Constrained by FOFC: a shift back to head-finality in Alemannic verb clusters

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The Germanic variety of Alemannic exhibits a great variety of grammatical orders of the Aux-Mod-V verb cluster. (1) shows a verb cluster in an Alemannic subordinate clause with the order 123, where 1 = auxiliary 2 = modal and 3 = main verb:

(1) a. … *dass dr händ künno goo*
that you have.1 can.2 go.3
"... that you could go."

5 of the 6 logically possible orders of this verb cluster are attested (Salzmann, 2013):

(2) a. 1 2 3 c. * 2 3 1 e. 3 1 2 t_3
b. 1 3 2 d. ? 2 1 t_2 3 f. 3 2 1

It is argued that varying levels of acceptability among the orders indicates a steady shift towards head-final due to contact with Standard German (particularly in younger speakers). This novel analysis of Alemannic word order assumes a harmonically head-initial verbal domain for Alemannic (based on an analysis of verb doubling (Diem, to appear). We have observed that the partially and fully head-final orders are more accepted by younger speakers than older. Crucially, however, the final-over-initial order is not attested or accepted by any speaker. Our diachronic account concerning the logically possible base-generated orders based on these observations is laid out in fig. 1:

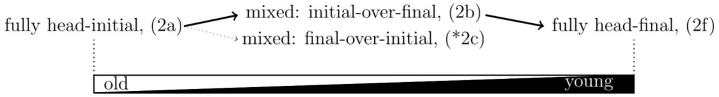

Figure 1: Schematic degree of acceptability for word orders in younger (born after c.1990) and older (born before c.1960) speakers.

Of the two conceivable intermediate/mixed directionality stages of this change, only the FOFC-complying order (2b) is attested. This follows naturally from the diachronic analysis we suggest, constrained by FOFC (Holmberg 2000, Biberauer et. al. 2014).

Selected references: • Biberauer, T., A. Holmberg & I. Roberts. (2014). A syntactic universal and its consequences. *Linguistic Inquiry 45.* • Salzmann, M. (2010). *An Alemannic Challenge to the FOFC.* Paper presented at the DGfS Linearization Workshop.