

The loss of the bipartite negation marker in Middle High German

A mystery finally unravelled

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- (1) a. *ni gíbit uns that álta, thaz thiu iúgund scolta.*
NEG gives us the age that the youth owes

'Age does not give us what youth owes'
(Otfrid I 4,54)

- b. *daz ne wart dem armen niht uirgeben.*
that NEG was the poor NEG forgiven

'The poor man was not forgiven'
(Vorauer Balaam, M028-N1 0a,53)

- c. *er sprach ir sulet niht weinen*
he spoke you shall NEG cry

'He spoke: You shall not cry'
(Nibelungenlied 69,3; Manuscript C)

Jespersen's Cycle:

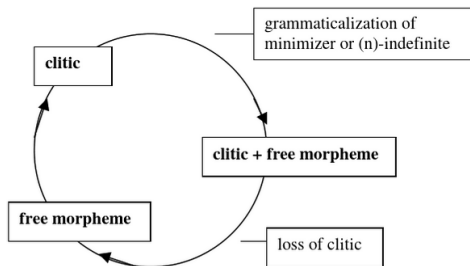


Figure: *Jespersen's Cycle* (Jäger 2008: 15)

- The *Jespersen's Cycle* (Jespersen 1917) can be observed in all of the Germanic languages: ptg. **ni* (< ie. **ne*) > me. *ne* ... *nought*, on. *ne* ... *-at/eigi* > engl. *not*, isl. *ekki*

- previous studies (Behaghel 1918, Gärtner 1977, Pickl 2017; Schüler 2016, 2017, Hrbek 2021):
 - bipartite negation marker mainly attested in Western Central German texts
 - early loss / no use in Upper German texts
 - early loss in verbinitial clauses, preservation in verbfinal clauses
- proposed syntactic accounts (e.g. Jäger 2008, Breitbarth 2014) do not consider diatopic, diachronic and syntactic variation
- Proposal: loss of bipartite negation marker can be accounted for by means of phonology

- 1 Point of departure ✓
- 2 Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors
 - ReM & CAO data
 - Diachronic variation
 - Diatopic variation
 - Syntactic variation: position of the finite verb
- 3 Analytical part: Phonology-based account
 - Framework
 - Proposal
 - Application
- 4 Summary & conclusion

- **Referenzkorpus Mittelhochdeutsch** (ReM; Klein et al. 2016, Klein & Dipper 2016): freely available since 2016, contains texts (written between 1050 and 1350) from the entire Middle High German area
- contains about two million tokens and is PoS-tagged
- consists of **well-balanced text genres** (e.g. Chivalric romance, prayers, charters or recipes) → text type-specific influences can be kept low
- However, in **diachronic and diatopic matters**, the ReM is **not well-balanced**: Western Central and Eastern Upper German predominate and early texts are scarce.
 - Analyzing Eastern Central German is particularly problematic since these dialects were formed only a few centuries ago.

Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

ReM data

- Although it uses ANNIS3 (Krause & Zeldes 2016), ReM **lacks syntactic annotations**. → limited use for complex syntactic phenomena
- Furthermore: Crashes/overloads and occasional errors/bugs → ReM **doesn't run smoothly in some places yet**
- Many queries for syntactic phenomena must be substituted (e.g. with distance parameters)¹
- For the syntactic variation: sample of 501 instances of *ne ... niht* (using *R*)

¹I thank Thomas Krause (HU Berlin) for his help in finding an adequate substitute query.

- Empirical basis for in-depth-study (Hertel 2022):
 - **475 negative clauses containing *ne/en* and/or *niht* from 195 charters** taken mainly (and exhaustively) from the *Corpus altdeutscher Originalurkunden bis zum Jahr 1300* 'Corpus of Old German Original Charters until the year 1300' edited by Wilhelm et al. (1932–2004)
 - allows observation of diatopic differences from 1250 to 1300

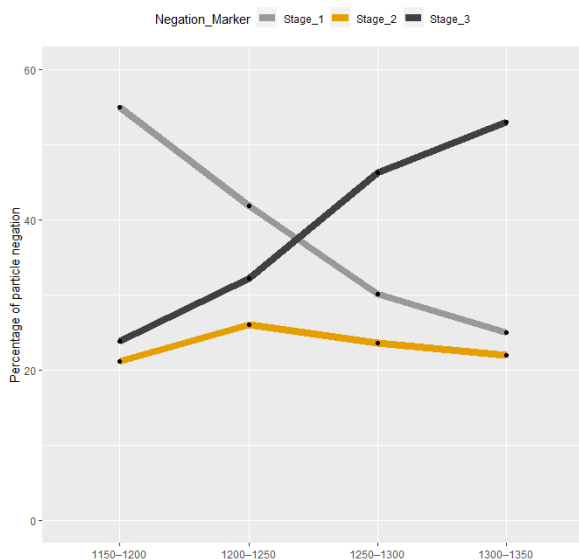
Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

Diachronic variation

- *Jespersen's Cycle* (all three stages) can be observed in many West Germanic languages, e.g. in Low German (Breitbarth 2014). MHG, however, turns out to be problematic.
- ReM enables us to observe the history of negation, but **only between 1150 and 1350**
- *ne* underwent a *lexical split* creating a homophone *ne*₂ with exceptive meaning – ReM does not differentiate between *ne*₁ and *ne*₂
- Neglecting diatopic variation leads to results similar to Jäger (2008) and Pickl (2017): *ne* gets replaced by *niht* early on.

Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

Diachronic variation – Neglecting diatopic variation



Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

Diatopic variation

- The omission of diatopic variation gives the impression that the classical *Jespersen's Cycle* did not occur.
- Taking into account the **dialectal colouring** of the original texts, we get a **completely different picture** supporting Schüler (2016, 2017):
 - MHG can be broken down into four major variants: Eastern & Western Upper German and Eastern & Western Central German.
 - Bear in mind that the Eastern Central German dialects can only be meaningfully analysed in the last third of MHG (from 1250) due to the lack of traditional texts → we will largely **exclude ECG** from the discussion.
- Now we can clearly see that the **negation change differs considerably** in the individual areas:

Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

Diatopic variation

	East UG.		West UG.		West CG.	
	Bipartite	Post	Bipartite	Post	Bipartite	Post
1150–1200	785	686	47	72	101	289
1200–1250	154	459	113	115	235	47
1250–1300	101	611	45	415	413	199
1300–1350	59	869	56	310	676	527
Total:	1099	2625	261	912	1427	1064
	total:	3724	total:	1173	total:	2491

Table: Frequencies of stage II & III negation in comparison

Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

Diatopic variation

	WCG	UG	total
charters	75	121	195
total	175	300	475
<i>ne/en</i>	4 (2,3 %)	0 (0 %)	4
<i>ne/en ... niht</i>	136 (77,3 %)	31 (10,3 %)	167
<i>niht</i>	35 (19,9 %)	269 (89,7 %)	304
	$\chi^2 = 227.9007, p < 0.01, V = 0.7$		

Table: Diatopic distribution of bipartite and single negation markers in MHG charters (Hertel 2022)

- **Upper German:** short peak between 1150 and 1200 in which the negation shifts from bipartite (*ne ... niht*) to single, postverbal *niht*. After 1250, almost every negated clause contains ***niht* only**.
- **Western Central German: bipartite negation marker in its peak** from 1200 to the end of MHG.
 - The transition from stage II to III negation seems to take place after 1350. *ne ... niht* stays the **main strategy** for expressing negation.
 - The deviation between 1150 and 1200 is due to two single texts: *Trier Versionen zum Interlinearpsalter* and *Trier Psalmen* which behave more like WUG texts.

→ **Evidence for a stable stage II in MHG!**

Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

Syntactic variation: position of the finite verb

- bipartite negation marker can occur with every position of the finite verb
- **V1-clauses are rare** – this is due to prosodic reasons, as we will point out in the analytical part.
- **V2** is the **most frequent** verb order, but is **decreasing** until the end of MHG for the **favor of verb-later and verb-final clauses**.
- **VF seems to have a preservative effect**, as Behaghel (1918: 245) already pointed out. → we can observe a steady increase in VF-clauses (although V2 remains the most frequent position in total)
- matches the results of CAO data (Hertel 2022)
- This pattern **doesn't seem to vary** between the four MHG dialects.

Descriptive part: External and internal variation factors

Syntactic variation: position of the finite verb

	Verb-initial	Verb-second	Verb-later/-final
1150–1200	11	124	16
1200–1250	3	59	21
1250–1300	14	44	48
1300–1350	14	90	57
Total:	42	317	142

Table: Variation in verb order with the bipartite negation marker

- Framework: theory of **prosodic phonology** (Selkirk 1981a, 1981b, 1996, Nespor & Vogel 1986)
 - phonological representation of a sentence is organized hierarchically into **prosodic units**, being **domains for segmental and suprasegmental rules**
 - Phonological Utterance (U) \geq 1 Intonation Phrase (IP) \geq 1 phonological phrase (ϕ) \geq 1 prosodic word (ω) \geq 1 **phonological foot (F)** \geq 1 syllable (σ_s)

- Framework: theory of **prosodic phonology** (Selkirk 1981a, 1981b, 1996, Nespov & Vogel 1986)
 - **non-isomorphism** with regard to **syntactic units** emerges with representation of **function words** (fnc) in comparison to **lexical words** (lex)

s-structure: [... lex lex ...]_{XP}

p-structure: (... (lex)_ω (lex)_ω ...)_φ

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

Framework

- Representation of function words (fnc) (cf. Selkirk 1996, Peperkamp 1997, Kabak & Schiering 2006): more possibilities with regard to **weak function words** (σ_w or σ_r , i.e. unstressed, reduction vowel, segmentally reduced)

(2) a. engl. *at* b. [æ̩t] c. [ət̩] (3) a. engl. *him* b. [hɪ̩m] c. [ɪ̩m] d. [m̩]

(4) s-structure

p-structure (possibilities)

a. [... Fnc Lex ...]_{XP}

(Fnc (Lex)_ω ...) _φ or (... (Fnc Lex)_ω ...) _φ

b. [... Lex Fnc ...]_{XP}

(... (Lex)_ω Fnc) _φ or (... (Lex Fnc)_ω ...) _φ

c. [Fnc Fnc Lex]_{XP}

((Fnc Fnc)_F (Lex)_ω) _φ

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

Proposal

- preverbal marker *ne/en* in MHG bipartite negation as a weak fnc (σ_r) is prosodified into **left-adjacent** phonological foot, represented by syntactic units (bisyllabic lex, mono- or bisyllabic strong fnc)
 - $((\text{Fnc Fnc})_F(\text{Lex})_\omega)_\phi$ or $(\dots(\text{Lex Fnc})_\omega \dots)_\phi$
- phonological foot $((\sigma_s\sigma_r\sigma_r)_F$ or $(\sigma_s\sigma_r)_F$): constituting the **domain for (the rule of) Schwa deletion**
- explains syntactic, diatopic and diachronic variation in the course of its loss and also graphematic characteristics

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

Schwa deletion

- systematic loss of nucleus vowel /ə/ in unstressable syllables (σ_r) (Klein 2005), observed in:

- (un)inflected trisyllabic lexical words (foot: dactyl)

(5) a. wehsele > wechsel \emptyset 'exchange'

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r \sigma_r)_F)_\omega > ((\sigma_s \sigma_r \emptyset)_F)_\omega$

b. manete > man \emptyset te 'admonished.3SG'

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r \sigma_r)_F)_\omega > ((\sigma_s \emptyset \sigma_r)_F)_\omega$

- (un)inflected bisyllabic lexical words and function words (foot: trochee)

(6) a. swane > swan 'swan'

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r)_F)_\omega > ((\sigma_s \emptyset)_\omega$

b. vnde > vnd 'and'

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r)_F)_\omega > ((\sigma_s \emptyset)_\omega$

- **progresses with different speed** in the particular dialect areas (Triwunatz 1913, Lindgren 1953, Klein 2005, Büthe-Scheider 2017), **resembling** the development of the **preverbal marker's loss**:
- **early and quick loss in Upper German:** (straightly following vowel weakening)
 - **completed during 13th century**
 - share of bipartite negation marker in ReM: 20,5 %
- **late and slower progressing loss in Western Central German:**
 - completion with **beginning of 16th century**
 - share of bipartite negation marker in ReM: 56,2 % in the beginning of 14th century

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

further evidence: spelling

- left-adjacent prosodification: not only suggested by **compound spelling with left-adjacent word** (Paul et al. 2007):

(7) *Ouch sone* *willen ich def niet*
also like that=NEG want i that NEG

'I also don't want it like that'
(CAO 624 WCG)

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

further evidence: spelling

- further graphematic evidence for left-adjacent prosodification:
seperate spelling

(8) *vnse erben in sūlen nit retthis haben an der mūlen*
our heirs NEG shall NEG right have of the mill

'our heirs shall have no right regarding the mill'
(CAO 1200 WCG)

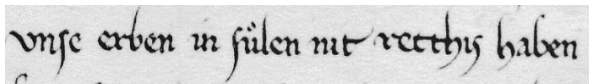


Figure: seperate spelling of preverbal *ne/en* in CAO 1200

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

Further evidence: spelling

- spelling variants <en> or <in>:
 - indicate **epenthetic vowel** after Schwa deletion („Stützvokal“, Nübling 1992, Paul et al. 2007)
- Hayes (1995, 2009): motivated crosslinguistically by **unsyllabified consonants**
 - *ne* → *n*: **prosodification impossible** in many cases **after Schwa deletion**, reason: high sonority

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

further phonological reasoning

- **sonority sequency generalization** (e.g. Selkirk 1984): segments onset and rhyme of syllable must be of rather low sonority
 - **excludes many right-adjacent hosts for the preverbal element**, i.e. finite verbs beginning with obstruent or nasal
 - also **excludes many left-adjacent hosts for the preverbal element**, additional exclusion possible because of coda law (e.g. Vennemann 1988 (no rhyme, less is best))
 - insertion of **epenthetic vowel**: "last resort" of prosodification before final deletion of /n/
- further assumptions:
 - **syllabic sonorants** like [ŋ] **only assumed for Standard German**
 - **epenthetic vowel reanalyzed as Schwa again**, especially in WCG (because of slow progressing); in UG in certain positions

- **early loss in V1 clauses** is well explained with left-adjacent prosodification: left-adjacent syntactic units (representing prosodic units) are often missing

(9) *bit deime merrendeile des Rathes / ∅ Get er dan nit*
with the majority the.GEN council goes he then NEG
dar zv
there to

'... by means of the majority of the council. If he doesn't participate then ...'

(CAO 903 WCG)

Analytical part: Phonology-based account

Application

- omission of *en* as a result of forming a **dactyl** with preceding bisyllabic lexical word, becoming a **domain for schwa deletion** → unsyllabified /n/ finally omitted

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r \sigma_r)_F)_\omega$

- (10) *vnse erben in sūlen nit retthis haben an der mūlen*
our heirs NEG shall NEG right have of the mill

'our heirs shall have no right regarding the mill'
(CAO 1200 WCG)

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r \emptyset)_F)_\omega$

- (11) *vn dis lehen ∅ fol man niet deilen*
and this fief shall one NEG share

'and this fief shall not be shared'
(CAO 13 WCG)

- **preservation of *en* in VF/L clauses** well explained with left-adjacent prosodification: **forms a bisyllabic trochee** with preceding postverbal negation marker *niht*

$(\sigma_s \sigma_r)_F$

- (12) *wie Wir des **nút** **endeten***
if we this NEG NEG=did

'if we didn't make this '
(CAO 1831 WCG)

- also omitted as **part of a bisyllabic trochee**: also a **domain for schwa deletion** → unsyllabified /n/ omitted finally

$(\sigma_s \emptyset)_F$





- (13) *vn* \emptyset *guld ich hieme **niet** die vorbenanten vonfhondirpont*
and payed I him NEG the aforementioned fivehundred pound

'and if I didn't pay him the aforementioned fivehundred pounds...'

(CAO 1577 WCG)




- **illustration of diatopic, diachronic and syntactic variation** observed during **loss of the MHG bipartite negation marker** using mainly a large corpus (**ReM**), confirming the results of in-depth-study based on 13th century charters (**CAO**)
 - short use and early loss in Upper German
 - long use and late loss in Western Central German
 - crossdialectally, early loss in V1 clauses

- **comprehensive explanation** of this variation from a **phonological perspective**:
 - analysis of the preverbal marker as a weak function word being prosodified into the left-adjacent trochee
 - claim: trochee serves as a domain for (the phonological rule) of Schwa deletion
 - final loss of remaining unsyllabic nasal for reasons of sonority
- **conclusion: loss of *ne/en* not random** or negation-specific but **consequence of a major sound change** in the history of German





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A mystery finally unravelled – the loss of the bipartite negation marker in Middle High German

Thanks for listening!

Kindly supported by ...



- In order to analyse the syntactic variation factors, we used a sample (by using *R*) of 501 instances of *ne ... niht*. For this we used the function *sample_n* of the *R* package *dplyr*.
- ANNIS query for the bipartite negation marker *ne ... niht* (VF: *niht ... ne*):

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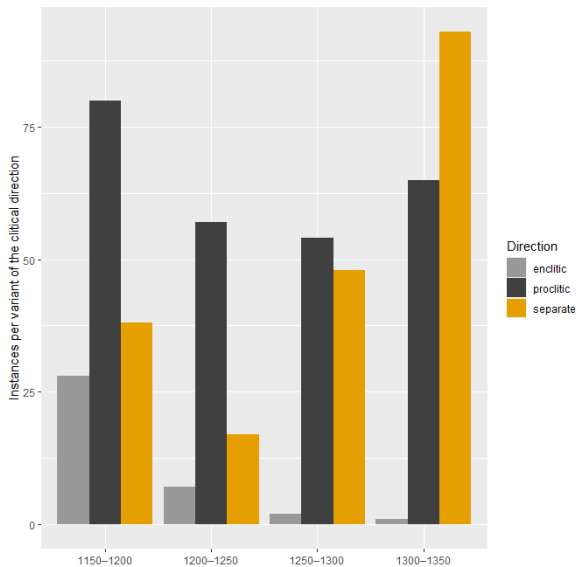
lemma="ne" &
lemma="niht" &
pos="PTKNEG" &
#1 .1,6 #2 &
#2 _=_ #3
|
lemma="ne" &
lemma="niht" &
pos="PTKNEG" &
#5 1,4 #4 &
#5 _=_ #6

```

- The clitic *ne* is said to change from preverbal (OHG) to postverbal (MHG).
- However, the texts of the ReM don't provide any evidence for this claim.
- Instead, we find a constantly increasing amount of separately written particles and verbs.
- Bear in mind that this does not only concern the negation marker(s). Rather, this is a symptom of the gradual emergence of an adequate writing grammar (Busch & Fleischer 2015, Labs-Ehlert 1993).

Encore

Proclitic or enclitic *ne*?



- (14) a. *Got newil niht haben uirlorn . daz er durch uns
god NEG=wants NEG have lost that he trough us
wart geborn
was born.PTC*

M116-N1 0a, 2124–2125 (Vorauer Joseph, Bücher Moses 2)

- b. *Sine waren da niht lange
they=NEG were there NEG long*

M149-N1 0a, 1125 (Vorauer Moses, Bücher Moses 3)

- c. *def ne wolten fi nicht abe gan
which NEG wanted they NEG but lose*

M205P-N1 0a, 144 (Roland's Song, Manuscript P)

- Due to the lack of texts (not only within the ReM), ECG dialects can only be investigated from the second half of the 13th century.
 - All in all, we can observe two periods of 50 years each: (i) 1250–1300 and (ii) 1300–1350.
 - Therefore, the results should be treated with caution.
- What we can observe: During the second half of the 13th century, the bipartite negation marker is (still) in its peak, but (most probably) already declining.
- However, this doesn't last for long: Within just 50 years, the tide turns completely: During the 14th century, *niht* rises quickly and becomes the main negation strategy and displaces *ne ... niht*.

	Eastern Central German	
	Bipartite	Postverbal
1150–1200	∅	∅
1200–1250	∅	∅
1250–1300	113	95
1300–1350	141	537
Total:	254	632

Table: Frequencies of stage II and III in comparison (ECG only)

- As we have already discussed, the position of the finite verb does not (significantly) vary between the four major MHG dialect groups.
- Nevertheless, there is one conspicuous feature that is noticeable in Eastern Central German: We can observe a (slightly) higher frequency of verb-initial clauses in ECG.
- However, this may be due to the (already discussed) conjunct *vnde* which may occur in the form of *en* or *in*.
- In some cases, we can clearly decide whether *ne* represents 'and' or 'not' – but in the majority of instances, we can't.

	Verb-initial	Verb-second	Verbs-later/-final
Eastern Upper German	15	142	26
Western Upper German	2	27	12
Eastern Central German	12	20	6
Western Central German	13	128	98
Total	42	317	142

Table: Verb position with the bipartite negation in the four major dialect groups

- Empirical basis for in-depth-study (Hertel 2022):
 - **all negative clauses containing *ne/en* and/or *niht* in 225 charters** taken mainly from the *Corpus altdeutscher Originalurkunden bis zum Jahr 1300* 'Corpus of Old German Original Charters until the year 1300' edited by Wilhelm et al. (1932–2004)
 - nearly 4300 documents representing historical scribal dialects of German, mainly Upper German (UG) written between 1280 and 1300 (121 charters selected)
 - 124 Western Central German charters (WCG) written between 1250 and 1300 (Gärtner et al. 1997): exhaustively investigated
 - 28 charters: Low German; 14 charters: Eastern Central German

- Empirical basis for in-depth-study (Hertel 2022):
 - **all negative clauses containing *ne/en* and/or *niht* in 225 charters** taken mainly from the *Corpus altdeutscher Originalurkunden bis zum Jahr 1300* 'Corpus of Old German Original Charters until the year 1300' edited by Wilhelm et al. (1932–2004)
 - **collected manually** by reading each document at least twice
 - not every document contained negation structures
 - **exclusion of identical duplicats and particular hits for methodic reasons:**
 - negated clauses with **an ambiguous initial element**: NEG or COORD e.g. *fo is he ledic · en mac he des nicht getuon* 'thus, he is free (and) if he can't do this ...' (CAO 1161A)

- Empirical basis for in-depth-study (Hertel 2022):
- **exclusion of identical duplicats** and **particular hits for methodic reasons**:
 - negated clauses with **ambiguous preverbal element**: NEG or lexical prefix e.g.

(15) *dc die selben livte ir fiehtagen (...) niht engelten sivln*

'that the same people do not have to pay for their sickness'
(CAO 31)

- **exceptive and adversative clauses with (single) en/in**, e.g.

(16) *Des en fal nieman mogen verkoufen [...] / he in duo it bit orloue dis Goizhus*

'Nobody shall sell this except with the chapel's permission'
(CAO 55)

- Empirical basis for in-depth-study (Hertel 2022):
- **exclusion of identical duplicats** and **particular hits for methodic reasons**:
 - negative clauses with **elided VP**, e.g.

(17) *ob es fchedlich fi ald nút*

'whether it's harmful or not'
(CAO 1591)

	WCG	UG	total
charters	75	121	195
total	175	300	475
<i>ne/en</i>	4 (2,3 %)	0 (0 %)	4
<i>ne/en ... niht</i>	136 (77,3 %)	31 (10,3 %)	167
<i>niht</i>	35 (19,9 %)	269 (89,7 %)	304
	$\chi^2 = 227.9007, p < 0.01, V = 0.7$		

Table: Diatopic distribution of bipartite and single negation markers in MHG charters (Hertel 2022)

- arguments against right-adjacent prosodification of *en/in*, i.e.: either $(\text{Fnc} (\text{Lex})_{\omega} \dots)_{\phi}$ or $(\text{Fnc} (\text{Lex})_{\omega} \dots)_{\phi}$
- not reconcilable with **trochaic foot structure** of MHG
 - implies constraint of prosodic units to begin with σ_s since Old High German
 - non-canonical pattern of ω as $(\sigma_r(\sigma_s)_F)$: phonological representation of lexical words containing **unstressable** prefixes are eliminated in the course of Schwa-deletion

(18) a. b \bar{l} ibe 'stayed.PTC' b. g \bar{f} onde 'found.PTC'

- early loss of *en/in* in V1-clauses

- further support: 8 clauses containing bipartite marker are 2nd conjuncts starting with 'and'

(19) $((\sigma_s \sigma_r \sigma_r)_F)_\omega$
Get er dan nit dar zv vnde enhilfet nith dar zv
goes he then NEG there to and NEG=helped NEG there to
'... If he doesn't participate then and doesn't give his support to it...'
(CAO 903 WCG)

- as a result of forming a **dactyl** with preceding bisyllabic lexical word becoming **again a domain for schwa deletion**: very same process in "pure" lexical words with dactylic structure

(20) *Swelchir der Burgen selbe nid geleiften en mag*
 which the.GEN bailsmen himself NEG perform NEG can

'Those bailsmen who are not able to perform in person'
 (CAO 1918 WCG)

- so called "haplology" contexts (Burridge 1917, Pickl 2017):

(21) *der da selbe nit leiften \emptyset will*
 who there himself NEG perform wants

'who doesn't want to perform in person'
 (CAO 13 WCG)

- as a result of forming a **dactyl** with preceding bisyllabic lexical word becoming **again a domain for schwa deletion**: /n/ unsyllabified → omitted finally

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r \emptyset)_F)_\omega$

(22) *dat fi **nieht** **fchuldig** \emptyset fin*
 that they NEG guilty are

'that they are not guilty'
 (CAO 45)

$((\sigma_s \sigma_r \emptyset)_F)_\omega$

(23) *eime gefezzene burger zu wormefzen **der nit** \emptyset lie paffe*
 an.DAT autochthonous citizen to Worms who NEG be priest

'... an autochthonous citizen of Worms who may not be a priest'
 (CAO 3438 WCG)

- as a result of **being part of a bisyllabic trochee** becoming a **domain for schwa deletion** as well (94 of 136 cases, with *niht* (n = 69) but also monosyllabic pronouns (n = 15) as hosts)

$(\sigma_s \sigma r)_F$

(24) *di infal fe niet virpehtin*
 these NEG=shall they NEG lease

'They shall not lease them'
 (CAO 59 WCG)