

## **Synchrony and diachrony in transitivity pairs (oral)**

Nedyalkov & Silnitsky (1973), Haspelmath (1993), and Nichols et al. (2004) have shown that there are certain typological tendencies in the lexicalization of non-causative/causative pairs of events such as 'open' (itr./tr.) or 'melt' (itr./ tr.). Certain languages prefer a pattern with a basic intransitive (non-causative) and a derived transitive (causative) verb, i. e., are transitivity pairs, other languages prefer the opposite, i.e., are detransitivizing, and there are still other languages which prefer neutral patterns. These may be either 'equipollent', that is, both verbs exhibit an equal degree of derivation from a common stem, or 'labile', that is, the same verb form expresses both the non-causative and the causative concept.

This typology is not without problems and unresolved questions, some of which come from the limitations of research with strictly cross-linguistic data. One such problem is that it highlights a purely synchronic morphophonological aspect of derivation at the expense of possible other aspects, such as the semantics and the historical directionality of derivation. Usually, an iconic relationship between morphology, semantics, and history is assumed (see, however, Haspelmath (1993) for a discussion of apparent mismatches of semantics and morphology). However, especially in the case of synchronically unproductive lexicalizations, can one really claim that verbs A and B form an equipollent pair in terms of derivation on the basis of modern surface structure, if in fact, historically, A is the basic form and B derived from it? Another question is how diachronically stable these verb patterns are (e.g. Comrie 2006).

This paper addresses these questions on the basis of a historically well-documented language, namely Japanese, utilizing the entire available Japanese diachronic verb vocabulary. Haspelmath (1993) concluded that Japanese is a language preferring equipollent patterns, while Nichols et al. (2004) classified Japanese as transitivity pairs with respect to animate verbs. Although both approaches do not entirely coincide with respect to their scope, and Nichols et al. (2004) do not present their Japanese data transparently, this paper argues that from a historical perspective, Nichols et al.'s (2004) analysis is the correct one. The historical realignment of inflectional verb classes has led to a situation in Modern Japanese where derived verbs and the verbs from which they are derived cannot be distinguished anymore in terms of markedness of their surface forms, and thus appear to be equipollent, although usually the intransitive verb is basic. Furthermore, with respect to diachronic stability, the indigenous Japanese verb vocabulary appears has lost its vitality and productivity, in contrast to the growing Sino-Japanese vocabulary, which generally does not form transitive-intransitive verb pairs. This leads to an increasingly prominent role of morphologically productive processes and to a prevalence of neutral patterns.

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