

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

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ABSTRACT

The unmarked stress pattern obviously differs in the degree of grammaticalness from the marked patterns in line-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 unmarked 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 hóli, félawe, while the latter rule assigns stress to the three types of words Týdeus, Satúrnes, and honóur, respectively. They notice that stress doublets like comfórt - cómfort 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 bargéyn - báргеyn. 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 [3: 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 grammaticalness 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 pattern obviously differs in the degree of grammaticalness 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 linguistic 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 bisyllabic words of both native and Old French origin like bósom, bihéest, cítee, and benígne, while stylistic rules account for marked stress patterns like bosóm, biheest, citée, and bénigne which are only derivatives from the unmarked ones. I assume that the stress patterns of Old French words were modified when they were borrowed into Middle English.

The unmarked stress patterns in late Middle English are subcategorized into three parts. Consider the stress assignment in the following trisyllabic words. Nouns: báchelét (A.Prol 80, MV bácheler), wýdeweris (PPIA 10.200), symonie (PP1B 2.63, MV symonye); Adjectives: síngulér (G.CY 997, MV síngulare), délicát (E.Cl 927, MV délicate), partíc- ulér (E.Cl), consérvatíf (HF 847); abhómínáble (B.NP 4243); Verbs: óccupé (F.Sq 64), sácrífíce (TC 5.423, MV sácrífice), mýnistren (PP1B 12.52). To account for the observed stress distribution, I propose to assign primary stress to the antepenultimate vowel except that an unstressed lax vowel is optionally suffixed to the word if the penultimate vowel is nontense and is followed by no more than a single consonant. The last vowel is either lax or tense and may be followed by more than one consonant. Notice that inflectional suffixes are neutral to the Main Stress Rule. Words prefixed with ad-, in-, and dis- like appárayl (GKK 601), apáraunt (Cln 1007), engéndred (E.Cl 158), and discóverest (G.CY 696) receive primary stress on the penult by the Main Stress Rule. There are many words that are morphologically analyzable into one of the prefixes aper-, compre-, etc., followed by a stem such as -ceyve, -hende, etc.: ápercéyved (RR 6371), cómprehénde (BD 762). The stress placement rule must assign primary stress to the final stem in these words. Using the customary formalism for the statement of phonological rules, I state

the Main Stress Rule as follows [3: 115]:

V → [1 stress]

/ [X(=) C<sub>o</sub>(((<sup>-tense</sup> V<sup>1</sup>)C<sub>o</sub><sup>1</sup>)CV<sub>o</sub>(ε))]

where ε stands for a schwa.

Let us turn now to our discussion of the difference between the Romance Stress Rule proposed by Halle and Keyser and Nakao and the Main Stress Rule just presented above since they are formally similar. As I have stated, however, the latter uniquely generates, without requiring any exceptional treatment, the stress patterns which reflect the linguistic intuition of Chaucer and his contemporaries as native speakers, while the former neither applies to words of Old French origin in which the vowel in the last syllable is to be stressed nor discriminates linguistic stress from alliterative and metrical stress. My analysis argues that the Main Stress Rule of Modern English had essentially reached its current form by the late Middle English Period [4]. This view is consistent with the historical fact that the system of English word stress was more greatly influenced by Old French than by other languages.

LINGUISTIC STRESS VS. STYLISTIC STRESS

To clarify the distinction between linguistic stress and alliteration and metrical stress, it may be useful to outline assumptions underlying this paper. Linguistic stress is a concept that belongs to the study of competence, whereas alliteration and metrical stress belong to the study of performance. The former is generated by a context-free rule called the Main Stress Rule. Linguistic stress is perfectly grammatical, independent of any stylistic consideration and has mostly been preserved in Modern English. On the other hand, the latter types of stress are derived by stylistic rules to base-generated stress patterns. Alliteration and metrical stress may be semi-grammatical, dependent on style, alliterative or metrical, and not been preserved in Modern English. It is also important to notice that "Die legitime Accentverschiebung zu Gunsten des Verses hat namentlich im Reim und demnachst in der Caesur ihre Stelle" and in the line-initial position and that alliterative and metrical verses differ in manner and frequently from legitimate stress shift [5]. I will illustrate three types of stress patterns and discuss stylistic rules relevant to marked patterns. Statistical consideration is made of each type of stress patterns. Examples of metrical verses are drawn from Chaucer's works [5'] (1369-99); alliterative verses, from *Patience* [6] (?cl380), *Cleanness* [7] (?cl380), *St. Erkenwald* [8] (cl386), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [9] (?l390), and *Piers the Plowman* (A [10] a1376, B [11] cl378, C [12] ?al387). The symbols ⓐ, ⓑ, and ⓒ stand for line-initial position, rhyme, caesura, respectively.

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

- Nouns
- Ch. abstinence 21x (ⓐ 11x); *abstinence* (PPIA 5.220, 6.109, 8.119/PPIC 7.440)
  - Ch. appetit(es) 16x (ⓐ 9x); *appetyt* (PPIA 7.251)
  - Ch. argument(s) 20x (ⓐ 5x); *argumentz* (PPIB 15.375/PPIC 20.110)
  - Ch. audience 18x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 17x); *audience* (PPIB 8.94)
  - Ch. champion 9x (ⓐ 6x); *cha(u)mpion* (PPIA 9.41/PPIC 16.279, 21.104)
  - Ch. claryoun 11x (ⓐ 9x); *claryoun* (Cln 1210)
  - Ch. countenance(s) 44x (ⓐ 33x); *countenance* (PPIB pr.24, 5.183, 11.15, 13.111/PPIC 1.26, 12.164<sup>a</sup>, 16.120), (Cln 792), (GGK 100, 1490, 1539)
  - Ch. diademe 5x (ⓐ 4x)
  - Ch. element(z) 6x (ⓐ 3x); *element(z)* (PPIB 18.235/PPIC 2.17, 21.247)
  - Ch. fantasye 23x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 20x); *fantasye(s)* (PPIA pr.36, 11.63/PPIB pr.36/PPIC 1.37)
  - Ch. funeral 4x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 1x)
- Adjectives
- Ch. amorous 15x (ⓐ 6x)
  - Ch. contraire 11x (ⓐ 4x)/ *contrarie* RR 2246 (ⓐ 1x), RR 5312; *contrarie* (PPIC 10.193, 20.325), (Cln 4, 266, 1532)
  - Ch. dangerous 15x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 11x)
  - Ch. desolat 9x (ⓐ 2x, ⓑ 6x)
  - Ch. fortunat 6x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 3x)
  - Ch. general 8x (ⓐ 3x)
  - Ch. honorable 18x (ⓐ 10x); cf. *honourably* (PPIB 12.155)
  - Ch. natural 11x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 3x)
  - Ch. perilous 18x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 5x); *perilous* (PPIA 7.44/PPIC 7.186n), (GGK 2097)
  - Ch. principal 7x (ⓐ 5x); *pryncipal(e)* (Cln 1531, 1781), cf. *principaliche* (PPIB 14.194)
  - Ch. resonable 11x (ⓐ 10x); *re(i)sonable* (PPIB pr.158n, 13.286/PPIC 1.176, 4.369, 7.33), (Cln 724)
  - Ch. soverain 30x (ⓐ 8x); *souereyn* (PPIB pr.159, 10.210, 11.370, 14.114/PPIC 2.148, 7.27, 16.295, 23.372), (Cln 93, 178, 210, 552, 557, 780, 1152, 1225, 1313, 1454, 1643, 1670), (Erk 120), (GGK 1278), (Pat 429)
- Verbs
- Ch. circumscribe TC 5.1865 (ⓐ 1x), cf. *circumcise* [13]
  - Ch. exercise 3x (ⓐ 3x)
  - Ch. executeth A.Kn 1664
  - Ch. fructifye Scog.48 (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. glorie 4x (ⓐ 4x)
  - Ch. magnifice HF 1.306
  - Ch. multiple 14x (ⓐ 2x, ⓑ 10x); *multiple* (PPIB 19.226), (Cln 278, 522)
  - Ch. occupe(th) 6x (ⓐ 1x); *occupien* (PPIB 16.196/PPIC 8.18, 19.207)
  - Ch. sacrifice 3x (ⓐ 2x); *sacrifised* (PPIB 12.118), *sakerefyse* (Cln 507, 510, 1447, 1497), (Pat 239, 334), (Pr1 1064)
  - Ch. stellyffe 3x (ⓐ 3x)
  - Ch. verifie G.CY 1068
  - Ch. versifie B.Mk 3168; *versifie* (PPIB 15.367/PPIC 18.109)

In Chaucer's metrical verses (see Table 1 below), unmarked instances total 396 --- of which two

instances occur in the line-initial position, 9 in the caesura, and 240 in rhyme. 145 unmarked instances occur elsewhere. In the alliterative verses, unmarked stress pattern occurs 85 times while no instances of the marked pattern are identified. In the stylistic component of the LME grammar the Metrical Rule I (MR-I) applies to words of Old French origin like *abstinence*, *appetit*, and *dangerous* to derive metrical forms like *abstinence*, *appetit*, and *dangerous*.

V → [1 stress] / C<sub>o</sub>[ V ] C<sub>o</sub>VC<sub>o</sub> (MR-I)

Only two marked instances remain unanalysed under this approach.

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

- Nouns
- Ch. alliance 10x (ⓐ 9x), MV *alliance*
  - Ch. apparence 10x (ⓐ 1x, ⓑ 7x); cf. *aparaunt* (Cln 1007), cf. MV *apparaunt*
  - Ch. acquyntance(s) 5x/ *acquyntance(s)* 15x (ⓐ 11x); *aquoyntance* (GGK 975)
  - Ch. advantage 4x/ *avauntage* 9x (ⓐ 9x), MV *aduantage*
  - Ch. aventure 80x (ⓐ 5x, ⓑ 55x); *aventure* (GGK 2482)/ *aventure* (GGK 29, 250)
  - Ch. commandement(z) E.C1 649, G.CY 1063/ *commandement(z)* 13x (ⓐ 9x); *commaundemens* (PPIB 12.143), (GGK 1303, 1501)
  - Ch. covetise TC 3.261, RR 205/ *coveitise* 24x (ⓐ 15x); *coue(i)tise* (PPIA pr.58, 2.33, 3.158, 5.107, 10.192/PPIB pr.61, 3.68, 9.155, 10.18, 13.391, 14.238/PPIC 1.59, 3.90, 7.39, 11.257, 13.241, 17.223, 20.254, 22.224), (Cln 181), (Erk 237), (GGK 2374, 2380, 2508)
  - Ch. habundance 8x (ⓐ 7x), cf. *abundant*
  - Ch. obeissance(s) 2x/ *obeissance* 16x (ⓐ 15x), MV *obeyance*
  - Ch. observance(s) 23x (ⓐ 17x), cf. MV *observance*
  - Ch. philosopre(s) C.Pard 620, G.CY 1394/ *philosopre(s)* 18x (ⓐ 7x)
  - Ch. remembrance 43x (ⓐ 37x), MV *remembrance*

- Ch. repentance 10x (ⓐ 9x); *repentance* (PPIA 5.43/PPIB 5.232/PPIC 7.234), MV *repentance*
- Adjectives
- Ch. acceptable D.Sum 1913 (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. apparaunt 2x (ⓐ 2x); *aparaunt* (Cln 1007), MV *apparaunt*
  - Ch. corporell RR 6757 (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. ententif 3x (ⓐ 1x)/ *ententif* 5x (ⓐ 5x)
  - Ch. erratik TC 5.1812
  - Ch. eternal 2x/ *eternal* TC 4.1062 (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. fantastik A.Kn 1376 (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. habundant E.C1 59/ *habundant* B.NP 4115, MV *abundant*
  - Ch. infernal A.Kn 2684/ *infernal* 2x (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. repentaunt F.Sq 655 (ⓐ 1x)/ *repentaunt* A.Prol 228 (ⓐ 1x), cf. MV *repentance*

- Verbs
- Ch. accomplice RR 2132/ *accomplice* 3x (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. aparayle 2x/ *aparayle* LGW 2473 (ⓐ 1x); *apparayle* (PPIA 2.148, 2.190, 7.53/PPIB pr.23, 2.170, 5.523, 6.59/PPIC 8.161), cf. *papailede* (PPIC 1.25, 3.224)
  - Ch. contínu 5x (ⓐ 2x)/ *contínu* RR 5332
  - Ch. delivere 26x/ *delivere* 8x (ⓐ 4x, ⓑ 1x); *deliyuer* (Cln 1084), (GGK 851)/ *deliyuer* (Cln 286, 500)
  - Ch. detemyne 4x (ⓐ 4x); cf. *termyne* PF 530, *deterymed* (R. the Redeles 2.97)
  - Ch. disfigure(d) 3x/ *dysfigure(d)* 2x (ⓐ 2x)
  - Ch. engendre 13x/ *engendré* 2x (ⓐ 1x); *engendrede* (PPIB 11.215), *engendered* (Cln 272)
  - Ch. enhabite TC 4.443/ *enhabite* RR 6355 (ⓐ 1x); *enhabiten* (PPIB 10.188)
  - Ch. enlumyned 4x (ⓐ 2x)/ *enlumyned* RR 5344 (ⓐ 1x)
  - Ch. envyneme(d) 2x (ⓐ 2x)/ *envyneme(d)* 3x (ⓐ 2x); *enuynemeþ* (PPIB 12.256)
  - Ch. reconforte 3x (ⓐ 3x); *reconforted* (PPIB 5.287)
  - Ch. remembre(th/st/d) 27x/ *remembre* RR 4110 (ⓐ 1x); *remembred* (Pat 326)

As shown in the Table 2, Chaucer's verses contain 110 unmarked instances versus 324 marked ones in the line-initial position, in the caesura, and in

Table 1

stress pattern	metrical verses				marked	alliterative verses		
	unmarked					unmarked	marked	
	initial	caesura	rhyme	elsewhere			— / —	— — /
nouns	1	2	118	54	0	30	0	0
adjectives	1	5	101	79	2	39	0	0
verbs	0	2	21	12	0	16	0	0
total	2	9	240	145	2	85		0
	396							

Table 2

stress pattern	unmarked	metrical verses				unmarked	alliterative verse		
		marked					— / —	— — /	
		initial	caesura	rhyme	elsewhere				
nouns	17	0	6	207	66	2	30	0	
adjectives	9	0	0	13	2	1	0	0	
verbs	84	0	4	18	8	11	6	0	
total	110	0	10	238	76	14	36	0	
		324							

Table 3

stress pattern	metrical verses				alliterative verses			
	unmarked				marked	unmarked	marked	
	initial (/)_/_	caesura (/)_/_	rhyme (/)_/_	elsewhere (/)_/_			/_/_	_/_/
nouns	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
adjectives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
verbs	1	0	20	21	2	1	3	2
total	1	0	20	21	2	1	3	2
	42						5	

rhyme (0, 10, and 238, respectively). The Stress Movement Rule (SMR) applies prior to the Metrical Rule II (MR-II) to derive metrical forms like álliáunce, hábundáunce, and éterné1 from base-generated forms like alliaunce, habundance, and eternel.

$$V \rightarrow [1 \text{ stress}] / C_0 \left[ \begin{array}{c} V \\ \text{1 stress} \end{array} \right] C_0 \rightarrow C_0 \# \text{ (SMR)}$$

$$V \rightarrow [1 \text{ stress}] / \_ C_0 VC_0 \left[ \begin{array}{c} V \\ \text{1 stress} \end{array} \right] C_0 \text{ (MR-II)}$$

78 marked instances occur elsewhere. These cases are captured in terms of a larger scope of poetic composition. In the alliterative verses the unmarked pattern occurs 14 times, while the marked one (/ \_ \_ \_) does occur 36 times. The Alliterative Rule (AR) derives from base-generated forms like auenture, commáundemens, and coué(i)tise stylistically-motivated forms like áuenture, cóm-maundemens, and coue(i)tise.

$$V \rightarrow [1 \text{ stress}] / \# C_0 \left[ \begin{array}{c} (C_0 V) C_0 \\ \text{1 stress} \end{array} \right] C_0 \text{ (AR)}$$

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 LME period belong to this class.

#### Verbs

- Ch. ápercéyv 4x (⊕ 4x) / apérceyv 2x; apérseyuede (PP1B 5.143n/PP1C 20.66n), cf. párceyued (PP1B 5.143/PP1C 20.66)
- Ch. cómprehénde 6x (⊕ 4x), cf. comprénde 3x
- Ch. cóndescénde(d) 2x (⊕ 2x)
- Ch. éntermédle(d) 2x (⊕ 1x)
- Ch. énterméte 11x (⊕ 2x); enterméten (PP1B 11.408) / éntermeten (PP1B 13.291)
- Ch. éntrecháunged(en) 2x
- Ch. mýsconstrúve TC 1.346 (⊕ 1x)
- Ch. mýsdepárteth B.ML 107
- Ch. récoménde(th) 9x (⊕ 4x); récomaund(ip) (PP1B 15.228/PP1C 17.355n)
- Ch. réprehénde TC 1.510 (⊕ 1x)
- Ch. réprésénte 2x (⊕ 2x)

In Chaucer's verses 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 compre-hénde and représente to derive metrical forms like cómprehénde and réprésénte. 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 entérméten and recomaund to yield rhetoric forms like éntermeten and récomaund.

The data illustrated from both of 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.

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