Exceptive negation in historical Low German

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The present paper proposes an analysis for exceptive clauses with a negation particle in Middle Low German (MLG), which express a meaning equivalent to *unless*-clauses in English. In these clauses, the finite verb, in subjunctive mood, appears in second position, preceded by the inherited preverbal negative particle *ne/en*, (1).

(1) *vnde dar moste numment yn, <u>he ne gheue V mark vp dat minste</u>*   (Stralsund 1392)
　　 and there must no.one in he NE give.SUBJN five marks on the least
　　 'and no one shall enter there, unless he give/pay at least five marks'

These clauses pose a challenge on several levels. First, while exceptive clauses are usually treated as a special type of conditional clauses, though different from *if…not*-type conditionals (for English e.g. Geis 1973, Dancygier 1985, 1998, von Fintel 1991, 1993), and while this particular type of subjunctive verb-second clauses with a preverbal negative particle have been called conditional clauses themselves (Holmberg 1967, Härd 2000), they are rather different from ordinary (negated) conditionals. Only focussing on the expression of negation, they are the only context where preverbal *ne/en* continues to be used on its own long after the initiation of Jespersen's Cycle in MLG. In all other clause types, including (regular negative) conditionals, MLG has either bipartite negation with *ne/en … nicht*/n-indefinite, or, much more frequently, *nicht*/n-indefinite alone. Furthermore, the negative particle *ne/en* does not seem to express sentential negation in the exceptive clause, an impression supported by the fact that none of the exceptive clauses in the corpus on which this study is based contains NPIs, *nicht*, or n-indefinites, as would be expected if *ne/en* were a (clausal) negative marker. On the other hand, the matrix clause always seems to contain an expression of sentential negation in the corpus used for the present study, viz. (*ne/en*)…*nicht*/n-indefinite, cf. *numment* 'no one' in (1). The exceptive clause therefore appears to express a positive exception to the negation in the main clause, despite the presence of *ne/en*.

Exceptive clauses in MLG are also remarkable from a syntactic point of view. While in Old Saxon (OS) the exceptive meaning was expressed by a negated 'dummy' main clause *ne sî/uuari* 'NEG be.SUBJN/were.SUBJN' taking a complement *that*-clause containing the actual exception, (3),

(3) *that thu giuuald obar mik hebbian ni mohtis <u>ne uuari</u> that it thi helag god selbo fargaui*
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 (*Heliand* 5351-5352)
　　 that you power over me have NEG can.PAST NEG be. SUBJN that it you holy God self gave
　　 'that you could not have power over me, unless the holy God himself gave it to you'

the MLG exceptive clauses do not generally exhibit the expected continuation of this pattern, viz. a negated main clause with an expletive pronoun and a *that*-complement. Rather, the former main and embedded clauses seem in most cases to have 'fused' in the sense that a (pro-)nominal constituent, which can be the subject (4a) or an object (4b), from the former *that*-clause comes to occupy the clause-initial position, and the formerly embedded (lexical) verb comes to occupy the second position, taking the subjunctive morphology and the negative particle originally associated with the former matrix verb *sî/uuari* 'be/were.SUBJN', (4).

(4)a. *It en scal nement enne nyen stenwech setten eder hoghen, <u>de rad en si darbi</u>.*
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　 (Braunschweig 1349)
　　 it NEG shall no one a new stone.way set or make.higher the council NE be.SUBJN there-by
　　 'No one shall build a new stone way or make one higher, unless the council agrees.'

b. ... *den genanten kalandes heren ensyn ersten sodane veirundevertich marck gensliken unde all wol to dancke betalt.* (Uelzen 12/07/1487)
the named kaland's sirs NE-be. SUBJN first those fourty.four marks entirely and all well to thank paid
'… unless those fourty-four marks have been paid first in their entirety to the named sirs of the kaland society'

The present paper argues that the negative particle *ne/en* underwent a lexical split at the point when the language entered stage II of Jespersen's Cycle, i.e., when the postverbal negator was established as the neutral productive expression of negation (with or without additional *ne/en*). In ordinary negative clauses, *ne/en* is gradually replaced by *nicht* as the sentential negative marker (taking scope within IP) during the MLG period. In exceptive clauses, on the other hand, it is reanalysed as part of the C-layer, above the scope position of sentential negation. More specifically, the paper argues that *ne* takes scope over a world operator situated in the C-domain (cf. Bhatt & Pancheva 2006, Kempchinsky 2009, Haegeman 2010). This operator is lexicalized by the subjunctive morphology the verb takes. This analysis accounts for the fact that *ne/en* in exceptive clauses has an interpretive effect similar to the one of Romero & Han's (2004) preposed negation in *yes-no*-questions (6a), which they argue scopes over the epistemic operator VERUM (cf. also Höhle 1992), or of Cormack & Smith's (1998;2002) EchoNeg (6b): it generates a positive epistemic implicature.

(6)a. *Isn't Jane coming too?* = [$_{CP}$ Q *not* [VERUM$_F$ [$_{IP}$ Jane is coming too]]] (R&H 2004)

b. *Shouldn't you be in school?* = You should be in school, shouldn't you? (C&S 2002)

Like English *n't*, *ne/en*, a clitic, needs a host at PF, as does the subjunctive morphology of the world operator, which is affixal. The paper argues that both are phonetically realised on the finite verb, argued to be in Fin in MLG exceptives, even though their LF-scope positions are higher (cf. also Cormack & Smith 2002). The paper further argues that there is an empty exceptive operator in the highest C-projection, ForceP, operating on the quantification introduced by the negation of the main clause (von Fintel 1994, Leslie 2009). The present paper proposes that the MLG exceptive construction developed out of the OS construction in the steps outlined in (5).

(5)a. [$_{ForceP}$ OP$_{exc}$ [$_{WP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [$_{Fin}$ *ne-sî*] [… [$_{VP}$ t$_{sî}$ [$_{CP}$ [$_C$ *that*] …]]]]]] OS

b. [$_{ForceP}$ OP$_{exc}$ *ne* [$_{WP}$ W [$_{FinP}$ [SpecFinP] [Fin] [… [$_{VP}$ XP V YP]]]]]] MLG
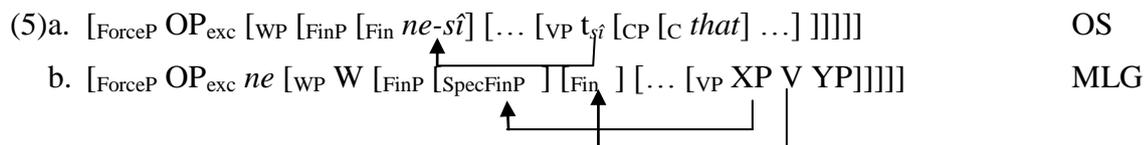
This reanalysis can be argued to be triggered by structural ambiguity; the OS embedded complementizer *that* could under the new structure in (5b) be analysed as occupying the matrix Fin-position. Once the embedded complementizer can occupy matrix Fin, the embedded verb can, too, as in any verb-second clause. The particle *ne/en* and the subjunctive morphology continue to be spelled out on the finite verb, now the originally embedded verb moved to matrix C, as they need a host. A possibly significant parallel to English 'Echo'-*n't* is the fact that this affects a phonetically reduced negation particle without sentential scope.

Interestingly, Dutch took a different path from the same starting point. The former 'dummy' matrix clause as a whole was reanalysed as the exponent of the exceptive operator itself, giving rise to the exceptive complementizer *tenzij* < *'t en zij* lit. 'it NEG be.SUBJN', now a full-fledged subordinating conjunction inducing clause-final verb placement, (6):

(6)*Wij zullen het halen, <u>tenzij de trein te laat aankomt</u>.*
we will make it unless the train too late arrives
[$_{ForceP}$ [OP$_{exc}$ *tenzij*] [$_{WP}$ W [$_{FinP}$ [$_{TP}$ *de trein te laat aankomt*]]]]