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## WORD ORDER STRATEGIES IN THE OLD HIGH GERMAN NEGATIVE SENTENCE

T. M. Horodilova\*

*This paper presents a description of word order patterns in Old High German with special emphasis given to the negative constructions. The Old Germanic syntax exhibits a relatively high variety in ordering constituents in the surface sentence structure, derived from the SOV-, SVO- and VSO-patterns. The study highlights the peculiarities of OHG word order with its verb-first, verb-second, and verb-third/last position of the finite verb regarding the conditions of such syntactic arrangement. The special attention is paid to the negative clauses, with the emphatically charged NEG-clitic in the proposition to the foregrounded finite verb. Sentence negation strategies in OHG (eighth-eleventh century) that display early signs of grammaticalization have been presented in the context of the available linguistic triggers, i.e., structural pressure and discourse specific to requirements of the texts under consideration. The paper provides the data-based analysis of NEG V1 patterns, retrieved from the OHG sources, aiming to show the role of the negative clitic in the word order arrangement. We assume that it was the interaction between the specific samples of the Old High German discourse and grammar that brought about the foregrounding of the negated head-initial VP. The discourse prose is regarded as a special case in the overall bulk of texts in the religious prose. The material shows that preposed negative clitic is placed separately or merged with the finite verb. The last option is represented rather strong in the negative verb-initial sentences. It is claimed that negation itself is an influential factor of the verb-first word order tightly related to the discourse peculiarities, shaped by the features of the religious texts of the mentioned period.*

**Keywords:** word order, sentence negation, V1, V2, V3/Ve, Old Germanic sentence, Old High German, discourse.

\* Postgraduate student (Philology)  
Lecturer at the Department of Germanic Philology  
(Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University)  
t.horodilova@kubg.edu.ua  
ORCID: 0000-0002-3500-9430

## СТРАТЕГІЇ ПОРЯДКУ СЛІВ У ДАВНЬОВЕРХНЬОНІМЕЦЬКОМУ ЗАПЕРЕЧНОМУ РЕЧЕННІ

Городілова Т. М.

У статті представлено основні моделі порядку слів у давньоверхньонімецькій мові, увагу зосереджено на заперечних конструкціях. Давньогерманський синтаксис демонструє відносно високу варіативність у розташуванні конститuentів поверхневої структури речень, похідних від SOV-, SVO- та VSO-моделей. Дослідження висвітлює особливості порядку слів у давньоверхньонімецькому періоді з розміщенням дієслова в ініціальній, другій та кінцевій позиціях з урахуванням умов, що сприяли такій організації конститuentів. Особливу увагу приділено заперечним реченням, які ілюструють об'єднання маркерів заперечення з дієсловом в ініціальній позиції, що розглядається як емпатична функція. Представлено стратегії розвитку реченнєвого заперечення в давньоверхньонімецькій мові (VIII–XI ст.) на тлі перших ознак процесу граматикалізації від превербальної до поствербальної заперечної частки включно з підсилювальними елементами. Останнє свідчить про такі чинники змін у структурі реченнєвого заперечення, як тиск системи й залежність від жанрових особливостей аналізованих текстів. У статті подано аналіз моделі заперечення Neg V1 на основі даних, вилучених із пам'яток давньоверхньонімецького періоду, що показує вплив заперечного клітика на порядок слів. Чинники, які сприяли розміщенню дієслова в початковій позиції в реченні, значною мірою зумовлені взаємозв'язком типу дискурсу та граматики. Прозовий дискурс розглядаємо як окремий випадок у загальній масі текстів релігійного характеру. Здійснений аналіз показує розміщення превербальної заперечної частки окремо або об'єднаної з особовим дієсловом, що широко представлено в заперечних реченнях із дієсловом в ініціальній позиції. Стверджено, що синтаксис заперечення – один із чинників впливу на модель порядку слів V1, тісно пов'язаний з особливостями дискурсу релігійних текстів досліджуваного періоду.

**Ключові слова:** порядок слів, реченнєве заперечення, дієслово в ініціальній позиції, дієслово в другій позиції, дієслово в кінцевій позиції, давньогерманське речення, давньоверхньонімецька, дискурс.

**Introduction.** Before embarking on the analysis, we shall give a short overview of the Old Germanic syntax, namely the circumstances, in which the Old Germanic sentence has been developed. It is necessary to take into consideration the time scale and the heterogeneity of the language. The Old High German (750-1050 AD) spans three centuries and during this period the phonology, the morphology and the lexis underwent a number of changes. Opposite to the present-day state the OHG word order was not strict or syntactically fixed and could be altered due to various reasons. Proceeding from the above, among the most triggering ones were e.g., the influence of Latin, especially in translations [41: 330], the formal constraints of poetry, such as metre and alliteration [13: 40; 45: 251], stylistic features in poetry and prose, and the role of discourse with its theme-

rheme order. Thus, the Old High German shows relative variety in word order, but during this period there was tendency to structuring in certain types of sentences [41: 335; 42: 243].

It should be noted that all modern Germanic languages, except English, are usually defined as V2-languages. The English language lost the V2-constraint and gained the status of a language with a verb in the medial position of V3. In particular, in the modern German language the V2-constraint acts in the main sentence. The latter involves movement of the finite verb to the second position if any constituent of the sentence, i.e., temporal adverbs, objects etc., is placed in the initial position of the sentence [1: 117].

In Germanic studies it is generally held that Old High German declarative sentences display a variety of word order patterns, i.e., SOV, VSO [37: 366], [27:

238-242]. The initial position of the finite verb was not uncommon: it is not limited to a small group of verbs, but its number decreases in later Old High German [12: 208]. Closely linked to the V1-order are negative sentences, where a negative clitic is either attached to the finite verb or functions as a separate particle in the clause.

**Theoretical background.** Historical linguistics studies over the past decades have provided important information on the issue of word order in the Germanic languages. Previous research provided by Otto Behaghel [5] has established the classical tradition in the word order paradigm of Old Germanic syntax. The author differentiates between traditional unmarked orders and special marked orders, which carry emotions. The theoretical stance of P. Kiparsky [26] envisages the convergence from OV to VO word order in the Germanic languages in language contact, grammaticalization, and harmonization of the direction of complementation, see also I. Bunyatova [1]. The structure of subordinate clauses as well as evolution of subordination has been analyzed by D. Wunder [47], considering the significant role of the language of poetry. Moreover, the investigations of the structure and word order in different sentence types, as well as semantic functions of subordinate sentences with VP-final have been highlighted in O. W. Robinson [35], O. Tuhai [2]. A profound generative study of the OHG syntax has been provided by K. Axel [4], where the author dwells on various aspects of the left sentence periphery in the oldest attested stage of the German language, with special attention to the origins of the verb-second origin. The mechanisms of the negative pattern grammaticalization in the course of the German language history have been revealed in O. Jespersen [25], whose contribution to the problem under consideration remains no less valuable in to-date historical linguistics. Another example of the early German negative

sentence treatment has been provided by K. Donhauser [15], see also A. Jäger [23]. Notwithstanding the representable body of papers devoted to the word order arrangement in the Old Germanic languages, there still remains the issue related to the rise of V2-constraint. In this regard the preverbal negative particle in the preposition to the finite verb is considered as one of the motivating factors for usage of V1-pattern.

**The aim of the paper.** This paper highlights the relationship of word order and negation patterns in development of sentence structure of the Old High German period (750-1050 AD). The object of the research is the word order in the negative sentences of the mentioned period. *The aim of this paper* is to specify the structural changes which took place in the formation of negative sentence word order in Old High German. Achieving the aim of the research involves solving the following tasks: (i) to outline the basic patterns of word order in the Old Germanic languages; (ii) to characterize sentence negation in the syntax of the Old High German period; (iii) to identify the dominant pattern of word order in the negative sentences of Old High German; (iv) to investigate the mechanisms of structural changes in the word order of OHG negative sentences. The material of the research consolidates clauses with negative constructions selected by the method of sampling from the literary sources of the Old High German period. The bulk of chosen texts consists of narrative and poetic samples of *Tatian*, *Isidor*, and *Otfrid*. The extracted data have been analyzed by using a concordance toolkit *AntConc 4.2.0* Laurence Anthony application.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony, Laurence. (2022) AntConc (Version 4.2.0) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available online at <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software> (Accessed on 22/03/2023).

**An outline of word order pattern in Present-Day German.** All present-day Germanic languages, except English, have a common feature: the finite verb takes the second position after the arbitrary initial constituent, that is, the sentences follow the pattern V2. The initial element is represented by a frontal (anterior) phrase in declarative clauses (or a *wh*-phrase in interrogative clauses) [19: 1].

PDG exhibits an asymmetry in word order patterns in main and subordinate clauses: subclauses are verb-final, whereas main clauses have the finite verb in the second position [16: 862-865]. It is necessary to take into consideration that declarative sentences in PDG stick to V2-rule, according to which the finite verb occupies the second position in the sentence, even if it requires a subject-verb inversion, e.g.:

- (1) *Ich **habe** es gelesen* – ‘I have read it’
- (2) *Gestern **habe** ich es gelesen* – ‘Yesterday I have read it’

So, the rule, according to which the finite verb must be in the second position in a declarative sentence, creates a subject-verb word order when the sentence does not begin with an adverb or another element that takes the initial position in the sentence. However, when a sentence begins with an adverb, the verb-subject order follows [11: 47].

**Basic structural patterns of Old Germanic sentence.** The OHG syntax is influenced in many ways by the Latin grammar, especially in the translated texts with more or less strict followings of Latin word order. Nevertheless, a large number of Germanic phenomena can be observed that help determine original OHG sentence structure, above all a relatively large variety of word order, with V2 in the main clause, but no stricter regulation in the subordinate clause [43: 573-574]. The relation between position of the verb and type of the sentence in

Old High German was rather strong, similar to PDG [4: 7].

According to the classical view of Germanic studies Old High German presents three main word order patterns in the main clauses: V1-, V2-, and V3/Ve-structures [7: 34], [5 IV: 30]. Thus, the finite verb often took the second position in the main declarative clause, but V1 pattern has been also attested. In OHG subordinate clauses the position of the finite verb was generally freer than it is realized in PDG [38: 72]. Still, the issue of verb placement in the main declarative clause is both complex and controversial.

The V1-structure is very frequent in early OHG texts and even though V1-clauses are still used in PDG, the OHG patterns exhibit specific grammatical and lexical characteristics which make them different from the modern equivalents [4: 330]. The verb-initial pattern in OHG represents a marked order mainly used in imperatives and sentences with dramatic force [40: 96]. On the one hand, the relatively high percentage of V1-sentences may be exemplified due to the influence of Latin word order [34: 101]. However, in OHG there are examples of declarative main clauses in which the finite verb comes first without a Latin template [17: 152], e.g.:

- (3) ***uuanit** sih kinada diu uuenaga sela* [30: 202, 28]  
wähnt sich Gnade die unglückliche Seele  
The unworthy soul imagines itself in grace’
- (4) ***uuas** thar ouh sum uuitua in thero burgi* [44: 122, 2]  
war da auch gewisse Witwe in dieser Stadt  
‘There was a certain widow in that city’  
Lat. Vidua autem quædam **erat** in ciuitate illa

Moreover, sentence (4) exemplifies V1-pattern contrary to the requirements of the Latin text. The V1 position is found

relatively frequently in sentences which introduce a new subject of speech into the narrative, as the sentence (4) shows, but also when new information is given about the already established discourse referent or a new situation in the discourse occurs [20: 316-317], [21]. So, in OHG the V1-order in declarative clauses had a specific function in the context of information structuring: sentences, in which new information was introduced, could have been marked by verb-initial.

V2-sentences were already productive in the Old High German period [28]. It should be noted that V2-pattern, which was already predominant in OHG, is considered a Germanic innovation, and the final position of the verb in the subordinate clause is therefore usually regarded as a linguistic historical relic [39: 197-198]. As it is shown in (5) and (6), the Old High German texts of the eighth and ninth centuries exhibit the verb in the second position, e.g.:

(5) *Petrus **folgeta** imo tho rumana joh ferno* [33: IV, 17, 18]

Petrus folgte ihm dann in weiter Entfernung

Peter then followed him at a distance'

(6) *Ih **gab** iu bilidi* [44: 156, 3]

Ich gab euch Beispiel

'I gave you an example'

The sentence (5) exemplifies a structure which is considered to be very archaic and independent of Latin [17: 152]. The V2-pattern remains stable in PDG.

In addition to V2 and V1 word order OHG texts also demonstrate declarative main clauses with verbs which come in the right sentence periphery. In some cases, several interpretations are possible: it is sometimes arguable whether there is a verb final or V3 in the sentence. The verb-final in declarative main clauses is a pattern known from the Old Germanic languages and seems particularly archaic [18]. The cases occurred in OHG would then have to be

regarded as the remains of the obsolete word order, e.g.:

(7) *Endi ih inan **chistiftu** in minemu dome, endi in minemu rihhi* [14: IX, 629-630]

Und ich ihn einsetze in meinem Haus, und in meinem Reich

'And establish him in my house and in my kingdom'

Lat.: Er statnam eum in domo mea et in regno meo

(8) *Fona hreue our lucifere ih dhih **chibar*** [14: V, 409]

Von Schoß vor Lucifer ich dir gebar  
'I begot you from the womb before Lucifer'

Lat.: Ex utero ante luciferum genui te

The sentence (7) exemplifies the V3-pattern. It should be taken into consideration that the conjunction *endi* 'and' is not a constituent, so the constituents before the verb are *ih* 'I' and *inan* 'him'. In (8), on the other hand, the verb *chibar* 'hid' is in the fifth position, where it occupies the right sentence bracket, i.e., there is the verb final. As K. Axel [4: 202] points out, there are at least six types of verb-final pattern in OHG characterized by the fact that unstressed constituents like pronouns or adverbs are placed before the verb. In the late OHG (about eleventh century) verb-final pattern becomes rare: notably, there are examples of verb-final in the Middle High German period (1050-1350 AD), when pronouns are involved [5: 15].

**Sentence negation in Old High German.** In the history of the German language negation underwent changes from a preverbal clitic to a free postverbal negation particle. Additionally, on certain language levels (and also in present-day dialects [cf. 36: 41] the multiple negation with negative concord (NC) can be observed. In this case two negative markers appear together in a sentence without cancelling each other (as it might be expected from

the logical point of view), so in the earlier stages of the language development, i.e., OHG and MHG, the German language is treated as a NC-language [24: 201-207]. In OHG the sentence negation is realized through the negative clitic *ni* in the preposition to the finite verb [9: 110], as it is exemplified in (9)-(10):

(9) **Ni uuas** her thaz lioht [44: 13, 4]  
NEG war er das Licht  
'He was not the light'

(10) **dat ero ni uuas** noh ûfhimil [46]  
dass Erde NEG war noch oben  
Himmel  
'the Earth was not, nor was  
heaven above'

Notably neg-marker *ni* due to its phonetic weakness is often cliticized to the finite verb, so it is treated as proclitic, e.g.:

(11) **nist** tót thaz magatin, ouh slafit  
[44: 60, 13]  
NEG-ist tot das Mädchen,  
sondern schläft  
'The girl is not dead, but asleep'

(12) **inti sines rihhes nist enti** [44: 3, 5]  
und seine Herrschaft NEG-ist  
Ende  
'And there will be no end to his  
kingdom'

(13) **Nist** ouh in erdriche nub er hiar  
irsiache [33: V, 23, 137]  
NEG-ist auch in Erd nur er hier  
krank  
'There is also no one in the world  
who does not get sick'

Moreover, the texts of the OHG period display the negative sentences with supplementary negative elements to preverbal clitic, among which the negative indefinite *niowiht* ('nothing'). By the end of OGH period (about eleventh century) it loses its indefinite semantics and thus becomes a pure carrier of negation [23: 107]. As a "new" negative

particle *nieht* (i.e., no longer with the original indefinite meaning), it first appeared in the late OHG, e.g., in Notker's Psalter of the eleventh century, e.g.:

(14) **Ih nehabo nieht** in gemeitun so  
uilo geuueino [31: 6, 10-11]  
Ich NEG-habe NICHT vergeblich  
so viel geweint  
'I have not cried so much in vain'

Thus, the negative indefinite *niowiht* underwent a grammaticalization process, being semantically bleached and in the course of time was changed into the single negative particle. Since negation particle *niht* complements preverbal clitic *ni*, the result is the sentences with double negation, i.e., sentences with two negative markers, but with a single negative semantic core. The texts of the late Old High German (eleventh century) show the first signs of grammaticalization that in the course of time resulted in a formal negation pattern VERB FINITE NICHT in PDG.

#### **Word order patterns in the Old High German negative sentence.**

Considering the point of view that V1 is a native structure, often realized contrary to the Latin original [4: 120-153], and among various syntactic contexts, in which V1-sentences appear, there are negative sentences, e.g.:

(15) **Ni liugu ih dauid** [14: IX, 612-613]  
NEG lüge ich David  
'I do not lie David'

(16) **Ni uuidarstritit** noh ni hrofit noh  
NEG kämpfen noch NEG rufen  
noch  
*ni gahoriti einich in heimingum*  
*sina stimma* [29: V, Line 9]  
NEG hört niemand in Heim seine  
Stimme  
'No one struggles and calls and  
hears at home his voice'

(17) *Trohtin*, **nihaben** man, mittiu daz uuazzert giruorit uuiridit [44: 88, 2]

Herr, NEG-habe Mann, mit das Wasser unruhig werde ...

'Lord, I do not have a man, when the water is troubled ...'

K. Axel [4: 152] mentions the peculiar status of the negative particle *ni* and considers it as a multifunctional element in order to express the contrast between the first and the second position of the verb. K. Donhauser [15: 202] insists on the clitic nature of negation: as examples (15)-(17) show, particle *ni* is always placed immediately before the finite verb

regardless of the position of this verb in the sentence, namely V1 or V2.

According to A. Jäger [23: 59], the particle *ni*, which came directly before the finite verb, accounts for at least 65% of all evidence for negative sentences. So, negative particles are treated as a discrete category in Old High German. In case of orthographical prefixation to the verb the order is treated as negative particle followed by the verb [6: 65]. The data retrieved from the chosen bulk of the OHG texts, namely *Tatian*, *Otfrid* and *Isidor*, show the relatively high frequency of NEG V1 pattern, among which the clauses with merged negative clitic, e.g.:

	<b>Ni as separate clitic (total)</b>	<b>Ni V1</b>	<b>nist (total)</b>	<b>Nist in initial position</b>	<b>Total NEG V1</b>
<b>Tatian</b>	812	43 (5%)	63	7 (11%)	50 (16%)
<b>Otfrid</b>	1123	158 (14%)	89	33 (37%)	191 (51%)
<b>Isidor</b>	43	4 (9%)	10	-	4 (9%)

Table 1. The distribution of NEG V1 pattern in OHG texts

Some observations on word order also suggest that the particle *ni* is dependent and does not represent a separate constituent. Thus, *ni* also comes before the verb if the verb is in the left-hand bracket of a declarative main clause and therefore, the pre-field (i.e., position before the verb) is already occupied [17: 229]. Comparing to the V3 position in OHG the V2 is in any case much more common. Evidence such as the following should be taken as an example of V3, when *ni* is not interpreted as a part of the verb. On the other hand, (17)-(18) should be treated as V2 negative clauses that seems more plausible, e.g.:

(18) *in nist iz ggeben* [44: 74, 4]  
ihnen NEG-ist es gegeben  
'It is not given to them'

(19) *sie ni brahtun nan sar* [32: I, 22, 22]  
sie NEG brachten ihn schnell  
'They did not bring him quickly'

Furthermore, in OHG *ni* also precedes the verb in decision-making contexts where the verb opens the sentence, e.g.:

(20) **Ni wildu sprechan** [...] *zi mir*  
[32: IV, 23, 35]  
NEG willst-du sprechen zu mir  
'You won't speak to me'

Thus, in OHG the V1-order in declarative sentences has been attested in the context of verbs of saying, motion verbs etc. and with sentential negation represented by a proclitic *ni* merged with the finite verb [3: 33]. According to A. Cichosz [10: 85-86] the structure *ne V1* is presented in the Old High German poetry in declarative sentences, where the negative particle usually functions as a separate unit, triggering the finite verb fronting. Furthermore, it would be reasonable to assume that the representative proportion of V1 negative sentences is motivated by narrative

techniques applied in the texts of the period under consideration.

It is important to mention the presence of neg-strengtheners in the negative sentences, especially in the texts of the Late OHG period (eleventh century). It should be noted that the cumulative effect of double negation was also achieved due to the placement of the proclitic negative marker in the initial position of the sentence, i.e., in V1-structures [8: 97-109]. Considering the number of verb-initial negative sentences and religious character of the texts under consideration we assume the correlation of discourse and grammar on the pathway of their formation: grammatical structures emerge from discourse and are shaped by discourse [22]. The word order variation in OHG is to an important extent determined by discourse context.

**Conclusions and perspectives.** The syntax of the Old Germanic texts in

general, and of the Old High German timespan in particular, is characterized by a relatively high variability of word order in complex sentences. The main typological feature of the Old Germanic syntax – V2-constraint – was implemented inconsistently. The conditions governing word order are represented by their variability and complexity, among them are grammatical, stylistic, and discourse regularities which should be taken into account. Additionally, in translations the influence of the source language (Latin) cannot be discounted. The present paper has suggested considerations regarding word order in OHG negative sentences. Correlation of negative constructions with word order patterns in OHG made it possible to explain the cases of verb-fronting with negative proclitic that is stylistically-bound, where fronted elements tend to be emphasized.

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