sylfe* in (7) serves the

function of the direct object of the verb *geopenode*. If this is so, the RFL labelling of the whole NP is fully understandable, since it is the whole phrase that performs the function of the direct object. At the same time, NPs in the examples classified as 'other' happen to refer to the subjects of their respective sentences. Therefore, the peculiarity of these constructions seems to lie in the fact that they all contain direct objects which have the same referent as their subjects.

Another puzzling fact about (7) is that it seems to be a halfway between transitive (causative) and intransitive (inchoative) structure. On one hand, due to the fact that the direct object shares the referent with the subject, it is difficult to treat it as a 'real' transitive construction. On the other hand, there is a strong feeling that neither is it the intransitive (inchoative) construction which is found in languages such as Polish (10):

10) *Okno   otworzyło   się.*
　　 window   opened   itself
　　 'The window opened.'

Interestingly, however, (7) seems to resemble another Polish structure which is illustrated in (11).

11) *Jan   myje   się.*
　　 John   washes   himself
　　 'John washes himself.'

What distinguishes the two structures is the fact that whereas in (11) *się* functions as a reflexive pronoun marked for accusative case, it is not so in (10). This proposal may be examined by means of applying a test for positional equivalents adapted from Zaron (1980). According to Zaron (1980), the positional equivalence is possible whenever two elements are mutually exclusive. She proposes the following models of predicative constructions: *xVa* and *xVb*, where (i) *x* is the subject, (ii) *a* stands for *się*, and (iii) *b* is another object. If *a* and *b* are mutually exclusive (*xVab), they are positional equivalents, as in (12).

12) a.　Jan   myje   się.   (*xVa*)
　　　　 Jan   washes   himself
　　　　 'Jan washes himself.'
　　 b.　Jan   myje   Piotra.   (*xVb*)
　　　　 Jan   washes   Peter
　　　　 'Jan washes Peter.'
　　 c.　*Jan   myje   się   Piotra.   (*xVab)
　　　　 Jan   washes   himself   Peter
　　　　 '*Jan washes himself Peter.'

Since *się* and another NP are mutually exclusive in (11) and (12), it is fully justified to treat *się* as a reflexive pronoun functioning as direct object. On the other hand, in

(10) it is impossible to substitute *się* with another NP without changing the meaning of the sentence.

13) a.   *Okno   otworzyło   się.*
           window   opened   itself
           'The window opened.'

   b.   *?Okno   otworzyło   Jana.*
           Window   opened   John.
           '?The window opened John.'

On the basis of this observation I would like to draw the following conclusion: Since OE had not developed the intransitive variant of *openian* yet, the use of *self* could have been one of the first attempts to express the inchoative meaning of *openian* (similarly to the Polish inchoative verb *otwierać się* 'open'). However, as it always takes time for the language change to proceed, these structures first altered into the interim stage, in which *self* still functioned as a separate lexical item. I have tentatively called this interim stage 'transitive (reflexive),' as opposed to intransitive (inchoative)[22].

The hypothesis that OE speakers could have started to use transitive constructions containing objects which share the same referents as their subjects in order to express inchoative meaning seems to be supported by the fact that no syntactic change appears on its own. What is necessary is the trigger, such as the speakers' need to express a certain new concept. In the case of the OE transitive (reflexive) constructions, it could have been the need to express the inchoative meaning of

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[2]   As an anonymous reviewer noticed, "in Aelfric's introduction to his translation of Old Testament one can find the following sentence: Þa *geopenode seo sæ togeānes Moysen*… 'Then the sea opened before Moses…'. In this case, the verb form *geopenode* is used as an intransitive verb corresponding to Polish *otworzyło się*. It is used without anything comparable to the form *hisylfe* in example (7)."

The fact that *openian* was used as an intransitive verb makes the analysis even more interesting. However, it doesn't seem to undermine the whole hypothesis which has been presented in the article. Since Aelfric lived at the turn of the X and XI c., the fact that he used *openian* intransitively could indicate that the change depicted by Figure 3 may have already appeared. According to Kroch's (1989a, 1989b) idea, some language changes involve synchronic competition between alternates. This would explain the fact that two variants, namely the intransitive (inchoative) with *self* and the intransitive (inchoative) without *self* could have been used simultaneously.

Moreover, as has been pointed out in the article, the change presented in Figure 3 is a *hypothesis*. This hypothesis seems to stand in accordance with Millward & Hayes's claim about reflexive pronouns (2012: 263). However, it is obvious that a hypothesis requires thorough examination. In order to address these issues, a more detailed diachronic study of *open* is needed. If the hypothesis is not true, the study will certainly reveal this fact. However, even if the hypothesis turned out to be false, it would still be very interesting to check why, then, *openian* was used with and without *self* at the same time and whether the two structures differ in any way. Nevertheless, developing a hypothesis seems to be the first step for further extensive analysis and this article is the first step in that direction.

open that triggered the change. It seems that at the time when (7) was written down, the change (presented in Figure 3) was still ongoing.

Transitive (causative)

↓

Transitive (reflexive)

↓

Intransitive (inchoative) [with *self*]
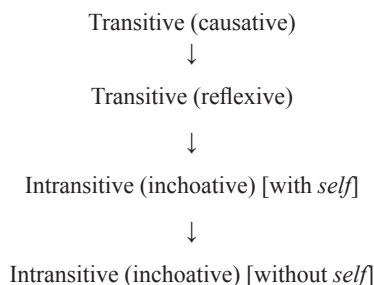
↓

Intransitive (inchoative) [without *self*]

Figure 3: The emergence of intransitive (inchoative) form of *openian*

The change presented in Figure 3 seems to stand in accordance with Millward & Hayes's statement about reflexive pronouns in general:

> Even as *-self* forms were being fixed as the normal reflexives, however, the use of reflexive pronouns in general was decreasing in the language. Verbs that had formerly been unvaryingly transitive, taking a reflexive pronoun when the direct object was the same as the subject, came to be used both transitively and intransitively. Among such verbs that Shakespeare often used reflexively were *complain, repent, fear*, *repose,* and *advise*. However (…), the reflexive object was not obligatory (and eventually would never be used). (2012: 263)

The questions that arise at this point are: (i) why the object of transitive constructions would disappear, and (ii) which process of language change was responsible for it. In order to address these issues, a more detailed diachronic study of *open* is needed. Examining the behaviour of this verb in different points of time, especially in inchoative structures, would provide sufficient data for a comparative study. The study, in turn, would show what type of change actually occurred and whether the hypothesis that transitive (reflexive) sentences containing the verb *openian* belong to the same cline as intransitive structures is true.

5. Dry: qualitative analysis

No significant differences have been observed as to the use of each variant of *dry* in particular types of texts. Both transitive and intransitive variants appear in religious, philosophical, historical, and medical texts. Since in many cases both transitive and intransitive variants come from the same source, it is impossible to state that one of them had been used before the other started being used. Hence, the indication of the basic form of this verb seems to be unattainable.

However, an interesting observation can be made from the point of view of morphology. Table 2 presents the infinitival verb forms of *dry* which were used in the analysed OE passages.

Table 2: Old English infinitival forms of *dry*

	TRANSITIVE			INTRANSITIVE		
	#	% (of transitive structures)	% (of all structures)	#	% (of intransitive structures)	% (of all structures)
DRUGIAN	1	8.3%	4.35%	6	54.5%	26.1%
DRYGAN	11	91.7%	47.8%	1	9.1%	4.35%
DRUWIAN	-	-	-	4	36.4%	17.4%

The data presented in Table 2 lead to the conclusion that although the OE form of *dry* licensed the causative alternation, this alternation seems to have been of a different nature than the one found in PDE. From the point of view of morphology, when alternating the causative verbs, PDE speakers use exactly the same verb forms for both causative and inchoative meaning. When analysing the OE passages, however, one may notice that there existed at least three morphological variants of *dry*, namely *drugian*, *druwian*, and *drygan*, each of them having its own inflectional paradigm. When examining the use of each variant from the point of view of its argument structure, it can be observed that whereas *drugian* and *druwian* were used mostly in intransitive constructions (together they constitute 90.9 % of instransitive structures compared to 8.3 % of transitive ones), *drygan* was used mostly in transitive constructions (91.7 % of transitive constructions compared to 9.1% of intransitive ones).

The reader may want to argue, however, that the morphological differences between different variants of *dry* result from dialectal differences rather than syntactic structures they occurred in. This argument would be very plausible if certain variants of *dry* appeared in one text and the other variants in other texts, written in a different part of the country. This is, however, not the case. On the contrary, the authors seem to have used different morphological variants of *dry* in the same texts. For example, *Blickling Homilies* uses both *drygan* and *drugian*. Moreover, the choice of the variant seems to have been made in accordance with the syntactic structure it was supposed to appear in. Thus, *drygan* was used in transitive structures and *drugian* – in intransitive ones. The same distinction may be noticed in other texts, for example in *Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy*. Therefore, it seems to be justified to claim that the morphological differences between different variants of *dry* result from syntactic structures they occurred in.

6. Discussion

In the light of the fact that the analysis above presents two completely different patterns of participating in the causative alternation, it seems reasonable to suggest a need for certain diversification in the group of 'change of state' verbs. If the hypothesis about the diversification in the class of 'change of state' verbs is confirmed, it may indicate that the problem of the direction of the derivation for the causative alternation *is not a problem at all*. This diversification may be addressed from at least two different perspectives, namely from the perspective of time and of direction. Each of the two perspectives seems to offer solutions to some of the problems with causativization and detransitivization processes observed by Alexiadou et al. (2006).

6.1. Direction

As there is no evidence for either transitive or intransitive variant of *dry* to be the basic one, at least two hypotheses about the direction of the derivation may be formulated. On the one hand, the results for *open* may be somewhat extended to other 'change of state' verbs. Such an extension would suggest that not only *open*, but also other alternating 'change of state' verbs are initially transitive. However, this assumption seems to be too far-reaching, since the results for one verb do not have to be the same as the results for other verbs. In order to confirm this assumption a more detailed study of a wide range of OE 'change of state' verbs would be necessary.

However, another hypothesis that may be formulated on the basis of the results of the analysis conducted in this paper is that *open* and *dry* had different basic variants; that is, while the basic variant of *open* is transitive, the basic variant of *dry* may have been intransitive.

Although seemingly far-reaching (due to the fact that the data for *dry* is not sufficient to indicate its basic variant), the hypothesis that different verbs within one language have different basic variants seems to solve at least one of the problems pointed out by Alexiadou et al. (2006). The rejection of the assumption that there exists one uniform pattern shared by all alternating verbs makes the problem of special morphology marking soluble. Whenever the transitive variant is basic, the intransitive form is marked with special morphology, as shown in the examples from Polish in (2). On the other hand, if the intransitive variant is the basic one, the transitive one would be marked with special morphology, as is the case in Georgian, exemplified in (4).

6.2. Time

The diversification of 'change of state' verbs in terms of the time when they developed both syntactic variants seems to be far less controversial than the perspective

of the direction. What seems to be certain is the fact that that there was no single moment at which the causative alternation developed for all the 'change of state' verbs. This is somewhat understandable due to the fact that no language change occurs overnight; both trigger and time are needed for a change to happen. Therefore, each 'change of state' verb has its own history of licensing causative alternation. This conclusion, again, offers a solution to one of the problems observed by Alexiadou et al. (2006), namely in relation to verb restrictions.

As Alexiadou et al. (2006) notice, some verbs seem to lack either the inchoative, or the causative counterpart (e.g., *cut* and *blossom*, respectively). From the synchronic point of view, this situation seems difficult to explain. However, if causative alternation is analysed from the diachronic perspective as being the result of the process of *language change* which affects different verbs in different points of time, contemporarily imposed verb restrictions become more understandable. For the verbs which lack one variant of the verb (and which would be expected, due to their features, to license causative alternation), the change may still be ongoing. An analogous situation is found in OE, where *open* seems to have been used predominantly in one of its forms, since the other one was not developed yet. However, as PDE data suggest, the situation in which *open* was used only in one of its variants was temporary, as the change, which would eventually result in the appearance of two variants of argument structure for *open*, was still ongoing.

If these conclusions are to be confirmed and developed, a further detailed study based on a wider scope of 'change of state' verbs in different points of language development is needed. Closer examination of the behaviour of *open* in different points of time may provide an answer to the question whether the observed transitive (reflexive) structures are indeed the beginning of a language change, which eventually resulted in the development of the intransitive variant of this verb. In all, the diachronic study of a wider scope of 'change of state' verbs would either provide further evidence for the detranzitivization theory or support the hypothesis of a directional and temporal diversification in the class of 'change of state' verbs. The question of the direction of the derivation for all 'change of state' verbs remains open until a more detailed analysis of the results of such research has been carried out. This article, therefore, should be treated as an introduction to a subsequent thorough study of the nature of the Old-, Middle-, early Modern-, and Modern English causative alternation.

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