

Auxiliary drop as subordination marking*

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1. Auxiliary ellipses in Early Modern German

1.1 The empirical domain

This paper is concerned with the auxiliary ellipses in Early Modern German, the stage of German language history stretching between 1350 and 1650 A.C. These comprise the “afinite construction” (Ebert et al. 1993) in embedded clauses as well as what can be called non-parallel coordination ellipses of finite auxiliaries. These two types of auxiliary drop emerge towards the end of the 15th century (cf. e.g. Biener 1925) and spread widely throughout the 16th and 17th centuries before they disappear in the 18th century.

The hallmark of these constructions is that the finite auxiliary is omitted from a periphrastic verb form, that is, perfect (*haben/sein* ‘have/be’ + past participle), passive (*sein/werden* ‘be/become’ + passive participle), future (*werden* ‘be(come)’ + infinitive) and constructions with *haben/sein* ‘have/be’ + *zu* ‘to’-infinitive. Furthermore, copulae and, rarely, modal verbs can be dropped.

The afinite construction is the omission of a finite auxiliary from a dependent clause. Especially in adjunct clauses (cf. (1)) and relative clauses, this phenomenon occurs frequently in the period in question.

- (1) Als nun die Storcken ausgelacht [], gerahtschlagt
when now the storks finished.laughing [had] deliberated
sich Gargantua mit seim Hofgesind was zu thun sey
REFL Gargantua with his servants what to do be.SUBJ
‘When the storks had at last finished laughing, Gargantua deliberated
with his servants what to do.’ (Fischart (1590; 302,22–23))

In addition to the afinite construction, there are ellipses in coordinations distinct from regular conjunction reductions such as Gapping. Schröder (1985) calls them ‘ungrammatical’ coordination ellipses because they lack the typical parallelism of conjunction reductions, i.e. the overt auxiliary in one conjunct can be different from the covert one(s) in subject agreement, tense, lexical item, etc. These non-parallel coordination ellipses are found in both main (2) and embedded (3) clauses. It is also possible that the auxiliaries in all conjuncts are covert.

- (2) *welcher ein BurgersKind von Memmingen / vnd zu Straßburg*
who a citizen.child of Memmingen and at Strassburg
war / auch hernacher Doctor der H. Schrifft worden
was also afterwards doctor the.GEN holy bible become
 [] / *vnd zu Vlm gelehret []*
[is] and at Ulm taught [has]
 ‘who was a citizen of Memmingen and Strassburg (and) also later became a theologist and taught in Ulm’ (Schorer (1660; B15,04–06))
- (3) *vnd die drey gebre^cder sein auf solch ersu^chen khumen /*
and the three brothers are on such request come
vn [] das gepiet zwischen einander außgetailt
and [have] the area among eachother divided
 ‘On such request, the three brothers came and divided the land among them’ (Herberstein (1558;2^v,34–35))

1.2 A brief note on the licensing conditions

As argued in Breitbarth (2004), the auxiliary drop in embedded clauses is licensed and recovered by the C/T-system. The C node ensures the temporal licensing by binding the ‘speech time’, that is in an embedded clause, the time the event time is ordered with respect to (Enç 1987, Butler 2004). C, by virtue of being φ -complete, always selects a φ -complete T (Chomsky 2001). A φ -complete T allows a subject in its Spec which values T’s φ -features, so they do not have to be expressed overtly on T (φ -features are [–int] on T but [+int] on D).¹

Given these assumptions, there are two problems with accounting for the phenomena described in 1.1. The first is that even when the development reaches its climax between 1600 and 1650, there is still an apparent *optionality*, as the peak frequency of the auxiliary drop in relative and adjunct clauses remains around 67.5% and around 58% in complement clauses, as shown in table (4).²

(4)

| | 1450–1500 | 1500–1550 | 1550–1600 | 1600–1650 | 1650–1700 | 1700–1800 |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| adjunct clauses | 3.9 | 17.0 | 54.7 | 67.5 | 64.7 | 14.9 |
| relative clauses | 2.1 | 18.3 | 48.5 | 67.6 | 60.4 | 30.5 |
| complement cls. | 4.1 | 14.4 | 30.6 | 58.1 | 51.2 | 30.5 |

The second problem are the cases of non-parallel auxiliary drop in coordinations, which in case of main clauses as in (3) cannot explained in terms of the licensing mechanism just outlined. The present paper proposes an answer to both questions.

2. Subordination and assertion

2.1 Finiteness and assertion

In a number of publications, Klein argues that the (semantic) function of finiteness is to make a validity claim (an assertion, AST) about the verbal situation which holds at the topic time TT of the utterance, achieved by a sentential operator FIN*(AST,TT) (Klein 1994, 1998, forthcoming). However, according to Klein (1998, forthcoming), the FIN operator lacks the assertion component AST in embedded clauses. Similarly, according to Cristofaro (2002, 2003), the common trait of subordinated clauses cross-linguistically is that they lack an ‘autonomous profile’ because they lack ‘assertiveness’.

At this point, I would like to make a cautionary remark. In the terminology adopted here, ‘assertion’ is not equal to the ‘main information’ conveyed by an utterance. For example, typical format of newspaper reports in EMG (Demske-Neumann 1990) is “We receive the information that X”, followed by a sequence of embedded clauses containing the reported news.

- (5) Bey Zumachung diß kompt ein/ das der Stendt
at closing this.GEN comes in that the.GEN states
 Volck mit den Bucheimischen Reutern einen starcken
people with the Bohemian knights a strong
 Scharmu*tzel gethan []/ vnd die Bucheimischen so vbermannet
skirmish done [has] und the Bohemians thus overpowered
 gewesen []/ vber 100. der andere aber/ welche eine
been [are] more.than 100 others however who a
 guten Vorteil gehabt [] gar wenig geblieben
good advantage had [have] hardly little remained

[_] / von Bucheim Jhr Ko^en: May: wieder solchen
[are] *from Bohemia to.His Royal Majesty against such*
Gewalt vmb starcke Hu^elff zugeschrieben [_]
violence for strong help to.written [have]
'At closing this [issue of the newspaper] we receive the report that the
army of the States had a fierce battle with the Bohemian knights and
that the Bohemians have been overpowered; of more than a hundred
others however who had a good advantage, hardly any survived [and]
wrote from Bohemia to His Royal Majesty for powerful help against
such violence.'
(Aviso (1609; 3/4,17–22))

We can state that embedding a proposition means to relativise its 'assertive power', because it is relativising the validity claim which according to Klein is made by a finite declarative main clause — "it is reported that X is the case" is clearly less assertive than "X is the case".

Having stated this, we now examine whether there is a relation between the absence of finite morphology and the absence of an assertion. As exemplified by (5), in the often long sequence of embedded clauses in a typical EMG newspaper report, the auxiliaries are more often dropped than overt, suggesting such a connection. In the next section, we will look at a different dimension of morphological finiteness marking and argue that there is actually a cross-linguistically well-attested principle behind this.

2.2 Degrees of spatio-temporal anchoring

Schrodt (1980) and Donhauser (1986) argue that different verb forms express different degrees of 'actualisation' of the verbal event, depending on the number of finiteness categories they encode. These finiteness categories are the ones associated with the *verbum finitum* in the Latin grammar tradition: Tense, Mood, Aspect, Person and Number (Lühr 1998). According to Schrodt and Donhauser, indicative mood expresses the highest degree of 'actualisation' because it contains the highest number of finiteness-features and infinitives express the lowest degree.³ We can equate the concept of 'actualisation' with the 'spatio-temporal anchoring' of the verbal event, that is, the degree of its location and actuality in the world.

(6)

| form | content | degree of anchoring |
|-------------|---|---------------------|
| infinitive | semanteme + categorial feature 'verb' | non-anchored |
| participle | semanteme + 'verb' + aspect | minimally anchored |
| imperative | semanteme + 'verb' + aspect + number | partially anchored |
| subjunctive | semanteme + 'verb' + aspect + number + person | partially anchored |
| indicative | semanteme + 'verb' + aspect + number + person + tense | fully anchored |

Interestingly, many languages use verb forms that are somewhere higher on the hierarchy in (6) in subordinate clauses, e.g. gerunds or participles or subjunctive mood. Cross-linguistically, subordinate clauses tend to express fewer finiteness distinctions (TMAPN) than independent clauses. This is a strategy of subordination marking called *deranking*, cf. Cristofaro (2003: 54ff). The following two sentences exemplify this. In Sinhalese, according to Matzel (1987: 47), there can only be one finite verb form in a sentence, the predicate of the main clause. All verbs of dependent clauses must be realised as participles (cf. (7)). The Italian example (Cristofaro 2003: 133) demonstrates the use of a special morphology, subjunctive mood, in subordinate clauses (cf. (8)).

- (7) lamayā liyumak liyalā nidā-gannavā
the.boy a.letter having.written sleep took
 'After having written/he had written a letter, the boy went to bed.'

- (8) Pens-a che io sia molt-o brav-a
think.PRES.3SG that I be.PRES.SUBJN.1SG very smart
 'He thinks that I am very smart'⁴

Summing up, the verb form in subordinate clauses has a cross-linguistic tendency to express less finiteness features. We have to wonder why that would be such a common strategy. An independent clause is usually anchored to the speech time and generally the here and now of the speaker, while subordinate clauses are anchored in relation to their embedding context. The expression of less 'finite' categories thus seems to correlate with a lesser degree of spatio-temporal anchoring, much in line with (6).

2.3 Tying things together

Why should there be a connection between the assertiveness of a clause, the overt expression of finiteness categories and spatio-temporal anchoring of a verbal event?

Lasser (1997, ch.3) makes a distinction between M(orphological) and S(ematic) finiteness, where M-finiteness is the term for the language-specific overt means of expressing the abstract concept of finiteness, S-finiteness (Tense, Aspect, Mood, and (Klein's) Assertion). S-finiteness can be regarded as a property of the clausal left periphery, assuming a representation of functional heads of the C-domain as proposed by Rizzi (1997). His FinP, the lowest of the sequence of functional heads making up the split CP, has the function of linking a proposition to the C-System whose highest head, ForceP, in turn links the clause to its external context. This is what we have called *anchoring* above. The C-system thus performs the function of anchoring a clause to a higher, embedding clause or in discourse.

Remember that Klein (e.g. 1998) regards (S-)finiteness as an operator which has to take scope over the proposition (the non-finite part of the clause). Let us assume that this operator is the semantic correlate of the functional head Fin in syntax.⁵ Note that the Germanic verb-second (V2) property of main clauses can be interpreted as movement to Fin, thereby establishing the link between main clauses expressing an assertion and subordinate clauses not doing so. Gärtner (2001) provides evidence from V2-relative clauses supporting a relation between V2 and assertion. V2 in relative clauses makes their backgrounding in the discourse impossible. Verb placement in Germanic thus seems to be a further deranking strategy, expressing the lack of assertion in embedded clauses, on a par with the use of participles in Sinhalese or of subjunctive mood in Italian referred to above.

3. Auxiliary drop as a subordination marker

In older stages of German, subjunctive mood (*Konjunktiv*) was much more frequently used as a formal mark of embedding than in the modern language (cf. Lühr 1985). In EMG, this strategy of marking subordinate clauses is replaced by both the establishment of sentence-final verb placement (Lühr 1985) and the emergence of auxiliary drop (cf. Admoni 1967). Dropping the auxiliary means less overt expression of finiteness categories in a clause, and a non-finite verb from higher up in the hierarchy in (6) like a participle or infinitive is staying behind. Therefore, the claim I would like to make here is that the afinite construction, that is, the ellipsis of finite auxiliaries in embedded clauses, developed as a marker of subordination expressing a lesser degree of spatio-temporal anchoring or actuality similar to subjunctive mood.

In EMG, there were a number of sentence-initial elements that were ambiguous between being subordinating complementisers and adverbs occupying the *Vorfeld* in V2 main clauses, including *da* 'there, then', *so* 'thus, who, which', and pronominal adverbs, formed by *da* + preposition. According to Lühr (1985), it is the position of the finite verb that decides the status of the initial element (adverb vs. complementiser). In EMG, pronominal adverbs were frequently used introducing so-called continuative relative clauses, adverbial relative clauses continuing and expanding a preceding clause.⁶ Demske-Neumann (1990) finds in her corpus of EMG newspapers that 85% of the continuative relative clauses introduced by a pronominal adverb in the function of a relative pronoun are in fact auxiliaryless. That means that the lack of the finite auxiliary makes clear if one is dealing with a subordinate or an independent clause. The two following examples show how verb placement and auxiliary drop determine the status of the clause as a main or relative clause, respectively.

- (9) 654. Fiel Feuer vom Himmel/ **darauff** kam ein Sterbent/
 654 *fell fire from sky there.after came a dying*
 'In 654, fire fell from the sky. **Consequently** started a period in which many died.'
 (Schorer (1660; C1,20))
- (10) **Darumb** ich aich nit allain von ho^erensagen/ bericht [_]
therefore I you not only from hearsay report [have]
thuen wo^ellen
do want.IPP
 '... **because of which** I did not want you to report only based on hearsay'
 (Herberstein (1557; 1^r,25–26))

The question is now if this explanation can be extended to the non-parallel coordination ellipses of finite auxiliaries in embedded and especially in main clauses as well. I would like to claim that this is indeed the case. It has often been noted in the literature that not all coordinations are symmetric (for German, cf. e.g. Höhle 1990, Büring & Hartmann 1998). Rather, while the conjuncts are still syntactically/formally parallel, they show signs of dependency between them. The following is an example of what Foley & Van Valin (1984:242) call *cosubordination*.⁷ An important feature is that the order of the conjuncts cannot be reversed.

- (11) a. She fell on the stairs and broke a leg.
 b. *She broke a leg and fell on the stairs.

88% of the non-parallel auxiliary ellipses in my corpus have this property. Take example (3) from above, repeated here.

- (3) a. vnd die drey gebrüder sein auf solch ersuchen khumen/ vn [] das
gepiet zwischen einander außgetailt
b. *vnd die drey gebrüder [haben] das gepiet zwischen einander
außgetailt/ vn sein auf solch ersuchen khumen

Like clausal subordination, this kind of temporal or causal dependency between two events is in some languages marked by less finiteness morphology, as in the following example from Italian, using a gerund in the second conjunct (from Cristofaro 2003: 59).

- (12) È uscita da casa, prendendo
AUX.PRES.IND.3SG go.out.PAST.PTCP.FEM from home take.GER
poi l'autobus
then the.bus
'She left home and then took the bus'

52.2% of all non-parallel auxiliary ellipses in coordinations are such that there is no auxiliary overt in any of the conjuncts, cf. (13). They are mostly embedded clauses, so the formal licensing mechanism mentioned in section 1.2 applies already.

- (13) Wie aber sy die Moabiter am morgē fruē
when however they the Moabitans in.the morning early
vfbrochē/ vn- die Son- vfgangen [] vnd vff das wasser/
left and the sun risen [is] and on the water
[...] geschinē []/ habind sy das wasser für bluot angesahe/
shone [has] have they the water for blood taken
'When however the Moabitans left early in the morning and the sun went up and shone on the water, they believed the water was blood.'
(Lavater (1578; 19^v, 19–23))

But given that the ellipsis is clearly optional in EMG, I propose that dropping the auxiliary is a strategy of pragmatically backgrounding a proposition made in a clause. This analysis follows from the fact that the ellipsis decreases the number of overtly expressed finiteness features in a clause, thereby expressing the lack of assertion and a lesser degree of spatio-temporal anchoring, as established above.

The question is why a language would develop such an extra tool of marking clauses as subordinate if there is already one strategy for doing so, namely

the verb placement. It can be shown that the development of the EMG auxiliary ellipses is linked not only to parametric changes in the underlying grammar(s) (of its speakers), but also to changes in language use. The parametric changes created the environment which made more and deeper embedding possible. It was then a stylistic choice to make use of this possibility. The resulting increase in text complexity after 1550 seems to have created a need for a stronger means of foreground-background structuring; cf. also Admoni (1967). The disappearance of the auxiliary ellipses of the EMG type after 1700 (in older Modern German) seems to correlate with a reduction of the degree and the depth of clausal embedding. As can be seen in table (14), the frequency of embedded clauses as compared to main clauses increases steadily between 1450 and 1650. At the same time, the ratio of embedded clauses of degree one with respect to more deeply embedded clauses decreases. Both numbers mean that there is more and deeper embedding. Mapping the average of the frequencies of auxiliary drop in embedded clauses (cf. table (4)) against these figures, we see a temporal coincidence of the development of the *afinite* construction and the development of the complexity of textual construal.

(14)

| | 1450–1500 | 1500–1550 | 1550–1600 | 1600–1650 | 1650–1700 | 1700–1800 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| emb. cls. | 43.9 | 45.9 | 62.9 | 69.2 | 54.6 | 40.9 |
| emb. cls. deg-1 | 80.7 | 75.1 | 63.8 | 57.1 | 69.0 | 86.1 |
| aux drop | 3.5 | 16.3 | 43.0 | 61.8 | 57.2 | 16.6 |

Of course, temporal coincidence alone is not indicative of a causal relationship. But given our argument above that there is in fact a correlation between overt marking of finiteness categories and subordination, this coincidence is quite suggestive.

Let us return to the two questions formulated in Section 1.2. With respect to the first, why there is never a 100% replacement of embedded clauses with overt auxiliaries despite their being formally licensed, but an apparent optionality, I would like to propose that it is a stylistic choice; an auxiliary is dropped to mark a clause as more subordinate compared to another one. As for the question of how to account for the non-parallel auxiliary ellipses in coordinations, I argued that these are in fact not cases of coordination, but asymmetric coordination or cosubordination, that is, one of the clauses is really dependent on the other. Again, the ellipsis of the auxiliary is used to structure the events described according to their degree of dependency on each other.

4. Concluding Remarks

In the present paper, I have claimed that the auxiliary ellipses in EMG develop as a formal marker of subordination, following a cross-linguistically widely attested strategy of deranking subordinate clauses (formally distinguishing them from independent clauses) by expressing fewer finiteness categories or none on the subordinate verb form. The function of this auxiliary drop was argued to be to pragmatically background a proposition.

Notes

* I am grateful to professor Karin Donhauser at the Humboldt University Berlin for having inspired me to look into this functional aspect of EMG aux drop and to the audience at the TiN-dag 2005 for their very helpful questions and suggestions.

1. The account is similar, but not identical to Julien's (2002) for Swedish finite *ha*-omission in embedded clauses.

2. These figures are the average frequencies found in five text portions (of between 6,000 and 10,000 words each) per 50-year period (100 years in case of the 18th century).

3. The table in (5) is a combination of the hierarchies given by Schrodtt (1980) and Donhauser (1986). The 'partial actualisation' theory goes back to the work of Wunderli (1970) on the Middle French *subjonctif*.

4. The abbreviations are Cristofaro's; PRES = present tense, SUBJN = subjunctive.

5. Klein (1998) explicitly does not subscribe to a specific theory concerning the levels of representation in grammar. His LEVEL*, at which FIN is operative, is however very similar to LF.

6. This is no longer possible in the present-day language. Pronominal adverbs can nowadays only be used in the Vorfeld of a V2 clause.

7. Their typology of clause-linkage types is based on the two parameters of syntactic embedding and semantic/pragmatic dependency and looks as follows:

coordination = [–dependent, –embedded],

subordination = [+dependent, +embedded],

cosubordination = [+dependent, –embedded].

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