

On the Choice of Complements with Causative Verbs in *Sir Orfeo*:
Comparison between the Three Extant Manuscripts*

Masato MORITA

1. Introduction

English has experienced various changes in verbal complementation since the Old English (OE) period. These changes are referred to as Great Complement Shift by Günter Rohdenburg (“Role” 159-60). The present study examines verbs and their complements in the three extant manuscripts of *Sir Orfeo*. In this paper, we will pay exclusive attention to the three causative verbs, that is, *leten*, *maken* and *bidden*.¹ We examine whether these verbs take bare infinitives, *to*-infinitives or *that*-clause complements.

Sir Orfeo is a rhymed poem written in Middle English (ME). It survives in the three manuscripts: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates’ MS 19.2.1, known as “the Auchinleck MS” (Auchinleck), London, British Library, Harley MS 3810 (Harley), and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61 (Ashmole).² The Auchinleck MS is considered to have been copied in c1330. The Harley MS was made at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the Ashmole MS at the end of the fifteenth century (Bliss x-xii).

Though the narrative itself is almost the same across the three manuscripts, it is sometimes difficult to compare verbal complements. This is because, even when they are describing the same situation, different verbs are sometimes chosen across the three manuscripts. In this paper, we especially focus on the sentences in which the same verb, not synonyms, are used in two or three of the manuscripts, so that we can observe whether verbs describing the same context take the same kind of complement or not.

* I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Ryuichi Hotta of Keio University, who always encourages me and gives me much valuable advice. I am also grateful to Professor Taro Ishiguro of Meiji University for answering an abundance of questions and giving me insightful comments and suggestions.

¹ Of the three manuscripts, we can find the causative verb *don* used only once in Harley. The verb *don* takes a *to*-infinitive in the example.

We redyn ofte & fynde y-wryte,

As clerkes *don* vs *to* wryte, (Harley 1-2)

² According to A. J. Bliss, the Auchinleck MS is not far removed from the original. In contrast, several lines are omitted in the Harley MS. In the Ashmole MS, there are fewer omissions and more additions than the Harley MS. (xv-xvi)

2. Verbal complementation in the three manuscripts

2.1. *leten*

Let us first compare complements of the verb *leten* in the manuscripts. In the following examples (1)-(3), *leten* is followed by a bare infinitive in all of the manuscripts.

(1) Þe porter vndede þe 3ate anon
& *lete* him in-to þe castel *gon*. (Auchinleck 385-86)

(2) He vnded þe gate anone
& *lete* hym in-to þe castel *gone*. (Harley 369-70)

(3) The porter vndyd þe 3ate anon
And as a mynstrell *lete* hym *gon*. (Ashmole 376-77)

Also in other examples (4)-(6), *leten* is followed by a bare infinitive in all of the manuscripts.

(4) Þe maidens durst hir nou3t awake,
Bot *lete* hir *ligge* & rest *take*. (Auchinleck 73-74)

(5) Þe maydenes durst hur not awake,
But by-syde hur mery þey can hem make,
& *lete* hur *slepe* tyl aftur none, (Harley 71-73)

(6) The ladys durste hyr nou3t wake,
Bot *lete* hyr *ly3e*, hyr rest to take. (Ashmole 61-62)³

Other than the examples above, we can find more examples of *leten*, all of which are followed by bare infinitives (see Appendix).

According to Bettelou Los, *laetan* in OE does not occur with *that*-clause complements or *to*-infinitive complements when used as a verb of causation or permitting (124). While some verbs have changed their complement types, the verb *let* has been followed by bare infinitives

³ In the example (6), *to take* is presumably a purpose adjunct, not a complement of the verb *leten*, considering the fact that *leten* is always followed by bare infinitives in other examples in this poem.

ever since the OE period. We can imagine that the employment of bare infinitives with *leten* had already been so firmly fixed that the writer of *Sir Orfeo* had no choice but to choose bare infinitives.

2.2. *maken*

In contrast to the verb *leten*, the causative verb *maken* takes not only bare infinitives but also *to*-infinitives in the manuscripts. It should be noted that the choice of complements is different between the manuscripts, even when the verb is used in the same context.

(7) & *made* me wiþ him *ride*

Opon a palfray bi his side; (Auchinleck 155-56)

(8) & *made* me with hym *ryde*

On a whyte palfrey by his syde; (Harley 153-54)

(9) And *made* me wyth hym *forto ryde*

Vpon a stede by hys syde. (Ashmole 154-55)

With regard to the difference between bare infinitives and *to*-infinitives, Yoko Iyeiri examines complements of *maken* in Late ME and refers to Rohdenburg's Complexity Principle.

In the case of more or less explicit grammatical options the more explicit one(s) will tend to be favored in cognitively more complex environments. ("Cognitive Complexity" 151)

She continues as follows:

(*For*) *to*-infinitives are, for example, favoured when the object of *make* is a noun rather than a personal pronoun. This is in accordance with Rohdenburg's Complexity Principle, which predicts the choice of (*for*) *to*-infinitives, i.e. the more explicit option, when nouns, which are more complex than pronouns, are employed. The Complexity Principle also explains why (*for*) *to*-infinitives are likely to occur when the number of intervening elements between *make* and the complement is relatively large and when elements other than the object intervene in the same position, since both present relatively complex linguistic environments. (72)

She also mentions the frequently discussed idea that “the causation is more ‘direct’ or more ‘integrated’ when bare infinitives rather than (*for*) *to*-infinitives are employed” (71) and examines whether complement types of the causative *maken* differ depending on the verbs employed as complements. She argues as follows:

Returning to the ME data from Caxton, *die* is more likely to occur in the bare infinitive than *come*, which may be due to the fact that the causee has to make the decision to “come” when the verb *come* is employed, although in practice he or she may have no choice other than decide to “come”. By contrast, the causee has no room to make the decision when the causer decides to “make someone die”. In this sense, the causation is more direct with *die* than with *come*. (71)

In addition to the factors mentioned above, there are also other factors regarding the choice of compliments. For more details, see Iyeiri.

To sum up, several factors, such as the syntactic complexity of a sentence and kinds of verbs used in complements, can affect the choice of complements. In this respect, the above examples (7)-(9) are interesting in that the verb *maken* takes the same verb *riden* in the three manuscripts and seems to be used in equal complexity, but the choice of the complements is different between the manuscripts.

Let us take a look at other examples of *maken*. In (10)-(12), *maken* takes the same verb *riden* in all of the manuscripts and seems to be used in equal complexity; however, *maken* takes a bare infinitive in Harley, while the verb takes a *to*-infinitive in Auchinleck and Ashmole.

(10) & *maked* hir oway *to ride*

— Sche most wiþ him no lenger abide. (Auchinleck 329-30)

(11) Þey *made* hur a-wey þere *ryde*,

For þer myzt sche no lengur abyde. (Harley 315-16)

(12) And *made* hyr a-wey *to ryde*

— No lenger myzht sche þer a-byde. (Ashmole 331-32)

In examples (13)-(15), the verb *maken* takes the same verb *abiden* in all of the manuscripts and seems to be used in equal complexity; however, *maken* takes a bare infinitive in Auchinleck and Harley, while the verb takes a *to*-infinitive in Ashmole.

(13) Amorwe, ozain none-tide,
He *maked* his wiif þer *abide*; (Auchinleck 497-98)

(14) Amorewe, at þe none-tyde,
He *made* þe quene þere *abyde*; (Harley 456-57)

(15) Amorow, azen þe none-tyde,
He *made* hys quen þer *to a-byde*; (Ashmole 486-87)

2.3. *bidden*

The verb *bidden* is followed by a bare infinitive in (16) and (17).

(16) & *bad* hem *go* & hir *at-hold*. (Auchinleck 88)

(17) And *bad* them *com* hyr *to be-hold*. (Ashmole 76)

In the following examples (18)-(20), however, the complements of the verb *bidden* are different between the manuscripts.

(18) Þer come to me to fair kniȝtes,
Wele y-armed al to riȝtes,
& *bad* me *comen* an heiȝing
& *speke* wiþ her lord þe kinge; (Auchinleck 135-38)

(19) Þer come to me two fayr knyȝtes,
Wele arayde at alle ryȝthis,
& *bade* me *come* with-out lettyng
To speke with her lord þe kyng; (Harley 133-36)

(20) To-werd me com a gentyll knyȝt,
Wele j-armyd at all ryȝht,
And *bad* j schuld vpon hyȝeng
Com speke wyth hys lord þe kyng; (Ashmole 134-37)

The verb *bidden* takes a bare infinitive in Auchinleck and Harley, while it takes a *that*-clause complement in Ashmole. As Kazumi Manabe shows, complements of *bidden* was in the course of change in the ME period (99-100). Manabe examines complements of *bidden* in ME texts and shows that the verb *bidden* experienced a drastic decrease in the number of finite clauses used as complements during the ME period.

Based on Manabe's data, in the period when *Sir Orfeo* was written, the verb can take both *that*-clause complements and infinitival complements, with the latter predominant. Examples (18)-(20) above are good examples showing the variation of complements in this period. As discussed in 2.2, several factors, such as the syntactic complexity of a sentence and kinds of verbs used in complements, affect the choice of complements. When it comes to the sentences above, however, *bidden* takes the same verb *comen* as a complement. Moreover, the complexity of the sentence does not seem different since the sentence consists of almost the same words. Nevertheless, the choice of complements is different between these manuscripts.

3. Conclusion

In this paper, we have compared verbal complementation in the three extant manuscripts of *Sir Orfeo*. It is worth mentioning that verbal complementation can be different between the three manuscripts even when the verbs are used in the same context as the examples of *maken* and *bidden* show. Since *Sir Orfeo* is a rhymed poem, metrical factors might lead to the employment of different complements in the three manuscripts. Even so, it should be noted that *leten* takes the same complement in the three manuscripts, while *maken* and *bidden* take different complements. The verb *let* has been used with bare infinitives ever since the OE period and employs only bare infinitive complements in this text too. On the other hand, *maken* and *bidden* displays variations of complements between the manuscripts, showing that their complements are still in the course of change in the Late ME period.

Appendix

The verbs are listed with the line number following Bliss's lineation.

bidden: [bare infinitive] (Auchinleck) 88, 137. (Harley) 135. (Ashmole) 76. [*that*-clause] (Ashmole) 136.

leten: [bare infinitive] (Auchinleck) 74, 114, 386. (Harley) 73, 112, 270, 370, 423. (Ashmole) 25, 62, 102, 128, 377.

maken: [bare infinitive] (Auchinleck) 155, 498. (Harley) 153, 315, 457, 499. [*to*-infinitive] (Auchinleck) 329. (Ashmole) 162, 331, 487. [*for to*-infinitive] (Ashmole) 154.

Works Cited

Primary Source

Bliss, A. J., editor. *Sir Orfeo*. 2nd ed., Clarendon P, 1966.

Secondary Sources

Iyeiri, Yoko. "The Complements of Causative *Make* in Late Middle English." *Middle and Modern English Corpus Linguistics: A Multi-dimensional Approach*, edited by Manfred Markus et al., John Benjamins, 2012, pp. 59-73.

Los, Bettelou. *The Rise of the To-Infinitive*. OUP, 2005.

Manabe, Kazumi. *The Syntactic and Stylistic Development of the Infinitive in Middle English*. Kyushu UP, 1989.

Rohdenburg, Günter. "Cognitive Complexity and Increased Grammatical Explicitness in English." *Cognitive Linguistics*, vol. 7, 1996, pp. 149-82.

---. "The Role of Functional Constraints in the Evolution of the English Complementation System." *Syntax, Style and Grammatical Norms: English from 1500-2000*, edited by Christiane Dalton-Puffer et al., Peter Lang, 2006, pp. 143-66.