New Types of Prepositional Stranding in Middle English and Their Relationship

Gwang-Yoon Goh

(Seoul National University)

Goh, Gwang-Yoon. 2002. New Types of Prepositional Stranding in Middle English and Their Relationship. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 2-2, 149-159. Prepositional stranding (P-Stranding), which was possible only in certain types of constructions in Old English, began to be allowed more freely in the Middle English (ME) period, resulting in many new types of P-Stranding. Although many relevant studies have tried to account for the development of these new P-Stranding types, none of them or no combination of them seem to adequately explain how the new types came into being in ME and why they occurred in the order in which they occurred. In this paper, I explain why the development of new P-Stranding types in Middle English cannot be properly explained by any of the previous studies and then provide an alternative account of the advent of each new type of P-Stranding and the chronology involved on the basis of the displacement of the prepositional object from PP (DPO), a constraint on DPO (*DPO), and the subject requirement (SubjR).

1. Introduction[1]

As is well known among English historical linguists, although the phenomenon of prepositional stranding (P-Stranding), in which a preposition is not followed by its object, was highly restricted in Old English (OE), it is attested in a much wider

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[1] OE (ME, ModE) = Old (Middle, Modern) English; V = verb; P = preposition; P-Passive = prepositional passive; PO = prepositional object; PP = prepositional phrase; DO = direct object; TC = *tough*-construction; DPO = displacement of PO from PP and its occurrence in a non-canonical position; *DPO = a constraint against DPO; SubjR = subject requirement.

range of constructions in Middle English (ME), resulting in many new types of P-Stranding (Denison 1993). This conspicuous change in the history of the English language has attracted considerable attention in English historical linguistics, producing a great number of diachronic and/or synchronic studies which have tried to account for the development of these new P-Stranding types (e.g., Maling 1978; Allen 1980a, 1980b; van Kemenade 1987, etc.).

Most previous studies, however, have focused on some subset of factors involved in the changes in P-Stranding and they generally have ascribed the given changes to changes in rules without explaining why rule changes occur(red) at all. Thus, they fail to show why these changes in P-Stranding occurred. In particular, none of previous studies or no combination of them seem to adequately explain how the new types came into being in ME and why they occurred in the order in which they occurred.

In this paper, I will first consider old and new types of P-Stranding in OE and ME and explain why the development of new P-Stranding types in ME cannot be properly explained by any of the previous studies. Then, I will provide an alternative account of the advent of each new type of P-Stranding and the chronology involved.

2. Prepositional Stranding in Old English and Its Syntactic Necessity

OE, unlike ME and Modern English (ModE), had a highly restricted form of P-Stranding and it was allowed only in the following six constructions:

(1) *Þe*-Relative Clause

... þæm	æhtum	þe	heora speda	on	beoð ...
... those	possessions	that	their wealth	in	is ...

'... those possessions that their wealth lies in ...'   (Or 15.7)

(2) Zero Relative Clause

... oþer stow elreordge   men beoð <u>on</u>

... other place barbarous   men are   in

'(an)other place barbarous men live in'   (Marv 18.1)

(3) Free Relative Clause

heo   gefret   softnysse   oððe   sarnysse,

it   feels   softness   or   pain

<u>swa   hwæðer   swa</u>   heo   <u>on</u>   bið

so   which   as   it   in   is

'it feels softness or pain, whichever it is in'

(ÆHom 11.218)

(4) Infinitival Relative Clause

stowe   mynster   <u>on</u>   to timbrebbe

place   minster   on   to build

'a place to build an abbey on'   (Bede 3.18.238.21)

(5) Complement Object Deletion

heo   wæs swiþe   fæger   <u>an</u>   to locianne;

it   was very   beautiful   at   to look

'it was very beautiful to look at'   (Or 74.12)

(6) Comparative Construction

bradre   þonne   ænig man   <u>ofer</u>   seon mæge

broader   than   any   man   across   see   may

'broader than any man can see across'

(Or 1 1.19.18 [Traugott 1992:225])

As for P-Stranding in OE such as above, Goh (2001b) claims that P-Stranding was necessary because no alternative structure that can obviate P-Stranding in a given sentence (through pied

piping or the co-occurrence of a preposition and its object NP within the same PP) was possible in any of the given constructions. Thus, none of the P-Stranding types attested in OE involve the displacement of PO from PP and its occurrence in a non-canonical position (DPO, i.e., ... NP$_i$ ... [$_{PP}$ P t$_i$] ...), whereas all the unattested (potential) types of P-Stranding must have DPO in OE. On the basis of this observation, Goh concludes that DPO was strictly prohibited in OE, proposing an OE constraint against DPO, i.e., *DPO: *... NP$_i$ ... [$_{PP}$ P t$_i$] ....[2]

3. New Types of Prepositional Stranding

In the ME period, P-Stranding became much more common and many new types of P-Stranding began to develop in various prepositional constructions that did not allow P-Stranding in OE (cf. Denison 1993; Fischer 1992). First of all, P-Stranding in the passive, which resulted in the advent of the prepositional passive (P-Passive), came to be allowed in the early ME period. Thus, early examples of the P-Passive begin to be found in the early 13th century, as follows:

(7) Þer   wes   sorhe   te seon   hire   leoflich   lich
    there was   sorrow   to see   her   dear   body
    faren so reowliche   wið
    dealt so cruelly   with
    'there was sorrow to see her dear body so cruelly dealt with'

                   (c1225 St. Juliana (Roy) 22.195 [Denison 1993])

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[2]Thus, PP in OE has been suggested as an island (out of which no movement is allowed) in many previous studies such as van Riemsdijk 1978; Allen 1980a, 1980b; Hornstein and Weinberg 1981; Kayne 1981a, 1981b; Lightfoot 1981; Bennis and Hoekstra 1984.

Second, at about the same time, P-Stranding also began to appear in *wh*-relative clauses and in *wh*-questions, as follows:[3]

(8)   And   getenisse   men   ben   in   ebron,
      and   gigantic   men   are   in   Hebron
      Quilc   men   mai   get   wundren   <u>on</u>.
      which   men   may   yet   wonder   on
      'And there are gigantic men in Hebron which one may
      still wonder at.'
            a1325 (c1250) (Gen. & Ex. 3715 [Denison 1993])

(9)   nuste   nan   kempe,   <u>whæm</u>   he sculde
      did not know   no   warrior   whom   he should
      slæn   <u>on</u>,
      strike on
      'no warrior knew whom he should strike at'
                              (Brut (Clg) 13718-19)

Third, P-Stranding in the construction that has a non-pronominal topicalized NP is also known to be first found in early ME, as follows:

(10) <u>þulliche   dunes</u>   þe gode   pawel   spek   <u>of</u>;
     those-very hills   the good   Paul   spoke   of
            c1230 (?a1200) (Ancr. 103a.22 [Denison 1993])

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[3]Even in the above ME constructions, however, P-Stranding is not found when P is not directly dominated by the VP (as in ModE *What train did Tom arrive by?*) (Fischer 1992:388). Note that the PP *by what train* (which is not directly dominated by the VP) can be considered more oblique than other PPs such as those in (8) and (9), thereby making the separation of the P from the PP relatively more difficult. Thus, the lack of P-Stranding with the given PP is also compatible with the explanation of the advent of new P-Stranding constructions in ME given in section 4.

(11) ... ah   þe gode ich   ga   aa   bisiliche abuten,

  ... but   the good I   go   always   busily   about

  '... but the righteous ones I always war against constantly'

<div align="right">(St. Marg. (1) (Bod) 30. 35-6)</div>

An important point about the development of all the new P-Stranding constructions above is that they began to appear at about the same time and yet remained rare until the end of the 14 century.

Another construction in which P-Stranding became possible in ME is the *tough*-construction (TC). Thus, when P-Stranding became more common in late ME, it also began to be allowed in the TC, as follows (van der Wurff 1990:522-3):

(12) ... *the grete Roches,* þat   ben   stronge   and   dangerouse

  ... the great rocks, that   are   strong   and   dangerous

  to passe by.

  to pass by   (?a1425 (c1400) (Mandev. (Tit) 29.10-11)

(13) *þe gospel*   ... is   most   esi   to wynne   heuene   by

  the gospel   ... is   most   easy   to reach   heaven   by

<div align="center">(c1430 (c1383) Wycl. Leaven Pharisees 2.22)</div>

4. The Advent of New Prepositional Stranding Types and Their Chronology

4.1. Previous Studies and Their Problems

As for the development of these new types of P-Stranding in the ME period, various accounts have been proposed by previous studies and most previous studies (especially in the framework of generative syntax) have centered on the theoretical analyses of P-Stranding constructions.[4] Among the previous

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[4]Among major proposals are the movement of a null operator in *þe-*

studies, however, the following two causes seem to be most widely accepted among English historical linguists.

First, *which*-relative clauses (and later also *who*-relative clauses) acquired P-Stranding on the analogy of *that-* or *þe*-relative clauses (e.g., Allen 1980b; Fischer 1992:390). Note that like the relativizer *that* (or *þe*), which has allowed P-Stranding since OE, *which* was virtually indeclinable. Thus, this similarity between *which* and *that* (or *þe*) adds likelihood to the proposed analogy.

Second, another factor which may have contributed to the extension of the phenomenon of P-Stranding (especially to *wh*-relative clauses and to *wh*-questions) is the fact that both the (new) *wh*-relatives and the *wh*-elements in questions developed from OE free relatives which had a *wh*-head within themselves (cf. Allen 1980a; Fischer 1992:390).

Note that P-Stranding with free relatives was possible in OE under certain conditions, that is, when the free relativizer syntactically belongs to the main clause (Goh 2001b). Note also that the relative *whæm* whom(ever) in (9) above could still be analyzed as a free relative. Thus, P-Stranding is likely to have become possible with *wh*-relatives and *wh*-questions by analogy.

Although it is very likely that the above two widely-accepted factors played an important role in the development of new types of P-Stranding in ME, there is still one significant aspect which has hardly been touched and cannot be adequately explained by any of the previous proposals including those two

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and *that*-relative clauses (Chomsky 1977; Chomsky and Lasnik 1977), the process involving the inversion of P and PO (= movement of PO to the left of P as an escape-hatch), *wh*-fronting, and the deletion of *þe* or *þær* (Vat 1978), *wh*-movement for P-Stranding through an escape hatch and NP-movement for the P-Passive through the reanalysis of V [P NP] to [V P] NP (van Riemsdijk 1978), unbounded deletion of PO under identity (Maling 1978; Allen 1980a, 1980b), the extension of reanalysis of V and P (in the P-Passive) to P-Stranding by *wh*-movement (Koma 1981), and the movement of PO as an empty clitic pronoun **pro** to the left of P and to COMP (van Kemenade 1987).

above. Note that although the above two promoting factors can reasonably be applied to the development of the new P-Stranding types involving a *wh*-element such as *wh*-relatives and *wh*-questions, they are difficult to use to explain the advent of P-Stranding in the passive (i.e., the P-Passive), topicalizations, and the TC. This is because these three constructions usually do not have a *wh*-element.

Some studies such as Allen (1980a) have argued that P-Stranding which began to develop in constructions involving *wh*-elements also spread to other constructions in which P-Stranding was previously impossible. This may be an explanation of why P-Stranding in the TC became possible in late ME later than the type of P-Stranding involving a *wh*-element. Note, however, that P-Stranding in the passive and in topicalizations involving a non-pronominal NP began to appear almost at the same time as P-Stranding in *wh*-relatives and *wh*-questions (i.e., in the early 13th century). This means that the relative chronology involved in the development of new types of P-Stranding in ME is yet to be explained.

4.2. New Stranding Types and Their Chronology

Around the end of the Old English period, various linguistic changes occurred in the English language, and these changes in sound, morphology, syntax, and semantics influenced the English prepositional constructions and the potential for DPO in those constructions. Above all, these changes contributed considerably to the weakening of *DPO. The main motivation for *DPO was the high degree of obliqueness of the prepositional argument and the maintenance of relative obliqueness among NP arguments (Goh 2001a). Given this, the loss of P-V compounds and their replacement by V+P phrases, the development of less oblique DO-like prepositional arguments, the loss of the case inflections, the fixing of word order, and the consequent change

in the means of maintaining relative obliqueness must have decreased the possibility of confusion in relative obliqueness which could be caused by DPO (Goh 2000:5.1).

Now, note that P-Stranding was possible in topicalizations in OE when the topicalized NP is a pronoun. Thus, with the weakened *DPO in early ME, P-Stranding is very likely to have been extended to non-pronominal topicalized NPs by analogy of pronominal topicalized NPs.

On the other hand, along with other conspicuous changes in the language system, especially the establishment of the fixed SVO word order, English came to require an overt subject in virtually every sentence and construction,[5] a constraint which can be called the **subject requirement** (SubjR). I propose that this SubjR, which began to be dominant in English around the early ME period, was what made DPO obligatory, changing P-Stranding in many English constructions, especially the P-Passive, from unnecessary to necessary, triggering the advent of the P-Passive (Goh 2000:5.1).

Finally, note that there is no clear independent promoting factor involved in the development of P-Stranding in the TC and that the *it*-analog construction which can serve as a semantic (and syntactic) alternative to the TC has been available since OE (cf. Goh 2001b). Thus, it is a quite plausible explanation that P-Stranding in the TC was not allowed until P-Stranding, along with the sufficiently weakened *DPO and the fully developed analogical changes, became more common in other P-Stranding constructions and spread to the TC itself.

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[5]The actual status and content of this constraint are far from being obvious. In particular, there are sentences without overt subjects such as imperatives, although some are trivial cases (e.g., coordination) while some may be somehow phonologically induced, as in *gotta go!* for *Ive gotta go*. Although the SubjR (cf. Perlmutter 1971:100) is widely assumed or implied in most diachronic and synchronic studies of English, what brought about the SubjR into the grammar of English has hardly been made clear.

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고광윤
서울시 관악구 신림동 산 56-1번지
서울대학교 인문대학 영어영문학과
우편번호: 152-742
전화번호: 02) 880-5862
E-mail: gyoongo007@hotmail.com