Obschon ‹obschon› schon ‹ob … schon› hiess:

The Role of Syntax in the Development of Complex Adverbial Subjunctions

Michael Redmond

Certain adverbial subjunctions can be observed to be sourced from multi-word expressions, composed of lexemes stemming from different syntactic categories. They may have an internal structure evident to speakers, however, this structure may also be fixed and no longer modifiable, cf. (1–3). Present Day German has a host of concessive subjunctions which are sourced from the combination of the older subjunction *ob* 'if', which was historically sufficient for the expression of concessive meaning, and different lexemes with a range of expressive meanings, such as *wohl* 'well', *schon* 'already', *gleich* 'even' and *zwar* 'indeed', cf. (3), (Dal 2014).

(1) Ich komme nicht mit, **es sei denn** du lädst mich ein.
    'I'm not coming along **unless** [lit. 'it be then'] you foot the bill.'
(2) **Même si** je n'en ai pas envie, je me lève à 6h du matin pour faire du sport.
    '**Even if** I don't feel like it, I'm getting up at 6 a.m. to do sports.'
(3) **Obwohl/-schon/-gleich/-zwar** es regnet, will ich spazieren gehen.
    Although it's raining, I want to go for a walk.'
(4) **Ob** er ſie **ſchon** für Verbrecher hielt, ſo nahm er ſich demungeachtet vor, ſie zu befreien [...] (Rétif de La Bretonne 1785: 375)
    '**Although** he considered them criminals, he intended to free them nonetheless[…]'

This study addresses the diachronic development of this pattern, which is an interesting case in that the two components were not historically collocated, cf. (4). Thus, a diachronic development can be assumed, whereby they move into immediate collocation, permitting the genesis of the new concessive subjunctions in turn through univerbation.

The proposed study focuses on the development of the form *obschon* in New High German corpus data from the *Deutsches Textarchiv* (DTA) (Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2023). *Obschon* is of particular interest as it is a historically dominant form (Dal 2014: 253) and *schon* still occurs frequently as a temporal adverb 'already' and in different particle uses approximately translatable as 'indeed' or 'merely' (Métrich & Faucher 2009: 740–763). It is observed that in German, as in other Indo-European languages, pronouns as well as certain particle types follow subjunctions like *ob* in the Wackernagel position (Dal 2014: 214–215), coming between *ob* and *schon*, cf. (4), but that in some contexts, for example where no such constituents are present, they may have come into contact. However, due to the high occurrence of personal pronouns, it is curious that these favourable contexts should gather enough momentum to have a meaningful effect on the diachronic development of *obschon*. Thus it seems that more factors may be at play. The study is therefore intended to address the following questions:

1. As *schon* belongs to different parts-of-speech, which type of *schon* is present in *obschon*?
2. Which contexts permit the immediate collocation of *ob* and *schon*?
3. What factors may favour the contact-position and consequently the eventual development of complex subjunctions and what does this mean for the distribution of concessive meaning across the clause?

And, in doing so, this study will address issues about how such phenomena straddle the syntax-morphology boundary, and the way clause-types and their constitutive features interact at a syntactic and morphological level.

Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.). 2023. Deutsches Textarchiv. Grundlage für ein Referenzkorpus der neuhochdeutschen Sprache. https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/.

Dal, Ingerid. 2014. *Kurze Deutsch Syntax auf Historischer Grundlage* (Sammlung Kurzer Grammatiken Germanischer Dialekte Ergänzungsreihe 7). 4. Aufl. bearb. Hans-Werner Eroms. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Métrich, René & Eugène Faucher. 2009. *Wörterbuch deutscher Partikeln: Unter Berücksichtigung ihrer französischen Äquivalente*. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.

Rétif de La Bretonne, Nicolas-Edme. 1785. *Der fliegende Mensch*. (Trans.) Mylius Wilhelm Christhelf Siegmund. 2nd edn. Dresden et al. https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/retif_mensch_1785/383. (13 September, 2023).