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Analogically-driven strong and weak verb transformations in the history of English: The role of synonyms

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ABSTRACT

It is well known that many strong verbs became weak verbs in the history of the English language. A reverse process, whereby weak verbs became strong verbs, is also known. In this article, I will examine the important role synonymous verb forms played in driving these changes. The analogical extension of a form from one type to another is most likely influenced by the form's co-occurrence with other phonetically or semantically related forms (Bloomfield 1933: 409). Considering the central role that semantic similarity plays in driving analogical change, I present a series of detailed case studies on individual verbs and argue that synonymous verb forms were a primary factor in the transfer of verbs from the strong to the weak conjugation and vice-versa.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate the influence of synonyms on the transition of English verbs as related to analogy: "a process whereby one form of a language becomes more like another with which it has some association" (Arlotto 1972: 130). Old English (OE) verbs are traditionally divided into two main types, weak and strong. Weak verbs employ dental consonants in the final position to mark the past tense and the past participle; strong verbs, on the other hand, express tense distinctions by means of vowel gradation without the presence of a dental marker. The most common type of change, i.e., the transformation of strong verbs into weak verbs, sees a significant increase from the 13th to 15th centuries, the peak of which was reached in

the 14th century, according to the data from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) and Krygier's work (1994: 247). As the past tense was easier to form with weak verbs than with strong verbs, it is likely that the strong-to-weak transfer is related to the simplicity of the verbal system. The opposite development – the transfer of weak verbs to strong verbs – is less frequent and has received but scant attention from most scholars, with the exception of Wełna (1997). In this paper, I will consider the influence of synonyms on both directions of change.

Before entering into the main discussion, let me briefly review some of the previous literature on these issues. Ever since the idea that languages change as a result of borrowing, analogy, and sound change was formulated by Paul (1898) in his *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*, most scholars (e.g., Brook 1958; Myers 1966; Bambas 1980; Wełna 1991, 1997, etc.) have claimed that analogy is involved in the transformation of English verbs. Although these scholars tend to treat analogy as if it were the only relevant intrasystemic factor, there is little explanation as to how exactly this mechanism functioned. Other scholars (e.g., Wright – Wright 1928; Fries 1940; Mossé 1952; Bloomfield – Newmark 1963, etc.) focused on either the listing of new analogical forms or the chronology of the transformations without attempting to reveal their causes. For this reason, I decided to investigate in more detail the role analogy may have played in the change of some English verbs.

Some scholars (Kaluza 1900-01 [1906-07]; Michelau 1910; Long 1944; Brunner 1951; Newfield 1983; Wełna 1991, 1997; Krygier 1994) analyzed other factors which may have been responsible for such verb shifts. Especially worth mentioning in this area is Krygier's comprehensive study on the English strong verb system. Kaluza began research into some of the phonological processes in the Middle English (ME) period as factors in this change. Michelau, on the other hand, proposed several parameters: the influence of a coexisting etymologically-related weak verb on its strong counterpart, the shift to the weak conjugation for dental-final verbs (with reference to Bülbring's (1889) study), the relation between ablaut and the shift, as well as Old Norse (ON) and Norman French (NF) influences. Most scholars cited above followed many of Michelau's ideas. Exceptions include Long, Brunner, and Krygier, who presented other factors such as the effect of a related ON verb, the irregularity of ablaut patterns, and the disintegration of certain ablaut series. Since every linguistic change involves at least some degree of choice, the probability of multiple conditioning must constantly be borne in mind (Samuels 1972: 3). In this light, it is likely that, depending on the period, different combinations of factors may have contributed to

the transfer of verbs. As a whole, further research into causes of the transfer other than analogy will be necessary in the future.

The reason why I draw attention to synonyms in this study is that, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the role of synonyms has rarely been examined by historical linguists. For example, Brunner (1951: 183) suggests that the coexistence of etymologically related strong and weak verbs with different but similar meanings (e.g., pairs of intransitive strong verbs and transitive weak verbs) gave rise to a blurring of this distinction in meaning, which then led to their forms being mixed up as well. This was not included in the main body of Brunner's discussion, but as a side-comment as to how other factors might be linked to the transfer of verbs. Krygier also mentions the impact of weak congeners on the shift, but their full effect could not be assessed because of many uncertainties accompanying the issue, such as the number of strong verbs, the number of their weak counterparts, and the degree of relationship necessary to trigger the shift (1994: 252). Therefore, this study will seek to shed some light upon on this issue.

2. The role of form and meaning in analogical change

Analogical change involves a relation of similarity (Anttila 1989: 88) which can be represented in an equation of the form $A : B = C : X$, i.e., A is to B as C is to X. Through this formula one can solve for 'X', but only in those cases which fit the pattern. It is important to note that the sets on both sides of the equation are not limited to two members. Traditionally, two subtypes of analogical change are distinguished: levelling and extension. Levelling is a process which causes paradigms to become more uniform by eliminating alternations in forms. Some strong verbs have been levelled to the weak verb pattern, such as, *help*, a strong verb, whose past tense (PT) form *healp* and past participle (PP) *holpen* were replaced by *helped*. Extension, the opposite of levelling, is a process which increases irregularity in a paradigm by replacing a regular pattern with an irregular pattern due to its similarity to an existing pattern, as is the case with *dive*, a weak verb, whose PT form *dived* was superseded by *dove* on analogy with strong verb patterns like *drive / drove*, *ride / rode*, *write / wrote*, and so on.

Let me turn now to the role of meaning and form in analogy. Paul (1898: 96) remarked that individual words may attract each other due to a partial correspondence of meaning between them. Different words with a similarity in meaning can cluster into groups, and then a new form may be

created on the basis of these groups. Thus a word is subject to the influence of analogy with other semantically similar words. In addition to semantics, phonetic similarity may also play an important role in analogical change. Bloomfield suggested that "the extension of a form into a new combination with a new accompanying form is probably favoured by its earlier occurrence with phonetically or semantically related forms" (Bloomfield 1933: 409). For example, in *kine* and *cows*, the former is an obsolete plural form of *cow* and the latter is an analogically-created form. *Cows* can be represented by the following proportions: *sow* : *sows* = *cow* : *X*; *sow* : *sows*, *heifer* : *heifers*, *ewe* : *ewes* = *cow* : *X*, where in both examples *X* is solved with *cows*. The former equation illustrates analogy based on phonetic similarity, the latter on semantic similarity.

As for phonetic relations, in a previous paper (Yoneda 2010), I showed that rhyme in poetry can be associated with analogy through a closer look at syllable structure in English. As similarity of sound played an important part in analogy which contributed to the transfer of verbs, it is natural to think that a word with a similar meaning could have an impact as well. Hence it is necessary to test this hypothesis through a series of detailed case studies on individual verbs.

3. The effect of synonymous words on the conjugation type of verbs

The Bible in English is as old as the recorded history of the English language. Many biblical passages came to be associated with a gloss in connection with primarily the Latin Bible, the Vulgate (Vg). Biblical texts are useful sources for understanding language change because they allow us to trace a language's continual change in written records.

Here I will briefly touch on the practice of glossing and translation. Glosses are explanations, usually brief, of difficult words or expressions in a text, typically written in the margin or between the lines of the text; glossaries are collections of glosses, drawn together for easier reference (Szarmach et al. 1998: 316). The purpose of producing English glosses of the Latin Bible was to teach the Christian faith especially to young oblates or novices whose understanding of Latin was inadequate. As Greenfield – Calder (1986: 6) state, "[…], the beginner would first have committed the Latin psalter to memory. His teacher would have aided memorization by means of literal explanations: hence, presumably, the complete OE interlinear glosses of Latin texts in many Anglo-Saxon psalters".

In producing the English texts, the scribes were faced with a task familiar from the production of Bible translations. Ælfric, who is believed to have been a monk in Dorset and Oxfordshire and who did many translations of Greek and Latin texts, states his policy for translation in *Grammar* as follows (Zupitza 1880: 1 [trans. Wilcox 1994: 130]): "I know it is possible to translate words in many ways but I follow a simple translation for the sake of avoiding putting off the reader". Clemoes (1966: 187) also notes: "Always he [Ælfric] omitted, transposed or added to his original to suit the audience for which his work was intended. […] In general, as he states in his prefaces, he condensed. Whenever he could he simplified and explained difficult material […]". It seems likely that the translators' lexical selection underwent changes in the wake of the semantic changes of the times. Thus, it is worth examining how OE equivalents of Latin words differ among various manuscripts or versions in order to discuss the transfer of verbs.

3.1 The verbs *slǣpan* and *hnappian* in OE

To address the question of why the strong verb *slǣpan* became weak in OE, the following case study will focus on OE, ME, and EME translations of the Latin verbs *dormīre* 'to sleep, to rest, to be at ease, inactive', *ob-dormīre* 'to fall asleep' and *dormitāre* 'to be sleepy, drowsy, to begin to sleep, to fall asleep', referring to the OE Gospels (*Li, Ru1, Ru2, WSCp*)[1], Psalter manuscripts with OE Glosses (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, P, PPs)[2], and English versions of the entire Bible (*WycE, WycL, Ty, Cov, GB, Mat, BB, Gen, AV*)[3]. The *Douay--Rheims* Bible (*D-R*) is used as an EME reference for comparison.

An *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: BT* (Bosworth & Toller 1989) shows that these Latin words are typically rendered as *-slǣpan, swefan, hnappian. -slǣpan* 'to sleep' belongs to the OE strong verb class VII, and has a number of

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[1] *Li: Lindisfarne Gospels*, 10th c., Northumbrian; *Ru1: Rushworth Gospels* (all of *Mt*, *Mk* 1-2.15, *Jn* 18.1-3), c. 7th c., Mercian; *Ru2: Rushworth Gospels* (remainder), 8th c. Northumbrian; *WSCp*: The Corpus Gospels, West-Saxon.

[2] A: *Vespasian Psalter*, 8th c.; B: *Junius Psalter*, 1st half of 10th c.; C: *Cambridge Psalter*, mid 11th c. or shortly after 1000; D: *Regius Psalter*, 10th c.; E: *Eadwine Psalter*, ca 1155-1160; F: *Stowe Psalter*, mid 11th c.; G: *Vitellius Psalter*, ca 1060; H: *Tiberius Psalter*, mid 11th c.; I: *Lambeth Psalter*, 1st half of 11th c.; J: *Arundel Psalter*, 2nd half of 11th c.; K: *Salisbury Psalter*, ca 975; L: *Bosworth Psalter*, 2nd half of 10th c.; P: *Paris Psalter*, 1170-1200, PPs: a metrical version of Psalms 51-150 (cf. Pulsiano 2001).

[3] *WycE: Wycliffe Bible, earlier version*, 1382; *WycL: Wycliffe Bible, later version*, 1395; *Ty*: *Tyndale Bible*, 1534; *Cov*: *Coverdale Bible*, 1535; *GB: The Great Bible*, 1540; *Mat*: *Matthew's Bible*, 1549; *BB: The Bishops' Bible*, 1568; *Gen: The Geneva Bible*, 1587; *D-R: Douay-Rheims Bible*, 1609-10; *AV*: *Authorized Version*, 1611.

slightly different forms and meanings: *a-slāpan* from *slǣpan* 'to be sleepy, to begin to sleep, to fall asleep'; *on-slǣpan* 'to sleep, to fall asleep'; *be-slǣpan* 'to sleep'; *be-slēpan* 'to slip, lay, place, put'; *slāpian* 'to cause to sleep'. *Swefan* 'to sleep, to slumber, to rest' belongs to the OE strong verb class V and is related to the weak verb *ge-swefian* 'to cause to sleep, to cast to asleep, to lull, to appease'. *Hnappian* 'to slumber, to sleep, to doze' belongs to the weak verb class II, and its present meanings 'to sleep lightly or for a short time, to get drowsy' only appear later. It appears that *hnappian* had a meaning similar to *slǣpan* in the OE period. The *OED* describes *hnappian* as "formerly in more dignified use than at present, being frequently employed in renderings of Biblical passages" (*OED*, cf. NAP). Biblical texts are useful sources for the study of how such words are used. The English noun 'sleep' is commonly used for 'natural sleep', and also the figurative sense of 'eternal sleep', that is, 'death'. It should be possible to see whether the OE equivalents of these Latin words are distinguished in their literal and figurative usages.

In the Gospels, there are 24 instances of the Latin words *dormīre* (22 times: *Mt* 8.24; 9.24; 13.25; 25.5; 26.40; 26.43; 26.45; 27.52; 28.13; *Mk* 4.27; 4.38; 5.39; 13.36; 14.37; 14.37; 14.40; 14.41; *Lk* 8.52; 22.45; 22.46; *Jn* 11.12; 11.12), *ob-dormīre* (once: *Lk* 8.23) and *dormitāre* (once: *Mt* 25.5), and all instances of *dormīre* and *ob-dormīre* are rendered as *slǣpan*, whereas only *dormitāre* is glossed either as *slǣpan* or *hnappian*. As a gloss for *dormīre* used in the figurative sense, *slǣpan* is found five times: *Mt* 9.24; 27.52; *Mk* 5.39; *Lk* 8.52, and *Jn* 11.11. There is no distinction in the choice of OE equivalents of Latin words as far as literal or figurative usage is concerned.

As shown in (1), the gloss or translation for the Latin *dormitāre* is inconsistent among the numerous versions: *slǣpan* in *Li* and *Ru1*, but *hnappian* in *WSCp*, *WycE*, and *WycL*, and *slumber* in the rest of the versions from *Ty* to *AV*. This new expression appears in *Ty*, and as this is mostly followed by the rest of the versions, it seems natural to conclude that *Ty* had a great impact on following translations. Therefore, in this paper I only cite the example from *Ty*. The Latin *dormīre* is glossed as *slǣpan* in all versions with the exception of *Ru1*. Let me point out some other things: most of the versions seem to avoid the combined use of same glosses, weak forms of *slǣpan* appear in Anglian (i.e. Mercian and Northumbrian) texts while strong forms remain in *WSCp*, weak forms of *slǣpan* are observed in *WycE* and *WycL* the new expression slumber appears from *Ty* onwards. Some of these features can be observed in (2).

(1)   *Mt* 25.5   …**dormitaverunt** omnes et **dormierunt**.
        [*D-R*: They all **slumbered** and **slept**.]

Li: **geslepedon** alle & **geslepdon**.
Ru1: **slepade** ealle & **slep ofereode**.
WSCp: **hnappudon** hig ealle & **slepun**.
WycE: alle **nappiden** and **slepten**.
WycL: alle thei **nappiden** and **slepten**.
Ty: all **slombred** and **slepte**.

(2)   *Lk* 8.23   Navigantibus autem illis **obdormiit**…
[*D-R*: When they were sailing, he **slept**.]
Li: hrowundum vel miððy gehrowun ðonne ðæm **slepde**.
WSCp: Þa hig reowun, þa **slep** he.
WycE: Sothli, hem rowynge, he **slepte**.
WycL: And while thei rowiden, he **slepte**.
Ty: And as they sayled he **fell a slepe**.

Thirteen surviving OE glossed Psalters were examined, as shown in Tab. 1. The Latin verbs (*dormīre*, *ob-dormīre*, *dormitāre*) corresponding to *hnappian* are

Table 1. Distribution of the OE equivalents of the Latin words *dormīre*, *ob-dormīre* and *dormitāre* in OE glossed Psalters

			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	P	PPs
1	3.6	*dormīre*	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○		○	
2	40.6	*dormīre*	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○		○	
3	56.5	*dormīre*	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			○
4	67.14	*dormīre*	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			○
5	75.6	*dormīre*	○ ●	○	○ ●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○			○
1	4.9	*ob-dormīre*	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○		○	
2	12.4	*ob-dormīre*	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○	
3	43.23	*ob-dormīre*	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○ ●	○	○		○	
4	120.3	*ob-dormīre*	●	●	●	○	○	●	○		○ ●	○	○	○ ●		○
5	120.4	*ob-dormīre*	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	○	○		▲
1	75.7	*dormitāre*	●	●	●	●	○ ●	●	●	●	●	●	●			○
2	118.28	*dormitāre*	●	●	●	○	○	○	○		●	○	○	●		○
3	120.4	*dormitāre*	●	●	●	●	○	●	●		●	●	●	●		○

●: *hnappian*; ○: *slǣpan*; ▲: *ge-swefian*; parts that do not correspond are left blank; instances where both *hnappian* and *slǣpan* appear are shaded in grey.

marked with ●, to *slǣpan* with ○, and to *ge-swefian* with ▲. Parts that do not correspond are left blank, and instances where both *hnappian* and *slǣpan* appear are shaded in grey. The OE equivalents of Latin words differ greatly in the various Psalters. Either *hnappian* or *slǣpan* is given as a gloss for the Latin *dormīre*, *ob-dormīre*, and *dormitāre*. Only *dormīre* in Psalms 67.14 and *ob-dormīre* in 12.4 and 120.4 are consistently translated with *slǣpan*, with the exception of the PPs. *Ge-swefian* appears only once as an equivalent of the Latin *ob-dormīre*.

These Psalters can be divided into two groups according to the Latin texts they are based on: one is the *Roman Psalter* (A to D and L), and the other is the *Gallican Psalter* (E to K and P). With some exceptions, when compared to the Roman type, the Gallican type seems to use *hnappian* for *dormitāre* and *slǣpan* for *dormīre* and *ob-dormīre*. However, although A and D are of the same type, the opposite distribution is observed in D. Both *hnappian* and *slǣpan* coexisted in the OE period, but from the latter half of OE to ME and later, *slǣpan* outnumbers *hnappian* more markedly. This appears to confirm the idea that *slǣpan* gradually became more common as compared to *hnappian*.

The thirteen instances shown in Tab. 1 can be spilt into three groups based on their meanings: 1) the figurative use of 'sleep', 2) 'to lie', 3) 'to slumber, to sleep'. The figurative use is found in 3.6, 4.9, 12.4, 40.9, 43.23, and 120.4 with the Latin verbs *dormīre*, *ob-dormīre*, and *dormitāre*. Both *slǣpan* and *hnappian* appear as glosses of these Latin words. As is the case with the Gospels, there is no distinction between the literal and figurative usages. A difference in glosses can be found in 3.6, 4.9, 40.9, and 43.23 in the various Psalters. This contrasts with what was found in other places; for example, in 12.4 and 120.4, the Latin *ob-dormīre* is rendered as *slǣpan* in all versions, with the exception of PPs *ge-swefian* in 120.4. Referring to 3.6, 4.9, 40.9, and 43.23 in Tab. 1, one can see that *hnappian* is preferably used in A and B, *slǣpan* in D, E, G, H, J, K, and P, and both of the verbs in C, F, and I. These instances show that *hnappian* and *slǣpan* may have been interchangeable. For instance, in 3.6 the Latin verb *dormivi*, which is the first person singular perfect active indicative form of *dormīre* 'to sleep', corresponds to *hnappian* in A, B, and F, whereas *slǣpan* is found in the others; and in 4.9 *dormiam*, the first person singular future indicative form of dormīre 'to sleep', is equivalent to *hnappian* in A, B, C, and F. Conversely, *slǣpan* is found in the rest. Another thing to point out is that the verbal type of *slǣpan* differs among OE glosses as in 3.6 and 4.9, where its weak form can be observed in G and J and the original form in the rest.

(3) Psalms 3.6   Ego **dormivi** et somnum coepi…
[*D-R*: I **have slept** and taken my rest.]
A: Ic **hneappade** & slepan ongon.
B: Ic **hnappade** & slapan ongon.
C: Ic **slep** & hnappunge ic onfeng.
D: **Slep** ic aras forðon anfeng.
E: Ic **slep** & swefne ic onfeng.
F: Ic **hnæppode** & ic swodrode.
G: Ic **slepte** & slæp ic ongan.
H: ic **slep** onfeng me.
I: Ic **slep** & ic eom geswefod.
J: Ic **slæpte** & slæpingan ic eom.
K: Ic **slep** & swefnode.
P: þa ongan ic slapan and **slep**.

(4) Psalms 4.9   In pace in idipsum **dormiam**…
[*D-R*: In peace in the selfsame I will sleep.]
A: In sibbe in ða ilcan ic **neapiu**.
B: In sibbe in þa ilcan ic **hnappige**.
C: On sybbe in þa ilcan ic **hnappige**.
D: On sybbe on þæt selfe ic **slape**.
E: On sibbe on þæt selfe ic **slæpe**.
F: On sibbe on þæt sylfe ic **hnæppie**.
G: In sibbe on þære ilcan ic **slepte**.
H: on sibbe on þæt sylfe ic **slape**.
I: On sibbe on him sylfum ic **slæpe**.
J: On sibbe on þare ilcan ic **slæpte**.
K: On sibbe on þæt sylfe ic **slape**.
P: on þære sibbe **slapan**.

The Latin *dormīre* glossed 'to lie' can be found in 56.5 and 67.14. In 56.5, *dormīre* is glossed as *hnappian* in A and C, whereas it is *slǣpan* in the others. On the other hand, *slǣpan* only appears in 67.14 as an equivalent of the Latin *dormīre* in the various Psalters. Hence, it seems clear that both *hnappian* and *slǣpan* overlapped in meaning in OE.

In 75.6, 75.7, 118.28, and 120.3, four examples of Latin words for 'to slumber, to sleep' are found. The OE equivalents of the Latin words vary among the various Psalters, especially in 118.28 and 120.3. In 118.28 the Latin *dormitāre* is glossed as *hnappian* in A, B, C, I, and L while *slǣpan* is used in the others. Here, no weak verbs are observable. In 120.3 the gloss for the Latin

obdormīre is *hnappian* in A, B, and C whereas it is *slǣpan* in the others with the exception of I and L, where both *hnappian* and *slǣpan* appear.

In general, the verb *hnappian* in OE and early ME denoted 'to sleep, to slumber, to fall asleep, to lie' as well as the figurative use of 'sleep'; however, the meaning of *hnappian* was gradually circumscribed, and it came to be used in the more specific sense of, for example, 'to sleep lightly or for a short time, to get drowsy'. Therefore, I conclude that the weak verb *hnappian* was a synonym of *slǣpan* in the OE period.

(5)   Psalms 118.28   **Dormitavit** anima mea prae taedio…
       [*D-R*: My soul **hath slumbered** through heaviness.]
       A: **Hneapade** sawul min fore longunge.
       B: **Hnappode** sawl min for langunge.
       C: **Hnappode** sawl min fore longunge.
       D: **Slep** sawl min for æþrote.
       E: **Slep** sæwle mine for unluste.
       F: **Slæpð** sawle min for gælnysse.
       G: **Slep** sawl min.
       I: **Hneppade** sawle min for ðrece vel for æmelnysse.
       J: **Slæpþ** sawle min for gælnesse.
       K: **Slep** sawl min for æþrote.
       L: **Hnappode** sawl min for langunge & utrotnesse.
       PPs: Min sawl **aslep**, þa me sorh begeat for langunga.

(6)   Psalms 120.3   …neque **obdormiet** qui custodit te.
       [*D-R*: Neither let him **slumber** that keepeth thee.]
       A: ne **hneappað** se ðe haldeð ðec.
       B: ne **hnappað** se ðe healdeð ðe.
       C: ne ne **hnappað** se ðe healdyð þe.
       D: & na **slape** þe healde ðe.
       E: nemne **slepeþ** þæ gehielt ðe.
       F: & ne ne **hnæppie** se ðe healde þe.
       G: & **slapað** se þe healdeð þe.
       I: ne ne **slæpeð** vel ne ne **hnappaþ** se þe gehealt þe.
       J: & na **slape** se þe healdeþ þe.
       K: & na **slapeþ** þe healdeþ þe.
       L: ne ne **hnappað** & **slæpeð** se þe healdeþ þe.
       PPs: ne hycge to **slæpe** se ðe healdeð þe.

The combined use of different lexical items which have the same or a similar meaning is sometimes effective in helping to convey a strong impression of

a scene. One finds an alternation between *hnappian* and *slǣpan* in the texts, it is likely that there is a close semantic relation between these words. I found six examples of the combined use of *hnappian* and *slǣpan* in glossing the Latin words *dormīre*, *ob- dormīre*, or *dormitāre*, which are shaded in grey in Tab. 1 and shown in (6)-(9). Here I noticed that the combined use of words with a similar meaning can be seen not just in a single manuscript, but in several. Furthermore, a noteworthy example is shown below in (8), which indicates how *slǣpan* may have become a weak verb in analogy to *hnappian*. *Hnappian* occurs with a weak form of *slǣpan* in A, whereas it appears with a strong form of *slǣpan* in C.

(7)   Psalms 43.23   Exurge quare **obdormis** Domine exurge.
        [*D-R*: Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise.]
        I: Uparis forhwi **hnappas** þu vel hwi **slæpst** þu aris.

(8)   Psalms 75.6   …**dormierunt** somnum suum…
        [*D-R*: They **have slept** their sleep.]
        A: **hneapedun** [vel **slypton**][4] slep heara.
        C: **slepun** vel **hnappudon** slæp hyra.

(9)   Psalms 75.7   **…dormitaverunt** qui ascenderunt equos.
        [*D-R*: They **have** all **slumbered** that mounted on horseback.]
        E: **slepon hnappodon** þa æstigen hors.

All available evidence thus suggests that both *hnappian* and *slǣpan* were essentially synonymous in OE. I also noted that both *hnappian* and *slǣpan* are used as glosses for the Latin words *dormīre*, *ob-dormīre*, and *dormitāre* in the same verse. This allows us to conclude that the strong verb *slǣpan* began to employ the weak conjugation in OE due to the analogical influence of the synonymous *hnappian*.

3.2 OE words for 'to spit'

The typical terms for 'to spit' in OE are as follows. *Spātan* and *spīwan* (= *spew*) were strong verbs which had related meanings such as 'to spew up', 'to vomit', and 'to spit up'. Weak verbs include *spǣtan*, *spēowan / spīowan*, *-spittan* (= *spit*), *spittian*, *spatilian* and *spigettan*. Derived words (weak verbs)

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4   [ ]: a mark for insertion.

are -*spi(o)wian* from the PT *spiowede* of *spēowan /spīowan* 'to spew, to spit up' (see *BT*). As for the Latin words which correspond to these words, they are as follows: -*spuere* 'to spit (out/upon), to spew', *sputāre* 'to spit, to spit out', *screāre* 'to hawk, to clear the throat noisily', -*vomere* 'to vomit, to vomit up, to vomit forth, to throw up, to spew out' (see *ALD*). Glosses corresponding to the Latin -*spuere* are mostly *spā/ǣtan* or -*spittan*, but *spā/ǣtan* seems to be predominant, and the Latin -*vomere* is chiefly glossed with *spīwan* according to the examination according to a survey of OE texts: Saint Gregory's *Pastoral Care* (*CP*) (MSS, C and H)[5], Ælfric's *Grammar* (*ÆGram*) and Ælfric's translation of the Heptateuch (*ÆHept*), *WSCp*, etc.

First, I will consider why *spīwan* (= *spew*), which belongs to the strong verb class I, changed to the weak class. In the *Book of Leviticus* (*Lev.*) 18.28; 20.22 and the *Book of the Apocalypse of St. John* 3.16 of *WycE* and *WycL*, -*vomere* corresponds to the weak verb *cast*, a verb which was borrowed from ON *kasta*. However, *spew* with weak forms is found from *Ty* to *AV*, except for *D-R* which uses *vomit* instead.

(10) *Lev* 18.28   Cavete ergo ne et vos similiter **evomat** cum paria feceritis sicut **evomuit** gentem quae fuit ante vos.
[*D-R*: Beware then, lest in like manner, it **vomit** you also out, if you do the like things, as it **vomited** out the nation that was before you.]
WycE: Shoneth therfor, lest and alsoȝow it **caste** out, whanne the same thinges ȝe doon, as it **keste** out folk that was before ȝow.
WycL: Therfor be ye war, lest it **caste** out viliche also you in lijk manere, whanne ye han do lijk synnes, as it **castide** out vileche the folk, that was bifor you.
Ty: lest that the lande **spewe** you out when ye haue defiled it, as it **spewed** out the nacions that where there before you.

(11) *Lev* 20.22   …ne et vos **evomat** terra equam intaraturi estis et habitaturi.
[*D-R*: Lest the land into which you are to enter to dwell therein, **vomit** you also out.]
WycL: lest the lond, in to which ye schulen entre and dwelle, **caste** out viliche also you.
Ty: that the londe whether I brynge you to dwell therein, **spewe** you not oute.

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5   MS.C: Cotton Tiberius B. xi., in the British Museum (C. i.); MS. H: Hatton 20 (formerly 88) in the Bodleian (H.).

(12)   *Apocalypse of St. John* 3.16   …incipiam te **evomere** ex ore meo.
          [*D-R*: I will begin to **vomit** thee out of my mouth.]
          WycE: I shal bigynne for to **caste** thee out of my mouth.
          WycL: I schal bigynne to **caste** thee out of my mouth.
          Ty: I will **spew** ye oute of my mouth.

According to the *OED*, weak forms for *spew* are first attested in the 14th century. In addition, the weak verb *vomit*, which was borrowed from Latin, appears after the 14th century. Although the strong verb *spīwan* was used in OE as a gloss for Latin *-vomere*, the existence in later glosses of two synonymous weak verbs, i.e., *cast* and *vomit*, suggests that these verbs may have had an analogical influence on *spīwan*, causing it to become a weak verb.

        Now let me turn to the problem of why *-spittan* (= *spit*), a weak verb, changed to a strong verb. Previous studies like Jespersen (1942: 48), Brunner (1962: 233), and Esser (1988: 31) claimed that the new strong forms of *-spittan* came about from the past form of *spǣtan*, a weak verb, while others like Bülbring (1889: 113-114), Wright (1924: 177), and Price (1970: 136) argued that the two originally distinct verbs *-spittan* and *spǣtan* were mixed up due partly to the operation of analogy that occurred after these forms became phonetically similar to *sit*. What seems to be lacking are any convincing examples which show the relation between these two verbs. Let me carefully examine the effects of synonyms in the OE period, and then demonstrate that the effects are diachronic.

        As mentioned above, *spā/ǣtan* and *-spittan* were used interchangeably as an equivalent of the Latin *-spuere*, but *spā/ǣtan* was quite dominant in OE. As a result of their semantic relatedness, their forms were gradually combined in the OE period. For my analysis, I will take a look at the diachronic change of the OE equivalents of the Latin *-spuere* in the Gospels. The third person plural future active indicative form of *-spuere* in *Mk* 10.34 and the present infinitive active form of *-spuere* in *Mk* 14.65 correspond to *-spittan* in *Li*, *Ru2*, and from *Ty* onward, whereas *-spǣtan* is used in *WSCp* and *WycL*, and either *-spǣtan* or *-spittan* in *WycE*. What is to be noted here is that *-spittan* occurs in infinitive and present forms in Northumbrian, but *-spǣtan* occurs only in West-Saxon (WS).

(13)   *Mk* 10.34   et inludent ei et **conspuent** eum et flagellabunt eum…
          [*D-R*: And they shall mock him, and **spit** on him, and scourge him, and kill him.]
          Li: & bismerageð him & hia **spittes** hine & hia suingeð hine hia acuoellað hine.

Ru2: & bismerigas hine & **spittas** & hiæ swingas hine & hiæ cwellað hine.

WSCp: & hi hine bysmirað & hi him on **spætað** & hine swingað & ofsleað hine.

WycE: And thei schulen scorne him, and **byspeete** him.

WycL: and **bispete** hym, and bete him; and thei schulen sle hym.

Ty: and they shall mocke hym and scourge him and **spit** vpo hym and kyll him.

(14)   *Mk* 14.65   Et coeperunt quidam **conspuere** eum…
        [*D-R*: And some began to **spit** on him.]
        Li: & ongunnun summe efne **gespitta** vel gehorogæ hine.
        Ru2: & ongunnun sume efne **gispita** vel hyra on hine.
        WSCp: And sume agunnon him on **spætan**.
        WycE: And summe bigunnen for to **bispitte** him.
        WycL: And summe bigunnen to **bispete** hym.
        Ty: And some begane to **spit** at him.

With regard to the OE equivalents of the Latin *-spuere* in the past tense or as a past participle, *-spātan* is observed in most cases with a few occurrences of *-spittan* to be found in OE. For example, in *Jn* 9.6, the Latin *ex-puit*, the third singular perfect indicative active form of *-spuere*, is rendered as *aspeaft*[6] in *Li*, *aspeoft* in *Ru2*, and *spætte* in *WSCp*; in *Lk* 18.32, the Latin *con-spuetur*, the third singular future indicative of the passive form of *-spuere*, is translated as *gespeoftad*[7] in *Li*, *gispitted* in *Ru2*, and *onspæt* in *WSCp*. In short, the new weak form and the original strong form of *-spātan* occur in *Li* and the forms of a weak verb *spittan* and a strong verb *-spātan* appear in *Ru2*. In contrast, the weak verb *-spǣtan* remains in *WSCp*. These observations imply that in Northumbrian *-spittan* was more likely to be used for infinitive and present forms for the term 'to spit', while *-spātan* was used for its past and past participle forms, but the situation differed in WS where the weak verb *-spǣtan* was commonly used.

     Tab. 2 shows the distribution of OE equivalents for the Latin *-spuere* in the numerous versions of the Gospels. A further important point is that the PT/PP forms for -spittan are variable, such as *spit* with the dental suffix, *spit*

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6   *Speoft* and *speaft*: the reduplicated past forms of *spātan* (cf. Campbell, 1959 [2003]: 320).

7   According to Krygier, *gespeoftad* is the PP form of **speoftian* which is derived from the PT *speoft* of *-spǣtan*, but *BT* has taken an uncertain stance on it. Campbell (1959 [2003]: 320) claims that it is formed from PT *speoft*.

Table 2. Distribution of OE equivalents for the Latin -*spuere* in the numerous versions of the Gospels

	VG	Li	Ru1	Ru2	WSCp	WycE	WycL	Ty	Cov	GB	Mat	BB	Gen	D-R
Mt 26.67	expuerunt	speafton	spittadun		spætton	spitten	speten	spat	spytted	did spytt	spat	did spyt	spet	did spit
Mt 27.30	expuentes	spætende vel	spittende		spætton	spittynge	speten	spitted	spytted	had spytt	spitted	had spyt	spitted	spitting
Mk 7.33	expuens	gebleuu		gibleow	spætende	spetinge	spetide	dyd spyt	dyd spyt	dyd spyt	did spitte	dyd spyt	did spit	spitting
Mk 8.23	expuens	speaft		speoft	spætte	spetynge	spete	spat	spat	had spyt	spat	had spyt	spat	spitting
Mk 10.34	conspuent	spittes		spittas	spætað	byspeete	bispete	spit	spyt	spyt	spyte	spit	spit	spit
Mk 14. 65	conspuere	gespitta		gispita	spætan	bispitte	bispete	spit	spyt	spit	spit	spyt	spit	spit
Mk 15.19	conspueban	speofton		speoftun	spætton	bispatten	bispatten	spat	spytted	dyd spitt	spatte	did spit	spat	did spit
Lk 18.32	conspuetur	gespeoftad		gispitted	onspæt	bispet	bispat	spetted	spitted	sppytted	spitted	spitted	spitted	spit
Jn 9.6	expuit	aspeaft		aspeoft	spætte	spette	spette	spate	spat	spat	spatte	spat	spat	spat

with *do*-periphrasis, and *spat* with or without the dental suffix. These forms can be seen in various versions. However, *spat* with *do*-periphrasis never occurs, as shown in (15). This implies that the weak form *spat* functions well by itself as a past tense form for *-spittan*.

(15)   *Mt* 26.67   Tunc **expuerunt** in faciem eius.
        [*D-R*: Then **did** they **spit** in his face.]
        Li: ða **speafton** in onsionc his.
        Ru1: þa **spittadun** on his ondwliotu.
        WSCp: þa **spætton** hig on hys ansyne.
        WycE: Thanne thei **spitten** in to his face.
        WycL: Thanne thei **speten** in his face.
        Cov: Then **spytted** they in his face.
        GB: Then **dyd** they **spytt** in his face.
        Mat: Then **spat** they in hys face.
        BB: Then **dyd** they **spyt** in his face.
        Gen: Then **spet** they in his face.
        Ty: Then **spat** they in his face.
        AV: Then **did** they **spit** in his face.

According to Elleågrd's (1953: 161-2) research on the use of *do*-periphrasis in various types of sentences, the second half of the 16 century was the peak of the usage of *do*-periphrasis in affirmative statements. Thus it is probably no coincidence that the use of *do*-periphrasis as a past marker for *-spittan* appeared around that time. One of the likely causes for inserting *do*-periphrasis is to differentiate the form of the preterit from that of the present of such verbs as *cast*, *put*, *set*, *spit*, *beat* and *eat* (Grainger 1907; Trinka 1930: 44; Rissanen 1999: 240). If there were a similarity between present and past, one would desire to avoid ambiguity. Then the historical competitor *-spǣtan* or *do*-periphrasis may be used for resolving the issue.

4. Concluding remarks

Through a series of detailed case studies on several individual verbs, I have argued that the transformation of verbs from strong to weak or vice-versa occurred as a result of analogy based on semantic relatedness. For instance, the strong verb *slǣpan* became a weak verb by analogy to the synonymous weak verb *hnappian*. The strong verb *spīwan* became weak under the

influence of the loanwords *cast* and *vomit*. The original weak verb *spittan* became strong under the influence of the strong verb *spātan* and its weak form *spǣtan*. I also noted that the simplification of final inflectional endings led to formal ambiguity between the present and past. In this case, the historical competitor -*spǣtan* or *do*-periphrasis were used for disambiguating the form. As a result, the original weak verb *spittan* obtained the PT form of -*spǣtan*. Furthermore, it was shown that the transfer of English verbs is often fostered by the verb type of co-occurring synonymous words. It is hoped that this study will contribute to elucidating the history of the English verb, despite the fact that it documents only a small number of cases. More comprehensive studies are necessary in the future.

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