

The Impersonal Verb *Listen* in Chaucer's Works: Implications of Its Textual Distribution¹⁾

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1. Introduction

Following van der Gaaf's pioneering monograph of about a century ago, a considerable number of studies have been dedicated to the impersonal constructions in Old and Middle English.²⁾ Among all the authors and works in medieval English, Chaucer's use of impersonal constructions has been of particular scholarly interest.³⁾ This is probably because his works abound in examples of impersonal constructions and because personal constructions are also attested.⁴⁾ Due to the coexistence of these two different constructions, it is generally assumed that Chaucer's English shows a transition from impersonal to personal constructions. However, not all the verbs that can be used in impersonal constructions exemplify such a "transition." Among the verbs that can hardly be regarded as undergoing transition, this paper is concerned with *listen* "to be pleasing."

The use of *listen* as an impersonal verb goes back to the Old English period, while its first occurrence in personal constructions does not appear until the thirteenth century.⁵⁾ According to van der Gaaf's extensive investigation (1904: 70–73), *listen* began to be used in personal constructions in all dialects by the beginning of the fourteenth century, and after the middle of the fifteenth century its use in impersonal constructions declined. Chaucer's English of the late fourteenth century has examples of both impersonal and personal constructions with *listen*.

There are more than 60 impersonal verbs in Chaucer's works,⁶⁾ of which *listen* is by far the most frequently chosen verb for impersonal constructions with objective personal pronouns. There are only 19 verbs with ten

or more instances of such impersonal constructions in Chaucer,⁷⁾ and *listen*, with more than 300 instances, far outnumbers the other verbs alone. This extremely high frequency may well characterize it as the most important representative of Chaucer's impersonal verbs. On the other hand, a simple comparison with its synonym *liken* points to the peculiar use of *listen* in Chaucer's works, especially in the verse texts. Chaucer uses *listen* far more frequently than *liken* in impersonal constructions,⁸⁾ but the disparity in frequency is restricted to the distribution in the verse texts. In the verse texts, Chaucer employs *listen* 290 times in impersonal constructions involving objective personal pronouns, while he chooses *liken* 66 times, more than four times less frequently than *listen*. By contrast, in the prose texts, the two verbs are selected almost equally, with 15 instances for *listen* and 18 instances for *liken*.

As far as I know, distinguishing examples between the verse and prose texts like this has never been attempted in the previous studies of Chaucer's impersonal constructions. These have tended to treat all the examples equally, irrespective of whether they are attested in the verse or prose texts. The problem with such a treatment is clear from the fact that verse texts have a much higher frequency of impersonal constructions than prose texts in Chaucer,⁹⁾ which suggests that Chaucer favored the use of the older constructions in the verse texts rather than in the prose texts. It should be stressed that distinguishing examples according to the texts is indispensable for a proper understanding of Chaucer's usage. This paper reconsiders the use of *listen* in Chaucer's works from the viewpoint of textual distribution.¹⁰⁾

2. Classification

The constructions in which Chaucer uses *listen* can be classified into the following four types depending on whether the construction is impersonal or personal:

Type I: with an objective personal pronoun [303 instances]

Ex. But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere. (CT V (F) 728)

Type II: with a formal subject *it* [4 instances]

Ex. My gold is youres, whan that it yow leste, (CT VII (B²) 284)

Type III: with a noun or an indeclinable pronoun [50 instances]

Ex. For certein, whan that Fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde.
(CT VII (B²) 1995–96)

Ex. After his fadres deth he bar hym so
That there nas non that liste ben his fo, (LGW 1406–07)

Type IV: with a nominative personal pronoun [8 instances]

Ex. And if ye lyst of me to make
Youre prisoner, I wol it take (RomB 1967–68)

Of these four types, Type I and Type II correspond to impersonal constructions in the general definition. Type I, without a nominative subject and with an objective personal pronoun in the preverbal position, is no longer allowed in Present-day English. Type II is a construction in which the dummy subject *it* precedes the verb. The introduction of a dummy *it* is generally agreed to have been motivated by the demand for a subject in the preverbal position after the rigidification of the SVO word order and to have had an important role in the demise of our Type I constructions.¹¹⁾ Type III are constructions in which *listen* occurs with a noun or an indeclinable pronoun. The distinctive feature of Type III constructions is their structural ambiguity in that they can be interpreted either as impersonal or personal constructions. There are no formal clues as to whether the noun *Fortune* in the first example should be understood as in the nominative (i.e. *she*) or objective case (i.e. *hire*), since the nominal case distinctions between the two cases are lost in Chaucer's English.¹²⁾ Nor can we tell whether the relative pronoun *that* in the second example is in the nominative or objective case, since it is an indeclinable pronoun.¹³⁾ Finally, Type IV is a construction in which an objective personal pronoun in Type I is replaced by a nominative personal pronoun. It is no longer recognized as impersonal but as a personal construction.

It is clear from the numerical data for the four types that Type I is the basic use for *listen* in Chaucer. On the other hand, although the examples are rather scarce, *listen* is also attested in the newer constructions, i.e.

Type II and Type IV constructions. This seems to imply that while Type I constructions are overwhelmingly productive, *listen* in Chaucer's English shows the transition to the newer constructions, just as is generally claimed regarding Chaucer's impersonal constructions. However, a closer look at the relevant examples casts doubt both on the productivity of Type I constructions with *listen* and on the progress of "transition" in Chaucer's English. In order to illustrate this point I shall examine each of the four types in detail.

3. Discussion of each type

3.1. Type I

While *listen* is by far the most frequent in Type I constructions of all the four types in Chaucer, there is some large disparity in distribution between the verse and prose texts. Of the total 303 instances, 288 are attested in the verse texts while only 15 are found in the prose texts. Table 1 gives the number of examples of Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer's verse and prose texts. The texts are arranged in the order in which they appear in the *Riverside Chaucer* from left to right. CT (V) stands for the verse part of the *Canterbury Tales*, while CT (P) stands for the prose part, i.e. the *Tale of Melibee* and the *Parson's Tale*. The texts with no examples are removed from the table in order to economize space. They are all verse texts that appear under "Short Poems" in the *Riverside Chaucer*.

Table 1 Examples of Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer
<Verse texts>

CT (V)	BD	HF	Anel	PF	Tr	LGW	Mars	Venus	Ros	WomNob	Fort	Rom	Total
125	4	7	5	6	96	25	1	1	1	1	1	15	288

<Prose texts>

CT (P)	Bo	Ast	Total
1	8	6	15

In order to facilitate comparison among these texts of different length, Figure 1 depicts normalized frequencies of the examples per 1000 words for each text.¹⁴⁾ In this figure too, the texts are arranged in the order in

which they appear in the *Riverside Chaucer* from left to right. The short poems of much less than 1000 words, i.e. the *Complaint of Venus*, *To Rosemounde*, *Womanly Noblesse*, and *Fortune* are excluded from the figure.

Figure 1 Normalized frequencies of examples of Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer (per 1000 words)

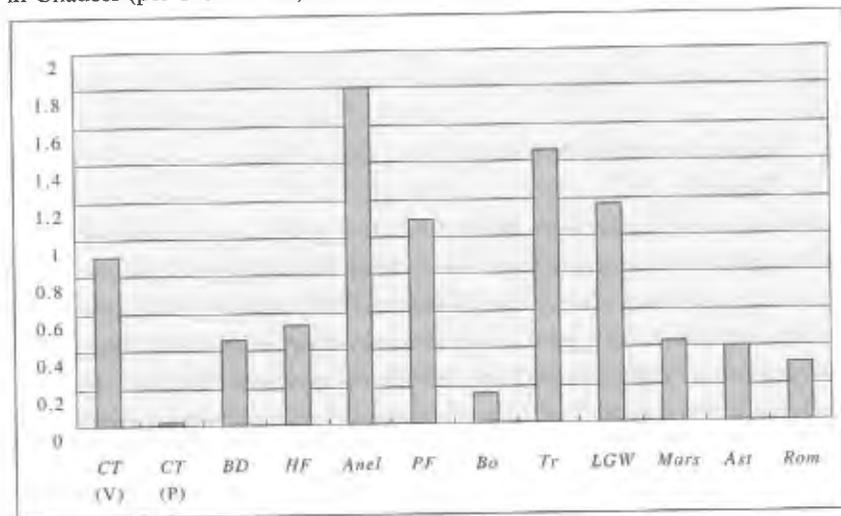


Figure 1 shows that the prose texts have much lower frequencies of Type I constructions with *listen* than the verse texts. The frequencies in the prose part of the *Canterbury Tales* and *Boece* are lower than in any of the verse texts in the figure, and the frequency in the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, the highest among the prose texts, only slightly exceeds the frequency in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, which is the lowest among the verse texts in the figure. The use of Type I constructions with *listen* obviously inclines toward verse texts, which indicates that these constructions were primarily regarded as poetic forms in Chaucer's English.

The results in Figure 1 also point to the disparity in frequency among the verse texts. *Anelida and Arcite* has the highest frequency, but this is no doubt because it is a much shorter work than the others. Its word total is only 2772, so that although it has only five examples (see Table 1), its normalized frequency is necessarily higher than that of the other much

longer works. We need not attach much importance to the fact that it has the highest frequency.

Following *Anelida and Arcite*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Legend of Good Women*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, and the verse part of the *Canterbury Tales* have more or less close frequencies. Among these four works, we may note *Troilus*, the *Legend*, and the *Canterbury Tales*. These texts have a relatively large number of examples of Type I constructions with *listen*, but many of its uses may be ascribed to formal factors rather than semantic ones.

The three works employ *listen* in various kinds of sentence structures, among which the following six should be noted:

- (1) (a) Ye may be war of men, if that yow liste. [: wiste]
(LGW 2387)
- (b) "But natheles, by that God I the swere,
That, as hym list, may al this world governe —
(Tr 3.372-73)
- (c) And sey to me, youre nece, what yow liste." [: triste, kiste]
(Tr 2.249)
- (d) As clerkes, whan hem list, konne wel endite,
(CT IV (E) 933)
- (e) And seyde, "Kneleth now, while that yow leste; [: reste]
(Tr 3.965)
- (f) Thou sholdest seye, "Wyf, go wher thee liste; [: chiste]
(CT III (D) 318)

These underlined constructions are raised as "stereotyped impersonal clauses" in Masui (1964: 180). Naming them "rime-clauses" for their frequent appearance at the end of a line as in (a), (c), (e), and (f), Masui further notes as follows:

"These hackneyed clauses seem to convey a polite manner of speaking on the one hand, whereas on the other they seem often to bear a weakened sense like 'please' or 'as one chooses' with a parenthetic function. They are sometimes placed merely for the poet to save himself trouble with riming. . . .

It is very interesting to note that various types of such rime-clauses are especially found in *Troilus and Criseyde*. The reason may be that

since the level of the language there used is courtly, these clauses are added to the courtly conversation as an expression of politeness besides the necessity of rime as a stop-gap serving for the complicated rime scheme of the poem."

Masui clearly acknowledges metrical convenience in the use of these expressions. Table 2 summarizes the number of examples of these "stereotyped impersonal clauses" with *listen* in Chaucer's verse and prose texts. The "(a)"–"(f)" in the leftmost column respectively correspond to the clauses illustrated above as (a)–(f) under (1). The texts with no examples of any of these clauses, all of which are verse texts, are removed from the table.

Table 2 Examples of "stereotyped impersonal clauses" with *listen* in Chaucer
<Verse texts>

	CT (V)	BD	HF	Anel	PF	Tr	LGW	Ros	WomNob	Rom	Total
(a)	18	—	—	—	1	16	3	—	—	—	38
(b)	30	—	—	2	1	14	10	—	1	2	60
(c)	9	—	1	—	2	7	4	1	—	2	26
(d)	12	1	—	—	—	7	—	—	—	1	21
(e)	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	3
(f)	7	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	2	13
Total	76	1	1	2	4	51	17	1	1	7	161

<Prose texts>

	CT (P)	Bo	Ast	Total
(a)	1	—	1	2
(b)	—	1	—	1
(c)	—	—	—	0
(d)	—	—	2	2
(e)	—	—	—	0
(f)	—	—	—	0
Total	1	1	3	5

Of the six clauses, the *if*-clause in (a) and *as*-clause in (b) are among the most common structures of Type I constructions with *listen* in *Troilus and*

Criseyde, the *Legend of Good Women*, and the verse part of the *Canterbury Tales*. The examples of (a) and (b) together occupy approximately one-third of all the examples of Type I constructions with *listen* in *Troilus* and the *Canterbury Tales* and even half of those in the *Legend*. The other four clauses in (c)–(f) are less frequent than these two clauses, but they are relatively common in *Troilus* and the *Canterbury Tales*: the instances of (c)–(f) together amount to about one-fifth of all the instances of Type I constructions with *listen* in these works. The verse texts other than *Troilus*, the *Legend*, and the *Canterbury Tales* and the prose texts also have examples of (a)–(f), but there are only one or two examples of either of the six clauses, and the repeated use in these three works is not matched in any other works. It seems reasonably safe to attribute the relatively high frequencies of Type I constructions with *listen* in the three works to the frequent use of Masui's "stereotyped impersonal clauses," particularly (a) and (b). Chaucer apparently made active use of these clauses as convenient tools for composing his three longest poems.

The frequent use of these "stereotyped" clauses allows us to conjecture regarding the state of Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer's English. The total number of these clauses in the verse and prose texts is 166 (verse: 161 instances; prose: 5 instances), more than half of all the examples of Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer's works. Chaucer uses *listen* in Type I constructions far more frequently than the other impersonal verbs, but it is questionable whether Type I constructions with *listen* were still syntactically in active use in Chaucer's English. It is reasonable to speculate that at least half of Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer's English belonged to more or less older, formulaic expressions.

3.2. Type II

Type II constructions with *listen* are far less frequent than Type I constructions in Chaucer. There are only four instances as follows (the logical subject of *listen* is in italics):

(2) (a) My gold is youres, whan that *it* *yoʝw* *leste*,

And nat oonly my gold, but my chaffare.

(CT VII (B²) 284–85)

- (b) Whan that ye wente, of which yet boote non
Have I non had, but evere wors bigon
Fro day to day am I, and so mot dwelle,
While it *yow* list, of wele and wo my welle. (Tr 5.1327–30)
- (c) She hath it kyst ful ofte for his sake,
And seyde, "O swete cloth, whil *Juppiter* it leste,
Tak now my soule, unbynd me of this unreste!
(LGW 1337–39)
- (d) Al was the tymber of no strengthe,
Yet hit is founded to endure
While that hit lyst to *Aventure*,
That is the moder of tydynges,
As the see of welles and of sprynges; (HF 1980–84)

It is important to note that all of these four instances are attested in the verse texts. The complete lack of Type II constructions in the prose texts suggests that the use of *it* with *listen* is required by purely metrical factors. In (2a) and (2b), the deletion of *it* would not damage the syntax of the clause, but would leave the line shorter by one syllable than the normal ten-syllable line, and the iambic rhythm would not run regularly.¹⁵ In (2c), which is attested in the *Legend of Good Women*, the line with *listen* is made up of twelve syllables, while the usual number of syllables in a line in this work is ten. As in (2a) and (2b), the use of *it* in this instance is not required by syntactic factors, for the construction without *it*, *Juppiter leste*, is syntactically quite adequate. Nevertheless, this hypothetical reading is metrically problematic in that the two accented syllables, i.e. *-er* of *Juppiter* and the stem vowel of *leste*, collide with each other.¹⁶ The use of *it* in (2c) was in all likelihood necessitated in order to avoid this problem. In (2d), *Aventure*, which is the logical subject of *listen*, is preceded by the preposition *to*. When we consider Chaucer's general tendency in the use of *listen*, the more usual syntactic structure would be *Aventure lyst*, a Type III construction without *it* or *to*. However, this not only makes the line too short but also fails to rhyme *Aventure* with *endure* in the previous line. The formal subject and the preposition may have been introduced in order

to solve these two metrical problems.

To sum up, in all the four instances of Type II constructions with *listen*, the presence of *it* can be metrically justified. It is safe to conclude that on the rare occasions when Chaucer used *it* with *listen*, he did so out of metrical requirements. It seems clear that the syntactic need for employing a formal subject with *listen* was hardly felt in Chaucer's English.¹⁷

Finally, we may note the following two instances:

- (3) (a) And what she thoughte somewhat shal I write,
As to myn auctour listeth for t'endite. (Tr 2.699–700)
- (b) Thorough yow have I seyde fully in my song
Th'effect and joie of Troilus servise,
Al be that ther was som disese among,
As to myn auctour listeth to devise. (Tr 3.1814–17)

In these instances, the logical subject of *listen* is expressed in the prepositional phrase as in (2d), and the verb lacks a syntactic subject. We may regard the underlined construction as a variant of Type II, since, as in the following examples with another impersonal verb *bifallen*, Chaucer sometimes uses *it* and sometimes not depending on meter:

- (4) (a) And so bifel it on a Saturday,
This carpenter was goon til Osenay; (CT I (A) 3399–400)
- (b) And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,
His wyf anon hath for hir lemman sent.
(CT IX (H) 203–04)

3.3. Type III

Examples of Type III constructions with *listen* are divided into those with nouns and those with indeclinable pronouns, 25 instances each, and all but one of these examples are attested in the verse texts. This implies that just like Type I and Type II constructions, Type III constructions with *listen* almost exclusively belong to poetic expressions in Chaucer's English.

As I have mentioned earlier in this paper, most of Type III constructions are structurally ambiguous between impersonal and personal constructions. However, there are three examples of unambiguous personal

constructions as follows, the last of which is the only instance of Type III constructions in the prose texts:

- (5) (a) Suffiseth me thou make in this manere:
That thou reherce of al hir lyf the grete,
After thise olde auctours lysten for to trete. (LGW 573-75)
- (b) Thow lady bryght, the doughter to Dyone,
Thy blynde and wynged sone ek, daun Cupide,
Yee sustren nyne ek, that by Elicone
In hil Pernaso listen for t'abide, (Tr 3.1807-10)
- (c) For soothly, he that precheth to *hem* that listen nat heeren
his wordes, his sermon hem anoieþ. (CT VII (B²) 1044)

In these three examples, *listen* has the plural ending *-en* agreeing with the plural noun in (5a) and the plural antecedent in (5b) and (5c). These examples show that, although only sporadically, *listen* could be used in personal constructions when it occurred with a noun or an indeclinable pronoun.

3.4. Type IV

Finally, we shall examine the instances of Type IV constructions with *listen* in Chaucer. There are only eight examples as quoted below, and all but (6h) are attested in the verse texts. Since the use of *listen* in Chaucer chiefly centers in the verse texts in each of the four types of constructions, it can safely be stated that Chaucer regarded this verb primarily as a poetic vocabulary item, irrespective of the types of constructions in which it may have occurred:

- (6) (a) I have my sone snybbed, and yet shal,
For he to vertu listeth nat entende; (CT V (F) 688-89)
- (b) But though that I now telle it the ne leste,
Be thow naught wroth; I hide it for the beste."
(Tr 1.580-81)
- (c) And if that he noght *may*, par aventure,
Or ellis list no swich dispence endure, (CT VII (B²) 15-16)
- (d) Delyte nat in wo thi wo to seche,
As don thise foles that hire sorwes eche
With sorwe, whan thei *han* mysaventure,

- And listen naught to seche hem other cure. (Tr 1.704-07)
- (e) He say his lady somtyme, and also
She with hym spak, whan that she *dorst* or leste;
(Tr 3.451-52)
- (f) And if ye lyst of me to make
Youre prisoner, I wol it take
Of herte and will, fully at gree. (RomB 1967-69)
- (g) What worship is it agayn hym take,
Or on youre man a werre make,
Sith he so lowly, every wise,
Is redy, as ye lust devise? (RomB 3529-32)
- (h) First wite thou certainly, hou that haven stondesth, that
thou list to werke for; (AstSup 2.46.1-2)

One might assume from these examples that the transition to personal constructions was in progress with *listen*. However, a careful examination of these instances shows that Type IV constructions with *listen* in Chaucer could only occur in some restricted environments.

In (6a) and (6b), some words intervene between the nominative pronoun and the verb. The distance between the two is particularly long in (6b). In contrast to these instances, the pronoun and the verb are almost exclusively placed next to each other in Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer. Of the 303 instances of Type I constructions with *listen*, there are only six cases where the pronoun and the verb are separated from each other:

- (7) (a) Ne me *ne* list thilke opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
(CT I (A) 2813-14)
- (b) Dwelleth with us, whil yow *good* list, in Troie. (Tr 1.119)
- (c) In joie and suerte Pandarus hem two
Abedde brought, whan that hem *bothe* leste,
(Tr 3.1678-79)
- (d) And after this, whan that hem *bothe* leste,
They spedde hem fro the soper unto reste. (Tr 5.517-18)
- (e) Ne me *ne* list this sely womman chyde
Forther than the storye wol devyse. (Tr 5.1093-94)
- (f) My wil I cónforme to your ordynaunce,

As you *best list*, my peynes for to redresse. (WomNob 16–17)

In all of these instances, only a single word intervenes between the pronoun and the verb. The inserted words, emphasized in italics, are either adverbs modifying *listen* (*ne* in (7a) and (7e), *good* in (7b), and *best* in (7f)) or pronouns modifying the objective pronoun (*bothe* in (7c) and (7d)), which are not very likely to be put in any other position. On the other hand, the inserted words in (6a) and (6b) are the constituents of the phrase governed by *listen*, which syntactically do not have to be placed in this specific position.¹⁸⁾ In short, the distance between the pronoun and the verb in (6a) and (6b) is unparalleled in Type I constructions with *listen* in Chaucer, and this might have prevented the use of the objective pronouns, *him* and *me* respectively. We should therefore not regard (6a) and (6b) as resulting from the transition from Type I to Type IV constructions.

In (6c)–(6e), *listen* is coordinated with verbs that were never used as impersonal in the history of English, i.e. *mowen* in (6c), *haven* in (6d), and *durren* in (6e), italicized in each quotation. The use of *listen* in Type IV constructions in these three instances results from the structural necessity that *listen* takes over the nominative subject of its coordinated verb. These three instances therefore should not be regarded as examples of the active use of Type IV constructions.

In contrast to (6a)–(6e), *listen* immediately follows the nominative pronoun in (6f)–(6h). If we replace the nominative pronoun in these examples with an objective pronoun, the resulting constructions would be Type I constructions where *listen* governs an infinitive. Such patterns are quite common with *listen* in Chaucer's works. For this reason, (6f)–(6h) might appear as typical Type IV constructions with *listen*, which were most easily produced simply by substituting the case of the pronoun in Type I constructions. However, these three instances are all from the portion of works that are not generally attributed to Chaucer. (6f) and (6g) both come from Fragment B of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, which is, according to Benson (1987: 686), "definitely not Chaucer's."¹⁹⁾ (6h) is from "Supplementary Propositions" to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*. According to Eisner (2002: 43–46), past editors since Skeat have cast doubt on the

authenticity of the Supplementary Propositions, and among those six propositions Proposition 46, from which (6h) comes, is generally regarded as not by Chaucer.

To sum up regarding the distribution of Type IV constructions with *listen* in Chaucer, the examples that seem to have developed by preserving the basic word order in Type I constructions and simply replacing the case of the pronoun are restricted to the portion of works whose authorship is suspect, whereas the works that are generally ascribed to Chaucer only have examples that cannot be regarded as having originated from the simple case alternation. The transition to personal constructions is much less in progress with *listen* than suggested by the numerical data.

4. Concluding remarks

So far we have investigated the use of the impersonal verb *listen* in Chaucer from the viewpoint of textual distribution. Our analysis of the examples has revealed that newer constructions with the formal subject *it* or the nominative pronoun are considerably limited in use and that the transition from impersonal to personal is hardly attested. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that when *listen* occurs with a personal pronoun, Type I constructions are almost exclusively fixed as the single choice in Chaucer's English.

On the other hand, it is hard to claim that Type I constructions with *listen* were still syntactically flourishing in Chaucer's English. More than half of the examples are a series of formulaic expressions, and although structurally the same as Type I constructions with other verbs, their repeated use strikes us as somewhat hackneyed. In this respect, *listen* is idiosyncratic among Chaucer's impersonal verbs. In discussing Chaucer's use of impersonal verbs, it should be emphasized that verbs with varying degrees of development coexisted in his writing.

NOTES

1) The present article is a revised version of the paper read at the 21st Congress of the Japan Society for Medieval English Studies at the University of Tsukuba, on December 4, 2005. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Jun Terasawa for his valuable comments throughout the preparation of this paper. I am also grateful to the following friends and professors for their

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2) In the generally accepted definition, an impersonal construction refers to a construction which lacks a nominative subject or employs a formal subject *it*, and in which the verb is consistently in the third person singular form. An impersonal verb is a verb that has the potential to occur in an impersonal construction. In other words, an impersonal verb can appear in other types of constructions, for instance in a personal construction with a nominative subject.

3) As far as I know, the most exhaustive study of Chaucer's impersonal constructions so far is Higuchi (1990).

4) According to van der Gaaf (1904: 142), with a few exceptions all the impersonal verbs began to be used in personal constructions in the first half of the fourteenth century.

5) See *OED* s.v. **list** v.¹.

6) These are (in alphabetical order): *athinken*, *availen*, *ben best*, *ben bet|bette*, *ben boden*, *ben fair*, *ben good*, *ben impossible*, *ben lef*, *ben lever*, *ben levest*, *ben loth*, *ben lothest*, *ben nede*, *ben possible*, *ben shapen*, *ben taught*, *ben told*, *ben wel*, *ben wo*, *ben wors*, *bihoven*, *bitiden*, *deinen*, *deliten*, *displesen*, *draven*, *dreden*, *dremen*, *fallen*, *gamen*, *geinen*, *greven*, *happen*, *haven lever*, *lakken*, *lasten*, *liken*, *listen*, *longen*, *meten*, *misfallen*, *mishappen*, *misliken*, *missitten*, *mosten*, *neden*, *oughten*, *recchen*, *reinen*, *remembren*, *repenten*, *reuen*, *semen*, *shamen*, *shinen*, *sitten*, *smerten*, *snewen*, *suffisen*, *thinken*, *thirsten*, *thurven*, *tiden*, *tikelen*, and *wanten*.

7) These are (in alphabetical order): *ben lef* (10 times), *ben lever* (27 times), *ben loth* (15 times), *ben wo* (21 times), *bihoven* (15 times), *happen* (10 times), *lakken* (17 times), *liken* (84 times), *listen* (305 times), *meten* (16 times), *neden* (34 times), *oughten* (41 times), *recchen* (12 times), *remembren* (14 times), *semen* (42 times), *smerten* (11 times), *suffisen* (10 times), *thinken* (178 times), and *thurven* (13 times). The figures in parenthesis are all based on my master's thesis (Miura 2004).

8) Van der Gaaf (1904: 70) points out that a decided preference for *listen* over *liken* is generally observed in Middle English.

9) This is pointed out in my master's thesis (Miura 2004).

10) The text to be used in the present paper is Benson's *Riverside Chaucer*. References and short titles are in general those used in Benson's *Glossarial Concordance*.

11) See Kim (1999) for further argument.

12) In Old English *listen* governed an accusative case. See van der Gaaf (1904: 8).

13) There are four other kinds of indeclinable pronouns that occur with *listen* in Chaucer's works: *whoso*, *who*, the personal pronoun *it*, and composite pronouns like *himselven*. Van der Gaaf (1904: 31) notes that before a verb *whoso* was generally left uninflected in Middle English. In order to be consistent with the inclusion of *whoso*, I have treated *who*, which occurs only once with *listen* in Chaucer (RomB 5028), as the indeclinable pronoun for 'convenience' sake. The use of the personal pronoun *it* with *listen* is attested only once as follows, where *it* refers to *Myn herte* in the first line but its case is ambiguous between the nominative and the objective:

Myn herte is youre, and myn right nought,
As it bihoveth, in dede and thought,

Redy in all to worche youre will,

Whether so turne to good or ill,

So sore it lustith you to plesse,

No man therof may you disseise. (RomB 2071-76)

As for the composite pronouns, Nakao (1972: 300) points out that they occur in the subject position as frequently as in the object position in Middle English. He further argues the possibility that they contributed to some extent to the transition from impersonal to personal constructions.

14) The total words for each text are obtained from Cannon (1998: 118-19) except for the *Romaunt of the Rose*. Cannon only gives the total words in Fragment A of the work. The total words in the *Romaunt* including Fragment B and Fragment C are taken from Nakao and Matsuo (1992: 192).

15) As for (2b), an alternative would be using a pleonastic *that* instead of *it*, as in (1e) above.

16) It should be noted that unlike in Present-day English, *Jupiter* in Chaucer's poems receives stress not only on the first syllable but also on the third syllable. This is confirmed by the fact that it rhymes by *-er* twice (in HF 591 with *botiller* and in HF 609 with *fer*).

17) The cause for the scarcity of examples of Type II constructions with *listen* may partly be attributed to its synonym *liken*. Unlike *listen*, *liken* is favored in Type II constructions almost as much as in Type I constructions in Chaucer. This leads us to assume that when Chaucer wanted to use *it*, the verb to be selected was not *listen* but *liken*.

18) Ohno (1995: 53) cites Norman Blake's opinion about the separation of *he* and *listeth* in (6a) from the metrical and psychological point of view: "In his suggestion, Norman Blake says, "By putting something in between, it allows both [*he* and *listeth*] to be stressed. I think this is important for the SqT example since 'he' refers back to 'my sone' in the previous line and allows the 'he' to carry stress." The franklin, the speaker, is complaining of his son by emphasizing his prodigality." As for (6b), Chaucer probably placed *leste* at the end of a line so that it should rhyme with *beste* in the following line. The rhyme between these two words is very common in Chaucer: CT I (A) 749-50, 787-88, 1847-48, 2207-08, III (D) 1985-86, IV (E) 489-90, 716 and 718, 986-87, 1517-18, V (F) 885-86, Tr 1.1028-29, 2.1448-49, 3.452-53, 671-72, 846-47, 1047-48, 1329-30, 4.169 and 171, 5.839-40, LGW 614-15.

19) Of the three fragments of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, only Fragment A (ll. 1-1705) is generally accepted by scholars as Chaucer's work. For a detailed account of the problem of authorship of this work, see Dahlberg (1999: 3-24).

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From Parataxis to Hypotaxis

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I claim that syntactic embedding emerged rather late in the history of English. It does not mean that there was no way of having another proposition embedded in a clause in early English. There have always been variant devices of expressing a complicate idea in languages. What I want to claim is that syntactic embedding presupposes a relevant functional category, and hence, without a relevant functional category in a given language, the language tries to exploit a different device for expressing the complex idea.

One of the widely exploited ways of complementation in earlier languages is nominalization, i.e., nominalized verbal forms such as infinitives, or more precisely, the precursors of Present-day infinitives. This will be dealt with in chapter 4. I claim that there was a diachronic shift from nominalization, or more precisely from nominals which are based on verbal forms, to syntactic embedding in the ways of complementation. The key factor behind this is the presence/absence of a relevant functional category. Another way of complementation in a language without a functional category is loose adjunction of a finite clause, which is traditionally called, as juxtaposition. This will be discussed in chapter 5.

The background assumptions are that the choice of functional categories such as D, T, I, and C is subject to parametric variation and that generally functional categories are introduced at a later stage in a given language. This is discussed in chapter 2 in more detail.

Syntactic embedding, which presupposes the presence of a functional category, is made possible after the relevant functional category emerges