

# Attraction or Differentiation: Diachronic Changes in the Causative Alternation of Chinese Change of State Verbs

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Attraction and differentiation are two recently proposed processes of constructional change. Attraction is a process of two constructions becoming more alike while differentiation is a process of two constructions becoming less similar. De Smet et al. (2018) regard attraction as a fundamental process but consider differentiation as epiphenomenal and accidental. In contrast, Traugott (2020) proves attraction and differentiation are intertwined because differentiation inevitably arises from attraction. This paper, situated in a usage-based framework, supports that attraction and differentiation are complexly intertwined. Our evidence comes from the causative-inchoative alternations of Chinese Change of State Verbs (COS verbs). COS verbs are verbs that refer to the change of an entity with respect to its property (Levin 1993; Talmy 2000: 237). They have undergone significant diachronic changes in Chinese, especially in their causative-inchoative alternations. In ancient Chinese, they are monosyllabic, and can alternate between causative and inchoative constructions. As demonstrated in examples (1a-b), the COS verb *po* (break, hurt) allows both the causative form *po-tou* and the inchoative structure *tou-po*. In modern Chinese, COS verbs, though licit in inchoative forms, have to collocate with action verbs to constitute the causative pattern. As exemplified in (2a-b), monosyllabic *po* only occurs in the inchoative form. It has to collocate with manner verbs like *da* to form the causative form.

- (1) a. tuī yī dà shí xià, pò qí tóu.  
push one big stone down, hurt his head  
'Push one big stone down and hurt his head.'
- b. yǐ lí dǎ wǒ, tóu pò nǎi ěr !  
with pear hit me, head hurt as such  
'Struck me with a pear and hurt my head as such.'
- (2) a. tā dǎ-pò le bēi-zi.  
He break LE cup  
'He broke the cup.'
- b. bēi-zi pò le.  
cup break LE  
'The cup is broken.'

This paper intends to explore: (1) what causative-inchoative alternations are displayed in the argument structure constructions of Chinese COS verbs? (2) how do attraction and differentiation drive the alternation between the causative and the inchoative pattern? To answer these two research questions, we adopt a corpus-based methodology. Our dataset is established by extracting the usages of *po* and *kai* (open) from CCL corpus. Two case studies are successively conducted to explore the causative-inchoative alternations of COS verbs. The first study captured the four causative-inchoative alternation pairs of COS verbs, including the alternation between S+COS+O and O+COS, the alternation between S+V+COS+O and O+COS, the alternation between S+COS+V+O and O+COS+V, as well as the alternation between S+V+COS and O+V+COS. The second study found attraction and differentiation operate both at global and local levels. At the global level, the emergence of the third and fourth alternations results from both the differentiation from the second alternation and the attraction to the first alternation. At the local level, the second alternation demonstrates a differentiation between the causative and inchoative form while the other three alternations show an attraction between the two alternatives. Overall, our study confirmed the proposal that attraction and differentiation are two sides of the same coin (Traugott 2020). Moreover, in consideration of the grammar network of constructions, we further differentiated global attraction and differentiation from local attraction and differentiation.

## References

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