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# Mobilizing Linguistic Concepts: Support Verb Structures in Early English

Patricia Ronan

This study investigates the use of support verb constructions in an Old English corpus in comparison with a sample corpus from Chaucer's late 14th century *Canterbury Tales*. The investigation focuses on the use of support verb constructions with loan-derived predicate nouns and observes that, while the percentage of loaned predicate nouns roughly corresponds to that of loan words in Old English overall, Chaucer uses considerably more foreign derived predicate nouns in support verb constructions than in non-support verb contexts. While a number of these constructions seem to be employed for stylistic or poetic considerations, others, particularly those with the support verb *do*, clearly fill gaps in the verbal system that result from recent language contact. This shows that Chaucer uses support verb constructions to incorporate new verbal concepts into his language and it suggests that the higher level of foreign derived predicate nouns is stimulated by the increased level of language contact in Middle English as compared to Old English.

## 1. Introduction

This paper investigates the use of support verb constructions in Old and Middle English.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of an Old English sample corpus and of a corpus consisting of a selection of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the study intends to determine the possible motivations for employing early English support verb constructions in general, and the importance of loan-derived predicate nouns in particular. The object of the study, support

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this paper for the helpful comments.

verb constructions, are multi-word verbs that consist of an inflected verb, which typically has rather general meaning content, such as *have*, *give*, *take* or *do*, and a predicate noun (e.g. Algeo 204), which syntactically is the direct object of the support verb. Examples of these structures are *to have a dream*, *to make a proposal*, or Old English *andsware sellan* “give an answer.” A number of these support verb constructions contain predicate nouns that are loan-derived and the research aim is to determine whether the overall higher degree of language contact in Middle English as compared to Old English leads to these multi-word words being used more frequently with loan-derived predicate nouns in Middle English. The investigation of the Chaucerian material serves as a pilot study for further research into this question in a larger corpus of Middle English material. This approach fills a lacuna in research as previous research on support verb constructions in English has mainly been concerned with the semantic contributions of their individual parts, and the pragmatic effects of their use overall. The main concerns of corpus-based studies, such as Algeo (203 ff.) on PDE, and studies on earlier varieties of English (Brinton and Akimoto 21 ff.; Ronan 43 ff.; Matsumoto, *From Simple Verbs* 209-213; and Claridge 4 ff.) so far are to offer overviews of the main support verbs used, and of the overall structure of the support verb constructions, as well as to assess the degree of grammaticalization of the collocations (Traugott 239-60). It has been noted, but not investigated further, that loan-derived nouns may be incorporated into the host language’s verbal system (Akimoto 235 ff.; Ronan 130), and in language contact studies the difficulty of incorporating verbs in language contact situations has also been observed. In the latter context it has been argued that verbs are more difficult to loan than nouns because of their generally more complex morphological patterns (Matras 172-176). The present paper reports the results of the investigation of corpus-based data in order to assess the use of loan-derived predicate nouns. It is argued that support verb constructions may indeed serve to facilitate the transfer of verbal concepts into early English.

## 2. Previous research on support verb constructions

A support verb construction is a type of multi-word verb which is also referred to as “light verb construction” (going back to Jespersen, Vol. IV 117), “complex verb” (Nickel 1ff.), “expanded predicate” (Algeo 203 ff.), “verbo-nominal combination” (Claridge 69-82) or “stretched verb construction” (Allerton 15 ff.). The collocations in question consist of predicate nouns, which contribute to the core semantic content of the collocations, and of inflected, semantically general verbal forms, whose

generality allows them to be applicable to a number of different predicate nouns. These collocations differ from ordinary verb-object combinations. Characteristically, they are semantically non-compositional, the collocations form semantic units that express one verbal event and are often paraphrasable by a simple verb, such as *to dream*, *to lecture* or *to propose* (e.g. Algeo 203-204). In the modern language, the choice of the verb is not arbitrary: with few exceptions, the verb and the predicate noun form a fixed collocation, in which a change of the verb typically results in semantic changes within the collocation (Allerton 227-234). However, the degree to which collocations were fixed constructions in the earlier language is difficult to determine. Following the approach to constructions in Goldberg and Jackendorff (532), the current study presupposes that collocations on a cline from free to idiosyncratic should be considered together, and applies this to support verb constructions. The term support verb construction in this study therefore does not entail judgement on fixedness or non-fixedness of the collocations.

The type of structure that is subject to study in different investigations varies considerably. First, scholars apply different morphological criteria. A number of authors working on English language constructions consider only collocations with predicate nouns that are verbal derivatives (e.g. Wierzbicka 753 ff.; Akimoto and Brinton 23), either by zero-derivation or by the use of derivative suffixes. Typically, the predicate noun is assumed to be preceded by an indefinite article, but exceptions can be found. In some cases, the predicate noun further requires a prepositional phrase. Here, Brinton (192) mentions *do a translation of* and *give consideration to*.

Second, functional criteria are used in the determination of support verb structures. Some authors take it as their main criterion that the resulting collocation functions as a verbal phrase (Claridge 72-73; Allerton 20; Matsumoto, *From Simple Verbs* 19 ff.). All authors agree on the prerequisite, however, that semantically the collocations must be non-compositional, i.e. they must have one single meaning, and thus could typically be paraphrased by a simple verb. The possibility that support verb constructions could also be paraphrased by a simplex means that they can be perceived as being verbose or unnecessarily complicated, and they are often shunned for being markers of unduly technical or scientific styles (Stein 25; Brinton 189).

Some authors (Nickel 15; Akimoto and Brinton 53) see it as one of the main functions of support verb constructions that they can make possible adjectival modification of the predicate noun where modification would be impossible with a simple verb, such as *Sue took a short walk* versus *\*Sue walked shortly* (Brinton 194), or where an adverb is considered ungainly, e.g. *to have a quick look* versus *to look quickly* (ibid.).

It is further argued that the complex morpho-syntactic structures also offer the possibility to change sentence structure for pragmatic re-ordering, such as in *he gave Mary a kiss* versus *he gave a kiss to Mary* (Brinton 197). They furthermore help to avoid that a verb, which is normally unstressed in English, appears in the final, stressed, position of a sentence (Nickel 17), and serve to provide an internal object for transitive verbs so that no further object needs to be mentioned, e.g. *to make a mistake* versus *\*to mistake*.

Support verb constructions can additionally offer semantic specification of an expression, which results from the interaction of the support verb and the predicate noun. Thus, whereas *to walk* is a temporally non-bounded, general activity, *to take a walk* is described as temporally bounded activity. In other cases, even more specific aspectual information may be added by the collocation of verb and predicate noun. Allerton (207), amongst a number of further uses and examples, observes that *be* and *have* add stative values to a collocation, *conduct* and *practice* create processes, inception of an action is expressed by *arouse*, *go into*, *initiate* and termination is expressed in his data by *drive home*.

Even though these complex functions of support verb constructions are often thematized, they can also serve to simplify language. Thus, Danchev points out that they are often found in language contact situations and in situations of imperfect language acquisition (Danchev 30), and particularly support verb constructions with the verb *do* are noted to be used for the incorporation of foreign verbs into a target language (Hock and Joseph 257-258). Both these studies are historical and typological and they are not concerned with offering corpus-based evidence. Further observations on the use of support verb constructions to incorporate verbal concepts in multilingual contexts are made by comparative studies on language contact. It has been argued that nouns can often be integrated into a borrowing language with more ease than verbs because nouns typically need little morphological adaptation to the target language (Matras 172). This has the result that the first step in borrowing processes of verbs often is the use of their nominal forms in support verb constructions (Matras 172-176). If these suggestions are viable then an increase in language contact in a given language should also manifest itself in an increase of loan-derived predicate nouns within support verb constructions. In the following it will be examined whether this is borne out by a sample corpus of Middle English support verb constructions in comparison with Old English support verb constructions.

### 3. Data and Method

The data for this study have been extracted by two different methods. The Old English data have been extracted semi-automatically from a roughly 108,800 word sample corpus of Old English. The texts used are the following

Beowulf	12,000 words
<i>Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum</i> (Bede)	80,000 words
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A	15,000 words
Ohthere and Wulfstan	1,800 words

These texts have been chosen in order to represent different linguistic genres, both in translation from Latin (Bede), and as original compositions. The largest part is constituted by prose, both narrative and annalistic, and poetry is also considered (Beowulf). The data were extracted by searching the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus in Electronic Form* by Di Paulo Healy et al. and using the search interface provided by the corpus website. In a first step, potential Old English support verbs were determined by a seed-study based on findings of previous research, and on an investigation of the *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* by Bosworth and Toller, as well as on textual investigation. All possible spelling variants of stem forms of potential support verbs were then searched for in the corpus texts. For example, *sel, sil, syl, sal, seal* and *sæl* were entered for *sellan* “give” or *ber, beor, bir, byr, bær*, and *bor* for *beran* “bear,” as well as corresponding forms with the prefix *ge-*. While guaranteeing very high recall, precision was low and false positives with coincidentally similar stem forms had to be discarded, as well as those attestations which were not complemented by predicate nouns that were possible candidates for creating support verb constructions. All corpus texts provide examples of support verb constructions, and the highest type and token frequencies are found in the elaborate poetry of Beowulf with more than 30 examples per 10,000 words, while the narrative texts have lower frequencies of between 14 (Bede) and 16 examples per 10,000 words respectively. The Chronicle A, with its more technical language, occupies a middle ground of about 24 examples per 10,000 words.

The Middle English sample corpus has then been compiled to make possible comparison with the earlier material and against the background of the high counts in the Old English poetic sample text, an example of verse has been selected for the pilot study, namely a selection of tales from the Canterbury Tales. For the purpose of this pilot study, we focus on the five most prominent support verbs in Middle English (cf. Matsumoto, *Composite Predicates in Middle English* and *From Simple*

*Verbs to Periphrastic Expressions* 42 ff.). The data considered for the Middle English sample corpus have been extracted from all attestations of the verbs in question and for this task use has been made of the *eChaucer* online concordance. The collocations have been selected using the same formal and semantic selection criteria as for the Old English data. The investigated texts consist of about 50,000 words:

General Prologue	8,400 words
Knight's Tale	21,800 words
Miller's Tale	7,400 words
Wife of Bath's Tale	12,700 words

It is planned for further research to considerably increase the corpus base for Middle English and take into consideration a wider variety of support verbs in addition to those identified as the most robustly attested support verbs (cf. Matsumoto, *From Simple Verbs* 42-45).

#### 4. Observations on support verb constructions in Old and Middle English.

##### 4.1. Motivations for the use in the Old English corpus

In the Old English data, two important groups of usage can be observed. Firstly, the use of support verbs may add semantic specification to the verbal action as compared to the verbal simplex. This is illustrated by the following examples.

1. *ic mē mid Hruntinge dōm genyrce* "I will create glory for myself with Hrunting" (Beo 1491)
2. *... Bæt þæt he him geþeabt sealde* . . . "he asked that he give him counsel" (Bede 4 [0608 (26.350.16)])

The noun *dōm* "glory" is connected to the verb *dēman* "to judge, deem." The meaning of the collocation in the support verb construction differs from the simple verb by focusing on the outcome of the action. Differences are also illustrated by Example 2. The noun *geþeabt* is the basis for the verb *geþeabtian* "to take counsel." With the verb *geþeabtian*, the subject of *geþeabtian* is the receiver of the counsel. The support verb construction is used if the subject is to give counsel rather than receive it. In addition, the data provides ample evidence of the second type of support verb construction for which no verbal simplex exists, where the support verb is used to create a verbalized expression to fill the gap:

3. *ac ymb Hreosnabeorh eatolne inwitscear oft gefremedon*. “but often committed dreadful malicious slaughter at Hreosnabeorh” (Beo [0681 (2472)])
4. *Swa sceal <geong> guma gode genyrcean*, “so a young man should do good” Beo [0008 (20)]

In these two cases no corresponding verbs exist for the nouns *inwitscear* “slaughter” and *gōd* “good.” If the speaker wants to use these and similar rare nouns and verbalized adjectives in a verbal phrase, then semantically appropriate support verbs, such as the factitive *genyrcean*, are used to create semantically more explicit multi-word verbs from these.

In some cases the predicate noun is a loan word in the sense that it is not derived from an Anglo-Saxon root, but has entered the English language due to language contact with mostly Latin or Old Norse. On the basis of the evidence in the *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Bosworth and Toller), the nouns in question have not formed a corresponding verb, or have not formed it yet at the period under investigation:

5. *& behead þam biscopan ... serfise to donde*, “and he ordered the bishops to perform service/mass.” (Chron A 0632 (1070.12))
6. *. . . ongunnon heo somnian & singan & gebiddan & messesong don (. . .)* “they began to gather it and to sing and pray and make mass-song” (Bede 1 [0236 (15.62.5)])

The examples of loan words in the 108,800 word Old English corpus texts are *almessan* “alms” (5 tokens), and *serfis* “service” (1 token). Further the loan-translation *mildbeortness* ‘mercy’, from Latin *miser cordia*, was found (1 token). There is one token of *messesong*, which is a compound of the Germanic head *song* “song” and the Latin modifier *messe-* from *missa* “mass.” The noun *serfis* develops a corresponding zero-derived verb at a later stage, during the Early Modern English period. All the examples in hand are examples of concepts expressing changes in cultural practices, in these cases in particular connected to Christianity.

Overall, in the Old English corpus only a small percentage of predicate nouns are foreign derived. Of a total of 188 tokens, only the above 8 nouns may be considered loans or loan translations, which have entered the language recently and have not developed corresponding verbs. This amounts to 4% of the total predicate nouns in the Old English corpus. This seems to be in line with the observation that Old English has an average of 3% loan words overall (Kastovsky 294).



## 4.2. Use of support verbs in Chaucer's English

The search for support verb constructions in the Middle English corpus data uncovers a wide variety of structures with considerably larger textual frequency than in the Old English data base. The occurrence of these tokens can arguably be explained similarly to the explanations given for the use of support verb constructions in Modern English in section 2, namely semantic specification, pragmatic reordering and creation of new verbal concepts. Further, metrical requirements can be assumed. Evidence of support verb constructions which are likely to be employed due to these different potential motivations are given in the following subsections.

### 4.2.1. Support verb constructions lacking parallel verbs

As in Old English, the support verb constructions may appear in expressions where no corresponding simple verb exists.

7. . . . *and smale foweles maken melodye*, (GP 9)

“and small birds make melody”

8. *I have the power duryng al my lyf* (WBT 158)

“I have the power during all my life”

9. . . . *I, that wende and hadde a greet opinioun*

*That if I myghte escapen from prisoun* (KnT 1268-90)

“I, who supposed and had a great notion, that if I could escape from prison. . . .”

In these cases the predicate nouns are loan words from Old French (MED, s.v), in the case of *opinioun* either from Latin or French (MED, s.v). The use of corresponding simple verbs is not attested according to MED, or in the case of *opinen* attested first in 1450, after the time of Chaucer writing the Canterbury tales. In these cases, the support verb constructions are used to accommodate otherwise non-existent concepts within a verb phrase. In the case of *melodie* no corresponding verb has ever developed and the collocation seems specific to the poetic register of the text, *to opinion* and *to power*, albeit in transitive use, come to exist, but are considerably later additions to the lexicon.

### 4.2.2. Support verb constructions with parallel verbs in rhyming position

Where no parallel simple verbs exist, an argument can easily be made that support verb constructions are formed in order to fill a paradigm-

matic gap. Where corresponding simplexes exist, the reason must be different. In poetic texts, such as *The Canterbury Tales*, it will of course be the author's concern to create rhyme. Here support verb constructions are additionally useful because the predicate noun can enter the rhyme.

10. *For if he gaf, he dorste make avaunt,*  
*He wiste that a man was repentaunt* (GP 227-8)  
 "for if he gave, he was want to boast, he knew that the man was contrite."  
 11. *And therfore wol I maken yow disport,*  
*As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.* (GP 775-6)  
 "and therefore I will create a game for you, as I said at first, and provide you some comfort."

Both the verb *avaunten* "brag, boast" and *disporten* "take leisure, be merry," from French *deporter*, were available at the time and are also found in Chaucer's *Tales* (MED online, s.v.) and would have been possible, albeit non-rhyming alternatives. But of course rhyme cannot be a criterion for use in every case. For example, where the support verb is not in rhyming position and has a parallel simple verb, a different reason must be found.

12. *Ne make werre upon me nyght ne day,* (KnT 1823)  
 "not to wage war on me by night or day"

In this case, the Old-French derived parallel simple verb *werren* (MED-online, s.v.) was available. Here it may be assumed that support verb constructions are used because they offer functions which are not offered by the simple verb.

#### 4.2.3. Support verb constructions used for meaning specification

As in Old English, Middle English structures can be found to offer meaning specifications that cannot be expressed by the use of the simple verb.

13. *He wolde make a fyr in which the office*  
*Funeral he myghte al accomplice* (KnT 2863)  
 "He should make a fire in which he should observe the funeral rights."  
 14. *To maken vertu of necessitee,* (KnT 3042)  
 "To make virtue of necessity"

The verb *fīren* “to fire” is normally transitive, in the collocation *make fyr* an otherwise necessary object phrase can be avoided if the author does not want to specify what is being burnt. Similarly, *vertuen* “to be virtuous” exists, but it is a stative or reflexive verb, and where it is to be used with a notional object, a support verb construction can create the necessary argument structure for this. This possibility clearly exists for both native and loan-derived predicates. *Fyr* is a Germanic-derived predicate, while *vertū* is a French loan. Not only valency-related, but also pragmatic functions can be fulfilled. Thus, some examples seem to facilitate pragmatic ordering of the utterance.

15. *So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature* (KnT 1359)

“a creature never had so much sorrow”

16. *‘Now dame,’ quod he, “so have I joye or blis,* (WBT 830)

“Now, Mylady,’ he said, ‘so I take joy or bliss.”

In these examples the predicate nouns *sorwe*, which is of Germanic origin, and the loan-derived noun *joye*, for which the parallel simplex *joien* is attested even before Chaucer’s time, are placed in positions of metrical stress in the lines and as they are stressed they may also be argued to carry salient information. This stress could not have been carried by a simple verb.

In sum, it can be seen that support verb structures are used in the Chaucer Tales investigated in order to create new verbs for concepts for which simple verbs do not yet exist. They can also be used in addition to extant simplexes, in such cases they function similarly to structures with native-derived predicate nouns. These functional parallels indicate that the collocations with loan-derived predicates largely seem to be used in similar contexts, and seem to be motivated by similar lexical, semantic and pragmatic concerns like support verb constructions with Anglo-Saxon-derived predicate nouns.

In the following, the question will be considered how prominent support verb constructions with loan-derived predicate nouns are within the linguistic system of the Chaucerian texts in question.

#### 4. 3. Loan-derived predicate nouns in Middle English

In order to assess how prominent the use of loan-derived predicate nouns is in support verb constructions in the corpus versus the use of loan-derived nouns in general, the first step is to quantify the overall use of loan nouns. To facilitate a rough comparison, the first 50 nouns have been counted in the four corpus texts and the overall ratio of loan-

derived versus native-derived nouns has been determined. This count shows that a mix of native and loan-derived nouns is used in all texts, but loan-derived nouns are more frequently used in some tales than in others:

Table 1: Number of foreign derived nouns in first 50 words of the corpus texts

Text	Loan nouns in first 50	% loan nouns in first 50
General Prologue (GP)	22	44%
Knight's Tale (KnT)	31	62%
Miller's Tale (MilT)	21	42%
Wife of Bath's Tale (WBT)	24	48%
Average	24.5	49%

Not all the tales feature foreign nouns to the same extent within the textual samples. On the basis of the first 50 sample nouns, Chaucer makes the educated and well-travelled Knight predictably use most foreign derived nouns, more in fact than Anglo-Saxon derived nouns. The Knight is followed by the socially aspirant Wife of Bath, who is made to use slightly more foreign words in the textual sample than the narrator in the Prologue. The Miller, doubtlessly the least upwardly mobile character in the sample, has the lowest percentage of loan-derived nouns within the noun sample. On average, about half the nouns in the textual samples are loan-derived.

Not only the total numbers of loan-derived predicate nouns in support verb constructions differ in the sample texts, also the use with different support verbs is unevenly distributed. In the following, the five most frequent support verbs are tabulated according to their use with native and foreign predicate nouns.

Table 2: loaned predicate nouns in Chaucer's SVCs

Counts	Overall	Loan	Native	Loan %
Do	57	46	11	81%
Have	63	43	20	68%
Make	54	36	18	66%
Take	27	11	16	41%
Give	10	4	6	40%
Total	211	140	71	66%

In support verb constructions with *do*, the use of loan-derived predicate nouns is considerably more frequent than with the other verbs investigated in the sample texts. In examples of support verb constructions with *do*, loan-derived predicate nouns are used highly significantly more often than loan nouns in the samples of Chaucer's overall language.<sup>2</sup> In the cases of *have* and *make*, foreign-derived predicate nouns are still more numerous than native-derived nouns. The two verbs with the lowest frequencies, *take* and *give*, also have the lowest percentages of loan-derived predicates.<sup>3</sup> This could be due to frequency effects: the more frequent a structure is, the more it undergoes grammaticalization, which entails an increase in semantic generalization. This, in turn, enables the item to extend to even more new contexts (Bybee and Hopper 13). Therefore, when a new collocation develops with a loaned noun, this is likely to use an already frequent support verb. Those support verbs that are already frequent in Old English, *do* and *have*, are well established with loan words in Chaucer's use. *Take* and *give* are not yet frequent support verbs in the Old English corpus investigated: *tacan* had not been loaned from Old Norse, *giefan* was still less general than *sellan*. This explanation does not, however, account for the overall high frequency of use of *macian*. *Macian* has no currency in the early Old English corpus material investigated for this study, but it is very well represented in the material from Chaucer, both in terms of general frequency, and in terms of percentage of loan-derived predicate nouns. Further research should investigate how and why this frequency increase took place.

<sup>2</sup> The difference is statistically significant according to the chi-square contingency table test. The probability of chance is smaller than 0.01%.

<sup>3</sup> The frequency of loan-derived predicate nouns with support verb constructions as a whole is statistically significantly higher than the overall use of loan-derived nouns. The probability of chance is 0.05%.

In addition to different overall frequencies of support verb constructions in the different Tales, the distribution of the individual support verbs also varies. Their distribution is shown in the following graph:

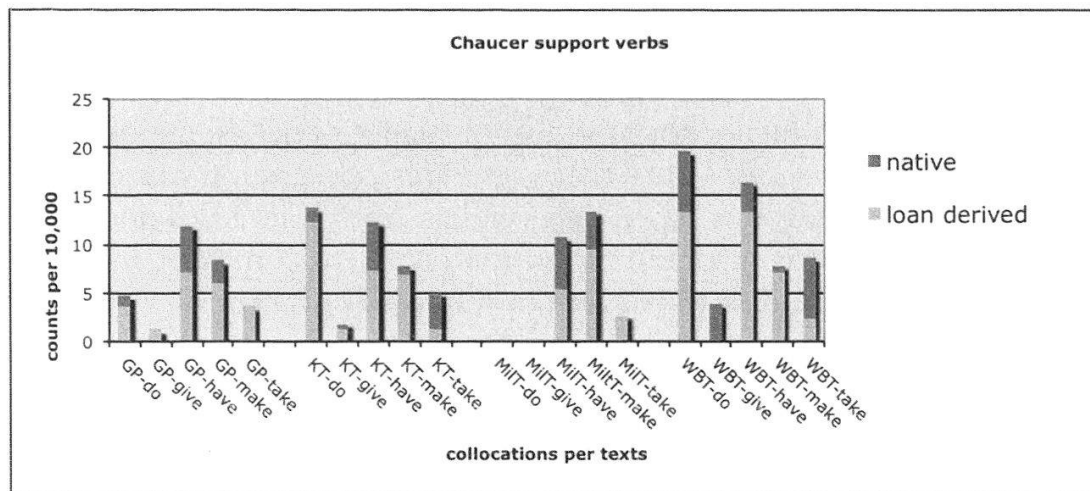


Figure 1:

The distribution of loan and native derived predicate nouns with support verbs in the texts (normalized to 10,000 words) in Chaucer.

Figure 1 illustrates the frequencies and distribution of the investigated support verbs in the corpus texts and shows the ratio of loan-derived and Anglo-Saxon derived predicate nouns. It can be seen that *have* and *make* have comparable numbers of loan-derived and native predicate nouns, while *take* and *give* have low counts both overall and with loan-derived predicate nouns. Their lower counts may be due to them being semantically more specific, and hence less broadly applicable, than *do* and *have*. At the other end of the scale, loan-derived predicates are particularly frequent in support verb constructions with *do*. The Knight's Tale employs most loaned predicate nouns, and few English derived predicates, with *do*. The Miller's Tale, by contrast, does not use *do* as a support verb at all. These differences of attestation in the texts do not appear entirely arbitrary, rather, they serve to underline the author's linguistic characterization of the protagonists: the Knight as an educated

person is made to use *do* support frequently to coin French-derived loan verbs, and the use of foreign-derived predicate nouns is also frequent in the other support verb constructions used by him. The General Prologue and the Wife of Bath's Tale resemble the Knight's Tale in using more foreign-derived predicate nouns than native ones in *do* support. The Miller, an uncultured person, is made to use fewer loan-derived predicate nouns in his support verbs overall.

In summary it can be shown that in the Chaucerian corpus data loan-derived nouns are used significantly more frequently in support verb constructions than in non-support verb contexts, in the case of *do* plus predicate noun this difference is statistically highly significant. Generally, loan-derived predicate nouns are more often used with frequent than with rarer support verbs. Furthermore, Chaucer's use of support verb constructions with *do* seems to illustrate social differences: in the speech of a character with higher social status, or higher social aspirations, it is used more than the low-status character. This observation can only be tentative, however, as it is based only on data from four Tales (including the General Prologue) and testing on the complete corpus of the *Canterbury Tales* is necessary to confirm or refute this hypothesis.

## 5. Conclusion

A comparison of the data from Old English and a data sample from Chaucer's Middle English *Canterbury Tales* confirms that Chaucer uses more loan-derived predicate nouns in support verb constructions than the texts in the Old English corpus do. The count of loan-derived predicate nouns in support verb constructions in Old English is similar to the average percentage of loan words in Old English, which is 3%. Even though the genre of the corpus texts, as well as the overall size of the corpora, differ in the Old English and the Chaucerian data, the figures suggest that the tendency to employ loan-words in support verb constructions increases from Old English to Chaucer's English. The Chaucerian sample texts show an average of 66% foreign derived predicate nouns in support verb constructions, compared to 49% foreign nouns overall in the textual sample. This increase is indeed likely to be due to increased borrowing overall, and disproportionately so in support verb constructions, particularly with *do*. Support verb constructions are clearly used as a means to create new verbs where no corresponding simplex exists. Furthermore loan-derived nouns continue to be frequent in support verb constructions, even if a corresponding simple verb has already developed at the time of use in Middle English. Where a corresponding simplex exists, the use of the support verb construction seems

to be conditioned by principles of stylistics and semantics similar to those that apply to support verb constructions with native predicate nouns. The investigation of the Chaucerian data, however, can only be viewed as a pilot study for the status and prominence of loan-derived predicate nouns in the Middle English corpus data. For any confident conclusions on Middle English, a larger-scale study of attestations in various dialects and genres from different periods of Middle English is needed. So far the material seems to confirm that support verb constructions, particularly with the verb *do*, are indeed used to integrate new linguistic concepts in the context of linguistic and cultural contacts, and the increase in linguistic and cultural contacts from Old English to Chaucer's times is mirrored in a high percentage of foreign derived predicate nouns complementing the most frequent support verbs.



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