Lexical or Auxiliary: 
*Dare, Need, and Ought* in the Paston Letters* 

Kenji MATSUSE

1. Introduction

In Present-Day English (henceforth abbreviated as PDE), as Biber et al. (1999: 73) point out, *dare, need,* and *ought* are positioned "on the borderline between auxiliaries and lexical verbs, and can be regarded as *marginal* auxiliaries" (emphasis added), not as ordinary modal-auxiliary verbs. As for the former two, *dare* and *need,* Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 109-110) consider them both lexical and modal-auxiliary, adding that "though the auxiliary use is rare in Am [erican]E[nglish]." Concerning the latter *ought,* however, they treat it as behaving "very largely like a modal auxiliary." And the marginality of auxiliary *ought* is often highlighted by the co-occurrence with the *to*-infinitive (= *to-inf*) in comparison with the fact that ordinary modal-auxiliary verbs usually accompany the bare/zero infinitive (= *ϕ*-inf).

This paper, then, discusses from a historical point of view the connection between the lexicality/(modal-) auxiliariness of the three verbs and their syntactic/semantic properties: in particular, whether they co-occur with the *ϕ*-inf or the *to-inf.*

The structure of this paper is as follows. In the next section, first of all, the characteristics of behaviors in PDE of *dare,* *need,* and *ought* are clarified so that some issues to be discussed can be identified. In section 3, their historical developments in Old English
(= OE) and Middle English (= ME) are examined principally through *The Oxford English Dictionary* [2nd edition] (= *OED*2) and *The Middle English Dictionary* (= *MED*). In section 4, in order to grasp the situation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the latter of which, according to Lightfoot (1979),3 “radical” syntactic changes are supposed to have taken place in English, the three verbs in the Paston Letters are focused on and analyzed. One big reason for this selection is that the occurrences of *ought* in the Paston Letters were not fully examined even by Tajima (1990). In addition, since “letters” are thought to reflect a lot of colloquial forms at that time, we could also imagine how the three verbs were used in speech as well as in writing. And the last section summarizes the precedent discussions and presents a conclusion.

2. Issues to Be Discussed

Let us begin by looking through the descriptions of *dare, need,* and *ought* in PDE which were made by Konishi & Minamide (2001) (= *Taishukan’s Unabridged Genius English-Japanese Dictionary: TUGED*), where the usages of the three verbs are being discussed in detail, and by Huddleston & Pullum (2002), a state-of-the-art grammar of the English language which succeeds Quirk et al. (1985). With *dare* we have:

(1) a. I wonder if he’ll *dare* (to) propose to her.
    b. We don’t *dare* to speak.
    c. I *dare* not tell her the sad news.

*TUGED* (s.v. *dare*) states that *dare* is one of the verbs whose demarcation drawn between lexical transitivity and modal-auxiliariness is “vague/blurred”. In affirmative contexts like (1a)
above, the occurrence of the infinitive marker to is optional as if behaving like an auxiliary verb (this dare cannot be a "genuine" auxiliary verb because of the existence of another auxiliary verb "'ll" [= will]), though it is common to use the to-inf for ordinary affirmative contexts. As regards explicitly negative contexts, however, the "lexical dare + to-inf" construction seems to be the rule in PDE as shown in (1b).  

On the other hand, auxiliary dare is, TUGED explains, rare itself and mainly used in British English (= BrE) rather than in AmE. It prefers if/whether clauses as well as negative/interrogative (i.e., non-affirmative) contexts as in (1c). Next, examples with need are:

(2) a. Our house needs to be repaired/repairing.
   [= We need to repair our house.]
   b. Need you work so hard?—Yes, I need to/*need.
      —No, I needn’t.

TUGED (s.v. need) mentions that lexical need seems to appear mainly in affirmative contexts; in non-affirmative ones, modal-auxiliary need is preferred and is typically British. Therefore, we find that instead of (2b), the following question-and-answer is also accepted in AmE: “Do you need to work so hard?—No, I don’t need to”.

Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 111) plausibly explain the above difference between dare and need: “with dare even the lexical verb occurs predominantly in non-affirmative contexts (as the modal obligatorily does), whereas lexical need very commonly occurs in affirmative contexts, reinforcing the contrast with the modal verb”.

Semantically speaking, need is thought to be positioned between deontic must and deontic ought, the latter of which will be discussed next:
(3) a. Oughtn’t we (to) ring up the police?
b. You ought not (to) smoke so much.

*TUGED* (s.v. ought) first of all writes this way, though it is, in a sense, a deviant definition for a modal-auxiliary verb: *ought* is an auxiliary verb, but it co-occurs with “to do”. And immediately after that comment, it adds that especially in non-affirmative contexts, the infinitive marker *to* could be deleted, which is often found in the colloquial style as shown in (3). Also Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 109) point out that “[t]here is a growing tendency for it [= ought] to be constructed with a bare infinitive [= φ-inf] in non-affirmative contexts (particularly negative), ..., especially in AmE, as well as the more usual forms with to”. Ando (2007[2003]: 185), too, recognizes this tendency and concludes that *ought* seems to have finally gained its “true” auxiliariness.

Its deontic use represents obligation or advice, based on ethics, socially accepted ideas, health problems, etc. It is semantically weaker than deontic *must* and almost the same as deontic *should*, but is not so frequently used as *should*. With regard to the degree of obligation *ought* has, *TUGED* (s.v. *should*) gives the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(4) WEAKER</th>
<th>STRONGER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>should ≤ ought to &lt; had better &lt; be to &lt; have to &lt; must</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And its epistemic use conveys the speaker’s certainty as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(5) WEAKER</th>
<th>STRONGER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>could &lt; might &lt; may &lt; should &lt; ought &lt; would &lt; will &lt; must</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The underlined parts of the above two scales clearly show that there is a semantically very close relationship between *should* and *ought*, as
Leech (1987: 100) writes: “SHOULD is a more common alternative to *ought to* in both senses [= ‘obligation’ and ‘logical necessity’].”

Here, if we focus on the environments where the three verbs co-occur with the φ-/to-inf, the foregoing discussion will be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>dare</th>
<th>need</th>
<th>ought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lexical</strong>* Afm.</td>
<td>△</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|        Non-afm. | ○    | ○    | –
| **Auxiliary*** Afm. | ●    | –    | ○     |
|        Non-afm. | ●    | ●    | △     |

Afm. = Affirmative contexts, Non-afm. = Non-affirmative contexts, 
— = no such use itself attested, ○ = to-inf, ● = φ-inf, & △ = φ-inf/to-inf

In addition to the distribution of the two kinds of infinitives co-occurring with each verb mentioned above, generally speaking, the syntagmatic positions of lexical or modal-auxiliary verbs in non-affirmative (i.e., negative or interrogative) contexts are described as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
& (7) & \text{Subject} & \text{do not} & \text{Verb} & \text{to-inf} \\
& \text{Do} & \text{Subject} & \text{Verb} & \text{to-inf} \\
& \text{Subject} & \text{AuxV not} & \phi\text{-inf} \\
& \text{AuxV} & \text{Subject} & \phi\text{-inf} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(AuxV: modal-auxiliary verb)

As far as the above (7) is concerned, we have an observation that the to-inf occurs immediately after a verbal element, whereas the φ-inf does not. In other words, the occurrence of the latter needs some “intervening element” between itself and the verbal element.

Thus, the issues obtained from (6) and (7) are:
(8) a. Why can the infinitive marker to be optional with dare, but not with need, when used in affirmative contexts?
= Why is no auxiliary need attested in affirmative contexts?
= Why is auxiliary dare attested in affirmative contexts?
b. Why does (auxiliary) ought originally accompany the to-inf, not the φ-inf?
c. Why can the infinitive marker to be optional with ought, when used in non-affirmative contexts?

They will fully be discussed together with a historical point of view in the following sections.

3. Dare, Need, and Ought in OE and ME

We begin with Mitchell & Robinson's (2007: 112) statement that "[t]he uninflected infinitive [= φ-inf] is usual after the auxiliaries ... and after uton 'let us', purfan 'need', and *durran 'dare'"", where we find that thar(f) and dare originally accompany the φ-inf. Then, OED² (s.v. dare) also explains that "[i]n the original construction, followed by the infinitive without to [= φ-inf], dare, durst are still in common use (especially in the negative 'he dare not', 'he durst not'); and most writers prefer 'he dare go' [= auxiliary dare], or 'he dares to go' [= lexical dare], to 'he dares go' [= lexical dare]" (emphasis added). Auxiliary dare is what we call one of the "preterite-present" verbs to which lots of modal-auxiliary verbs belong. Originally, it was a lexical verb which accompanied the φ-inf as a "noun" object. But when interpreted as an auxiliary verb whose peculiarity comes from the use of the preterite form as the present form, the original object infinitive was mutated and regarded (i.e., reanalyzed) as the main verb of the sentence. In other words, the "verbalness" of the infinitive came to be felt more strongly.

OED² further points out that "[t]he original 3rd singular present he dare, and past tense durst, remained undisturbed to the modern
period, in which the transitive senses [= 'to dare to undertake or do', etc.] were developed; but early in the 16th century the new forms dares, dared appeared in the south, and are always used in the transitive senses, and now also in the intransitive sense [= 'to have boldness or courage'] when followed by to',⁸ which means that, as Mustanoja (1960: 530) also points out, there was no such case with the to-inf in ME. Examples are:

(9) a. Hwæðer he wid Romanum winnan dorste  
   (c893, King ÆLFRED, Orosius, IV, xi)  
   b. The counsell neither durst to abridge or diminish any of them.  
   (c1555, Nicholas HARPSFIELD, Divorce Hen. VIII⁹ [1878], 269)

From above we see that the earliest OE example has the $-inf, but the to-inf is not found until the sixteenth century.¹⁰

Concerning thar(f) derived from OE purfan, as Mitchell & Robinson (2007⁷) suggest, OED² (s.v. thar(f)) states that this verb is “[o]bsolete except Scottish dialect. The ME. $ -forms [= thar, etc.] had lost the f or v, apparently first in the 2nd singular present bærft, bærft-tu, bær-tu, leaving a stem bær-, bær-, bør-, bœr- which was afterwards often confused with the dar-, dor-, dur- of DARE v’”, and gives the earliest example with the $-inf in OE:

(10) gif he gewistesse hæbbe, ne bærf he bæt geldan  
   (c890-901, King ÆLFRED, Legal Code of Ælfred the Great, 
   Introduction, c. 28)

In addition, MED (s.v. durren) also writes that as to durren, “[i]n both meaning and form, there is much confusion with thurven [= thar(f)]” and presents its semantic development as follows:
(11)a. To have the courage (to do something), dare:  
    — with negative, (one) need not (fear, blame, seek, say, etc.):  
    
    b. To be under necessity or obligation; (one) must (do something),  
      ought needs, should:  
    
    As regards need which has inherited the semantic content of the  
    extinct thar(f), OED² (s.v. need) explains that the “need + φ-/to-inf”  
    construction signifies “[t]o be under a necessity or obligation to do  
    something”, and the predominancy of co-occurring with the to-inf in  
    this construction is shown by the comment that “[i]n modern usage  
    the to is expressed except when the clause has the forms it (he, I,  
    etc.) need not, (why) need (it, etc.)?, or virtually equivalent to one of  
    these”. The earliest examples for each infinitival form are as follows:  

    (12)a. More tan he nedip for to have.  
      (c1380, John WYCLIF, Select English Works, III, 348)  
    b. The woman .. Cawkit ilk zett, that thai neid nocht gang by.  
      (c1470, HENRY the Minstrel, Wallace,¹¹ VII, 414)  

    In (12a) we see a variant of the to-inf, that is, the for to-inf, which  
    was being frequently used in ME¹² and disappeared thoroughly in  
    Modern English (= ModE) except for some dialectal expressions. For  
    (12b), notice that the φ-inf occurs in a non-affirmative context in  
    the fifteenth century, which is to be crucial later.  

    Finally, let us take a look at ought. Traugott & Dasher (2002: 11)  
    aptly explain the semantic change of ought; they write: “[i]n ME  
    ought (to) was the past tense form of both ‘have/owe’ and of the  
    obligation modal. Both the ‘have/owe’ and the modal senses were  
    derived from Late OE ahte ‘have’, but the original meaning of  
    possession was lost”. We find, therefore, that ought is also one of the
preterite-present verbs. And Ono (1969: 203) claims that in the present-tense use, *ought* has the meaning "[a]m (is, are) bound or under obligation", and points out the following information obtained from the first edition of *OED*:

(13)a. *ought* + simple inf [= φ-inf]: a1220-1868
b. *ought* + to-inf: c1175-1886

This clearly shows that the meaning the auxiliarily-functioned *ought* has, from the very beginning, starts with the *to-inf*. Ono (1969: 226) goes on to say that Chaucer in the fourteenth century rather intensively used the construction like (13a), and it is also not rare in Thomas More's writings in the fifteenth century, but in Shakespeare, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there is only one example with the φ-inf. At any rate, we find that the (13b) type had already firmly prevailed in later ME and early ModE periods.

With regard to the origin of the co-occurrence with the φ-inf, Tajima (1990: 236) speculates that there must have been an analogy with the behavior of *shall/should* which is semantically similar to *ought*, but concludes that the *to-inf* (including the *for to-inf*) is overwhelmingly more common than the φ-inf in late ME. And Fischer (1992: 405, fn. 33) ascribes the reason why the φ-inf co-occurred with *ought* (as well as *need* above) in ME to the usage of *ought* (*need*) as an "impersonal" verb, because, she writes, "impersonal verbs regularly took the bare infinitive (= φ-inf)".

From the above discussion in this section, we can find out some possible explanation at least for Question (8b) presented in section 2: "Why does (auxiliary) *ought* originally accompany the *to-inf*, not the φ-inf?"; the following fact seems to be crucial:
(14) Enne sede ahte to geldanne [= had to pay]
(c950, Lindisfarne Gospels, Matthew, xviii, 24)

(14) is the earliest example of owed "was under obligation to pay" cited in OED², where it also co-occurs with the to-inf, though OED² says that "for the following two centuries and a half, examples are wanting to show the passing of this into the simple ahte [= auxiliary ought]". As a matter of fact, the year of the earliest example of auxiliary ought cited in OED² is c1175 as shown in (13b). And also Traugott (1992: 242) points out that "[t]he inflected infinitive [= to-inf] was of relatively limited occurrence in verse and indeed is quite rare in the earlier OE prose. Nevertheless, a few verbs seem to have required the inflected infinitive from early times, e.g. agan 'to possess and have as a duty', habban 'to have'". It seems to be rather natural that we have these facts, because the action "to have (an obligation)" tends to have a directionality, which is best fitly shown by the preposition "to" plus an object. So it is not uncommon that when the direction of the obligation is an action, the inflected to-inf was used instead of the φ-inf, as seen in the quasi-modal auxiliary verb "have to" shows.

From these, we understand that in the two hundred years or so the formal/syntactic status of ought had changed from a lexical verb to an auxiliary one (i.e., a category change), but its semantic content was well preserved in it, which still required accompanying the former type of infinitive closely related to its semantic content. This, so to speak, "semantic attraction of syntactic forms" might be one of the explanations for the formal irregularity and marginality of the modal-auxiliary verb ought.
4. Dare, Need, and Ought in the Paston Letters

We conducted a statistical survey of the "dare/need/ought + infinitive" construction found in the Paston Letters (= PL), utilizing the concordance compiled by Uchioke (2004), which is based on 930 letters and documents written in CE 1425-1510 and edited by Norman Davis (2004[1971/76]). Here we also expect to find colloquial speech styles as well as those typical of letters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

4.1. Dare

The morphological variants of dare in the PL are: dar, dare/darenott [found in the one-word form], darre, durst, and durste, which are all auxiliary forms. Lexical forms like dareth, dares, or dared, however, have never been met with. We, therefore, safely conclude that dare, in the PL, has not yet shifted to a lexical verb as OED² points out, but still remains an auxiliary one.

We will show the result of investigation in the following table, where "Afm." means affirmative contexts; "Neg.", negative contexts; and "Infs", forms of the infinitive co-occurring with dare in the PL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(15)</th>
<th>Variants</th>
<th>Afm.</th>
<th>Neg.</th>
<th>Infs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dar</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>only φ-inf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dare</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>only φ-inf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darenott</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>only φ-inf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>only φ-inf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durst</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>φ-inf &amp; for to-inf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durste</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>only φ-inf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>40 [40.8%]</td>
<td>58 [59.2%]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table reveals that in late ME, auxiliary dare was still frequently and vigorously used in affirmative contexts as well as in negative ones, which might tell something about Question (8a): "Why
is auxiliary *dare* attested in affirmative contexts?” The fact is that
the PDE situation in which auxiliary *dare* functions in both
affirmative and non-affirmative contexts can also be seen in late ME,
though lexical *dare* had not yet emerged at all at that time. This
means that auxiliary *dare*’s co-existence with lexical *dare* did not
influence very much the occurrence of the former in affirmative
contexts.

With the “*dare* + infinitive” construction, the earliest and the latest
elements found in the PL corpus are:

(16)a. *he seyd parlement at Leycestre durst not, ne yet ne dar not,
rydyn ne go abowte...* (c1426, 5, 148-49, WP1/MA)

b. he *durste not meue hym wyth it.* (1489, 413, 14, WP3/JP3)

Though in (16a) the negative particle “ne” is still being used side by
side with “not”, this usage just seems to be characteristic of the
letter #5 in c1426, in which we also have found (17) below, while in
other letters and documents there is no such usage of “ne” with *dare*
at all:

(17) *seruantz ne durst not at here fredom nothyr goo ne ryde*
     (c1426, 5, 35-36, WP1/MA)

In the PL, as understood from the table (15) above, it appears to
be the rule for *dare* to function as a modal-auxiliary verb with the
ϕ-inf; we have just one exception for it, though:

(18) *they seyd they durst not for to take vpon hem for to be
bonden,* (1465, 182, 12-13, MP/JP1)

Despite the fact that we find the ϕ-inf with quite a length of
intervening elements between *dare* and the infinitive in (17), and there is even a united verbal-negative complex, *darenot*, which accompanies the *-inf in other examples; the hypothesis that the "not" can be an intervening element to adopt the *-inf will not account for this irregularity in (18). This could be, therefore, one of the earliest lexicalized examples of auxiliary *dare*. It is, however, also true that even in the latest example (16b), we still see the *-inf instead of prepositional infinitives. So it may be natural that in *The Canterbury Tales* which is supposed to have been composed in c1375-a1400, no prepositional infinitives with *dare* were attested, as was pointed out in Matsuse (1987: 43).

This might be called a kind of "counter-" grammaticalization: i.e., from auxiliary to lexical. But, why could this possibly take place? The development of the *to-inf* itself may be one of the reasons, as Los (2005) discusses it in detail. For example, in the group of causative verbs, native-origined ones such as *make* or *let*, from the very beginning, co-occur with the *-inf, while one like *cause*, newly-joined in ME, takes the *to-inf, which suggests that the functional regions of the *-inf had already been to a large extent confined by the ME period principally because of the blurring of inflectional system in English. In connection with this, it is also likely that people felt that the semantic content of *dare* was rather special/marginal in comparison with those of authentic modal-auxiliary verbs like *must* or *can*. Thus there emerged an environment in which auxiliary *dare* could be (re)interpreted rather as lexical, not as auxiliary: hence the co-occurrence with the *to-inf.*

### 4.2. Need [& Thar(f)]

Before discussing *need*, here we should also briefly refer to *thar(f)/thurven* in the PL; we have just two examples of it:
(19)a. He thare have non excuse for defavte of leyser
        (1463, 172, 9-10, MP/JP1)
b. ye ther feere as fore the sy3t of hem,
        (1465, 180, 113-4, MP/JP1)

From (19a) in particular, where the third-person-singular ending -eth is lack, we understand that thar(f) is functioned as an auxiliary verb in the PL. Accordingly, for it, we have found only the φ-inf, but not the to-inf.

The result of investigation is presented in the following table (20), where “Infs” means forms of the infinitive co-occurring with need in the PL; “Aux.”, explicit auxiliary uses; “Lex.”, explicit lexical uses; and “Amb.”, ambiguous uses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ncd</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>only to-inf</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nede</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>only to-inf</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neede</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>only to-inf</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nedid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>only to-inf</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nedis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>only to-inf</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nedith</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>only to-inf</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nedyd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>only to-inf</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nedyth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>to-inf &amp; for to-inf</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(21) a. ye shulde not nede to drede yow,
        (c1444, 432, 52, JGr/WP1)
b. they nede not to fere them of ther payment
        (c1503, 845, 28, RC/JP3)

Explicitly lexical forms of need are easy to find, because they are either inflected like nedith/nedis or dedid, or used together with an auxiliary verb as seen in (21a). But we can not easily judge that nede in (21b) is “definitely” an auxiliary form, only in terms of the word
order "nede + not" which is specific to auxiliary verbs in PDE, because what we call "do-support" or "do-insertion" had not fully been established until the sixteenth century: hence we have the following:

(22) he ne nedid not to haue sent no spyes.

The past-tensed nedid is immediately followed by the negative particle "not" as "shulde" in (21a), not preceded by "did not" and also not changed to its root form "nede". The case in (21b) with no explicit inflection, therefore, is ambiguous between a lexical reading and an auxiliary one in connection with the negative particle "not".

Thus it may be safe to say that there was no "explicit" example of need with the φ-inf in the PL. And this fact at least tells us that its shift to an auxiliary verb might not have been well recognized in the Pastons yet, though the φ-inf was already able to be used with need in the fifteenth century, as shown in (12b) above.

The reason why the construction in which its ancestral thar(f) co-occurs with the φ-inf was not directly handed down to the "need + infinitive" construction may partly be explained also by the development of the to-inf in ME. By the time when need inherited the semantic content of thar(f) as a lexical verb, newly in ME, the to-inf had begun being predominantly and intensively used, unlike the time in which thar(f) was used.

The problem is why lexical need "had to" be grammaticalized into auxiliary need, especially in non-affirmative contexts (in BrE) (= Question (8a)); it may be regarded as a kind of "return" to the root shared with thar(f), both semantically and syntactically. One of the reasons for this is likely to be lexical need's semantic similarity to
modal-auxiliary verbs like *must* or *should* which had firmly prevailed in ME. Then, why only in non-affirmative contexts? The latent lexicality of *need* might have required an intervening element between need and the infinitive following it (see (7) above), in order to realize the same situation where lexical *need* co-occurs with the to-inf (the "to" could be perceived enough as an intervening element in affirmative contexts). Thus, semantically speaking, chasing the ordinary and common modal-auxiliary verbs like *must* or *should*, *need* has obviously become modal-auxiliary, but syntactically speaking, this shift was not perfect: the co-occurrence with the \( \phi \)-inf was severely limited to non-affirmative contexts that permit and (virtually) realize the elemental order for the "lexical need + infinitive" construction. And we understand, too, that it may be natural that this shift to a modal-auxiliary verb was encouraged only in BrE, probably because of the fact that the development of modal-auxiliary verbs took place more positively in BrE which had lost the traditional inflectional device for the present tense in the subjunctive mood than in AmE which still keeps it intact (Koma 1996: 64).\(^{16}\)

4.3. **Ought**

While Tajima (1990) just took a look at some selected letters and documents in the Pastons, in this paper, utilizing Davis (2004[1971/76]), we investigated all 930 letters and documents. The result of investigation is shown in the following table, where "Infs" means forms of the infinitive co-occurring with *ought* in the PL:
The examples for each infinitive are:

(24) a. ye wolde, and weell aghte to, take ther-in greet comffort    (1474, 287, 5-6, JP2/JP3)
    b. they ought for to pay you,    (1465, 182, 8, MP/JP1)
    c. whate ought be doon there-ynne,    (1455, 523, 7, SJF/JP1)

(24c) is considered to be a definite example of ought accompanying the φ-inf, while the occurrence of the φ-inf in (25) below could probably be ascribed to the juxtaposition with "sholde" which requires the φ-inf, though the same kind of juxtaposition in (24a) allows ought to have the infinitive marker:

(25) be goode rewle and mesure bat 3e ought and sholde haue yn be despociscion    (1464, 694, 31-32, UN/JP1)

In any case, we have found only nine examples which co-occur with the φ-inf, out of 32 "ought + infinitive" constructions in total; they account for 28.1 percent:17
That the ratio of the $\phi$-inf to the (for) to-inf is approximately three to seven seems to show that the use of the latter is predominant. And it is also evident from (26) that in the PL, the environment in which the $\phi$-inf is favored is considered to be affirmative contexts rather than non-affirmative ones, unlike the tendency for ought found in PDE. The "intervening element" hypothesis applied to the "dare + infinitive" construction, however, this time, does not seem to account for the appearance of the $\phi$-inf in this construction, because just two out of eight examples have some intervening elements between ought and the $\phi$-inf as in (27):

(27) who ought more halde wyth me yn reson
(1460, 888, 22, WWr/JB)

Thus these facts tell us that in the fifteenth century, at least in the PL, it was basically the rule for the "ought + infinitive" construction to favor the to-inf, but the $\phi$-inf used for it was also not rare, whether it is in non-affirmative or affirmative contexts. The overall picture is, therefore, that as shown in the above (13), with this construction, the two kinds of infinitives co-existed from the thirteenth century onward until now.

The problem is, then, why the co-existence of these infinitives was possible for ought as a modal-auxiliary verb. Concerning the reason why ought failed to join the "core" modal-auxiliary verbs like must or can, Nordlinger & Traugott (1997: 307, fn. 13) mention the following two points: (1) "its [= ought's] semantics which was tied to advisability rather than prototypical deonticity" (cf. (4) above) and (2) "the lack of epistemic meaning until the nineteenth century" (emphases added). It is conceivable enough that its semantic peculiarity and its mono-barreled semantic structure that lasted long
may have hindered ought becoming truly modal-auxiliary in the course of its development. So we may be able to say that this "imperfect auxiliariness" of ought caused it to have the indeterminacy of the infinitive for it, though it has always predominantly co-occurred with prepositional infinitives closely related to and semantically attracted by its former lexicality.

Next, the recently remarkable tendency of ought's co-occurring with the $\phi$-inf (or deleting the infinitive marker to from the to-inf), especially in non-affirmative contexts (and in AmE) (= Question (8c)) as in (28), should be discussed here:

(28) (= (3)) a. Oughtn't we (to) ring up the police?  
        b. You ought not (to) smoke so much.

The "intervening element" hypothesis could account for this case, too. The inverted subject and the negative particle "not" can be an intervening element to make an environment in which the $\phi$-inf is likely to occur. Another reason could have something to do with the pronunciation:

(29) a. He ought/oughtn't to go.  
        b. He oughta/oughtn'ta go.

That is, the phonological reduction of "ought(n't) to /ɔ:t(nt) tu:/" to /ɔ:te/ or /ɔ:tə(nt)ə/ which can visually be shown in (29b). The infinitive marker to tends to be phonologically absorbed into and amalgamated with ought when it is pronounced in ordinary speeches, because it has no primary stress and begins with the same sound as the last sound of ought it follows. At first sight, in non-affirmative contexts, this reduction seems to function to help the use of the to-inf rather than the $\phi$-inf, because it could lower the status of "not" as
an intervening element. But here the fact is that in spite of the reduction of "not", the infinitive marker of the to-inf would be reduced so that it can be integrated into the auxiliary verb. So even if the power of "not" could be weaker as an intervening element, it is hard to presume that the marker in its full form, i.e., /tu:/, instead, would newly get the status of an intervening element; but rather it would behave invariably as the weak form seen in affirmative contexts, namely /tə/ in /ɔːtə/. We conclude, therefore, that we can say that the φ-inf (or the to-inf without to) does appear not only in non-affirmative contexts where we can well perceive the overt existence of an intervening element, but in fact in affirmative contexts as well; in the latter contexts, the infinitive marker to is integrated into ought and felt as if they were one word, which native speakers of English just do not notice, because it is a very natural and ordinary practice to pronounce that way. And the pronunciation characteristic of AmE like /ɔːfə/ may contribute to the way in which Americans subconsciously take the to-inf for the φ-inf in affirmative contexts, and probably this phonological treatment also creates the use of the φ-inf in non-affirmative contexts, amplified with the help of the intervening elements in them.

5. Summary and Conclusion

We have seen the lexical and auxiliary behaviors of dare, need, and ought in the history of English, especially focusing on the situation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in terms of the Paston Letters as an example.

The findings from the present survey of the Paston Letters are:

(30)a. Auxiliary dare seems to be the rule in the Paston Letters, but one example of lexical dare has been met with, though
OED² cites the earliest example of the latter only from the sixteenth-century data.

b. Only lexical need was found in the Paston Letters; it seems that the Pastons had not yet recognized auxiliary need even in non-affirmative contexts, despite in other late ME corpora auxiliary need was already not rare.

c. Tajima (1990) did not report the φ-inf in his corpus of the Paston Letters, but we this time did find nine examples of it, though the predominant use of the to-inf was also confirmed.

With regard to Questions (8a)-(8c) presented in section 2, the keywords to solve them seem to be: (1) intervening elements between modal-auxiliary verbs and the infinitive, (2) functional extension of the to-inf, (3) semantic attraction of specific syntactic forms, (4) imperfect auxiliariness, and (5) phonological reduction and its washback effect.

The fact that the ordinary direction of grammaticalization “from lexical to auxiliary” is found with need and ought, but not with dare (we do have a slight tendency as seen in (1a), though) should be further discussed. And ought also may have, in a sense, some remnants of lexicality, when it is used in a negative context like “shouldn’t ought to”, even though it is not acknowledged as the standard use (see foot note 7).

Are they lexical or auxiliary? Verbs like dare, need, and ought have all the more important issues for the study of grammaticalization because of their marginality.
Notes

* In commemoration of Professor Morio Nishikawa's retirement from Kumamoto University, who had been the president of The English Literary Society of Kumamoto in the academic years 2005-2008


2. Since the optionality of the infinitive marker to is one of the major issues in historical linguistics, discussions about it can be found elsewhere. For example, Iyeiri (2007: 94) refers to the verb help:

(i) to help him (to) deal with his concerns

She claims that this phenomenon is caused by the difference between the use in AmE and that in BrE rather than by some semantic “indirectness” of to which TUGED (s.v. help) suggests, but Declerck (1991: 488) also points out the semantic constraint that “to is not normally omitted if help does not have its most literal meaning” (cf. Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1244) and gives the following examples:

(ii) a. Jill helped me (to) lay the table.

[= Jill was one of the persons performing the action.]

b. The BBC commentary helped us to see the gravity of the situation.

[= The commentary is not one of those that see the gravity of the situation.]

Concerning help, not only in the above, what we call, “accusative with infinitive” construction, but in the “help + infinitiv(al object)” construction as well, we often witness the φ-inf instead of the to-inf, which we may say is characteristic of the “modal-auxiliary verb + φ-inf” construction, as in:

(iii) ..., which eventually should help revive the ailing economy,

(The Daily Yomiuri, Nov. 20, 2008)

The crucial point here is that the auxiliarily-functioned help, which is shown by the co-occurrence with the φ-inf, appears side by side with a genuine auxiliary verb should (see also (1a) above with dare). We may say that this help lies between a lexical verb and an auxiliary verb.


4. Both Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 110) and TUGED (s.v. dare) point out the optionality of the infinitive marker to in implicitly negative contexts, too:

(iv) a. Few of them dare/dared (to) stand up to him.

b. I hardly dare (to) breathe for fear of making an error.

5. With lexical dare and need, TUGED (s.v. dare & need) says, their progressive forms cannot usually be allowed.

7. But TUGED (s.v. ought) also refers to such uses of "lexical ought" in non-affirmative contexts as "didn't/hadn't/shouldn't ought to" or "Did/Didn't you ought to...?", among which only "hadn't/shouldn't ought to" is regarded as "non-standard"; the others are just colloquial. And the expression "shouldn't ought to" seems to be commonly used in AmE (in personal communication with Professor Judy Yoneoka of Kumamoto Gakuen University who comes from California).

Terasawa (2008: 195) also notes that it is possible to use the following type of tag question (vb) in place of (va):

(v) a. We ought to go there, oughtn't we?
   b. We ought to go there, shouldn't we?

8. The northern situation is explained as follows: "[t]he northern dialects retain 'he dare, he durst', and writers of northern extraction favour their retention in literary English when followed by the simple infinitive without to [= φ-inf]."

In the descriptions cited from OED², various kinds of abbreviations are almost all recovered in this paper.


10. As for the construction with the to-inf, OED² adds that "the 3rd singular is now dares and the past tense dared; but durst to was formerly used. 'None dared to speak', is more emphatic than 'none durst speak'" (emphasis added).


12. As regards Chaucer's use of the for to-inf, Horobin (2007: 117) writes that "this variation [= the to-inf or the for to-inf] may also be manipulated for metrical effect" (emphasis added).

13. Beadle & Richmond (2005) have edited other documents related to the Pastons (document numbers 931-1051), but the present survey do not include them.

14. As the present PL corpus does not have any examples of the three verbs in interrogative contexts, we use the term "Neg." instead of "Non-Afm." for the ensuing tables.

15. Information as to each letter in the PL is shown in the round brackets in the following order: (1) the year it was written, (2) the number given for edited letters and documents, (3) line(s) in the edition, and (4) from whom [the left side of the slash] to whom [the right side of the slash] it was sent. And the abbreviations for senders and receivers are as follows:

16. Los (2005: 300) claims that in OE, the functional shrinking of the subjunctive clauses was brought about by the competition with the to-inf, saying: "the to-infinitive was at first analysed as equivalent to the optative subjunctive, and started to occur with discourse subjunctive (reported speech) only at a later stage". This suggests that not only modal-auxiliary verbs, but also the functional field of the to-inf was enlarged at the cost of that of the subjunctive clauses in the course of time.

17. Tajima (1990: 235) has found 12 examples of ought in his corpus of the selected PL, among which 11 have prepositional infinitives (= the to-inf & the for to-inf), and no example with the Φ-inf is attested.

Matsuse (1987: 43-44) reported that in The Canterbury Tales, 39 examples with the Φ-inf were met with, out of 50 “ought + infinitive” constructions, which occupy 78 percent. Also Matsuse (1996: 70) has found 7 examples with the Φ-inf out of 22 in The Secrete of Secretes composed in a1500 (about 32 percent). Setting aside Chaucer’s extraordinary use of the Φ-inf in the fourteenth century, we confirm that at least in the fifteenth century, the Φ-inf is not rare in the “ought + infinitive” construction, as Ono (1969) points out.

References

Lexical or Auxiliary: Dare, Need, and Ought in the Paston Letters

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