A comparative investigation of mood
in Old High German, Old Saxon and Old English adverbial clauses

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Introduction. In old Germanic languages, adverbial clauses (ACs) display variation between the indicative (IND) and the subjunctive (SUBJ), which has been the object of some investigations in individual varieties, e.g. Old High German (OHG) and Old English (OE) (cf. Schrodt 1983, Petrova 2008, 2013, Coniglio 2017, Coniglio/Hinterhölzl/Petrova 2018; Mitchell 1985, Vezzosi 1998, van Gelderen 2019), as exemplified by the OHG contrast in (1) and (2). However, besides being non-exhaustive, these studies do not tackle the issue from a comparative perspective, which has thus become a desideratum in historical linguistics (cf. Coniglio/De Bastiani/Hinterhölzl/Weskott t.a.). By focusing on some West Germanic languages – OHG, Old Saxon (OS) and OE –, this paper presents a pilot study as part of a larger comparative project aiming at filling this void.

Corpus study. For this investigation, we extracted data on ACs from the Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch (Donhauser et al. 2018) and from the York Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE, Taylor et. al 2003). The general figures on the IND vs SUBJ distribution in OHG, OS and OE ACs (Table 1) reveal a ratio of approximately 65-70% IND and 30-35% SUBJ and thus a very similar situation in all the languages considered (with only a slightly higher percentage of the SUBJ in OHG).

If we examine individual types of ACs, e.g. concessive, purpose and temporal ACs, we observe that the percentages of the SUBJ vary across these types, in that they are almost equally high in concessive and purpose but significantly lower in temporal ACs (see Table 2).

On closer inspection, we may identify two factors that lead to the different distribution of IND vs SUBJ, namely a) the semantic class of the subordinate clause and b) the type of adverbial subordinator. As to a), we see for example that, within the class of temporal ACs, 'as/after'-sentences (signaling simultaneity or anteriority of the event described) almost systematically display the IND, while 'before'-sentences (signaling posteriority of the event) vary according to the subordinating conjunction, but the SUBJ generally predominates (see Table 3). As to b), we observe a difference between different adverbial subordinators in one and the same semantic type of AC (see Table 4). Thus, for example, the 'doh'-variant in OHG correlates quite strongly with the SUBJ. Also, the difference between OHG 'er' and 'er danne' and equivalents thereof in OE and OS (Table 3) points in the same direction.

In our investigation, we intend to include also other types of ACs, as well as different adverbial subordinators introducing one and the same semantic type of clause.

Theoretical analysis. In our view, the twofold explanation for the different distribution of the SUBJ in the different ACs (see a) and b) above) must be linked to the formal properties of the C-Layer, which both determines the semantic class of the AC and hosts the subordinating element.

Coniglio/Hinterhölzl/Petrova (2018: 30) claim for example that an Agree operation affecting different heads in the clausal spine (and ultimately a C-head) is responsible for the licensing of the IND/SUBJ mood in ACs, as is illustrated in (2) and (3). In particular, following Giannakidou (2009 et seq.), (non-)veridicality is claimed to play a crucial role in the licensing of mood alternations in ACs.

This analysis very well captures the fact that different semantic types of ACs license mood alternations and that the types of the subordinating conjunctions alone are sometimes able to determine the verbal mood independently of the semantics of the AC (cf. Rivero 1988, Calabrese 1993, Damonte 2010, Ledgeway 2005, 2012, Giannakidou 2009, Padovan 2011). However, it is not clear why the verbal mood may vary with the same subordinator in the same type of AC, in a situation of language change. In addition, these previous analyses neglect that crosslinguistic facts show that subordinating elements occupy different positions in the C-Layer.

Thus, we intend to revise our previous proposal in the light of recent theories proposed for other Germanic and non-Germanic languages (which mainly concentrate on complement clauses) and to assume that the subordinating elements of ACs target different head positions in the C-Layer (cf. Bhatt/Yoon 1991, Roussou 2000, Grewendorf/Poletto 2011, Bidese/Padovan/Tomaselli 2012 a.o.). In particular, we will argue that the head Force hosts complementizers/subordinators that are mainly responsible for subordination and clause

typing (only licensing the IND), while a head Mood – also located in the C-Layer – hosts lower subordinating elements that are responsible for IND vs SUBJ alternations.

The analysis we will present has the advantage of explaining 1) the interaction – from a West Germanic comparative perspective – between the semantics of the AC and the type of subordinating element in licensing mood alternations as well as 2) the role played by syntax in the subsequent developments of the languages considered.

Examples and Tables

(1)　　a.　[...] sar　　　thu **bist**　áltenti [...]　　　　(O V, 15, 41, from ReA)
　　　　　　as.soon.as you **are.IND** aging
　　　　'[...] when you grow old [...]'

　　　　b.　Sar　　　thú **sis**,　　druhtin, tháre [...]　(O IV, 31, 21, from ReA)
　　　　　　as.soon.as you **are.SUBJ** Lord　　there
　　　　'[...] when you are there, Lord [...]'

(2)　　[CP1 ... [CP2-Adv C[iVerid] … Mood [iSubj] [uVerid] … V[uInd]]]　　　　Agree
　　　　[CP1 ... [CP2-Adv C[iVerid] … Mood [iSubj] [u̶V̶e̶r̶i̶d̶] … V[u̶I̶n̶d̶]]]　　　　→ indicative

(3)　　[CP1 ... [CP2-Adv C[i¬Verid] … Mood [iSubj] [u¬Verid] … V[uSubj]]]　　　Agree
　　　　[CP1 ... [CP2-Adv C[i¬Verid] … Mood [iSubj] [u̶¬̶V̶e̶r̶i̶d̶] … V[u̶S̶u̶b̶j̶]]]　　　→ subjunctive

	OHG		OS		OE	
IND	3.130	65,0%	828	69,0%	4.604	70,0%
SUBJ	1.682	35,0%	372	31,0%	1.977	30,0%
total	4.812	100,0%	1.200	100,0%	6.581	100,0%

Table 1. Mood in ACs in OHG, OS and OE

	Concessive			Purpose			Temporal		
	OHG	OS	OE	OHG	OS	OE	OHG	OS	OE
IND	31,0%	9,3%	17,4%	10,8%	23,3%	na	87,6%	84,3%	87,0%
SUBJ	69,0%	90,7%	82,6%	89,2%	76,7%	na	12,4%	15,7%	13,0%
total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	na	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 2. IND vs SUBJ in concessive, purpose and temporal clauses in OHG, OS and OE

% of SUBJ	OHG	OS	OE
do/tho/ða	0,0%	3,0%	2,9%
er/er/ær	36,8%	41,7%	65,7%
er danne/er than/ær þan ðe	58,6%	72,7%	77,7%

Table 3. Percentage of SUBJ in 'as/after' vs 'before'-clauses in OHG, OS and OE

	OHG		OS			OE	
	doh	mit diu	thoh	that	so	ðeah	ðeah ðe
IND	11,6%	100,0%	2,4%	50,0%	100,0%	17,0%	17,5%
SUBJ	88,4%	0,0%	97,6%	50,0%	0,0%	83,0%	82,5%
total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4. IND vs SUBJ in concessive clauses in OHG, OS and OE

Selected references. Bidese, E./A. Padovan/A. Tomaselli 2012. A binary system of complementizers in Cimbrian relative clauses. *WPSS* 90, 1-21. **Roussou, A. 2000.** On the left periphery: modal particles and complementizers. *JoGL* 1, 65-94. **Van Gelderen, E. 2019.** Main and embedded clausal asymmetry in the history of English: Changes in assertive and non-assertive complements. *LV* 19(1), 118-140.