

In the right mood, in the right place

The issue: This paper investigates the interactions between indicative/subjunctive mood alternations (MAs) and verb placement in Old English (OE) and Old High German (OHG) subordinate clauses, as exemplified by the relative clauses in (1) and (2) (only for OE, for reasons of space). In older Germanic, MAs are traditionally taken as indicators of the (in)dependent clausal status (cf. the discussion in Schrodtt 1983, Petrova 2008 for OHG and in Traugott 1972, Faraci 1980, Vezzosi 1998 for OE, etc.), similarly to modern Romance languages (cf. Farkas 1985, Giorgi/Pianesi 1997, Quer 1998, etc.). Verb placement (V2, V-medial or V-final) also seems to compete for the function of marking (in)dependency (cf. Axel 2007, Vezzosi 1998, etc.), but it is also often considered as a reflex of information structure (IS), with the verb preceding or following its complements for example in order to focalize or background them, etc. (cf. Hinterhölzl/Petrova 2009, Hinterhölzl 2015, Petrova 2009, 2011, Coniglio/Linde/Ruette 2017 for OHG; van Kemenade/Los 2006, van Kemenade 2009, Bech 2012, Pintzuk/Taylor 2012 for OE; Walkden 2012, etc.).

In most modern Germanic languages, in contrast, MAs no longer reflect the different syntactic status of the clauses (but rather reported speech, counterfactuality, etc.), whereas verb placement has become the most reliable indicator for (in)dependency. Modern Germanic languages are thus configurational and make use of verb placement for signaling (in)dependency, whereas Romance languages (may) resort to MAs (Meinunger 2004, 2006, but cf. Poletto 2000, Ledgeway 2012, etc. for verb placement).

Mainly based on Icelandic and German, a recent theoretical investigation (partially based on traditional literature) by Gärtner/Eythórsson (t.a., henceforth G/E) convincingly shows that Germanic languages reflect different stages of a more general diachronic change scenario (cf. Vezzosi 1998). They move from a system in which mood is “recruited” for clauses combining, i.e. for marking (in)dependency, and verb placement is related to prosody and IS towards a system in which verb placement indicates clausal (in)dependency, while verbal mood acquires different types of (semantico-pragmatic) functions (“autonomous mood”), as sketched in Tab. 1, taken from G/E (t.a.:9). The Old English data possibly reflect a transitory scenario in the diachronic change outlined above, since remains of mood as a marker for clausal (in)dependency can be found, while at the same time mood reflects the speaker’s attitude or is dependent on the mood in the main clause (Mitchell 1985).

Hypothesis and methods: Starting from the traditional view that MAs in Old Germanic languages indicate some sort of (in)dependency and that verb placement is only determined by IS, one would expect that, given that these languages are assumed to be non-configurational in their early stages, MAs do not correlate with verb placement (null hypothesis). Considering OE and OHG, we empirically investigate whether there is a clear division of labor between mood and verb placement at the start to determine whether these two languages reflect different stages in a diachronic scenario as sketched for example in G/E (modulo the fact that languages like English signaled dependency by means of verb placement alternations until the loss of V2).

For this investigation, all finite subordinate clauses (complement, adverbial and relative clauses) were extracted from the York Corpus of Old English Prose (queried through the Corpus Studio Web application, <http://corpus-studio-web.cttnww-meertens.surf-hosted.nl/crpstudio/home>) and the *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch* (<http://www.deutschdiachrondigital.de/>, searchable via ANNIS, Krause/Zeldes 2016, <http://corpus-tools.org/annis/>). For the OE sample, we selected only those verbal categories with a clear indicative or subjunctive tag, leaving aside verbal categories marked as ambiguous; moreover, the Corpus Studio Web Application individuated further ambiguities among the results, which were removed from the data. All elements that precede and follow the finite verb were counted. Finally, we determined whether differences may be observed with respect to verb placement in indicative and subjunctive clauses. We have

statistics for both word and constituent counts; given that the two are (rather unsurprisingly) highly correlated, both measures give the same results. We performed a logistic regression on the variable *pos* (count after verb, divided by the sum of count before and after verb) with mood as a fixed factor (indicative vs. subjunctive).

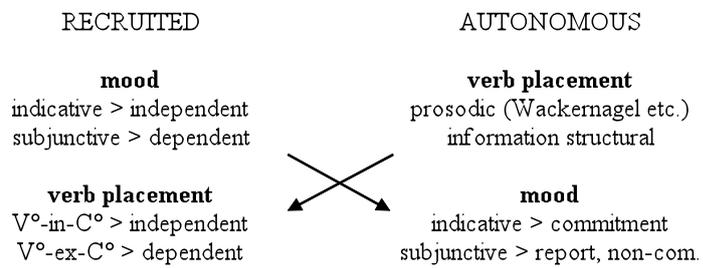
First results and analysis: The (complete) results for OE indicate a significant effect of verb mood on verb placement in all the types of subordinate clauses considered. In the indicative, the verb appears earlier in the sentence (*pos*=.26) than in the subjunctive (*pos*=.21). This effect of mood on the position of the verb is significant ($p < .05$). As to OHG, first sample tests indicate a weaker effect of mood on verb placement than in OE.

If G/E's assumptions are right, these empirical results indicate that the two languages reflect different stages in the proposed diachronic scenario. OE was possibly situated at an intermediate stage (at the point of intersection), in which mood and verb placement strongly interact because neither the old system had already been completely abandoned nor the new one had completely prevailed (cf. Vezzosi 1998). In contrast, OHG could reflect a more conservative stage in which dependency was more frequently indicated by means of verb mood (31% of all OHG subordinate clauses exhibit a subjunctive verb, with – in particular – complement clauses scoring 44%), while verb placement was strongly dependent on IS.

For the syntactic analysis, we will propose that the morphological marking of mood on the verb, which is traditionally considered responsible for signaling (in)dependency, was independent from verb movement in the earliest stages of Germanic languages. In order to capture the change towards a system in which verb placement configurationally determined whether a clause is (in)dependent, we will present an analysis in which mood features are licensed syntactically via verb placement (and verb movement). In particular, in line with recent proposals, we will interpret the higher position of the indicative mood in Germanic as the consequence of epistemic anchoring or of the presence of illocutionary force (Gärtner 2001, 2002, Lohnstein 2000, 2004, Catasso/Hinterhölzl 2016, etc.).

Tables and examples

- (1) Ælfred cining, þe oft **gefeht** wið Denan
 Alfred King, REL often fought.IND against Danes
 'King Alfred who fought often against the Danes.'
 [[coepigen.o3]_+AGenEp:78.60]
- (2) n-ænig man, þe in þære Godes swinglan mid fullre gife **gestande** [...]
 not-any man, REL in the God's afflictions with full grace stand.SUBJ [...]
 '[...] none who faces God's afflictions with full grace.'
 [[cogregdc.o24]_GDPref_and_4_[C]:11.274.13.3994]



Tab. 1. *Clausal (In)dependency Marking* (slightly adapted from G/E t.a.:9)

Selected references: Gärtner, H.-M./T. Eythórssón (t.a.). Varieties of Dependent V2 and Verbal Mood: A View from Icelandic. Draft 30 June 2017. Mitchell, B. (1985). Old English Syntax, Concord, the Parts of Speech and the Sentence. Oxford: Clarendon. Faraci, M. (1980). The modally marked form in Old English subordinate clauses. A structural sign. Neuphilologische Mitteilungen 81, 378-384. Pintzuk S./A. Taylor (2012). Verb Order, Object Position and Information Status in Old English. York Papers in Linguistics 2, 29-52. Vezzosi, L. (1998). La sintassi della subordinazione in anglosassone. Perugia: U/PGE.