"It grew a day of expectation"

A diachronic corpus study on the evolution of the verb *grow* in British English

Rosaleena Luokkala
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Abstract

English has an extraordinary number of labile verbs, that is, verbs that can be used both transitively with a causative sense and intransitively with an inchoative sense. This corpus-based study investigates the evolution of the verb grow from exclusively intransitive to labile in British English in the Late Modern English period. A random sample of 500 instances of the verb grow was drawn from the period 1710-1780 as well as from the period 1850-1920 of the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts in order to track diachronic changes. The instances in the samples were categorized according to their verb pattern and type of complement (if any), and instances of the past participle grown were also categorized based on the auxiliary used (be/have/none). The study suggests that grow came to be used transitively when resultative intransitive constructions (e.g. be grown (over)) were reanalyzed as passives; that the use of noun phrase complements with copular grow decreased and became archaic to make the distinction between copular and transitive uses less ambiguous; and that the fact that the be-auxiliary was replaced by the have-auxiliary in perfect constructions helped avoid ambiguity between intransitive and transitive uses of grow. Thus, the study provides some empirical evidence for Visser's (1963) hypothesis that the change from be- to have-perfects played a central role in the acquisition of lability.

Keywords
grow, labile verb, transitivity, corpus study, diachronic study.
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1. Introduction

Verbs are said to be “the most important lexical and syntactic category of a language” (Fellbaum, 1990, p. 278). While grammatical sentences in English can be composed without a referential noun, as in *It is snowing*, they must all contain at least one verb (Fellbaum, 1990, p. 278). Verbs are also considered “more complex” than nouns (Pickering & Frisson, 2001, p. 557). The importance and complexity of verbs make them an interesting category of language to study.

Verbs are distinguished by the syntactic patterns they can occur in; the two main patterns are intransitive and transitive. Modern English is extraordinary in that it has so many verbs that can be used both intransitively (without an object) and transitively (with an object) without formal marking to distinguish between the two syntactic patterns. In this study, these verbs will be referred to as ‘labile verbs’. There are estimated to be over 800 labile verbs in Present-day English (PDE) (McMillion, 2006, p. 185). The number is considerably smaller in other Germanic languages (McMillion, 2006, p. 185; Haspelmath, 1993) and it was also much smaller in Old English (55 according to Visser, 1963, p. 99). For some reason the number of labile verbs in English seems to be increasing. Due to research lacking in this field, not much is known about the mechanisms of lability and why and how specific verbs become labile (Kulikov & Lavidas, 2014, p. 872).

*Grow* is an example of a labile verb in PDE. The verb has existed since the Middle Ages, and it was originally used exclusively intransitively, as in *The corn grew fast* (grow, n.d.-a). The earliest example of intransitive *grow* in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is from circa 888 (grow, n.d.-c). A transitive sense meaning “to produce or cultivate” appeared in the 1700s (grow, n.d.-a). The earliest example of this transitive use in the OED is from 1774: “They likewise grow some Rice and Tobacco, which is sent through Virginia” (grow, n.d.-c).

The aim of the study is to investigate the evolution of the verb *grow* and the contexts in which it came to be used transitively in British English. The study attempts to answer the following question: how has the verb *grow* developed a transitive use in British English over the course of the Late Modern English period? The question will be investigated using the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts. The verb *grow* has been studied previously by Alam (2003) and Qing-Hua (2011). They both examine the polysemy of *grow* from a synchronic perspective and demonstrate in different ways that the polysemy is a result of an extension of the verb’s basic literal meaning, that of the development of a living thing towards maturity. However, the diachronic development of transitive *grow* has not been studied in detail before.

The rest of the thesis is organized in the following way: chapter 2 will describe the theoretical background necessary for understanding the categorization of the corpus instances as well as the findings; chapter 3 will present the method and material used in the study; in chapter 4, the categorization and the findings of the study will be presented; finally, chapter 5 will conclude the thesis.
2. Background

This part will introduce the concept of transitivity and discuss previous research on English labile verbs. This section will form the basis for understanding the categorization of the corpus material.

Transitivity refers to the ability of predicates to take direct objects. A distinction is generally made between intransitive and transitive verbs: the former do not take objects, whereas the latter do. In English there are many verbs that can appear in both intransitive and transitive verb patterns. The following section describing the verb patterns is based on McMillion and the examples therein (n.d., pp. 30-35). The patterns are summarized in Table 1.

Intransitive verbs can be bare intransitive or copular. The bare intransitive pattern consists of a subject and a predicate (i.e. a verb group). In this pattern the subject either does or undergoes something, and thus, the semantic role of the subject within this pattern can be that of an actor or that of an undergoer.

- The chair broke.
- The queen died.
- Oscar coughed.

The copular pattern is seen as a sub-category of the intransitive pattern. It consists of a subject, a predicate, and a subject predicative. The subject predicative is a complement that attaches, for example, a quality, characteristic, or location to the subject. In terms of semantics, this pattern often has the sense of being or becoming.

- Harry is in the kitchen.
- Lucy became a doctor.
- She grew anxious.

Transitive verbs can be monotransitive, ditransitive, or complex transitive. The monotransitive pattern consists of a subject, a predicate, and a direct object. A direct object is a complement in the form of a noun phrase or a subordinate clause. The overall sense of this pattern is that the subject affects the direct object by doing something to or with the object. Thus, the direct object typically expresses the patient role and can often take the place of the subject in a passive clause.

- Charlie despises him.
- They grew cabbages.
- I hope that Emily shows up.

The ditransitive pattern includes a subject, a predicate, an indirect object, and a direct object. An indirect object often expresses the recipient role, takes the form of a noun phrase, and is placed before the direct object. Semantically, the subject in a ditransitive pattern ‘transfers’ the direct object to the indirect object.
We wrote him a postcard.
Lucy gave Oscar a new sweater.

A complex transitive consists of a subject, a predicator, a direct object, and an object predicative. An object predicative ascribes a property to the direct object and is typically realized by a noun phrase or an adjective phrase. Semantically, this pattern often denotes the result of an event or caused motion, or has the sense of viewing things in a certain way.

They appointed her managing director.
Charlie pushed Harry off the bus.

Table 1. Verb patterns: the first two are intransitive and the last three are transitive. Based on McMillion (n.d., p. 35). S=subject; P=predicatore; sP=subject predicative; dO=direct object; iO=indirect object; oP=object predicative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intransitive</td>
<td>S P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copular</td>
<td>S P sP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monotransitive</td>
<td>S P dO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditransitive</td>
<td>S P iO dO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex transitive</td>
<td>S P dO oP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adverbials can be added to any transitivity pattern to express circumstances related to the event described in the clause, for example, time, place, manner, condition or reason; the speaker’s view on what they are saying; or a semantic link between sentences. Adverbials are commonly realized by preposition phrases, adverb phrases, noun phrases, or subordinate clauses. Adverbials can function as either modifiers or complements, but there is some disagreement as to where to draw the line between the two. However, in McMillion (n.d., p. 30), the term ‘adverbials’ is reserved for modifiers and obligatory elements are referred to as complements. Following McMillion (n.d.), this study uses the term ‘adverbial’ to refer to optional elements (underlined in the examples) that can be added to any clause pattern without changing the basic structure of the clause:

Mrs. Jones died in her bed last Sunday. (intransitive)
Unfortunately, she was ill last weekend. (copular)
They grew cabbages in their garden. (monotransitive)
However, she bought him a new sweater. (ditransitive)
He pushed him off the bus furiously. (complex transitive)

Preposition phrases are sometimes modifiers, as in Mrs. Jones died in her bed, but can in some cases be seen as complements. Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) mention quasi-adjectival complements in the form of preposition phrases, such as This machine is out of date and This dress seems out of fashion. They can be considered adjectival for three reasons: they are semantically similar to adjectives (out-of-date/obsolete), they can be coordinated with adjectives (They’re happy and in good
health) and they are used as complements with other copular verbs besides be (They seem in good health) (p. 658).

Many verbs in English can be used both intransitively and transitively with a shift in terms of sense from inchoative to causative. The intransitive verb pattern has an inchoative sense, because the subject is presented as undergoing a change by itself without an external agent or causer. In the transitive pattern, the subject of the intransitive pattern is placed in object position and now there is a causative sense: the new subject is presented as doing something to the object. These verbs are sometimes referred to as ergative verbs, “double-functioned or amphibious verbs” (Visser, 1963, p. 97), ambitransitive verbs (Dixon, 1994, p. 18), etc., but the term ‘labile verbs’ is used in this study, because it is deemed to be the most neutral and transparent (McMillion, 2006, p. 7-10). McMillion (2006) defines labile verbs in the following way:

1. They can occur in both transitive and intransitive patterns.
2. The subjects of the intransitive patterns denote the same kind of entities as the objects in corresponding transitive patterns.
3. The transitive patterns express a causative event in which the transitive subject causes some change in the direct object. The causative subject is external to the affected object and has the semantic role of actor or agent, and, depending on the individual verb, can include animate beings, events, natural forces, and conditions.
4. The intransitive patterns express events in which the subjects, usually inanimate participants, are interpretable as self-causing or self-affecting, or in which an external cause is irrelevant. (p. 1)

McMillion moreover uses the term in a restrictive sense to refer to verbs that can be used in both transitivity patterns without being marked either morphologically or lexically, for example break (intransitive) and break (transitive) (p. 9).

According to Haspelmath (1993), a causative-inchoative verb pair is defined semantically. For example, the stick broke (inchoative) and the girl broke the stick (causative) describe the same basic situation, but whereas the causative clause includes an agent who causes the stick to break, the inchoative clause presents the situation as occurring by itself, even if there may be an agent in the objective situation (p. 90). He furthermore points out that the condition for a verb to appear in an inchoative-causative alternation pair is that it does not contain any “agent-oriented meaning components or other highly specific meaning components that make the spontaneous occurrence of the event extremely unlikely” (p. 94). In other words, the verb must be semantically free of any reference to an agent. This is exemplified by means of cut and tear, where the former includes the agent-oriented meaning component ‘by means of a sharp instrument’, whereas the latter does not, which is why it can be used both transitively and intransitively (p. 93).

Lability can be seen in different ways depending on the theoretical perspective. Most generative theories on lability posit different lexical entries for the inchoative and causative verb meanings, which dictate the argument structure patterns associated with them, and formulate lexical rules to derive one from the other (e.g. Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 1994, p. 47). More recent accounts from cognitive and constructionalist perspectives have criticized the redundancy of these multiple lexical verb entries, and
focused on the meanings that can result from the combination of a verb's meaning with the meanings carried by the constructions it combines with (e.g. Goldberg, 1995).

English differs from other languages, including other Germanic languages, in that it has so many verbs that can be used transitively and intransitively just by alternating the word order (Haseleu, 1993, p. 101). Languages use various ways to mark the causative-inchoative contrast; they can, for example, use affixation, suppletion or particles, or change the stem vowel. English can mark the contrast in these ways, for example *raise–rise* and *lay–lie* show a change in the stem vowel, whereas *kill–die* and *teach–learn* are examples of suppletion (McMillion, 2006, p. 17). However, many causative-inchoative alternations are expressed using labile verbs, which means that there is no formal difference between the causative and the inchoative. According to McMillion (2006), there are at least 800 labile verbs in PDE: 500-700 single-word ones and 200-300 multi-word ones, that is, phrasal verbs (p. 7), whereas Old English (OE) had relatively few labile verbs in comparison.

Visser (1963) was one of the first to describe this increase in labile verbs from OE to PDE: “Historically, the most remarkable fact is that, whereas in Old English the number of double-faced or amphibious verbs was far inferior to that of intransitive verbs, in Pres. D. English amphibious verbs far outnumber the intransitive verbs” (p. 99). In other words, he says that intransitive verbs were far more prevalent than labile verbs in OE, whereas the reverse is true for Modern English (ModE). He illustrates the transitivization process by juxtaposing, on the one hand, 223 exclusively intransitive verbs in OE with 58 in ModE, and, on the other hand, 55 labile verbs in OE with 506 in ModE (p. 98-127). These lists are certainly not exhaustive and have been reviewed and contested, for example, by van Gelderen (2011), but the numbers do give an idea of the extent of the change that has taken place from OE to PDE.

Visser (1963) mentions the loss of the prefix *ge*- as one of the reasons for the increase in labile verbs. The prefix used to be one of the distinguishing factors between transitive and intransitive verbs in OE: *growan* was the intransitive verb meaning “to sprout, flourish” and *gegrowan* the transitive equivalent meaning “to produce” (p. 127). When the prefix disappeared, the transitive and intransitive forms became identical. Another reason mentioned by Visser is the ambiguity in constructions such as *it was crumpled*, where the verb phrase can be seen as an intransitive one which expresses a resulting state or as a passive construction of a transitive verb suggesting the operation of an agent: *it was crumpled [by someone]* (p. 131). This point will be relevant to the discussion below. Visser mentions several other factors that have in his view contributed to the increase in labile verbs. However, they are only hypotheses which need to be investigated and tested. It is quite possible that it is because there are so many ways in which verbs can become labile that the labilization process has been so extensive.

Although there is some research showing that there is an increase in lability from OE to ModE, diachronic aspects of labile verbs have overall received very little attention. Kulikov and Lavidas (2014) argue that “[a] systematic treatment of [lability] from a diachronic perspective is lacking: the rise, development, and decline of labile verbs remain on the periphery of typological research. In many cases, we cannot explain why and how the lability emerges and disappears” (p. 872). In other words, there is a need
for research on the diachronic aspects of lability, both in English and in other languages, in order to explain how verbs become labile. The current study is thus an attempt to track the development of the verb *grow* from exclusively intransitive to labile.

### 3. Method and material

#### 3.1 Corpus linguistics

A corpus is a collection of texts from the real world. The word is nowadays generally understood to refer to “a collection of (1) *machine-readable* (2) *authentic* texts (including transcripts of spoken data) which is (3) *sampled* to be (4) *representative* of a particular language or language variety” (McEnery, Xiao, & Tono, 2006, p. 5; italics in the original); that is, a corpus is not a random collection of texts. There are different kinds of corpora; a corpus can be general or specialized, written-only or spoken-only, and synchronic or diachronic. Representativeness is a crucial aspect in corpus design, as the goal of a corpus is to be representative of a language or language variety. The representativeness of a corpus is determined by balance and sampling. Balance has to do with the range of genres or text categories included in the corpus, and a balanced corpus usually includes a wide range. Although corpus makers strive for balance in their corpus design, there is no way to reliably measure corpus balance, so the notion of balance relies on “intuition and best estimates” (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 16). Sampling, on the other hand, is associated with the notion that a corpus cannot cover everything within a given language and is always a sample of a larger population. A sample is considered representative when the findings based on the sample can be generalized to the whole population (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 19).

There is some disagreement concerning whether corpus linguistics should be seen as an independent branch of linguistics or as a methodology. In this work, as in for example Lindquist (2009, p. 1) and McEnery et al. (2006, p. 7), it is viewed as a methodology. Corpus linguistics is not a branch of linguistics in the same way as, for example, sociolinguistics is. While sociolinguistics studies the relation between language and society, corpus linguistics does not reveal what is studied, but rather, *how* something is studied (Lindquist, 2009, p. 1). It is a methodology that can be used to study many different areas of language, including aspects of sociolinguistics, syntax, semantics, historical linguistics, etc.

Although corpus linguistics is often considered quantitative, it is possible as well as desirable in many cases to combine quantitative and qualitative elements in a corpus linguistic study. This study is one which uses a mixed methods approach. The research questions of this study are such that they must be examined qualitatively; a purely quantitative approach cannot answer questions about how something, in this case transitive *grow*, has evolved. Quantitative findings will be presented, discussed, and compared, but the emphasis is on the qualitative analysis of the contexts in which transitive *grow* developed.
3.2 The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts

The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, version 3.0 (henceforth CLMET; see De Smet, 2005; Diller, De Smet, & Tyrkkö, 2011) is a collection of public domain texts by British authors published between 1710-1920. Version 3.0 contains over 34 million words of running text divided over three sub-corpora: there are 10,480,431 words in Period 1 (1710-1780), 11,285,587 in Period 2 (1780-1850), and 12,620,207 in Period 3 (1850-1920). The corpus covers five genres: narrative fiction, narrative non-fiction, drama, letters, and treatises, as well as a number of unclassified texts; and it claims to be approximately genre-balanced (KU Leuven, n.d.). The CLMET is used in this study, because it is the most extensive corpus for British English in the Late Modern English period that was readily accessible. This study examines and compares Period 1 and Period 3; Period 2 has been excluded due to a limited amount of space and time.

3.2.1 Extraction of data from the corpus

The corpus material was extracted manually using Wordsmith 7.0, a software used for finding words and phrases in corpora. The search included the following forms: grow, grows, grew, grown, and growing. Other, non-standard forms were not included in the search, because there were not many in the corpus and they would not have added anything to the analysis. For example, the form groweth had 4 and 3 hits in Period 1 and 3, respectively. That is no surprise, because the suffix -eth had mostly been replaced by -(e)s during the 17th century (OED, 2012). The form grewed had no hits in Period 1 and only 11 in Period 3, which is a very low number in comparison to the frequency of the other forms (see Table 2). The manual search yielded in total 2,122 instances in Period 1 and 5,209 in Period 3. Table 2 shows the frequencies of the forms that were included in the search. All the hits for each period were gathered into an Excel file, assigned a random number using the RAND function, placed in ascending order based on the random number, and then a sample of 500 relevant lines in each period was scrutinized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of grow</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>grow</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grows</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grew</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>1,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grown</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>1,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growing</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,122</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,209</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All instances where grow could be understood as a verb were considered relevant. Clearly adjectival and nominal uses of grow, such as “he began to roar like a full-grown elephant” (CLMET3_0_3_190.txt), “the Europeans have a growing ascendency over the nations of Africa and America” (CLMET3_0_1_52.txt), and “He tells me he […] has taken to vine-growing” (CLMET3_0_3_283.txt), were excluded from further analysis, and a sufficient number of lines was examined to come up to 500 relevant instances in each period. This meant that 543 lines were examined for Period 1 and 566 for Period 3.
The categorization will be presented in the next chapter together with the results. The adjectival and nominal instances will not be discussed further.

### 4. Results

This part will explain how the corpus material was categorized and present the results of the categorization as well as the findings regarding the contexts in which transitive *grow* developed. The tables present the observed absolute frequency of each item in the sample (N), their relative share in percent (%), and the normalized frequency per million words of the estimated absolute frequency in the subcorpus (pmw)\(^1\) to make it possible to compare the two subcorpora and to see the diachronic changes. When absolute frequencies are discussed in this study, they always refer to the frequency in the sample, not in the whole subcorpus.

#### 4.1 Intransitive instances

Period 1 and 3 have 459 and 407 one-word (i.e. not phrasal) intransitive instances of *grow*, respectively (Table 3). If phrasal verbs like *grow up* are added, Period 1 has 495 intransitive instances, whereas Period 3 has 478. The frequencies in table 2 show that the overall use of *grow* has increased between the two periods, which is probably why intransitive use in general has also increased. The only kind of intransitive use which has not increased is copular use with noun phrase complements.

#### Table 3. Frequencies for categories of intransitive *grow*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intransitive grow</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bare intransitive</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copular</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- AP complement</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- NP complement</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- PP complement</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- AdvP complement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Non-finite complement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>459</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The estimated absolute frequency in the subcorpus was calculated by multiplying the absolute frequency of the category in the sample by the total number of hits in the corpus and then dividing that amount by the total number of hits in the sample, e.g. for bare intransitives in Period 1: \(93 \times 2,122 / 543 \approx 363.44\). The normalized frequency was then calculated by dividing the estimated absolute frequency by the size of the subcorpus (see section 3.2), and then multiplying that amount by a million, e.g. \(363.44 / 10,480,431 \times 1,000,000 \approx 34.7\).
4.1.1 Bare intransitive instances

Bare intransitive uses are generally relatively easy to distinguish from copular, phrasal, and transitive ones. There are 93 and 123 bare intransitive instances of grow in Period 1 and 3, respectively (Table 3). This category includes uses of grow that do not take a complement but may be modified by an adverbial. “All things are growing or decaying” (CLMET3_0_3_189.txt) is an example of bare intransitive grow that is not modified by an adverbial, but cases where an adverbial is present are much more frequent. In the following case, there is an adverbial of manner: “good Grass, which grows in little Tufts about as big as one can hold in one's hand” (CLMET3_0_1_61.txt), and here there is an adverbial of degree: “Pine apples grow in such abundance that they may be purchased, at the first hand, for the value of an English farthing” (CLMET3_0_1_29.txt). These are classified as modifiers and not as complements, because they could be left out without changing the basic meaning of grow.

4.1.2 Copular instances

Copular uses of grow are very frequent in both periods: Period 1 includes 359 instances of copular use, whereas Period 3 contains 280 (Table 3). These numbers make copular use by far the most frequent use of grow in the samples. Because the CLMET is quite heavy on ‘literary’ texts such as narrative fiction, it is likely that copular grow is overrepresented in the corpus vis-à-vis other corpora, because it seems that the copular use of grow is more common in fiction than in other genres (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan, 1999, pp. 438-439). Semantically, copular grow usually denotes a gradual evolution into a state or condition, although a sudden change may sometimes be implied (Visser, 1963, p. 203). Copular grow characteristically has a complement that either describes the subject of the clause or renames it. In the samples, copular grow has five types of subject predicative complements: adjective phrases (AP), noun phrases (NP), preposition phrases (PP), adverb phrases (AdvP), and non-finite phrases. Many dictionaries do not distinguish between bare intransitive and copular meanings. The OED, for example, does not differentiate between the two, but category 12 seems to be dedicated to copular grow:

To become or come to be by degrees, sometimes with inclusion of the literal sense of increase of magnitude or quantity. a. with adjective or (arch.) n. complement. b. with adverb or adjectival phrase formed with a preposition. Now rare. (grow, n.d.-c)

Category 12.a. is rather self-explanatory, whereas 12.b. is not clearly defined, but it does seem similar to quasi-adjectival complements mentioned by Quirk et al. (1985).

Copular grow most often takes a complement in the form of an AP: there are 325 and 253 in Period 1 and 3, respectively (Table 3). The AP complement of copular grow is often a simple adjective, such as dark, old, or poor, which is at times preceded by a modifier, such as so, too, or quite. Comparatives expressed inflexionally, such as “the noise grew louder and louder” (CLMET3_0_1_48.txt), are rather frequent in the samples, whereas those expressed periphrastically, such as “The older I have grown, the more distinctly have I perceived that […]” (CLMET3_0_3_241.txt), also occur. Comparative adjectives make an implicit comparison to an earlier state (Biber et al.,
1999, p. 445), and the frequency of such complements is well aligned with the inherent semantics of copular grow that often expresses an increase in magnitude or quantity (grow, n.d.-c). The samples also include comparisons composed of as + adjective + as: “I only begin to be afraid that it should grow as necessary to shoot one's self here, as it is to go into the army in France” (CLMET3_0_1_44.txt). AP complements often consist of an adjective and a complement in turn, as in the aforementioned example.

NP complements are rather infrequent in the samples: Period 1 has 14 NP complements, whereas Period 3 has only 4 (Table 3). This is the only category of intransitive grow which shows a decrease between the two periods. It is no surprise, though, since this use is now considered archaic (grow, n.d.-c). The NP complement can be a simple one, as in “She is grown a woman you see” (CLMET3_0_1_39.txt); or a more complex one, as in “Lowriver is a pleasant, genteel little village, which […] has been growing, for the last seven years, with each succeeding summer, more and more a place of favourite resort with the inhabitants of Babel” (CLMET3_0_3_332.txt). This has been categorized as an NP complement, because the elements between the copular verb and the complement noun can be considered adverbial. Sometimes the distinction between a subject predicative and a direct object is not clear-cut. For example, in the case of “life […] grew the object of my abhorrence” (CLMET3_0_1_23.txt), it may not be immediately obvious that the NP following grow functions as a subject predicative of copular grow and not as a direct object of transitive grow. The data show that the use of copular grow with NP complements decreased around the same time as transitive grow appeared in the active voice. Considering that direct objects are almost always NPs, it would have been easier to confound copular and transitive grow as long as NPs could equally well function as subject predicatives and direct objects.

The third kind of complement that copular grow is found with is a PP. There are 15 PP complements in Period 1 and 17 in Period 3 (Table 3). Not all grammarians agree that a copular verb can take a complement in the form of a PP and some would categorize these instances as bare intransitive. For example, Biber et al. (1999) consider that some verbs, such as be, get, happen, and remain, can take ‘obligatory adverbials’, whereas grow, among others, cannot (pp. 142-143). Overall, grammars and dictionaries do not offer much help in categorizing grow followed by a PP, because they generally contain examples of prototypical use and not so many examples of exceptional or atypical use. However, in this study any essential element, regardless of its grammatical form, without which the sense of the clause is incomplete has been classified as a complement following Huddleston & Pullum (2002, p. 221). This means that a PP has been classified as a complement of copular grow in instances where the PP functions as a subject predicative complement describing the subject and/or where omitting the PP would change the meaning of grow and the entire clause. Optional elements are considered modifiers that can be removed without a change in meaning. This distinction is important for the categorization, because it means that instances such as “The hair of the people […] grows in great abundance” (CLMET3_0_1_29.txt) have been categorized as bare intransitive, whereas instances such as “You must have passed a lamentable scene of anxiety; […] but I think we grow in spirits again” (CLMET3_0_1_44.txt) have been classified as copular, although grow is in both instances followed by a PP headed by the preposition in.
Grow has a basic meaning which denotes an increase in size, quantity or degree or developing towards maturity (grow, n.d.-d; Qing-Hua, 2011; Alam, 2003). In instances such as “she had grown in all the secrets of allurement” (CLMET3_0_3_244.txt), omitting the PP would entail a crucial change in the meaning of grow and thus in the meaning of the whole clause: she had grown would mean that the person had matured or increased in size, but in this instance the person has developed in a very particular way, namely in all the secrets of allurement (cf. alluring/knowledgeable in all the secrets of allurement). In fact, many of the PPs in these instances could be replaced by an AP and retain their meaning. Thus, many of the instances can be seen as quasi-adjectival, following Quirk et al. (1985). For example, in “he is grown of less consequence” (CLMET3_0_1_44.txt), the PP could be replaced by the AP less important, and in “my father and mother, growing in years” (CLMET3_0_1_7.txt), the PP could be replaced by older without a semantic change (although there is a stylistic change). Even in cases where grow has the basic meaning of increasing or developing towards maturity, there may be a PP which emphasizes the result of growing, as in “it will grow to a gigantic size” (CLMET3_0_3_244.txt), where the meaning of the PP could be expressed by the AP gigantic in size. Some of the PPs are not easily replaced by APs, as in “the Speculations about Infinites have run so high, and grown to such strange Notions” (CLMET3_0_1_1.txt), but the PP is, nevertheless, an essential part of the clause and cannot be left out without changing the meaning of grow.

The fourth kind of complement of copular grow in the samples is an AdvP. There are no AdvP complements in Period 1 and only 2 in Period 3 (Table 3): “How thoroughly I've grown away from them—ceased to be one of them” (CLMET3_0_3_265.txt) and “Ernest and I had been growing apart for some time” (CLMET3_0_3_228.txt). They are similar to PP complements and have been categorized as copulas for the same reason, namely that omitting the AdvP would result in a change in meaning.

Another category of copular grow found in the samples is made up of the verb with a non-finite complement. There are relatively few instances in this category: 5 in Period 1 and 4 in Period 3 (Table 3). If phrasal verbs with a non-finite complement are added to these counts, there are 6 in each period. The non-finite complements of grow are all to-infinitival, such as “I feel very often that I grow to correct twenty things in myself” (CLMET3_0_1_44.txt) and “he grew to be an affluent tradesman” (CLMET3_0_3_332.txt). These instances are difficult to label, because grow used in this way comes close to functioning as an auxiliary verb. Some dictionaries, such as the OED, Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, and Collins English Dictionary, mention constructions of grow with the to-infinitive, which the OED considers rare (grow, n.d.-c). This use has the sense “to gradually begin to do something” (grow, n.d.-d). Collins English Dictionary is the only one out of the three dictionaries that classifies this use as copular alongside AP complements:

You use grow to say that someone or something gradually changes until they have a new quality, feeling, or attitude.
I grew a little afraid of the guy next door. [VERB adjective]
He's growing old. [VERB adjective]
He grew to love his work. [VERB to-infinitive] (grow, n.d.-b)
The other two dictionaries do not take a stance and classify this use as merely intransitive without specifying the type. However, if we consider that there are two intransitive verb patterns, the bare intransitive which is characterized by not having a complement and the copular which is characterized by having a subject predicative complement, *grow* followed by a non-finite phrase comes closer to the latter.

### 4.1.3 Ambiguous intransitive instances

Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between bare intransitive and copular uses. In unclear cases it is necessary to delve into the semantics of the context in which the verb appears more in detail. Cases of *grow* followed by a word that can be either an adjective or an adverb are particularly difficult to categorize, because such words can function either as subject predicative complements or as modifiers. *Like, wild, low and high* are a few examples of words appearing in the samples that cause difficulties due to their double-function. “What have you been doing to grow so like Murillo's Madonna?” (CLMET3_0_3_272.txt) has been categorized as a copular instance, because *so like Murillo's Madonna* seems to function as a complement and denote the result of becoming, whereas “they saw wonder growing like a flower inside” (CLMET3_0_3_306.txt) has been categorized as bare intransitive, because *like a flower* seems to function as a modifier and denote the manner in which wonder is growing. However, “One sort, which is by far the most Numerous sort of any in the Woods, grow Something like birch” (CLMET3_0_1_61.txt) has been placed in the ambiguous category, because it was deemed impossible to tell from the context if the intended meaning is that this type of tree grows to be like birch or in a manner similar to birch. Using the same strategy as above, “The sky had grown wilder since he stood there last hour” (CLMET3_0_3_319.txt) has been classified as a copula, since *wilder* functions as a complement that indicates the result of becoming, whereas in “There are, indeed, growing wild in the wood a few sorts of Fruit” (CLMET3_0_1_61.txt), the adverbial meaning of *wild*, that is, *in a wild manner* seems to be the more relevant one, so it has been classified as bare intransitive. *Low and high* are more difficult to categorize, because it is often unclear whether the word denotes the result or the place of growing, as in “As this button ripens and withers, others grow lower and lower every year” (CLMET3_0_1_88.txt) and “Eighty Ears of Wheat have been found to spring from one Root, but grows not very high” (CLMET3_0_1_83.txt). In these cases, the context does not reveal the intended meaning conclusively, so they have been classified as ambiguous.

Ambiguity and confusion can also be caused by the omission of -*ly* in adverbs that would in standard PDE end in this suffix. The practice of omitting -*ly* from adverbs was quite common in Early Modern English (OED, 2012) and it is even done in colloquial and non-standard PDE (Hughes & Trudgill, 1987, p. 20), so it is likely that it was also done in the Late Modern English period in question. There are some instances in the samples where an adjective may have been used as an adverb. “Ginger grows plentiful here” (CLMET3_0_1_83.txt) and “Commerce, in the pride of her prosperity, grows nice about her roads” (CLMET3_0_3_332.txt) are two examples where it is unclear if the word following *grow* should be seen as a complement or as a modifier. The latter
interpretation seems slightly more relevant, but these have, nevertheless, been placed in the ambiguous category.

Verse is particularly difficult to interpret, because it often uses non-standard word order, metaphors and vague language. For example, in “Shou'd there a Flow'r be plac'd for me, To nourish, as it blooming grew” (CLMET3_0_1_85.txt), it is not clear if blooming denotes the result or the manner of growing. Another example of verse that is difficult to interpret is this: “To Covent-Garden 'tis sent (as yet sweet), There fades, and shrinks, and grows past all enduring” (CLMET3_0_1_3.txt). Here, past all enduring could be a complement in the form of an AP or a PP or a modifier, which is why it has been categorized as ambiguous. Overall, Period 1 has 7 instances that have been categorized as ambiguous, whereas Period 3 has 4. Most of them consist of grow followed by a word that could be either adjectival or adverbial, but some of them are like the latter and cannot be interpreted without engaging in poetry analysis.

4.1.4 Phrasal verbs

There are 36 and 71 phrasal verbs in Period 1 and 3, respectively. The normalized frequencies indicate that phrasal verbs consisting of grow and a particle have increased almost fourfold, mostly thanks to grow up. This is an interesting development, and although it may be connected to the labilization of grow, it would require much more time and space than is currently available to investigate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrasal verbs</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow up</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow upon</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow on</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow into</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow to</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow out of</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The samples include six different phrasal verbs: grow up, grow upon, grow on, grow into, grow to, and grow out of. The numbers for each phrasal verb can be seen in Table 4. Although they are all intransitive, they have been kept separate from other intransitive uses of grow in the categorization. Most instances of grow up are bare intransitive, such as “Miss grew up under the influences of such a directress” (CLMET3_0_1_9.txt), but some of them seem more like copulas, for example “their children will grow up selfish in the very core of their souls” (CLMET3_0_3_216.txt). All the instances of grow into are copular, such as “The post at the confluence was gradually growing into the great camp of a few months later” (CLMET3_0_3_312.txt). One instance of grow to seems to also have the same copular meaning as grow into. It is no surprise that there are no instances of transitive grow into of the type grow + NP +
into + NP, because this use is more complex and presumably developed after the simple monotransitive grow. All the other phrasal verbs in the samples are bare intransitive. There are at least three different meanings of grow out of in the samples, and only one type has been placed in the category of phrasal verbs. Instances such as “it grows out of fashion like a fardingale” (CLMET3_0_1_44.txt), where it refers to the addressee’s humour, have been classified as copular due to their quasi-adjectival nature, whereas “he had a candle growing out of the top of his head” (CLMET3_0_3_281.txt) has been categorized as bare intransitive, because the adverb phrase seems to function as a spatial adverbial. Instances such as “there have grown out of the amalgamate languages, the ‘anaptotic’ languages” (CLMET3_0_3_189.txt) have been classified as phrasal though, because they have acquired an idiomatic meaning “to develop or come into existence from” (grow, n.d.-a).

4.2 Transitive instances

There are not many transitive instances in the samples, and they are all monotransitive. Period 1 includes 5 instances of grow that can be understood as transitive and they are all passive, whereas Period 3 includes 22 possibly transitive instances, of which 10 are passive and 12 are active (Table 5). The numbers include even the ambiguous cases.

Table 5. Frequencies for categories of transitive grow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitive grow</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Period 3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>pmw</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>pmw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the transitive instances in Period 1 are unambiguous and cannot be understood as anything but passive forms of transitive grow: “Cloves are now grown no where but on the island of Amboina” (CLMET3_0_1_29.txt) and “unless more corn is either usually grown, or usually imported into the country” (CLMET3_0_1_51.txt). These can both easily be turned into active phrases where the subject is semantically understood as the causer of the event (e.g. they grow cloves nowhere but on the island). Instances such as “one of the towers of an old ruined abby, grown over with ivy” (CLMET3_0_1_23.txt) and “thy path from thy door to thy bowling-green shall never be grown up” (CLMET3_0_1_36.txt) are more problematic though, because they cannot be turned into active phrases. They also resist the addition of a causative agent by someone but yield to the inchoative test by itself (McMillion, 2006, p. 5). They have been categorized as transitive, because the OED lists this use as transitive with the following description: “passive. Of land, etc.: To be covered with a growth of something. Also with over. So to be grown about (i.e. surrounded by a growth), to be grown up (i.e. crowded with a growth),” and adds that “[t]hese uses seem to have arisen partly from the indirect passive of phrases like to grow over, and partly from the intransitive perfect conjugated with be” (grow, n.d.-c). In other words, to be grown over
or up both seem to derive from the intransitive perfect using the be-auxiliary. There is also one instance which is ambiguous because of the auxiliary used: “They breed with me excessively, and are grown to the size of small perch” (CLMET3_0_1_44.txt), where the word they refers to gold fish. This could be understood either as a passive transitive with an external causer: they are grown by someone; or as an intransitive perfect with an inchoative sense: they have grown by themselves.

Most of the transitive instances in Period 3 are unambiguous and this concerns both the passive and the active ones. Period 3 includes transitive instances such as “Now a good deal of dhourra is grown” (CLMET3_0_3_332.txt) and “He has grown the white moss rose” (CLMET3_0_3_202.txt). The instance “they sat down to [...] the salad grown and gathered by their host's own hands” (CLMET3_0_3_238.txt) is interesting, because although it is passive, the ‘causer’ is made explicit with the use of an agentive by-phrase which would become the subject in a corresponding active phrase: the salad which their host’s own hands had grown and gathered. There is also one instance of passive transitive grown over and one of grown up used in the same way as in Period 1. Period 3 also includes one ambiguous instance that can be seen either as transitive or as intransitive: “A little man with a pink face and large red ears was sitting in a fat pink chair, as if he had been grown there” (CLMET3_0_3_301.txt). If it is seen as transitive, it seems that the little man is likened to a plant and has been grown by someone, and if it is seen as intransitive, grown functions as an adjectival complement to the copula be.

There is clearly an overlap between intransitive perfects and passive transitives, which are both constructed using the auxiliary be and the past participle grown. Overall, it does not seem to be a coincidence that the instances in Period 1 that could be understood as transitive are all passive, because the passive is similar to the intransitive in that the patient, or the ‘causée’, of an active transitive phrase takes the place of the subject in a passive phrase and the agent, or the ‘causer’, loses its subject status (Haspelmath and Müller-Bardey, 2001, p. 5). It also does not seem to be a coincidence that the first instances that can be seen as transitive are ambiguous or belong to the grown over/up category that is semantically closer to intransitive verbs.

4.3 Instances with auxiliary verbs (have/be)

In the Late Modern English period, there existed two competing auxiliaries to mark the perfect: be and have. While transitive perfects in the active voice always select have as the auxiliary and transitive verbs in the passive voice always select be, intransitive perfects could and can to some extent still be formed using either auxiliary. The data in this study show a shift from the auxiliary be to have in perfect constructions from Period 1 to 3 (Table 6). While be is used in 49 instances in Period 1, it is used in only 13 in Period 3; and whereas have is used in only 15 instances in Period 1, it is used in 63 in Period 3. The normalized frequencies indicate that the use of be has halved while the use of have has increased eightfold between the two periods, 1710-1780 and 1850-1920. The findings are aligned with previous studies showing that the have-perfect prevailed over the be-perfect between 1750-1800 (Kytö, 1997, pp. 32-33).

Los (2015) argues that the have-perfects developed from passive transitive expressions, such as the enemy has been bound [by someone], whereas be-perfects developed from
resultatives of intransitive verbs; change-of-state verbs in particular (p. 74). She suggests that the be-perfect is “an extension of a construction with the copula be” (p. 74). There are instances of grow in the samples which are perhaps best understood as complements of the copula be: “A little man […] was sitting in a fat pink chair, as if he had been grown there” (CLMET3_0_3_301.txt) discussed above and “she had managed the housekeeping without a servant since Christiane had been grown up” (CLMET3_0_3_332.txt), although due to their form, they could also be understood as past perfect passives which would make them transitive. In the latter case, a transitive reading does not seem possible, though, since the phrasal verb grow up cannot be used transitively, but in the former case, either an intransitive or a transitive interpretation is possible. Either interpretation is also possible in instances such as “They […] are grown to the size of small perch” (CLMET3_0_1_44.txt) discussed above. The data show that the use of the be-auxiliary decreased by 50% from Period 1 to Period 3. In addition, those intransitive instances in Period 3 that use the be-auxiliary are almost all of the type that could even in PDE be constructed using the be-auxiliary, because they are unambiguous, such as “Why, Cousin Ruth, you are grown” (CLMET3_0_3_206.txt). It therefore seems that have-perfects replaced be-perfects in cases where be could lead to confusion between intransitive and transitive uses of grow. This finding is in line with Visser’s (1963) hypothesis that the change from be- to have-perfects played a part in the process of labilization.

Table 6. Frequencies for auxiliary verbs with intransitive perfect grown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary verb</th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No auxiliary</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion

The study set out to investigate the contexts in which the verb grow developed a transitive use in British English in the Late Modern English period. During the investigation it became clear that the categorization of labile verbs like grow is complicated, because in many cases there could be two possible categories. The distinction is particularly difficult to make between three pairs that have been identified as ambiguous: bare intransitives and copulas; copulas and transitives; and intransitive perfects and passive transitives. In the first case, the ambiguity arises from words and phrases that could be interpreted either as modifiers or as complements, depending on whether they express dispensable information regarding, for example, the manner or place of growing (bare intransitive), or indispensable information regarding the result of growing (copula). This ambiguity is not crucial though, because they are both
intransitive and thus inchoative. In the second case, the ambiguity stems from NPs which could be interpreted either as subject predicatives of copular grow or as direct objects of transitive grow. The data indicate that the use of copular grow with an NP complement decreased from Period 1 to Period 3, as transitive grow was emerging. It is possible that NP complements of copular grow disappeared because they could in some cases be misinterpreted as direct objects of transitive grow. In the third case, the ambiguity is caused by the auxiliary be: intransitive perfects could be formed using the auxiliary be and a past participle, while passive transitives are formed the same way. This overlap renders certain instances highly ambiguous and means that they can be interpreted as transitive and thus causative or as intransitive and thus inchoative. This ambiguity appears to have been crucial enough to have led to a change in the auxiliary. The data show that over the Late Modern English period, there was a shift from be to have as the perfect auxiliary of intransitive grow; while be was the most common choice in Period 1, have had taken over by Period 3, at the same time as transitive grow was increasing. The have-perfect may have replaced the be-perfect to avoid ambiguity between intransitive and transitive grow, which seems to provide some preliminary evidence, albeit limited to this one verb only, for Visser’s (1963) hypothesis about the role of the auxiliary in the acquisition of labilization. The study makes no claims about verbs other than grow.

The sample for Period 1 only includes passive forms of transitive grow. Passive transitives are inherently closer to intransitives than active transitives are, because in the passive voice the agent becomes irrelevant and the object takes the place of the subject. Three out of the five transitive instances in Period 1 are also semantically inchoative and cannot be turned into active phrases. They are, nevertheless, classified as transitive in line with the OED, because only transitives can occur in the passive voice. Active forms of transitive grow appear only after Period 1, as there are already 12 of them in Period 3. The fact that there are only passive forms of transitive grow in Period 1 suggests that the transitivization of grow took place via the passive which can be seen as a category in between prototypical intransitive and transitive uses.

These are the ways in which the data indicate that grow has developed a transitive use in British English in the Late Modern English period. The findings can be seen as tentative and would ideally be confirmed in future studies. It would be interesting to extend the study to include all occurrences of grow in all three periods of the CLMET, then replicate the study using other corpora with texts from around the same period, and eventually extend the study to other labile verbs.
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