

Gradual Parametric Change?  
Revisiting the Loss of Non-Nominative Experiencers of *Like*

**Abstract**

This paper investigates the replacement of dative/accusative Experiencers of *like* by nominative ones in the history of English. The literature on this issue has traditionally supposed that this change was caused by the decline of the dative case ending.

To reconcile this paradox, I put forth an analysis that makes use of two parameters, maintaining that the emergence of nominative Experiencers was enabled by the decline of the morphological dative, while the loss of non-nominative Experiencers stemmed from the loss of verb second. This analysis can also account for residual non-nominative Experiencers in Modern English.

**1. Introduction**

Studies in historical syntax within the generative framework generally assume that grammatical changes result from the resetting of parametric values that are innately built into human language. Since generative grammar makes a strong claim that parameter setting is a once-and-for-all process, carried out when children acquire their mother tongue, it is predicted that grammatical changes also take place catastrophically.

This expectation, however, is often betrayed by the historical data recorded in the literature. This is the case when a syntactic property X changes into another property Y through an intermediate stage where X and Y are both allowed. Given that X and Y are phenotypes of a relevant parameter P, the discrepancy between the presumed parametric change and the actual data change can be illustrated as in (1).

- (1) a. parametric change:  $P(x) \rightarrow P(y)$   
b. actual data change:  $X \rightarrow X/Y \rightarrow Y$

This situation presents a serious challenge to the generative approach to grammatical changes, particularly in cases where a single speaker (with a single parametric value) equally accepts both X and Y. ...

(4) a. Experiencer-Theme

hu him se sige gelicade  
how him-Dat the-Nom victory-Nom liked  
[how the victory had pleased him] (Or 84.32 / Denison 1993: 72)

b. Theme-Experiencer

ge noldon gode lician on godum ingehyde  
you-Nom not-would God-Dat like in good understanding  
[You would not please God with good understanding.]

(*ECHom* II, 44 332.160 / Allen 995: 146-147)

〈脚注〉

Interestingly enough, we can also find non-nominative Experiencers in Chaucer's writings such as the following:<sup>1</sup> ...

〈表〉 罫線の書式が変わる可能性があります。

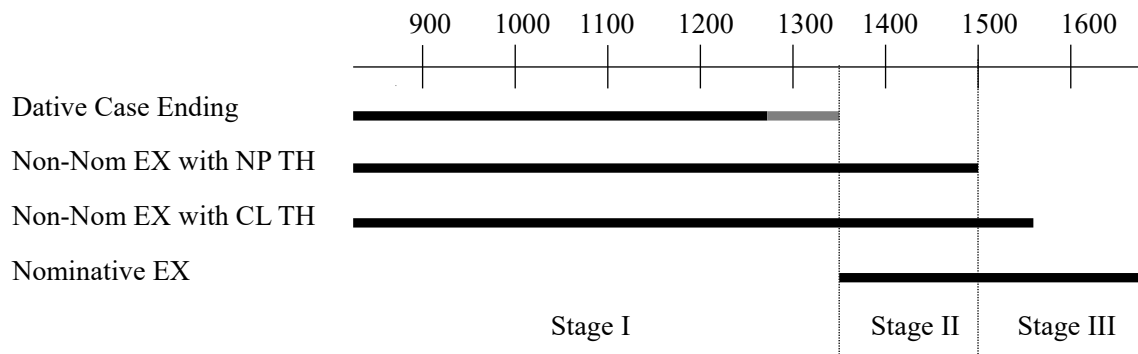
**Table 2.** Frequency of *Preyen* and *Bisechen*

	Chaucer	Gower	Langland
<i>preyen</i>	169	38	7
<i>bisechen</i>	26	17	2

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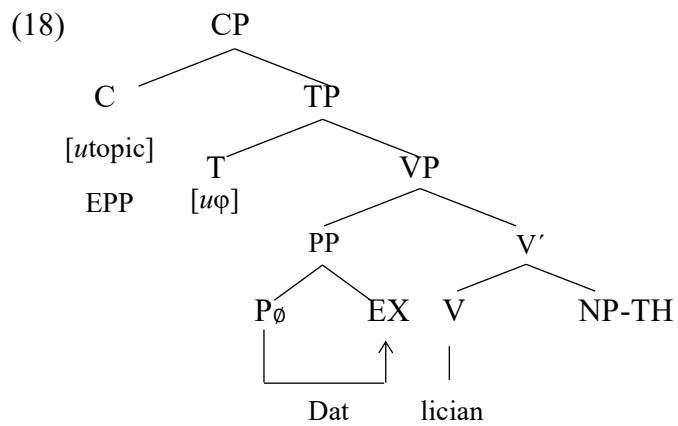
<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, examples are cited from the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English, 2nd edition (Kroch and Taylor 2000) and from the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English (Kroch, Santorini and Diertani 2004). The final line in each example gives an abbreviated filename for the source text followed by the sentence ID from the corpus file.

〈図〉



**Figure 1.** The Chronological Relation between the Loss of the Dative Case Ending and (Non-)Nominative Experiencers of *Like*

〈樹形図〉



## 6. Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that the shift of case-marking on the Experiencer of *like* resulted from the interaction between the availability of inherent dative Case and the behavior of the EPP feature. Specifically, I have demonstrated that the loss of the dative case ending opened up the possibility for the Experiencer to be marked as nominative, but this change did not immediately prohibit the option of non-nominative Experiencers, which were later lost in the NP-TH construction due to the shift of the EPP feature from C to T. Thus, unlike previous attempts, I have successfully accounted for the intermediate stage, where both old and new forms were allowed, in a manner that is consistent with the core hypothesis of generative grammar that parameter (re)setting is a sudden process.

## References

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