WORD STRESS OF TRISYLLABICS OF OLD FRENCH ORIGIN
IN LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH

TOMONORI MATSUSHITA
Dept. of English Literature
Faculty of Letters
Senshu University
Kawasaki, Kanagawa, JAPAN

ABSTRACT
The unmarked stress pattern obviously differs in
the degree of grammaticality from the marked
patterns in late-initial position, caesura, and
rhyme and alliteration. Separation of linguistic
intuition from poetic license enables us to define
the former more narrowly and limit the scope of
poetic license. The Main Stress Rule captures un-
marked stress patterns of trisyllabic words of Old
French origin, while stylistic rules account for
marked stress patterns which are only derivatives
from the unmarked ones. The stress patterns of Old
French words were modified when they were borrowed
into Middle English.

INTRODUCTION
Halle and Keyser [1] show that both the Initial
Stress Rule inherited from Old English and the
Romance Stress Rule were productive in the language
of Chaucer and his contemporaries. The former rule
correctly determined the place of stress for words
like hōtli, fēlāwe, while the latter rule assigns
stress to the three types of words Týdeus, Sátōrēs,
and hōnour, respectively. They notice that stress
doublets like comforts - com福特 must be described
either in terms of a shift into another lexical
category or in terms of assumption of two possible
pronunciations, one with a lax vowel in the last
syllable, the other with a tense vowel.

Nakao [2] argues that the application of the Romance
Stress Rule and the Stress Retraction Rule accounts
for stress doublets like bārgyn - bārgyn. Under
Nakao's analysis, the stress placement in doublets
seems to be highly motivated and the Initial Stress
Rule can be eliminated. Closer examination reveals
that the Romance Stress Rule, which plays a crucial
role in the analyses mentioned above, faces serious
difficulties in assigning stress to Old French loan-
words [5: 111-12].

Under the two analyses presented by Halle and Keyser
and by Nakao, the two stress patterns in doublets
would have the same degree of grammaticality and,
therefore, speakers of late Middle English would
have possessed a broader and looser linguistic
intuition than speakers of any other age.

However, I [3] argue that the unmarked stress pat-
ttern obviously differs in the degree of grammatic-
ality from the marked patterns in line-initial posi-
tion, caesura, and rhyme and alliteration and that
Chaucer and his contemporaries composed their
verses utilizing poetic license which was partly deviant from their own linguistic intuition. This
approach predicts that difference in judgment of
grammaticality of the same stress patterns reflects
the difference in derivations. Separation of lin-
guistic intuition from poetic license will enable
us to define the former more narrowly and limit
the scope of poetic license.

It is argued in Matsushita [3] that the Main Stress
Rule captures unmarked stress patterns of bisyl-
labic words of both native and Old French origin
like bōsom, bǐsheft, cītē, and bōnfāne, while
stylistic rules account for marked stress patterns
like bōsōm, bǐsheft, cīte, and bōnfan which are
only derivatives from the unmarked ones. I assum-
that the stress patterns of Old French words were
modified when they were borrowed into Middle En-

The unmarked stress patterns in late Middle English
are subcategorized into three parts. Consider the
stress assignment in the following trisyllabic
words. Nouns: bāchēlēr (A.Prov 85, MV bāchēlēr),
vīdērī (FPLA 10.250), sīmonīe (FPLB 2.63, MV
sīmonyē); Adjectives: sīngūlār (G.CY 997, MV sī-


Se 55.2.1
Consider first words of Old French origin in which the Main Stress Rule assigns primary stress to the antepenultimate vowel.

Among instances occur in the line-initial position, 9 in the causer, and 240 in my sham. (15a) unmarked (9 instances occur elsewhere. In the alliterative verses, unmarked stress pattern occurs 9 instances while no instances of the marked pattern are identified. In the stylistic component of the LN grammar the word role 1 (BR-1) applies to words of Old French origin like ébatit, éspérit, and döno in the medical forms like dodoguer, dodognus, and demosic. V — [1 stress] / C 1st stress / C "B 1st (BR-1)

Only two marked instances remain unanalyzed under this system.

Let us turn next to words of Old French origin in which the Main Stress Rule assigns primary stress to the penultimate vowel.

Among Ch. 411 stress 10x (9x), my alliteration Ch. 403 stress 10x (9x), this is mentioned Ch. 402 stress 10x (9x) not mentioned (9 instances occur elsewhere. In the alliterative verses, unmarked stress pattern occurs 9 instances while no instances of the marked pattern are identified. In the stylistic component of the LN grammar the word role 1 (BR-1) applies to words of Old French origin like ébatit, éspérit, and döno in the medical forms like dodoguer, dodognus, and demosic. V — [1 stress] / C 1st stress / C "B 1st (BR-1)

Only two marked instances remain unanalyzed under this system.

Let us turn next to words of Old French origin in which the Main Stress Rule assigns primary stress to the penultimate vowel.

Among Ch. 411 stress 10x (9x), my alliteration Ch. 403 stress 10x (9x), this is mentioned Ch. 402 stress 10x (9x) not mentioned (9 instances occur elsewhere. In the alliterative verses, unmarked stress pattern occurs 9 instances while no instances of the marked pattern are identified. In the stylistic component of the LN grammar the word role 1 (BR-1) applies to words of Old French origin like ébatit, éspérit, and döno in the medical forms like dodoguer, dodognus, and demosic. V — [1 stress] / C 1st stress / C "B 1st (BR-1)

Only two marked instances remain unanalyzed under this system.
### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stress pattern</th>
<th>unmarked</th>
<th>marked</th>
<th>unmarked</th>
<th>marked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nouns</td>
<td>initial 1</td>
<td>caesura 1</td>
<td>rhyme 1</td>
<td>elsewhere 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjectives</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verbs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

78 marked instances occur elsewhere. These cases are captured in terms of a larger scope of poetic composition. In the alliterative verse the unmarked pattern occurs 14 times, while the marked one (V) does occur 36 times. The Alliterative Rule (AR) derives from base-generated forms like auëntë, commandements, and couë(t)ise stylistically-motivated forms like auëntë, commandements, and couë(t)ise.

Finally, let us consider words of Old French origin to which the Main Stress Rule assigns primary stress to the last vowel. To my knowledge, neither nouns nor adjectives of the IME period belong to this class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verbs</th>
<th>Ch. apérécyv 4x (14x)/ apérécyv 2x; apérécyveude (PPIB 5.143n/PPIC 20.66n), cf. párceyveu (PPIB 5.143/PPIC 20.66)</th>
<th>Ch. compréhend 6x (14x), cf. comprénd 3x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. côndescé(d) 2x (2x)</td>
<td>Ch. énterméde 2x (1x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. éntermécd 2x (1x)</td>
<td>Ch. éntermécd 1lx (2x); enterméten (PPIB 11.408)/ enterméten (PPIB 13.291)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. éntermécd 2x (1x)</td>
<td>Ch. entermécd 2x (1x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. mëysconstrôme 1x</td>
<td>Ch. mëysconstrôme 2x (1x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. vércomènd(e)d 1x</td>
<td>Ch. mëyscorrect(e)d 1x (1x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. récomènd(e)d 1x</td>
<td>Ch. récomènd(e)d 1x (1x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ch. rreprésent(e) 1x</td>
<td>Ch. rreprésent(e) 1x (1x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Chaucer’s verse the unmarked stress pattern occurs 42 times whereas the marked pattern occurs only twice (see Table 3 above). The Metrical Rule II applies to base-generated forms like compréhènd(e) and rreprésent(e) to derive metrical forms like compréhènd(e) and rreprésent(e). In the alliterative lines, however, marked cases exceed unmarked ones with a ratio of five to one. The Alliterative Rule applies to base-generated forms like enterméten and récomènd(e) to yield rhetoric forms like Entermèten and récomènd(e).

The data illustrated from both the alliterative and metrical verses of late Middle English strongly support my approach that the Main Stress Rule assigns linguistic stress to the required vowel and later modification by stylistic rules yields alliteration or metrical stress according to rhetorical necessity.

## Conclusion

The comparison between poetic licenses in metrical and alliterative poems has allowed us to clearly characterize the unmarked stress patterns of late Middle English which reflect the linguistic intuition of native speakers of that period. The formulation of the Main Stress Rule, in turn, sheds light on artistic creativity in alliterative and metrical verses. Reflection on multi-layered linguistic data thus enables us to discriminate what is generated from what is derived even though we are not allowed to obtain judgment immediately from native speakers of the late Middle English period.

## References