Anglo-Scandinavian Contact Influence on Verbs Entering the Causative Alternation

The English causative alternation and which verbs participate in it in true syntactically labile fashion is a puzzle attempted from many angles and widely discussed (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1994, 2012; cf. Schäfer 2009, a.o.). Diachronically, several derivational morphemes have contributed to the English set of causative-anticausative verb pairs (van Gelderen 2011, 2018; García García 2012, 2020; Ottósson 2013). One of them is the Germanic causativizer *-j* that is reflected in Old English (OE) as in *meltan* and *miltan* '(cause to) melt' or *byrnan* and *bærnan* '(cause to) burn' (cf. van Gelderen 2018, p. 85-96). However, while pairs like *fall* and *fell* or *sit* and *set* are still distinct in Present Day English (PDE), a number of these verb pairs became formally indistinct when the derivation had become both intransparent and unproductive (cf. Ottósson 2013, García García 2020, van Gelderen 2011). The resulting merged lexemes like *melt* and *burn* have thus become syntactically labile and entered the causative alternation (cf. Levin 1993), some of them in early Middle English already. In contrast to Visser's (1963) account of 55 labile verbs in OE, McMillion (2006) documents a stark increase to over 800, of varying sources and derivations, until PDE. However, one possible factor in the labilization of English *-j* derived verbs entering the causative alternation however is scarcely discussed: Anglo-Scandinavian contact. Linguistic contact between these somewhat mutually intelligible and very closely related languages has been shown to have led to changes in the lexicon (Durkin 2014; Dance, Pons-Sanz & Schorn 2019. A number of verbs in the alternating verb classes of PDE (Levin 1993) show cognate influence of varying degrees, like *melt*, *burn* and *run*.

This work investigates whether the set of Germanic derived causative verbs in English has been influenced by contact with Old Norse cognate verb pairs. Specifically concerning the labilization of Germanic derived causative verbs in English, this work explores a possible correlation of the level of Old Norse contact influence on these lexical items and their beginning participation in the causative alternation during late Old English and Middle English. To this end a corpus analysis of OE derived causative verbs, their anticausative base verbs as well as their descendant lexemes in Middle English illustrates if and when these lexemes enter into the causative alternation in Middle English. Data are extracted from the *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (Taylor, Warner, Pintzuk & Beths 2003) and *The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English (2nd edition)* (Kroch & Taylor 2000). Work on Norse cognate verb pairs influences on these lexemes (Dance, Pons-Sanz & Schorn 2019) is considered in relation to the timing and extent of their labilization. If the analysis shows that verbs with significant Old Norse cognate influence show differences in timing or pace of labilization to lexemes without significant Old Norse influence, one might consider contact between Anglo-Scandinavian cognate verb sets as a factor in the labilization of these originally derived causative verbs. Formal and functional overlap between cognate verb pairs not only across their derivational relation, but also cross-linguistically due to the close genealogical relationship of the languages in contact might have led to increased ambiguity in a set of verbs already affected by derivational intransparency due to the loss of *-j*-causativization (cf. García García 2012, 2020; van Gelderen 2011; Ottósson 2013).

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