THE MAINTENANCE OF MEANING IN SYNTACTIC CHANGE: TOWARDS A DIACHRONIC SEMANTIC SYNTAX

Javier E. Díaz Vera
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha

1. AIMS AND SCOPE

Since the publication in 1904 of van der Gaaf's pioneering research, the evolution of Old English[1] subjectless constructions has attracted a good deal of attention among linguists interested in historical syntax. In most cases the use of a wide number of different theoretical frameworks has produced radically different conclusions, so that no clear agreement has been reached on the reasons of the disappearance of these constructions during the ME period (Mitchell 1985: 427-438, 1992: 97-98, and references there cited).

In a first attempt to explore the historical relations between different languages regarding the evolution of impersonal constructions,[2] von Seefranz-Montag (1983, 1984) shows that their gradual loss in all the languages analyzed took place along the same lines and responds to a general semantic and syntactic trend: the loss of the pragmatic and semantic information encoded in the morphosyntactic properties of OE non-nominative subjects as a consequence of the progressive rigidification of the SVO word order.

My analysis of this feature is based on Martín Mingorance's functional-lexematic model, more precisely on the so-called *functional lexical syntax* (Mairal Usón 1995), which is concerned with the meaning of each different complementation pattern of a given predicate. In this way, I want to show that this theoretical model offers an excellent method of diachronic research from a contrastive perspective.

2. THE REPRESENTATION OF *FEELING* IN OE: THE CAUSATION PARAMETER AND ITS REPERCURSIONS ON THE SYNTAGMATIC AXIS

As Labov (1994: 596) has recently argued, speakers are not dominated by the need to preserve information in choosing a particular linguistic variant, but rather by the tendency to maintain parallel structure. In spite of this, it is more than obvious

that living languages continuously evolve and change, whereas linguistic meaning is generally preserved through a series of systemic readjustments.

The history of impersonal constructions presents a clear instance of the capacity of languages to maintain a given meaning during long periods of time, in spite of the profound morphosyntactic changes that affected them. In many languages, impersonal constructions with oblique arguments in the role of affected[3] constitute a productive syntactic device to encode expresions of a specific semantic class, i.e. verbs denoting processes and situations in which a person is *unvolitionally* or *unselfcontrollably* affected (McCawley 1976: 194). The semantic argument function of *affected* is here morphologically marked on semantic considerations, independently of its syntactic function. For this reason, impersonal constructions of this type are more frequently found in highly inflected languages where the selection of specific cases for verb arguments is determined on semantic factors.

IE, with its elaborate eight-case system and its preference for the grammatical marking of semantic information (Lehmann 1974: 110-111), was presumably rich in impersonal constructions. Moreover, many of these IE constructions systematically correlated with personal constructions (i.e. constructions with a nominative affected) of the same verbs denoting lack of *causation* (this choice being still productive in languages such as Russian; see McCawley 1976: 195-200). The distinction is important, because whether the speaker attributes some measure of the responsability of the action of feeling to the human participant or to the causal complement will have definite repercussions on the verb's syntax.

The OE impersonal pattern that characterizes this group of causative predicates can be represented as follows:

> OVAdj
>   (a) O=prototyp. a person (affected; dat/acc)
>   (b) Adj=prototyp. +concrete: an unpleasant situation or feeling (phen; gen)

This complementation structure, which encodes the concrete way speakers experience the event, presents a number of secondary derivations in OE, most of which show the co-occurrence of a human affected in the dative or in the accusative case.[4] According to Cole (1983), the grammatical choice between dative and accusative is not semantically neutral, as it indicates varying degrees of responsibility in the activity on the part of the affected. As Langacker (1991: 257) puts it, "a pivot that fails to be marked as a secondary agent [i.e. in dative] is simply a thematic object [...]. It undergoes a thematic process by externally-supplied energy, but is not specifically portrayed as controlling or initiating this process":

(a) SECONDARY AGENT   (b) THEMATIC OBJECT

DAT/INSTR   ACC/ABS

Figure 1: Semantic roles of DAT/INSTR and ACC/ABS in causative constructions (Langacker 1991: 257).

The OE predicates used in impersonal constructions with human participants in the role of affected fall into one of the following lexical fields:[5]

Lexical field	Examples of OE verbs with the pattern OVAdj/Cl
EXISTENCE	**gelimpan:** to CAUSE something to come to EXISTENCE in someone's perception *Sum sare angeald æfenræste, swa him ful oft **gelamp**, siþðan goldsele Grendel warode, unriht æfnde, oþþæt ende becwom, swylt æfter synnum* (OX/3_XX_XX_BEOW,39)
COGNITION	**þyncan:** to CAUSE someone to THINK about someone or something in a particular way *Philippuse **geþuhte** æfter þæm þæt he an land ne mehte þæm folce mid gifan gecweman þe him an simbel wæron mid winnende* (O2_NN_HIST_OROS,116)
FEELING	**hreowan:**to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief (as a result of something that has happened) *And me **ofhreow** þæt hi ne cuðon ne næfdon ða godspellican lare on heora gewritum* (O3_IR_PREF_PRCHOM1,2)

Table 1. OE impersonal construction: a lexical-domain classification.

All the verbs that can appear with both nominal and sentencial complements fall into the lexical domain of FEELING, and make reference to physical, psychological or mental states or changes of state. The following is an illustration of the construction of the syntagmatic axes formed by the OE impersonally-used predicates belonging to the lexical subdimension "to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief," with examples of the different complementation patterns each verb admits (Díaz Vera 1999a: 78-79):

hrēowan: [to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief]
1. OVAdj
   e.g. *Mec **hreoweþ** þas mengu ðe hie vel forðon þreo dagas is* (O3_XX_NEWT_RUSHW,131)
2. OVObCl
   e.g. ***Hreaw** hine swiðe þæt he folcmægþa fruman aweahte* (OX/3_XX_XX_GEN,40)
3. OVS
   e.g. *Ne hit furðum him ne læt **hreowan*** (O2_XX_PHILO_BOETHAL,134)
4. SVAdj
   e.g. *forðæm ðe hie ne magon ealneg ealla on ane tid emnsare **hreowan**, ac hwilum an, hwilum oðru cymð sarlice to gemynde* (O2_IR_RELT_CP,413)

ofhrēowan: [to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief] [+about a failed action or person]
    2. OVObCl
        e.g. *Me **ofhreow** þæt hi ne cuðon ne næfdon ða godspellican lare on heora gewritum* (O3_IR_PREF_PRCHOM1,2)
    4. SVAdj
        e.g. *Þa se mæssepreost þæs mannes **ofhreow*** (O3_NN_BIL_AELIVES26,III,142)

ofþyncan: [to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief] [+about the bad consequences of something that has happened]
    1. OVAdj
        e.g. *Mæg þæs þonne **ofþyncan** ðeodne Heaðobeardna ond þegna gehwam þara leoda* (OX/3_XX_XX_BEOW,63)
    2. OVObCl
        e.g. *Þa **ofþuhte** him þæt he þæt feoh to sellanne næfde his here swa hie bewuna wæron* (O2_NN_HIST_OROS,116)
    3. OVS
        e.g. *Þa **ofþuhte** þæt Mariuse þæm consule, Iuliuses eame* (O2_NN_HIST_OROS,236)

hrēowsian: [to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief] [+expressing it with words]
    5. SVObCl
        e.g. *hi ðeah ne betað ne ne **hreowsiað**, ðæt hi ne wenen, ðeah hi hira synna forlæten* (O2_IR_RELT_CP,423)

eglian: [to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief] [+about something that has happened] [+physical pain]
    3. OVS
        e.g. *Hu reowlicor? him geyfelade & þæt him stranglice **eglade*** (O4_NN_HIST_CHRONE2,218)

When used impersonally, these predicates show the distinctive features [-controlled] and [-voluntary] in the paradigmatic axes, the semantic differences between them and the remaining verbs in their dimensions running parallel to changes of syntactic complementation. This explains why the impersonal pattern is most clearly present when the element "X experiences a negative feeling" enters the predicate's definition (such as *rue*, *long*, etc.; Elmer 1981: 63-65).[6]

The lexical structure within the subdimension of the field of FEELING "to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief" can thus be provisionally reconstructed as follows:

1. **hre–owan:** to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief.
    1.1. **ofhrēowan:** to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief about a failed action or person.
    1.2. **ofþyncan:** to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief about the bad consequences of something that has happened.
    1.3. **hrēowsian:** to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief expressing it with words.
    1.4. **eglian:** to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief about something that has happened, with physical pain.

As can be seen here from the above hierarchical structuring, the OE predicate *hrʻowan* is the most general within its subdimension, since the action of *grieving* can be the result of a wide variety of actions, events, things or persons. Meanwhile, the other verbs have a more specific and concrete meaning, i.e. they are less prototypical both semantically and syntactically.

Obviously, whereas the reconstruction of the semantic aspects of words in historical linguistics is generally based on indirect evidence, the syntactic paradigm constitutes a direct source of information. Due to space restrictions, I will concentrate here on the syntagmatic relations of these predicates. However, the reader should keep in mind that the paradigmatic aspect of meaning is essential for a complete lexical entry.

3. SYNTAGMATIC RELATIONS AND INTERFIELD CATEGORIZATION

The OE lexical subdimension "to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief" offers a clear instance of the different ways in which both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axes establish multiple connections between the different dimension-level schemata within the semantic macronet. The connections between the lexical fields of EXISTENCE, COGNITION and FEELING become evident in two different ways: in the syntagmatic axis, through the recurrence of the prototypical complementation pattern OVAdj/ObCl, and in the paradigmatic axis, through the addition of the distinctive feature [-voluntary action].

EXISTENCE	COGNITION	FEELING
OVObCl	OVObCl	OVAdj/ObCl
gelimpan	*þyncan*	*hrēowan*
to cause something to come to EXISTENCE in someone's perception	to CAUSE someone to THINK about someone or something in a particular way	to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief as a result of something that has happened

Table 2. OE impersonals and inter-field connections.

Interestingly, the three lexical-schemata to which OE impersonally-used verbs belong are those that present a lower level of concreteness within the whole semantic macronet. Faber and Mairal Usón (1998) have recently proposed the following hierarchical ordering of field-schemata, which is based on the number of prototypical features they display:

MOVEMENT   [+Concrete]
POSSESSION
ACTION
PERCEPTION
POSITION
CHANGE
EXISTENCE
COGNITION
FEELING   [+Abstract]

Figure 2. Hierarchy of lexical domains.

The above hierarchy of domains presupposes that grammatical categories are distributed along a scale of time-stability (Givón 1984: 51-53): since the category *verb* prototypically denotes "rapid changes, codified in terms of concrete, kinetic, visible, effective, energized events or actions" (Faber and Mairal Usón, 1998), and most verbs included in a field-schema like EXISTENCE (*exist*, *live*, *reside*, *be*, *persist*, etc.) encode long-lasting events, this field is considered to exhibit less prototypical properties than, for instance, that of MOVEMENT (*go*, *leave*, *fall*) or POSSESSION (*get*, *loose*, *buy*). The OVAdj complementation pattern is thus restricted in OE to the expression of very abstract actions, which are not subject to physical observation, referring rather to the inner experience of the human subject. For this reason, the complement meanings of these predicates do not designate actions or events, but physical or psychological states or state changes (Díaz Vera 1999b: 724).

4. SYNTACTIC EVOLUTION VS. SEMANTIC MAINTENANCE

In this preliminary approach to the above mentioned topic, I will deal with the progressive fall of the OE OVAdj complementation pattern and the maintenance of these predicates within the causative subdomain, which implies either a change of the affected object from topic to post-verbal position, or its re-analysis as nominative subject. The change to SVO in NE), which we will relate to the linguistic tendency to maintain parallel structure (Labov 1994: 596), implies that all the English predicates must show a nominative subject (independently of its semantic role; Lightfoot 1979: 230).

The five OE predicates from the lexical subdimension "to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief" analyzed here illustrate the different ways in which the relation between the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axes can be mutated as a consequence of linguistic evolution. The following five processes have been attested as regards the evolution of this subdimension:

4.1. LOSS OF LEXICAL CAUSATIVES

Most OE predicates with these impersonal patterns died out during the late ME period (Moessner 1989: 137-147). This is the case of the verb *ofþyncan*, whose last occurrences recorded in the *Helsinki Corpus* date back to the period 1250-1350 (i.e. sub-period file M2):

[1] *Huy bi-menden, and it **of-þou3hte** heom sore* (M2_NN_BIL_SLEG,443)
[2] *Sore **ofþinkeþ** me þis cas þat þou fi3ttes wiþ Nicholas* (M2_NI_ROM_KALEX,I,61)

In the case of the verb *ofhr'owan*, the process of lexical loss was already completed soon before the end of the OE period, favoured by its quasi-homophony with the more prototypical predicate *hr'owan*. A late example of this impersonal predicate is found in:

[3] *Þæs sceapes untrumnesse him to ðam swiðe **ofhreaw**, þæt he hit ofer his eaxla lede and eft up to þære heorde bær* (O3_IR_RULE_BENEDOE,51)

4.2. Change of dimension

The OE verb *eglian* ("to grieve") has been subject to a series of semantic changes, by which it has acquired the meaning "to be ill, to be indisposed" (NE *to ail*), in a strictly physical way (a change which was favoured by the presence of the feature [+physical pain] in OE). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), the last instances of this verb for the expression of "mental affliction" correspond to the 17th century, whereas the physical sense can already be seen in some early ME examples, such as:

> [4] *Him ʒeyfelade, and þæt him stranglíce* **eʒlade** [1086 *O.E. Chron.* (Laud MS.)]
> [5] *Nu a uleih mei* **eilen** *þe, & makien þe to blenchen* [c1230 *Ancr. R.* 276]

Through this process of semantic change, this impersonal predicate shifts from the subdimension of MENTAL AFFECTION to that of PHYSICAL FEELING. This process of semantic bleaching is accompanied by a change of verbal valency (see *4.4* bellow), through which the personal object, which in early times always preceded the impersonally-used verb, will be reinterpreted as a subject, taking on nominative form, as can be seen in the following examples:

> [6] *If she be very well, what does she* **ail***, that she's not very well?* [1601 Shakes. *All's Well* ii. iv. 6]
> [7] *I know not what I* **ail***, says he, I cannot swallow any Beer* [1702 Pryme in *Phil. Trans.* XXIII. 1076]

4.3. Lexical borrowing/derivation

The progressive loss (either through lexical loss or by semantic change) of many of the predicates that formed the OE verbal subdimension "to CAUSE someone to FEEL grief" was parallel to the introduction into the lexical system of ME of a wide group of French verbs, that immediately occupied different sections of the semantic area defined by the general predicate *hr'owan*. This is the case of ME *grieve* (from French *grever*), a verb that admits both causative and non-causative patterns. According to the *OED*, the earliest occurrences of this predicate with non-nominative human participants in the role of affected date back to the first half of the 13th century, and widely correspond to the general meaning "to cause pain, anxiety, or vexation to someone":

> [8] *ʒif þu him muche luuest & he let lutel to þe hit* **greueð** *þe* [c1230 *Hali Meid.* 33]
> [9] *It* **greuys** *me wonderly sare, I se þe leudy ma suilk care* [a1300 *Cursor M.* 10443 (Gött.)]

However, this predicate would soon experiment an expansion of its original meaning to other areas within its semantic space, so that *grieve* came to express such different things as physical and mental pain, harm, injure, discomfort or even disease. This semantic expansion was accompanied during the ME period by a progressive

increase in the number of syntactic complementation patterns this verb admits, through which the originally causative predicate will develop new non-causative functions (see *5* below).

Other French borrowings are the verbs *repent*, *regret* and *lament*, which entered the English language in different periods of its history. The earliest examples and the original meanings of these three verbs are:

REPENT (< Fr. *repentir*): To affect (oneself) with contrition or regret for something done, etc:

   [10] *Of hire misdedes heo **repentede** hire sore* [c1290 *S. Eng. Leg.* I. 52/173]

REGRET (< Fr. *regretter*): To think of something lost, with distress or longing; to feel grief for the loss of (a person or thing):

   [11] *He cam to hym mournyng and wepyng waylyng and **regretyng** his wyf* [1483 Caxton *G. de la Tour* C ij]

LAMENT (< Fr. *lamenter*): To express profound grief for or concerning:

   [12] *There folowed him a greate multitude of people and of wemen, which bewayled and **lamented** him* [1535 Coverdale *Luke* xxiii. 37]

4.4. CHANGE OF VERBAL VALENCY

The preverbal oblique pronoun found for the OE predicate *hrēowan* was realized as a subject in ME, and took on nominative form. This process of syntactic change permitted the maintenance of this verbal predicate in ME, where the old OV causative pattern had become obsolete.[7] Obviously, this change in the syntactic valency of the verb *hrēowan* implied a semantic restriction and a progressive decrease in its use.[8] The earliest examples of this verb with nominative human experiencers correspond to the following meanings (*OED*):

A. To repent of (wrongdoing); to feel penitence, remorse, or contrition for (sin, etc.):

   [13] *Armheorted is þe man þe swiðere **reoweð** his sinne* [c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 95]
   [14] *In takening sare he **reud** his sake, An orisun sun can he make* [a1300 *Cursor M.* 7965]

B. To repent of (some act or course of action); to regret and wish undone or altered, on account of the consequences. Frequently with implication of suffering or punishment following upon the act:

   [15] *Þat Baret rede i noght yee bru, þat yow mai euer after **ru*** [a1300 *Cursor M.* 4138]
   [16] *Bot he in þame **ruit** his teching, for...þai na tyme for to scorne hym fane* [c1375 *Sc. Leg. Saints* xxvii. (*Machor*) 972]

C. To regard or think of (an event, fact, etc.) with grief or regret; to wish that (something) had never taken place or existed:

[17] *So þat hii ne com nammore to þe croune of engelond, and þat was to **rewe** sore* [1297 R. Glouc. (Rolls) 10127]

[18] *To make of thilke werre an ende, which every day now groweth newe, and that is gretly forto **rewe*** [1390 Gower *Conf.* Prol. 164]

D. To regard with pity or compassion; to feel sorry for (a person, etc.):

[19] *Mildheorted beð Þe man Þe **reouð** his nehgebures unselðe* [c1200 *Trin. Coll. Hom.* 95]

[20] *I trow thar is na man that he ne will **rew** a woman than* [1375 Barbour *Bruce* xvi. 280]

As can be seen from these examples and from the definitions given by the *OED*, the general meaning of *causation* is absent from these personal constructions, and the old senses of *secondary agent* and *thematic object* have merged into a hybrid role of *experiencer/affected* (see *Section 5* bellow). As a consequence of this change, the verb *rue* will be found in morphosyntactic environments where OE *hrēowan* was not allowed. The use of ME *rue* in progressive tenses, in the imperative, with direct objects in the role of phenomenon, or even accompanied by adjuncts expressing duration (as in examples [21]-[24]) clearly exemplifies some of these new environments:

[21] *ʒef þow hyt fynde no wey myʒte, þrytty dayes þow **rewe** hyt ryʒte* [a1450 Myrc 2016]

[22] ***Ruing** the spoile done by his fatall hand* [1596 Drayton *Legends* ii. 549]

[23] *Nor shall I live to view Thy sorrows ended, if thou do not **rue** Thy sins with speed* [1628 Wither *Brit. Rememb.* 240]

[24] *O wreche, be war!.. Remeid in tyme, and **rew** nocht all to lait* [1500-20 Dunbar *Poems* lxxiii. 5]

4.5. CHANGE OF PROTOTIPICITY

OE *hr'owan* was further affected by a process of semantic and syntactic restriction, through which the following meanings and the corresponding impersonal complementation patterns were lost during the ME period[9] (examples correspond to the two last occurrences of each meaning given in the *OED*):

A. To cause someone to feel penitence or contrition (for sins or offences committed):

[25] *Þis man sais...þat him **reuys** his sinnes sare* [a1300 *Cursor M.* 28676]

[26] *Gyue me grace for to etchewe to do þat þing þat me shulde **rewe*** [c1375 *Lay Folks Mass-Bk.* (MS. B) 359]

B. To cause someone to feel regret (for some act); to make (one) wish one had acted otherwise:

[27] *Me **rewith** sore I am unto hir teyd* [c1386 Chaucer *Epil. Merch. T.* 14]
[28] *Þe bargayne I made þare, þat **rewes** me nowe full sare* [c1440 *York Myst.* xiii. 36]

C. To cause someone to feel grief; to distress, grieve:

[29] *Me **rewith** the deth of hyr for his sake* [a1450 *Le Morte Arth.* 1029]
[30] *It would haue **rued** any good huswiues heart, to haue beholden ye...murder*
    [1548 Patten *Exped. Scotl.* B v b]

D. To cause someone to feel pity or compassion:

[31] *It pitieth and **rueth** every good man...to remember the same* [c1555 Harpsfield
    Divorce Hen. VIII (Camden) 136]
[32] *Deare dame, your suddein overthrow much **rueth** me* [1590 Spenser *F.Q.* i. ii. 21]

This change produced a progressive decrease in the level of prototipicity of the verb *rue*, which acquired a more specific meaning and, consequently, lost part of the semantic space it occupied in OE, in favour of the new personal predicates borrowed from French (see *4.3* above).

5. WHY AFFECTED SUBJECTS? THE GRAMMATICALIZATION OF OE TOPICS

The changes described under *4.1* and *4.2* represent a loss of predicates, which is automatically compensated by *4.3*. In a parallel way, changes *4.4* and *4.5* represent a loss of prototipicity of the old archilexemes, with the corresponding change upwards of its hyponims. The overall balance within the subdimension is thus maintained through the co-occurrence of these processes.
The OE semantic distinction between the three predicates of the minimal pairs formed by sentences like:

1. ***him** hrēoweþ1 þær dæde* ({H} = object/secondary agent/topic)
2. ***hine** hrēoweþ1 þær dæde* ({H} = object/thematic object/topic)
3. ***he** hrēoweþ2 þær dæde* ({H} = subject/affected/topic)

could be confronted to the NE pair formed by :

4. *something grieves1 **me*** ({H} = object/affected/topic)
5. ***I** grieve2 something* ({H} = subject/affected/comment)

This parallelism is justified by the fact that the two nominative human partici-pants in sentences [3] and [5] are clearly more prototypical instantiations of the cat-egory *subject* than the three oblique {H} NPs found in [1], [2] and [4], as regards the distribution of the roles of primary and secondary agent and the topic position. Moreo-ver, the iconic nature of the complements each predicate admits can be diagrammed in *Table 3*, which indicates that both *hrēowan2* and *grieve2* are more sensible to the

restrictions proper of the category verb[10] and, consequently, represent relatively more prototypical instances of this category (Mairal Usón 1995: 35-50):

COMPLEMENT EXTENSIONS	SYN-SEM RELATIONS	PREDICATE
Quoted Speech Act	[+weak]	-
Fact		*hrēowan1/grieve1*
Future Fact		-
Event		*hrēowan1/grieve1*
Accion		*hrēowan1/grieve1*
Individual/Entity	[+strong]	*hrēowan1-2/grieve1-2*

Table 3: Syntactic restrictions and extensional properties of verbal complements

The degree of concreteness being relative, one could confidently affirm that the processes expressed in sentences [1], [2] and [4] above are more abstract than those expressed in [3] and [5], as the actions thereby expressed are less observable and effective. This being so, the affected arguments of relatively more concrete predicates (such as *hrēowan2*) will be more subject to grammaticalization, i.e. they will be more easily interpreted as agents,[11] whereas the human participants of the more abstract predicate *hrēowan1,* will maintain their status of complements and lose their topic position in favour of the older causal objects.

Compare for example the predicates GRIEVE 1 and GRIEVE 2, corresponding to the two main senses of the verb given in the *OED*: "to CAUSE to FEEL grief" (example [33]) and "to FEEL grief" (example [34]):[12]

[33] *It really **grieves** me to have you be so naughty* [1852 Mrs. Stowe *Uncle Tom's C.* xxv. 239]

[34] *He...**grieved** for the gentle young wife who had been taken from him* [1884 Pae *Eustace* 22]

As can be observed here, the semantics of each predicate acts as a filter of the syntactic patterns it governs, so that the role of subject/affected is found only when the cause of the grief cannot be directly attributed to the nominal complement (see [34]), whereas the affected participant is encoded as object whenever it acted as thematic object or as secondary agent (as in [33]).

A different process is found in the development of the minimal pair LIKE/PLEASE. The predicate *please* ("to CAUSE to FEEL pleasure") was borrowed by ME from French, and took the place of OE *cweman* (ME *queme*), a verb that was used when "the speaker attributed some measure of responsability to the cause of the pleasure" (Allen 1986: 404; see examples [35]-[37] below), whereas *lician* was preferred when there was no intentionality on the part of the causal argument:

[35] *Conplacebam,* **quemde** [a750 *Blickl. Glosses* 13 in *O.E. Texts* 123]

[36] *Ðæt ic monnum* **cweme** *& liciȝe* [c897 K. Ælfred *Gregory's Past.* xix. 146]
[37] *Ȝef þu þus dost...þu* **quemest** *god* [c1175 *Lamb. Hom.* 67]

Consequently, the semantic and syntactic distribution of the OE pair *lician/cweman* was maintained after the introduction of the verb *please*, which was preferred when the human participant was affected by the causal argument in the speaker's perception:

[38] *For God wasted Þe bones of Þem Þat* **plesen** *to men* [a1325 *Prose Psalter* lii. 7 [liii. 5]]

My impression here is that the process of universalization of the syntactic pattern SVO in late OE contributed to the creation of new lexical pairs of the type GRIEVE 1/ GRIEVE 2 (semantic extension) or PLEASE/LIKE (derivation/borrowing of new lexemes) as the only way to maintain the OE morphosyntactic distinction between the causative and the non-causative subdimensions in a syntactic scenario where the old construction OVAdj was becoming increasingly obsolete. The causative parameter becomes thus lexicalized through the introduction of new verbal predicates for the expression of the different subdimensions, where the presence of an agent "CAUSING someone to FEEL a sensation" is conveyed by those verbs which have a human object (as in *something grieves1/pleases* **me** ({H} = object/secondary agent/comment), while the verbs in the parallel subdomain (i.e. "to FEEL a sensation") will require a human subject/affected (as in *I rue2/grieve2/like something* ({H} = subject/affected/theme).

Notes

[1] The following abbreviations will be henceforward used: IE = Indo-European; OE = Old English; ME = Middle English; NE = New English.
[2] I will not apply the term impersonal to verbs, but rather to syntactic patterns of use; this way, I want to avoid the ambiguity that is inherent to the use of the label *impersonal verb* in OE (for an illuminating discussion on this terminological debate see Méndez Naya and López Couso 1997).
[3] Following Langacker (1991: 238), I will define an experiencer as "an individual engaged in some type of mental process, be it *intellectual*, *perceptual*, or *emotive*," whereas the term affected will be used to make reference to an individual that undergoes an internal change.
[4] The most frequent of these being formed by a dative affected and a causal *þæt*-clause in the role of sentential complement (Elmer's **Type S**; 1981: 21-54):
    OVObCl
        (a) O=prototyp. a person (affected; dat)
        (b) ObCl=prototyp. -concrete: objective action or event (cause; object clause)
[5] The examples presented in this part of the research have been extracted from the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*. I have maintained the code values used by its compilers to define the textual parameters. These *text identifiers* make reference to "part of corpus," "prototypical text category," "text type" and "abbreviated title" (Kytö 1996: 43-60).

[6] *Negativity* is often intensified by the OE prefix *of*, which almost always preceeds these predicates when used in OVAdj sentences (*ofhreowan*, *ofþyncan*, etc; Kastovsky 1992: 378). Impersonally-used verbs of the OVAdj type are included in the category 02.02. *Mental pain/Suffering* of the future *Historical Thesaurus of English* (Kay 1994), corresponding to 08.01.03.04. *Grief* and 08.01.03.04.01. *Complaint* in the *Thesaurus of Old English* (Roberts and Kay 1995).

[7] Differently to other less prototypical verbs from this dimension, such as OE *ofþyncan* and *ofhrēowan* (see 4.1), which were not able to adopt the new SVO pattern and consequently disappeared from the language during the ME period.

[8] According to the *COBUILD English Language Dictionary*, the verb *rue* (< OE *hrēowan*) can be considered an "old-fashioned or literary word," with the specific meaning "to REGRET an action, event or decision because of its unpleasant results."

[9] As can be seen here, some of these constructions were kept well into the NE period.

[10] That is, they prototipically appear with descriptive complements of the type individual/entity, whereas *hrēowan1* and *grieve1* are not subject to such syntactic and semantic restrictions.

[11] The diachronic relation between the categories of topic and subject has been stressed by Li and Thompson (1976: 484), who affirm that subjects are essentially grammaticalized topics.

[12] According to the *OED*, whereas the first occurrence of GRIEVE 1 dates back to 1225, GRIEVE 2 is not found until the year 1598. From a diachronic point of view, the process of semantic extension could be represented as:

1. OE: "to CAUSE to FEEL grief"
2. NE: "to CAUSE to FEEL grief"   "to FEEL grief"

Works Cited

Allen, Cynthia L. "Reconsidering the History of *Like*." *Journal of Linguistics* 22 (1986): 375-409.

Cole, Peter. "The Grammatical Role of the Causee in Universal Grammar." *International Journal of American Linguistics* 49 (1983): 115-133.

Díaz Vera, Javier E. "El concepto de iconicidad léxica en los procesos históricos: algunas implicaciones micro y macroestructurales." *Estudios funcionales sobre el léxico, sintaxis y traducción: un homenaje a Leocadio Martín Mingorance*. Ed. Mª J. Feu Guijarro y S. Molina Plaza. Cuenca: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1999. 75-90.

— "Estabilidad y cambio en las lenguas con la alternancia personal/impersonal: hacia una aplicación diacrónica del modelo lexemático-funcional." *Actas del XXI Congreso Internacional de AEDEAN*. Ed. F. Toda Iglesa *et. al.* Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1999. 721-728.

Elmer, Willy. *Diachronic Grammar: The History of Old and Middle English Subjectless Constructions*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1981.

Faber, Pamela and Ricardo Mairal Usón. "Towards a Typology of Predicate Schemata in a Functional-Lexematic Model." *Toward a Functional Lexicology. Hacia una Lexicología Funcional. Papers in Honor of Leocadio Martín Mingorance*. Ed. G. Wotjak. Berlin: Peter Lang, 1998.

Givón, Talmy. *Syntax: A Functional Typological Introduction*. Vol. I**.** Amsterdam/Phila-
   delphia: John Benjamins, 1984.

Kastovsky, Dieter. "Semantics and Vocabulary." *The Cambridge History of the Eng-
   lish Language I: The Beginnings to 1066.* Ed. R. Hogg. Cambridge: Cambridge
   UP, 1992. 290-408.

Kay, Christian J. "Historical Thesaurus of English: Progress and Plans." *Corpora across
   the Centuries: Proceedings of the First International Colloquium on English
   Diachronic Corpora***.** Ed. M. Kytö, M. Rissanen and S. Wright. Amsterdam:
   Rodopi, 1994.111-120.

Kytö, Merja. *Manual to the Diachronic Part of the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts:
   Coding Conventions and Lists of Source Texts.* Helsinki: U of Helsinki, 1996.

Labov, William. *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors***.** Oxford: Blackwell,
   1994.

Langacker, Ronald W. *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Gram-
   mar.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991.

Lehmann, Winfred P. *Proto-Indo-European Syntax*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1974.

Li, Charles N. and Sandra A. Thompson. "Subject and Topic: A New Typology of
   Language." *Subject and Topic.* Ed. Ch. N. Li. New Tork, Academic Press, 1976.
   457-490.

Lightfoot, David W. *Principles of Diachronic Syntax.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP,
   1979.

McCawley, Noriko A. "From OE/ME 'Impersonals' to 'Personal' Constructions: What
   Is a 'Subjectless' S." *Papers from the Parasession on Diachronic Syntax.* Ed. S.B.
   Steever, C.A.Walker and S.S.Mufwene. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society,
   1976. 92-100.

Mairal Usón, Ricardo. "Parámetros para la organización de una sintaxis léxica
   funcional." *Estudios de Gramática Funcional.* Ed. J. Martín Arista. Zaragoza:
   Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 1995. 23-73.

Méndez Naya, Belén and Mª José López Couso. "What Is Really Meant by Imper-
   sonal? On Impersonal and Related Terms." *Atlantis* 19 (1997): 185-192.

Mitchell, Bruce. *Old English Syntax.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1985.

Mitchell, Bruce. "How To Study Old English Syntax?" *History of Englishes: New
   Methods and Interpretations in Historical Linguistics.* Ed. M. Rissanen*,* O.
   Ihalainen, T. Nevalainen and I. Taavitsainen. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter,
   1992. 92-100.

Moessner, Lilo. *Early Middle English Syntax.* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989.

Roberts, Jane and Christian Kay. *A Thesaurus of Old English.* London: King's Col-
   lege London Medieval Studies, 1995.

Van der Gaaf, W. *The Transition from the Impersonal to the Personal Construction in
   Middle English.* Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1904.

Von Seefranz-Montag, Ariane. *Syntaktische Funktionen und Wortstellungs-
   veränderung: Die Entwicklung subjektlöser Konstruktionen in einigen Sprachen.*
   München: Fink, 1983.

— "Subjectless Constructions and Syntactic Change." *Historical Syntax.* Ed. J. Fisiak.
   Berlin: Mouton, 1984. 521-553.