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A pronoun, a negative marker and a modal particle - what it takes to mark exceptive clauses in Middle Low German, Middle Dutch and Middle High German

Exceptive clauses are adverbial clauses expressing an exception to a situation or stipulation in the main clause (Geis 1973). While, in modern Germanic languages, they are introduced by frozen connectors like German *es sei denn* ('it be DENNE') or complementizers like Dutch *tenzij* (< 't en zij 'it not be') or English *unless*, there was no consistent marking in older Continental West Germanic languages. In my talk, I will present data from Middle Dutch (MD), Middle High German (MHG) and Middle Low German (MLG), where exceptive adverbial clauses appear as subjunctive V2-clauses without any complementizer. Mostly, these exceptives appear as a monoclausal structure, such as examples 1 and 2. In 99% of the cases, the adverbial clause follows the associate clause and is introduced by a non-salient pronoun (1 as well as 2). Example 1 also shows the most frequent marker for exceptives: the preverbal clitic *ne*, which previously expressed sentential negation in Old Saxon (OS) and Old High German (OHG). MHG, MLG and MD express sentential negation bipartite (*ne*=V...*nicht*) or with the adverbial *nicht* alone.

- (1) *(dhe scal ome sin wulle loen gheuen) he ne hebbe it uerboret mit bosheit*
DEM shall him his demanded wage give he NEG have.SUBJ it forfeited with mischief
'who shall give him his demanded wage, unless he has forfeited it with mischief.'
(Westphalian:

1492)

Interestingly, under Upper German influence, the verb-second structure also appears with the modal particle *denne* in the position immediately following the finite verb (2). Both *ne* and *denne* can appear in the same clause. There are examples from MHG where neither of the two markers is used and only the pronoun and subjunctive on the verb mark the dependent relation between main and exceptive clause.

- (2) *(daz tier mag niht lang beleiben) ez hab denne den zagel oder den sterz in dem wazzer*
the animal wants not long stay, it has DENNE the tail or tail in the water
'the animal won't stay long, unless it has its tail or tail in the water'
(Konrad von Megenberg, Buch der Natur: 1477)

Less frequently, exceptives in the languages under investigation are introduced by a dummy-matrix clause *it ne si/wari (denne)* ('it NE be/were') (3), which later on grammaticalizes towards Modern Dutch *tenzij* and Modern German *es sei denn*. I refer to those clauses as biclausal exceptives.

- (3) *(der mir aldaz golt wage uz arabisken richen)*
DEM me all-that gold weigh from Arabic realms
iz ne si daz mir di fursten geswichen
it ne be.SBJV that me the sovereigns leave
'Who weighs a the gold from Arabic realms unless the sovereigns renounce me'
(The Song of Roland, around 1200)

Table 1 gives an overview of the possible exceptive constructions which follow the associated clause, where XP can be any noun phrase but is in 99% of the cases a prosodically non-salient pronoun.

Monoclausal constructions

MLG	[XP ne=V.Subj (denne)...]
MHG	[XP (ne)=V.Subj (denne)...]
MD	[XP ne=V.Subj...]

Biclausal constructions

MLG	[it ne were (denne)] [dat XP V.Subj...]
MHG	[ez (ne) were (denne)] [dat XP V.Subj...]
MD	[het/ø ne ware] [dat XP V.Subj...]

Table 1: Forms of exceptive adverbial clauses in MLG, MHG and MD

The question I want to discuss is what exactly marks the exceptive relation and how this relation can be formally modelled as (i) the preverbal clitic and the modal particle can but do not necessarily have to appear and (ii) there seems to be a need for a pronoun referring back to an entity or situation in the previous discourse in preverbal position. In older Germanic languages, main clauses with an initial adverbial protasis show resumptive pronouns or adverbials (Thim-Mabrey 1987; Axel 2002; Breitbarth 2017). Interestingly, in exceptives the resumptive pronoun appears in the semantically dependent clause. Regarding the preverbal clitic and the modal particle, I suggest that they are markers of an exceptive operator in a discourse projection linking the two clauses (Cinque 2008).

Furthermore, I will address the influence of written/spoken language for the construction. Tophinke (2012) and Merten (2015) account for MLG exceptives as syntactic elaboration strategies in the course of the development of a written legal language, parallel to other (conditional) constructions such as *were dat sake* ('be.SBJV that the case'). While this seems reasonable for the biclausal constructions, monoclausal exceptives, which are much more frequent in the languages under investigation, cannot be analyzed as syntactically elaborated written language. I argue that resumption and the use of the discourse markers *ne* and *denne* are characteristic for oral communication.

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