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If not ≠ unless - Exeptive clauses in Continental West Germanic

In this talk, I address the difference between negative conditionals (1a) and exeptive clauses (1b).

(1) *I will come and help you ...*

a) *if I don't fall into a river*

b) *unless I fall into a river*

It has long been claimed that exeptives and negative conditionals share the same underlying semantic structure, with differences only in the surface structure; however, Geis (1973) and those following him have presented challenges for this view, suggesting rather that the two constructions have different semantics. I present data from Middle Dutch (MD), Middle High German (MHG) and Middle Low German (MLG) that support an analysis of two different semantic structures. In doing so, I discuss some observations regarding conditionals more generally in the modern Germanic languages that are relevant to understanding the historical data from my corpus study. In particular, in MD, MHG and MD, exeptive adverbial clauses appear as subjunctive V2-clauses without any complementizer (2). In the early stages, the preverbal clitic *ne* is used which expressed sentential negation in Old Saxon (OS) and Old High German (OHG).

(2) *dhe scal ome sin wulle loen gheuen he ne hebbe it uerboret mit bosheit*

DEM shall him his demanded wage give he NE have.SUBJ it forfeited with mischief

'who shall give him his demanded wage, unless he has forfeited it with mischief.'

(Westphalian: 1492)

I will provide arguments for analysing MD, MLG and MHG exeptives as peripheral adverbial clauses, while their related OHG and OS structures are central adverbial clauses.