

# German Verb-First Conditionals as Unintegrated Clauses – A Case Study in Converging Synchronic and Diachronic Evidence

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## 1 Introduction and hypothesis

According to standard assumptions, German V1 conditionals – just like canonical *wenn* ‘if’-clauses with verb-end (VE) order – are analysed as embedded clauses occupying the prefields (= SpecC) of their apodosis clauses (e.g. König and van der Auwera 1988):

- (1) [<sub>CP</sub> *Glaubt man den Plakaten* [<sub>C</sub> [<sub>C</sub> *jagt<sub>j</sub>*] [<sub>IP</sub> *ein*  
believes one the placards chases one  
*Großereignis das nächste t<sub>j</sub> ]]] (TüBa-D/Z, n° 3802)  
mega-event the next  
‘If one trusts the placards, one mega-event is chasing the other.’*

By contrast, we will defend an unorthodox hypothesis, namely that (i) the V1 conditional is an unintegrated clause and (ii) its apodosis is a declarative V1 clause. To this end, we bring together synchronic data from Present-Day German – introspective data and corpus data from COSMAS, *Tübinger Baumbank* and TIGER – and data from historical text corpora (collections of Old, Middle and (Early) New High German prose texts). While the synchronic and diachronic data provide new insights by themselves, it is their combination that crucially corroborates our analysis.

## 2 Synchronic Data: Present-Day German

Regarding (i), conditional V1 clauses do not meet the diagnostic criteria for syntactic embedding in Reis (1997). In contrast to the canonical conditional *wenn* ‘if’-clauses, V1 conditionals are hardly attested in postposed position in our corpora and they hardly occur with correlative *d*-phrases in the apodosis (2)-(3). Also, binding into the

apodosis is not possible (4). Moreover, verb-first conditionals cannot occur in the scope of left-peripheral focus particles such as *sogar* ‘even’ and *nur* ‘only’ (5). Concerning focus-background structure, constructions with V1 conditionals exhibit paratactic properties. Furthermore, in question-answer pairs V1 conditionals cannot figure in elliptical constructions with omitted apodosis clauses (Reis 2000: 217). (For a different account that we will refute, see Iatridou and Embick 1993.)

- (2) ? [*Hab ich was erreicht,*] **dann** *bin ich glücklich.*  
 have I something achieved then am I happy  
 ‘If I have achieved something, I am happy.’
- (3) \* **Dann** *habe ich was erreicht,* [*bin ich glücklich.*]  
 then have I something achieved am I happy  
 ‘I am happy if I have achieved something.’
- (4) \* [*Hat er<sub>i</sub> was erreicht,*] *ist jeder<sub>i</sub> glücklich.*  
 has he something achieved is everybody happy  
 ‘Everybody is happy if he has achieved something.’
- (5) [(*\*Sogar/ \*Nur*) *habe ich was erreicht*] *bin ich glücklich.*  
 even/only have I something achieved am I happy.  
 ‘Even/Only if I have achieved something, I am happy.’

Regarding (ii), we will demonstrate that besides the well-known narrative V1 declaratives, V1 order in non-narrative declaratives is more wide-spread than commonly assumed: There exist, for example, V1 declaratives with a causal reading containing the affirmative particle *doch* ‘yet’ (6) or enumerative V1 conditionals containing the verb *bleiben* ‘to remain’ (7) (Önnerfors 1997). Thus the assumption that the apodosis of a V1 conditional is a further instance of such a non-narrative type of V1 declarative has some synchronic support.

- (6) (*Der Bau des Polders ist ungewiss,*) *steht ihm*  
 the construction of-the-polder is uncertain stands it  
*doch der Widerstand der Anwohner gegenüber.*  
 yet the opposition of-the residents opposite  
 ‘The building of the polder is uncertain since it faces the resistance of the residents.’
- (7) (*Soviel zu diesem Argument*). *Bleibt nachzutragen, dass ...*  
 so-much to this argument remains to-supplement that  
 ‘So much for this argument. It remains to add that ...’ (Önnerfors 1997)

### 3 Diachronic Data

Our diachronic data provide further evidence for the claim that (i) V1 conditionals have always been unintegrated clauses and that (ii) their apodosis clauses are V1 declaratives: As to (i), in Middle High German the main clauses after preposed canonical adverbial clauses (AdvCs) and the apodosis clauses after V1 conditionals

did not show surface V1 order as in modern German, but V2 order (8). In other words, neither type of AdvCs occurred in the prefields of their main/apodosis clauses. Likewise, in complex clauses in which the matrix/apodosis clauses were dependent clauses themselves, both types of adverbial clauses occurred to the left of the complementizer (AdvC–COMP) (9). The examples from the Prose Lancelot illustrate this for V1 conditionals, the same types of examples are abundantly attested with canonical VE clauses introduced by adverbial subordinators.

(8) [*wil er icht darwiedder sprechen*], *ich wil es ware machen ...*  
 wants he not it-against speak I want it true make  
 ‘If he does not want to speak against it, I will make it true ...’ (ProLa 36,2)

(9) (*sie*) *hett angst*, [*begriff er sie*], *das er ir laster mocht thun*,  
 she had fear caught he her that he her disgrace might do  
 ‘She was afraid that he might put her to disgrace if he got hold of her.’

(ProLa 52,19)

In late Middle High German and earlier Early Modern High German (between 1300-1500), the canonical VE AdvCs are increasingly attested in the position directly to the left of the finite verb in the main clause (AdvC–V<sub>fin</sub>), while the old AdvC–XP–V<sub>fin</sub>- and AdvC–COMP orders are on the decline. As argued in Axel (2002), these three developments and other changes in the syntactic distribution of AdvCs and in the inventory of adverbial subordinators show that VE AdvCs have gained the status of syntactically embedded clauses. In the new AdvC–V<sub>fin</sub>-order, the AdvC thus occurs in the prefield of the main clause.

The V1 conditionals, however, do not take part in any of these developments. Crucially, V1 conditionals do not participate in the general rise of the AdvC–V<sub>fin</sub>-order. With V1 conditionals, the old AdvC–XP–V<sub>fin</sub>-order also gradually decreases in frequency during the late Middle and Early New High German periods; yet it is not pushed back by the AdvC–V<sub>fin</sub>-order, but by the correlative construction, in which the resumptive adverb *so* occurs in the prefield of the apodosis. With V1 conditionals, the AdvC–V<sub>fin</sub>-construction did not develop until the 17<sup>th</sup> (!) century:

(10) [*wollen wir derselben furchtbarlich genießen*], *müssen wir uns nicht*  
 want we the-one terribly enjoy must we us not  
*ausfüllen* ([1631], J. Gerhard: Postilla Salomonaea 2,375)

fulfil

‘If we really want to enjoy these, we do not need to be fully occupied.’

There is thus a considerable delay compared to the rise of the AdvC–V<sub>fin</sub>-construction with canonical adverbial clauses, which has largely been completed by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This strongly suggests that these two developments are not reflexes of the same underlying phenomenon. This conclusion can be strengthened with respect to (ii) by showing that the late rise of AdvC–V<sub>fin</sub> with V1 conditionals is the result of an independent development, namely the general increase of V1 order in root declaratives as in (11) (vs. König and van der Auwera 1988). In Middle High German V1 declaratives are extremely rare, they only begin to rise after

the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century – first with verbs of saying in *inquit formulae*, later also with dynamic verbs in narrative contexts. Non-narrative types of V1 declaratives like (6)-(7) above are first sporadically attested in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and become more frequent in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

- (11) *Stehet doch im Vatter vnser nit ein ander wort*  
stands yet in Lord's Prayer not an other word  
'since in the Lord's Prayer there does not occur another word.'

([1578], Veit Dietrich 73)

We shall argue that the innovation of non-narrative V1 declaratives also spread over to the apodosis clauses of the syntactically unintegrated V1 conditionals. Thus, in contrast to the canonical VE adverbial clauses, the unintegrated status of V1 conditionals has been diachronically stable, i.e. these clauses have not gained access to the apodosis prefield position. What has changed pertains to the syntax of the apodosis only, namely the innovation of (non-narrative) declarative V1 order.

To conclude, in our case study we draw on data from synchrony as well as diachrony – still seemingly distant fields under a generative perspective – showing that they provide converging evidence for the unintegrated status of V1 conditionals and also for the existence of V1 apodosis clauses in present-day German. In this vein, our paper can be read as a plea for systematically using diachronic developments as evidence for synchronic analyses alongside (properly) synchronic data not only in grammaticalization theory but also in a modular theory of grammar.

## References

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