Title	The Use of ouen in Fifteenth-Century Printed Editions of The Canterbury Tales
Author(s)	Ohno, Hideshi
Citation	Hiroshima studies in English language and literature , 66 : 1 - 20
Issue Date	2022-03-30
DOI	
Self DOI	10.15027/52389
URL	https://ir.lib.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/00052389
Right	著作権は，執筆者本人と広島大学英文学会に帰属するものとします。
Relation	

The Use of *ouen* in Fifteenth-Century Printed Editions of *The Canterbury Tales**

Hideshi Ohno

1. Introduction

When *The Canterbury Tales* (*CT*) was written in the late fourteenth century, the verb *ouen*,[1] denoting obligation, necessity, and propriety, took on both impersonal and personal constructions.[2] This paper will attempt to clarify the extent of the transition from the impersonal to the personal use of the verb in the editions printed in the following century when the impersonal construction ceased to be used. It will also examine how the transition might influence the various explications that are derived from a consideration of the original uses of the verb as presented in the earliest extant manuscript, the Hengwrt (Hg).

This study is based on a comparison between the Hg manuscript and editions printed by Caxton (Cx1 (1476) and Cx2 (1483)) and his successors, Pynson (Py (1492)) and de Worde (Wy (1498)). Previous studies on the diachronic transition of the impersonal construction, such as those by van der Gaaf (1904), Elmer (1981), Dons (2004), and Möhlig-Falke (2012), use large linguistic corpora that consist of various genres of documents. Therefore, they clarify only a general tendency of the linguistic change. In contrast, the present study examines the diachronic linguistic change in specific phrases in the same passages across successive editions of a single text, to clarify in greater detail

[1] Root forms of the verbs in this article are from headwords in the *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*).

[2] This study examines the construction type depending upon the grammatical case of the "experiencer" (Ex). When the verb takes on a dative or nominative Ex, the example is classified as "impersonal" or "personal," respectively. When the case of the Ex is obscure, the example is not classified into any use and is excluded from the present analysis.

In Chaucer's body of work, there are four other verbs that denote obligation and have the impersonal construction: *thurven, bihōven, nēden*, and *mōten*. None of them, however, have enough examples for statistical analysis; arguments about their variant readings in the fifteenth-century printed editions have inevitably been subjective.

the processes that facilitated the transition.

The original meaning of the verb *ouen* refers to an obligation that is "strictly of a moral character; but often various kindred shades of meaning come to the fore, as when the verb denotes what is befitting, proper, correct, advisable, or naturally expected" (Visser 1969: §1711). The verb "newly developed impersonal" construction in Middle English (Möhlig-Falke 2012: 209), presumably on the analogy of synonymous verbs such as *bihǭven* and *mǭten* (Visser 1969: §1715) and its use continued till the end of the fifteenth century. Concerning the use of the verb in Chaucer's works, Ohno surveys examples in Benson's edition (2008) and concludes as follows:

> Some examples of *ouen* in Chaucer's works have the epistemic meaning and in those cases the impersonal use does not appear … On the other hand, when it has the root meaning, the personal use seems dominant when statements or their grounds about the agent's obligation are more subjective, as typified by the examples with the first-person singular Ex, and the impersonal use does so when the addresser's involvement in the obligation is slighter, as typified by the examples in *as*-clauses. (Ohno 2007: 363)

Caxton printed *CT* for the first time in 1476 and more than 80 manuscripts were made throughout the fifteenth century. Blake describes the general attitudes of scribes and printers at that time: "In medieval times one manuscript was considered as good as another; scribes and printers freely altered individual words and phrases as long as they kept the general sense and plan of the original" (Blake 1969: 102).

Individually, Caxton wrote Cx1 "in a language similar to the the [sic] Type III[3] of the Hg manuscript" although "the immediate exemplar used in the production of Cx[1] has not survived" (Horobin 2003: 83). Thereafter, based on an unspecified book given to him by a gentleman, he made his second edition— Cx2—by writing "in corrections to the text in his first edition" (Blake 1969: 104) "acordyng unto his [= Chaucer's] owen making" (Blake 1973: 62).

In 1492, Pynson made his edition based on Cx2 by consulting unspecified

---

[3] For a summary of the types, see Samuels (1963).

text(s). His edition "replaced many of the oddities of Caxton's spelling habits with spellings common to Type IV documents" (Horobin 2003: 85), and corrected several grammatical and textual errors (Ohno et al 2018: 4–5). Overall, however, "there was no attempt at improving Caxton's version (as De Worde later did), and in fact quite a few new errors were introduced" (Hellinga 2010: 117).

De Worde's edition "seems to be based on an annotated copy of Caxton's second edition as well as a now unknown manuscript of the text. De Worde's Chaucer differs from both Caxton editions in its introduction of more modernised spelling and more frequent captions, paragraph marks, and other textual divisions" (Hotchkiss and Robinson 2008: 51–52). De Worde believed that "the text should be intact, and as complete as the author intended, but it should not be perceived as an antiquarian relict, rather allowed to be read in the reader's own time, as if it had been written recently" (Hellinga 2010: 147). This kind of commercial attitude can also be observed in Caxton.[4] Contrarily, de Worde altered the text of Cx2 so as to bear greater similarity to that of Hg; as Garbáty (1978: 65) says, "Wynkyn de Worde may have used a 'Hengwrt manqué,' a slightly corrupt descendant of this fine manuscript," although his reference manuscript(s) are unspecified.

2. Statistical Data of Variant Readings in Printed Editions

Drawing on Horobin's (2003) method of reviewing earlier manuscripts, this paper compares Hg to other printed editions with a focus on the use of the verb *ouen*. The statistical data are tabulated below.

Table 1. Frequency of *ouen* in Hg according to the Grammatical Person of Ex

	1st		2nd	3rd
	sg.	pl.		
Impers.		4 (1)[a]	3 (3)	13 (2)
Pers.	5	3	6	8

[a] Figures in the brackets show the numbers of examples where the verb is used personally in at least one of the printed editions.

---

[4] "It is doubtful … whether his primary motive in printing the second edition was to produce a good text; his motive may have been a desire to oblige a noble customer, or simply a publisher's realization that a new, revised edition might sell well" (Blake 1969: 103).

The table shows that some examples of impersonal use have variant readings in at least one edition and all examples with a second-person Ex do.[5]

To better comprehend these results, it is necessary to first survey the general use of *ouen* in the fifteenth century. As a reference corpus this study deals with five texts: *Helsinki Corpus*, *Paston Letters*, Caxton's own prose, his *Le Morte Darthur*, and Vinaver's *Le Morte Darthur*. Caxton's own prose and *Paston Letters* indicate the use of the verb in non-fiction writing and Caxton's and Vinaver's *Le Morte Darthur* in fiction writing. The statistical data of the texts are tabulated as follows:

Table 2. Frequency of *ouen* in Fifteenth-Century Texts according to the Grammatical Person of Ex

		1st, sg.	1st, pl.	2nd	3rd
Helsinki Corpus	Impers.				1
(M4 (1420–1500))	Pers.	2	1	1	3
Paston Letters[a]	Impers.				
(*c*1420–1504)	Pers.	4	1	8	9
Caxton's Own Prose[b]	Impers.				
	Pers.	1	2		6
Caxton's *Le Morte*	Impers.	6			1
Darthur (1485)[c]	Pers.	12	2	22	11
Vinaver's *Le Morte*	Impers.	6			3
Darthur[d]	Pers.	11	2	22	13

[a] Uchioke (2004), [b] Blake (1973), [c] Mizobata (2009), [d] Kato (1974)

Paston Letters and Caxton's own prose only feature personal examples. A Chancery document contained in the *Helsinki Corpus*[6] and Caxton's and Vinaver's editions have impersonal examples in the first and third person.[7] The data show that the verb tends to be used personally in the second person, from which it can be surmised that the printed editions of *CT* are edited in

---

[5] The same tendency is observed in the case of the verb *listen*, which denotes both preference and wishes (Ohno 2019).

[6] "The Mayor's Articles of Complaint Against the Bishop, Dean, and Chapter, Article IV" in *An Anthology of Chancery English*.

[7] Examples of *ouen* in an *as*-clause are found in any type of grammatical person in the personal and impersonal uses.

accordance with this tendency.

However, more detailed analyses of the examples are needed to understand what influence the variant readings may have on the interpretation of the original text of *CT*.

3. The Use of *ouen* in Chaucer's Fourteenth-Century Texts

Before examining the variant readings, this section details the use of *ouen* in Chaucer's fourteenth-century texts using Benson's edition[8] for the sake of convenience. Ohno (2015), revising Ohno (2007), investigates grammatical aspects of the verb such as its complement and clause types, word order, verb forms and significations, and Ex's grammatical persons. The analysis reveals the following characteristics (59–65):

(i) The verb almost exclusively takes the impersonal use in an *as*-clause with its complement implied, no matter which grammatical person the Ex is in. In contrast, it more frequently takes the personal reading in a main clause.

(ii) The verb more frequently takes the personal use when it has a past form with a present or future meaning (as in *ought* in Present-Day English). However, when the tenses of its form and meaning agree, the verb takes both uses. This demonstrates that the auxiliarisation of the verb is still in progress and is not a factor in determining which construction it takes.

(iii) There are more examples of the personal use in any grammatical person. The gap in the number is larger in the first and second persons, and, as Kerkhof states (1982: § 269), all the examples in the first person singular are of the personal use.

To these characteristics, the present research adds the following: (iv) the examples in a *than*-clause demonstrate the same tendency as those in an *as*-

---

[8] No holograph of Chaucer's works survives. *CT* in Benson's edition is mainly based on the Ellesmere manuscript, which has some differences in the use of *ouen* from Hg (VII 643, 1089, 1248, 1298; X 133). It is also observable that *Boece* has no impersonal example.

clause and (v) the adverbials co-occurring with the verb do not determine the choice of construction.

Furthermore, to revise the semantic and pragmatic aspects treated in Ohno (2015), the present research attempts to analyse the data in Hg from the viewpoint of external causals of obligations, an approach that Nakao (2013) introduces in his examination of the modal verb *mǭten*. He explains them as follows (141–42):

External causals are related to the epistemology of the medieval society in which Chaucer lived. Generally speaking, the less the speaker's involvement in the obligation is, the more objective these causals are, and the greater, the more subjective. … They are roughly divided into the following categories from the objective to the subjective.

(5) a. laws of natural phenomena
   b. reason
       (i) God or saints
       (ii) philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, etc.)
       (iii) Fortune
   c. everyday characteristics of humans/animals/abstract entities (joy, sorrow, love, sickness, secrecy, etc.)
   d. people's social roles or moral status (king, knight, judge, courtly persons, husband, wife, etc.)
   e. regulations for specific groups (parliamentary decisions, rules of games like a tournament, etc.)
   f. promises among individual relationships

In Chaucer (5b, c, d and e) are frequently used. Divine obligations gradually shift to human ones, or original divine obligations lie behind human ones.

A classification of the data from the analysis of *ouen* (with root meanings) according to causal type reaches the following findings. Figure 1 illustrates how the impersonal examples are associated with a limited number of causals, while the personal ones are associated with every causal, as well as with other subjective causals such as in the lines 1429–35 of *Troilus and Criseyde* (*Tr*),
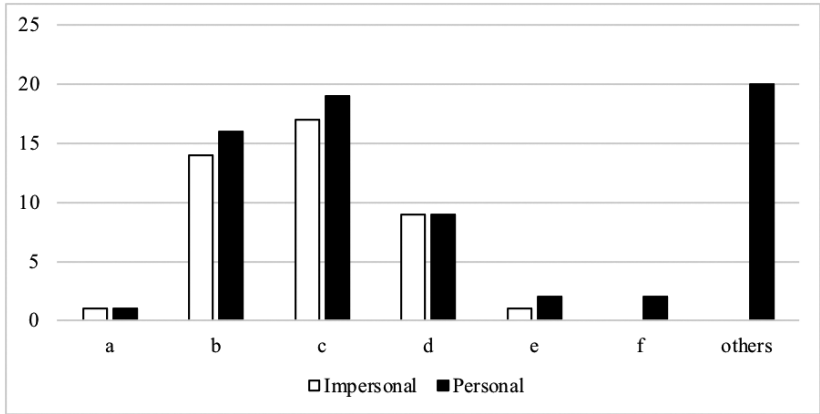
Fig. 1. Causals of Obligations of *ouen* in Chaucer's Works

Note: The "others" include: Arcite has been exiled and cannot see Emily (I 1244); the villains fulfilled their wicked will (VII 1523); Pandarus has experienced hardships in love (*Tr* 1.646–47); Criseyde knows means to redress what is amiss (*Tr* 4.1266–67); Criseyde is not in Troy (*Tr* 5.545); the knight would have done the same as Fortune did (*The Book of the Duchess* 676–77); the male eagle cannot form any bond with the female eagle except by means of her mercy (*The Parliament of Fowls* 438).

Book III, in which the night of the lovers' secret meeting is described as passing too rapidly. In other words, the impersonal examples share the same causals as the personal ones. For example, (1) and (2), which are spoken by the Parson in *CT*, expound general obligations to Christian principles, yet *ouen* is impersonal in (1) and personal in (2):

(1) And venial synne is it, if man love Jhesu Crist lasse than *hym oghte*. (X 358)[9]

(2) Allas, wel *oghten they* [= humans] thanne have desdayn to been servauntz and thralles to synne, and soore been ashamed of himself / that God of his endelees goodnesse hath set hem in heigh estaat, or yeven hem wit, strengthe of body, heele, beautee, prosperitee, / and

---

[9] Emphases in all quotations are mine. References to *CT* are shown by fragment numbers and line numbers.

boghte hem fro the deeth with his herte-blood, that they so unkyndely, agayns his gentilesse, quiten hym so vileynsly to slaughtre of hir owene soules. (X 152–54)

Quotation (3) is from a scene in *Troilus and Criseyde*, in which Pandarus, hearing for the first time that Troilus loves Criseyde, instils in Troilus the appropriate attitude towards her and cheers him up.

(3) And whan that Pandare herde hire name nevene,
Lord, he was glad, and seyde, "Frend so deere,
Now far aright, for Joves name in hevene.
Love hath byset the wel; be of good cheere!
For of good name and wisdom and manere
She hath ynough, and ek of gentilesse.
If she be fayr, thow woost thyself, I gesse,
…
"And forthi loke of good comfort thow be;
For certeinly, the ferste poynt is this
Of noble corage and wel ordeyné,
A man to have pees with hymself, ywis.
So *oghtist thow*, for noht but good it is
To love wel, and in a worthy place;
The oghte not to clepe it hap, but grace. (*Tr* 1.876–82, 890–96; Pandarus to Troilus)

After mentioning Love in line 879, Pandarus refers to the single underlined part, which is based on Seneca's wisdom, and then to the double-underlined part, which comes from Dante's *Purgatorio* (Windeatt 1984: 139; Benson 2008: 1030). Although this utterance of Pandarus' contains two aphorisms, which can be classified as either external causal as b or c above, the verb appears in different constructions. It is noteworthy that *the oghte*[10] in line 896 may have three syllables as *oghtist thow* in line 894, which illustrates that a choice

---

[10] This stanza is only recorded in three manuscripts (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 61; St. John's College, Cambridge, L.1; Harleian 1239); the first one reads *the ought* and the others read *Men ought* in line 896. The noun *men* signifies the generality of the statement.

between the constructions is not necessarily determined by metrical reasons.

Moreover, a detailed analysis of the data related to *ouen* reveals that, as in Table 3, when the Ex is a first-person plural pronoun referring to the addressers and addressee(s) (i.e. "inclusive"), the impersonal construction is more frequent and the addressers deliver general obligations or sense of propriety. In contrast, when the addressers deliver the individual obligations of the addressee(s) in front of them with a second person Ex, there is a tendency wherein the causals are sometimes subjective and the verb takes the personal use—the addressers' involvement in the obligations being more active.

Table 3. Frequency of *ouen* with Root Meanings in Chaucer's Works

Ex	Impers.	Pers.
1st pers. sg.	0	16
1st pers. pl. (exclusive)	0	3
1st pers. pl. (inclusive)	6	3
2nd pers. sg.	4	6
2nd pers. pl.	5	11
3rd pers.	27	33

Additionally, from linguistic perspectives, Fischer and van der Leek (1983) and Ikegami (1985), for instance, suggest that the personal construction expresses the volitionality and agentivity of the Ex.

That which has been discussed in this section can be summarised as follows: considering the objectivity/subjectivity of causals, the addressers determine the extent of their involvement in the obligations. Figure 2 demonstrates this notion.

Fig. 2. Addresser's Involvement in Obligation

Nakao, examining the modal verb *mǭten*, also points out the addressers' manipulation of the objectivity/subjectivity of external causals:

They [= the external causals expressed by *mọ̄ten*] may be objective and reflect real obligation imposed from without, or they may be only apparently so in that the speaker presents them as such by attempting to suppress his own feeling/intentions. In this way the subjective and objective overlap. (2013: 142)

This idea may explain the high frequency of the impersonal use in *as-* and *than-*clauses; in those clauses, obligations are universally understood or can be easily presumed without the addressers' intense involvement.

4. Variant Readings of *ouen* in the Fifteenth-Century Printed Editions

Based on the proposition made in Section 3, this section considers what is meant by variant readings of *ouen* in the fifteenth-century printed editions of *CT*. The data are first examined from the viewpoint of the grammatical person of Ex, and thereafter of verb forms and significations (i.e., moods).

4.1. Grammatical Person of Ex
4.1.1. First Person (plural)
There are four examples of the impersonal use in Hg, namely IV 1150, VI 512, VII 998, and VIII 14. All of these examples have more objective external causals such as Christian principles and dictums from the Bible. Quotation (4), derived from "The Clerk's Tale," is the only instance in which the impersonal *ouen* in Hg becomes personal in the printed texts.

(4)　¶ This storie is seyd / nat for þᵗ wyues sholde
　　　Folwen Grisilde / [ ] as in humylitee
　　　For it were inpor table / thogh they wolde
　　　But for þᵗ euery wight⁊ in his degree
　　　Sholde be constant⁊ in aduersitee
　　　As was Grisilde / therfore Petrak writeth
　　　This storie / which he with heigh stile enditeth /
　　　¶ For sith a womman / was so pacient⁊
　　　Vn to a mortal man / wel moore *vs oghte*
　　　Receyuen al in gree / that god vs sent

For gret skile is / he preue that he wroghte

(IV 1142–52; Cx1, Cx2, Py, Wy: *we*)[11]

After talking about Grisilde, a wife inimitably obedient to her husband, the Clerk clearly explains the main message of his tale to his companion pilgrims: "Do not follow her example but receive gratefully what God sent to humans as she." As in the other three examples, the impersonal use in line 1150 demonstrates a Christian obligation. Thereafter, the personal use in all the printed editions is thought to emphasise his intention to deliver his message precisely.

4.1.2. Second Person

Hg has three examples of the impersonal *ouen*: VII 1341, VII 1342, and VII 1413. All examples, personal and impersonal, with a second-person Ex, are in "The Tale of Melibee," specifically in Prudence's speeches towards her husband Melibee. In the tale, she attempts to persuade him to reconcile with the villains who harmed her and their daughter and not seek revenge.

In quotation (5), Prudence tells Melibee, as a Christian, to honour and revere Christ. The verb in an *as*-clause, which has a high tendency to take the impersonal use, is rendered in the personal one in Cx1, Cx2, and Py; yet it is in the impersonal in Wy.

(5) ¶ Thy name is Melibe / this is to seyn / a man that drynketh hony / thow hast ydronke so muchil hony / of swete temporel richesses and delices and honours of this world / that thow art dronken / and hast forgeten Ihū cᵢst⁊ thy creatour / thow ne hast nat doon to hym / swich ho-nour and reuerence as *thee oghte* ⸱⸱
(VII 1410–13; Cx1: *thou oughtest*, Cx2, Py: *thow oughtest*, Wy: *the oughte*)

In quotation (6), Prudence, in an indirect speech, summarises the advice that the men of law and the wise folk offered to Melibee. The first example of *ouen* is personal and the other two are impersonal.

---

[11] Henceforth, all quotations from *CT* are from Stubbs's edition, which digitises Hg. For the sake of convenience, fragment and line numbers are from the Benson edition.

(6) [the men of law and the wise folk] seyden also / þᵗ in this cas / *ye* [= Melibeus] *oghten* for to werke / ful auysely / ⁊ wᵗ greet⁊ deliberacioū ¶ … youre olde and wise conseilours seiden / þᵗ *yow* ne *oghte* nat sodeynly / ne hastily / proce-den in this nede / but þᵗ *yow oghte* pʳueien and apparailen yow in this cas / with greet diligence and greet deliberacioū ⁒ trewely / I trowe þᵗ they seyden right wisely / and right sooth

(VII 1298, 1341–43; Cx1, Cx2, Py: *ye oughten to*, Wy: *ye oughte*; 1298 El: *yow oghten*)

The original speeches of the counsellors are in quotation (7), in which they use not *ouen* but *we conseile* and *men moste*—quoting two common sayings that are underlined here. Among these, *men* and the common sayings render their speeches objective.

(7) ¶ Wherfore Melibeus / this is oure sentence ⊽ *we conseile* yow abouen alle thyng⁊ . þᵗ right anon thow do diligence / in kepynge of thy ₚpre ₚsone / in swich a wise / þᵗ thow ne wante noon espye / ne wacche / thy body for to saue ⊽ And after þᵗ *we conseille* / þᵗ in thyn hous / thow sette suffisant garny-son / so þᵗ they may as wel / thy body / as thyn hous defen-de ¶ But c̄tes / for to moeue werre / ne sodeynly for to doon vengeance / we may nat deme in so litel tyme / þᵗ it were ₚfitable / wher fore / we axen leyser ⁊ espace / to haue deli-beracioū in this cas to deme / for the cōmune ₚūˉbe seyth . this / he þᵗ soone demeth / soone shal repente ¶ And eek men seyn / þᵗ thilke Iuge is wys / þᵗ soone vnderstondeth a ma-tere / ⁊ Iuggeth by leyser / for al be it so þᵗ al taryyng⁊ be anoyful / algates it is nat to repreue / in yeuyng of Iugge-ment⁊ / ne in vengeance takyng⁊ . whan it is suffisant and resonable / … ¶ Lordyn-ges quod he / ther is ful many a man . þᵗ crieth werre ~ werre ⁒ þᵗ woot ful litel / what werre amounteth ⊽ Werre at his bigynnyng⁊ hath so greet an entree ⁊ so large þᵗ euˉʳy wight⁊ may entre whan hym liketh / ⁊ lightly fynde werre ⊽ But certes what ende / þᵗ ther of shal falle ⁒ it is noght light to knowe ⊽ for soothly / whan þᵗ werre is ones bigonne ⁒ / ther is ful many a child / vnborn of his moder / þᵗ shal sterue yong⁊ by cause of thilke werre / or ellis lyue in sorwe / ⁊ dye in wrecchednesseand ther fore / er þᵗ any werre be bigonne / *men moste* haue gret⁊ conseil / ⁊ gret deliberacioū (VII 1026–32, 1038–42)

In another speech in (8), Prudence uses the personal construction, quoting Seneca's words.

(8)　¶ Allas my lord quod she / why make ye your self꞉ for to be lyk a fool / for sothe / it apte-neth nat to a wys man / to maken swich a sorwe / yowre ~ doghter / with the gᵃce of god / shal warisshe and escape ~ And al were it so / þᵗ she right now were deed ꞉ ye ne *oghte* natꞁ as for hir deth / yourꝰ self to destroye¶ Senecꞁ seith / the wise man shal nat take to greet disconfortꞁ for the deth of his children / but ꝯtes / he sholde suffren it in pacience / as wel / as he abideth the deth / of his owene ꝑpre ꝑsone (VII 980–85)

These linguistic features allow for the interpretation that in (6), Prudence maintains the objectivity of the external causals of the counsellors in lines 1341 and 1342 while her involvement in Melibee's obligation becomes more active in line 1298. The fact that the Ellesmere manuscript, which is said to have been written by the same scribe as that of Hg, means that *yow oghten* in line 1298 may signify his attempt to make the three expressions uniform although the -*en* ending is a remnant of the personal use.

　　This discussion on the extent of Prudence's involvement is closely related to a pragmatic aspect of her speeches. Investigating her utterances from the viewpoint of politeness, Pakkala-Weckström explains that "Prudence employs a number of politeness strategies, although her most common form of discourse is bald on record[12]" (2004: 164). Prudence's bald-on-record speech mainly consists of imperatives, *thou/ye*[13] + *shulen*, *ye han erred*, and insults such as *why make ye your self꞉ for to be lyk a fool* in (8); the personal use of *ouen* appears in such passages (Ohno 2016: 27). Thus, in (6), the personal use in line 1298 co-occurs with *ye shal* in lines 1297 and 1300. Contrastingly, the passage containing the lines 1341 and 1342 only has *I rede* ("I advise") in line 1346, an expression that can be understood to be milder than those in the bald-on-

[12] The term "bald on record" originates from Brown and Levinson, who state, "Doing and act baldly, without redress, involves doing it in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible (for example, for a request, saying 'Do X!')" (1987: 69).
[13] Examining Prudence's use of *thou shalt* and *ye shul* to Melibee, Pakkala-Weckström says, "it is somewhat doubtful whether her occasional use of *ye shul* is meant as a politeness device" (2004: 164).

13

record style mentioned above. Therefore, it is safe to say that Prudence's pressure on Melibee is lighter in that instance.

Based on what has been analysed in this section, it follows that the printed editions' choice of the personal use in lines 1341 and 1342 demonstrates that Prudence attempts to make her style bald on record; alternatively, the printers simply followed the common usage of the time without reading into it her lighter involvement in Melibee's obligation observed in Hg.

4.1.3. Third Person

Among the 13 examples of the impersonal *ouen* with a third-person Ex, two take the personal use in the printed editions, namely VII 1731 and IV 1120. First, in (9), derived from "The Tale of Melibee," Prudence shows the villains the consequences of either reconciliation or war and tells them to repent their deed. Cx1, Cx2, and Py use the personal construction while Wy uses the impersonal one.

> (9) … [Prudence] shewed wysly vn to hem [= the villains] / the grete goodes / þᵗ comen of pees / ⁊ the grete harmes ⁊ pils / þᵗ been in werre / ⁊ seyde to hem / in a goodly manere ⁚ / how þᵗ *hem oghten* haue greet repentance / of the Iniurie ⁊ wrongꝛ þᵗ they hadden doon / to Melibe hir lord / ⁊ vn to hiꝛ / ⁊ to hir doghter /
>
> (VII 1731–32; Cx1, Py: *they oughten*, Cx2: *they ough ten to*, Wy: *them ought*)

Because this example is in an indirect speech in narrative, the first three editions might reflect the tendency of the verb with a second-person Ex presumed in a converted direct speech. Wy, in contrast, corrects Cx2 in accordance with Prudence's behaviour, evidenced by *wysly* and *in a goodly manere*. However, this is the only example of *ouen* with a third-person Ex in an indirect speech in Chaucer's works; a comprehensive study on direct and indirect speech in Chaucer is thus necessary to confirm the statement about the first three editions.

Second, (10) is in the final part of "The Clerk's Tale," and the verb is in an *as*-clause.

(10)   ¶ This ladies / whan þᵗ they / hir tyme say
        Han taken hiꝛ [= Grisilde] / and in to chambre goon
        And strepen hiꝛ / out of hir rude aray
        And in a clooth of gold / þᵗ brighte shoon
        With a coroune / of many a riche stoon
        Vp on hir hed / they in to halle hir broghte
        And ther she was / honured as *hir oghte*

                              (IV 1114–20; Cx1: *she*, Cx2, Py, Wy: *her*)

Section 3 indicates that the obligations and sense of propriety the verb embodies in this clause are universally understood or easily assumed without the addressee's strong involvement, and it is almost exclusively used in impersonal construction. Cx1 presents the verb in the personal use but the later editions seem to express some resistance to the involvement.

4.2. Forms and Significations of *ouen*

The pragmatic aspect discussed in Section 4.1 is associated with mood. As mentioned in Section 3, Chaucer uses two different types of *ouen*: (A) in a past form with a present/future meaning (i.e. in the subjunctive mood); and (B) in a past form with a past meaning or in a present form with a present/future meaning (i.e. in the indicative mood). The six impersonal examples quoted in Section 4.1 have the verb in the past form. According to Ono's classification of tenses (1989: 212–14),[14] all examples except IV 1150 in (4) are in a past form with a past meaning. He classifies examples in a past form in indirect speech, as in (6) and (9), as indicative. However, they could be considered subjunctive free from the tense shift. If his classification is correct, the examples belong to Type B, and these tend to become personal, like another one in the present tense: "Also / *ye owen* / to enclyne ⁊ bowe youre herte / to take the pacience / of oure lord Ihū crist⁊" (VII 1501). Conversely, those of Type A have both impersonal and personal uses in Hg, and most of them remain unchanged in the printed

---

[14] His classification is as follows:
   III. 5. Personal use: **a.** in a present form, **b.** in a past form with a past meaning, and **c.** in a past form with a present meaning.
   III. 6. Impersonal use: **a.** in a past form with a past meaning and **b.** in a past form with a present meaning.

editions. These facts can mean that the addressers' "impatient" attitude in Type B tends to be expressed as personal while their "mild"[15] attitude in Type A can be expressed in both constructions.

This observation may explain some of the examples in the fifteenth-century texts treated in Section 2, apart from the viewpoint of the grammatical person of the Ex. The only impersonal example in the *Helsinki Corpus* (see note 6) belongs to Type A: "so that the seide Meyer and cyteseyns may nought have theyre way as *theym ought* to have to the towne wallys and ye Towre foreside." The example from *Paston Letters*, which belongs to Type B, is personal: "I hope he wolle be y*our* good fade*r* her-aft*er* yf ye demene you welle *and* do as ye owe to do to hym"[16] (Margaret Paston to John Paston II; Davis 1971: 288).

However, there are examples that contradict the above surmise: one is the example in IV 1150, which belongs to Type A and is rendered personal in all the printed editions. Another is an impersonal example in Vinaver's *Le Morte Darthur*: "Than sir Gawayne and sir Ector buryed hym as *them ought* to bury a kynges sonne" (Book 16, Chapter 3), in which the verb is in the past indicative in narrative. Additionally, Ono's classification may not be necessarily absolute. He argues that the past forms in VII 1268 in (11) and VII 1342[17] in (6) belong to Type B (1989: 213), but they can belong to Type A as per the *MED* (s.v. *ouen*, *v*. 5.) definition.

(11) I sey yow / þ^t the Sirurgiens ⁊ Phisiciens / han seyd yow in youre conseil / discretly / as *hem oghte* (VII 1268)

It is difficult to judge whether the verb in those examples shows past obligations or regular/universal ones. This difficulty necessitates the collection of more data to confirm the relationship between the personal and impersonal constructions and mood.

---

[15] Ono (1989: 125) uses the two adjectives to explain a difference between subjunctive *moste* and indicative *moot*.

[16] In this quotation, the italics are original and the underline is added for emphasis.

[17] As shown in (6), the verbs in VII 1341 and VII 1342 occur in the reported clauses which share the same reporting verb; and according to his criteria, it has a past meaning as well.

5. Summary

The discussions of this paper are summarised as follows:

- In Chaucer's fourteenth-century text, the use of *ouen* is likely to be affected by the extent of the addressees' involvement in an obligation as well as by the objectivity/subjectivity of external causals.
- All impersonal examples with a second-person Ex in Hg have variant readings in the personal use in any one of the fifteenth-century printed editions.
- In the referenced texts from the fifteenth century, the verb only takes on the personal reading no matter the grammatical person it appears with.
- Even fifteenth-century editions are unwilling to take the personal construction in *as*- and *than*-clauses.
- In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the auxiliarisation of the verb is still in progress, and its forms and significations (i.e., moods), cannot be a decisive element for determining its impersonal and personal uses.
- A careful survey of the examples that have variant readings in the various editions suggests that it is doubtful whether the editions can express the dynamically changing attitudes of the addressers towards the addressees entirely "as the author intended" (Hellinga 2010: 147).

Hiroshima University

Primary Sources

Benson, Larry D., ed. *The Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Blake, N. F. *Caxton's Own Prose*. London: André Deutsch, 1973.

Bordalejo, B., ed. *Caxton's Canterbury Tales: The British Library Copies*. CD-ROM. London: British Library, 2003.

Davis, Norman, ed. *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*. Part I. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Hofland, Knut, et al. *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic Part, ICAME Collection of English Language Corpora*. 2nd ed. CD-ROM. Bergen: The HIT Centre, University of Bergen, 1999.

Kato, Tomomi, ed. *A Concordance to the Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974.

Mizobata, Kiyokazu, ed. *A Concordance to Caxton's* Morte Darthur *(1485)*. Suita: Osaka Books, 2009.

Pynson, R., pr. *Canterbury Tales*. 1492. Web. Early English Books Online. <https://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2264198830/A35FBD6881B94BCAPQ/2?accountid=15247&imgSeq=1>

Sommer, H. Oskar, ed. *Le Morte Darthur by Syr Thomas Malory: The Original Edition of William Caxton, Now Reprinted and Edited with an Introduction and Glossary*. London: David Nutt, 1889. Web. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/MaloryWks2>

Stubbs, Estelle, ed. *The Hengwrt Chaucer Digital Facsimile*. CD-ROM. Leicester, UK: Scholarly Digital Editions, 2000.

Uchioke, Shinji, ed. *A Concordance to Paston Letters*. Okayama: University Education Press, 2004.

Vinaver, Eugène, ed. *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

de Worde, Wynkyn, pr. *The Boke of Chaucer Named Caunterbury Tales*. 1498. Web. Early English Books Online. <https://search.proquest.com/eebo/docview/2240920086/C5F56239A565483EPQ/1?accountid=15247&imgSeq=1>

Secondary Sources

Blake, N. F. *Caxton and His World*. London: André Deutsch, 1969.

Brown, Penelope and Stephen C. Levinson. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Dons, Ute. *Descriptive Adequacy of Early Modern English Grammars*. Berlin: Mouton, 2004.

Elmer, Willy. *Diachronic Grammar: The History of Old and Middle English Subjectless Constructions*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1981.

Fischer, Olga C. M. and Frederike C. van der Leek. "The Demise of the Old English Impersonal Construction." *Journal of Linguistics* 19 (1983): 337–68.

van der Gaaf, W. *The Transition from the Impersonal to the Personal Construction in Middle English*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1904.

Garbáty, Thomas J. "Wynkyn de Worde's 'Sir Thopas' and Other Tales." *Studies in Bibliography* 31 (1978): 57–67. Web. <https://www.jstor.org/

stable/40371674>

Hellinga, Lotte. *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*. London: British Library, 2010.

Horobin, Simon. *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003.

Hotchkiss, Valerie and Fred C. Robinson. *English in Print from Caxton to Shakespeare to Milton*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Kerkhof, J. *Studies in the Language of Geoffrey Chaucer*. 2nd ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982.

Middle English Dictionary. Web. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>

Möhlig-Falke, Ruth. *The Early English Impersonal Construction: An Analysis of Verbal and Constructional Meaning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Nakao, Yoshiyuki. *The Structure of Chaucer's Ambiguity*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013.

Ohno, Hideshi. "Impersonal and Personal Uses of *Ouen* in Chaucer." *Language and Beyond: A Festschrift for Hiroshi Yonekura on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*. Ed. Mayumi Sawada, et al. Tokyo: Eichosha, 2007. 353–66.

Ohno, Hideshi. *Variation between Personal and Impersonal Constructions in Geoffrey Chaucer: A Stylistic Approach*. Okayama: University Education Press, 2015.

Ohno, Hideshi. "*The Tale of Melibee* no *ouen* ni Tsuite." *Kotoba de Hirogaru Chisei to Kansei no Sekai*. Ed. Yosuke Yanase and Takayuki Nishihara. Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2016. 23–31.

Ohno, Hideshi. "Variations in Use of *listen* among the Earliest Manuscripts and Printed Editions of *The Canterbury Tales*." Paper read at International Medieval Congress Leeds 2019. 2 July 2019.

Ohno, Hideshi, Akiyuki Jimura, Yoshiyuki Nakao, Noriyuki Kawano, and Kenichi Satoh. "Textual Variations and Readings among the Manuscripts and Editions of *The Canterbury Tales*: With Special Reference to *The Knight's Tale*." *Hiroshima Studies in English Language and Literature* 62 (2018): 1–13.

Ono, Shigeru. *The Development of the English Modal Auxiliaries*. 3rd ed. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1987.

Pakkala-Weckström, Mari. "Discourse Strategies in the Marriage Dialogue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 105 (2004): 153–75.

Samuels, M. L. "Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology." *English Studies* 44 (1963): 81–94.

Visser, F. Th. *An Historical Syntax of the English Language*. Part 3, 1st Half. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969.

Windeatt, B. A., ed. *Geoffrey Chaucer,* Troilus and Criseyde*: A New Edition of "The Book of Troilus.*" London: Longman, 1984.