

Call for papers

Full title: **Verb-first adverbial clauses. A cross-linguistic perspective**

Date: October 22, 2025

Location: Hamburg, Germany

Organizers: Werner Frey (formerly Leibniz-ZAS) &
Łukasz Jędrzejowski (University of Agder)

Contact person: Łukasz Jędrzejowski (lukasz.jedrzejowski@uia.no)

Web site: <http://www.lukasz-jedrzejowski.eu/adverbial-clauses-2/>

Call deadline: September 20th, 2025

Meeting description:

In many languages, verb-first clauses appear not only as main clauses, such as polar interrogatives, but also in adverbial functions, particularly as conditional, concessive, adversative or causal clauses. Although certain types of verb-first adverbial clauses have been studied in languages like Dutch, German, English, and the Scandinavian languages, their syntactic status, semantic interpretation, and prosodic integration remain underexplored.

In the case of German, verb-first conditional clauses have traditionally been analyzed as stylistic or positional variants of subordinated structures introduced by conditional conjunctions (e.g., *wenn* ‘if’). This assumption has led to widespread grammatical analyses that treat these constructions as syntactically embedded within the matrix clause (cf. Zifonun et al. 1997: 1745–1748, 2280–2290; Eisenberg 2020: 365–367, among others).

However, recent research has begun to challenge this consensus. Axel-Tober & Wöllstein (2009) and Reis & Wöllstein (2010) observe that verb-final conditionals cannot always be replaced by verb-first variants without affecting interpretation or grammaticality, particularly in constructions involving preference predicates, premise conditionals or relevance conditionals (see Reis 1992; Reis & Wöllstein 2010). They argue that verb-first adverbial clauses in both present-day and historical stages of German are not syntactically embedded, but instead form unintegrated structures. These clauses are said to exhibit distinct distributional, semantic, and prosodic properties, setting them apart from canonical subordinate clauses and point to more fine-grained structural and interpretive constraints on clause integration than previously assumed. In response, Pittner (2011) offers a detailed critique and partial reassessment, contending that conditional verb-first adverbials do not provide conclusive evidence for non-integration (cf. also Freywald 2013). By contrast, stronger evidence for unintegration has been observed in causal verb-first clauses (Pittner 2011, 2023; Müller 2017; Taigel 2021; Frey 2023) and in adversative verb-first clauses (Christ 2014).

A particularly intriguing subtype of verb-first conditional clauses involves constructions introduced by the modal verb *sollte* (‘should’) in German. Unlike bare verb-first clauses, which are generally infelicitous in speech-act related conditionals, *sollte*-verb-first clauses are acceptable. Reis & Wöllstein (2020: 137) attribute this to the ability of *sollte*, like *wenn* or *falls*, to explicitly mark the antecedent proposition as potentially realizable – an interpretive feature

supposed to be lacking in bare verb-first clauses. This raises further questions about the interpretive mechanisms and constraints governing different types of verb-first conditional constructions.

Furthermore, verb-first adverbial clauses may serve as a heuristic for diagnosing phenomena such as Konjunktiv (subjunctive) licensing and the categorial status of subordinators in German. For instance, comparative clauses introduced only by *als* display obligatory verb-first order and Konjunktiv marking, unlike comparable *als ob* clauses with verb-final order, raising questions about the interaction of clause type, and mood (cf. Bliß 2017, 2018 for German).

Despite these important contributions, with only a few comparative studies available (e.g., Iatridou & Embick 1994; Leuschner & Van den Nest 2015; Leuschner 2016; Weisser 2019), the status of verb-first adverbial clauses across languages and clause types has not been extensively discussed.

This workshop aims to bring together scholars working on verb-first adverbial clauses from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, with the goal of advancing our understanding of adverbial clause linkage and the theoretical implications of clause integration and independence.

The international workshop "Verb-first adverbial clauses. A cross-linguistic perspective" is organized as part of the scientific network *Adverbial Clauses and Subordinate Dependency Relationships*, funded by the German Science Foundation (grant number 455700544) and granted to Łukasz Jędrzejowski. The network is currently led by Andreas Pankau. The workshop will be hosted by the *Institut für Germanistik* at the University of Hamburg on October 22, 2025, and is organized by Werner Frey and Łukasz Jędrzejowski.

Invited speakers (all confirmed):

Hans-Martin Gärtner (Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics)
Stefan Hinterwimmer (University of Hamburg)
Sabine Iatridou (MIT)
Karin Pittner (University of Bochum)

Call for papers:

Topics for the workshop include, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- What are the semantic restrictions on verb-first adverbial clauses? Which adverbial relations can they express? How do these vary cross-linguistically?
- To what extent are verb-first adverbial clauses structurally (dis)integrated with their host clause? Are all types of verb-first adverbial clauses alike?
- Under what syntactic or semantic conditions are verb-final and verb-first adverbial clauses interchangeable or not? What do asymmetries reveal about the grammar of subordination and clause-type licensing? How do verb-first adverbial clauses exactly differ? Is their special semantic contribution truth-conditional, presuppositional, or pragmatic?

- What factors license the use of *sollte*-initial clauses in speech-act related conditionals, a context in which other verb-first clauses typically are unacceptable?
- Can a unified theory of V-to-C movement account for all types of verb-first adverbial clauses? What are the implications of such analyses for clause-typing theories?
- Can verb-first adverbial clauses serve as diagnostics for other grammatical phenomena?
- What is the prosodic profile of verb-first adverbial clauses? How does prosody correlate with syntactic (dis)integration? Which prosodic cues signal clause integration or independence?
- What are the diachronic pathways that lead to the emergence of verb-first adverbial clauses?

The workshop seeks to offer an interdisciplinary perspective on verb-first adverbial clauses and will be followed by an international conference on "Adverbial clauses as relative clauses: Old questions, new answers" at the University of Hamburg (23-24 October, 2025).

We invite submission of abstracts for 40-minute oral presentations (with additional 20 minutes for questions) on topics that address verb-first adverbial clauses. These may include case studies as well as formal theories of particular adverbial clause types. We also welcome research at the interfaces with semantics, prosody, and other areas, as long as the research makes a contribution to the area of verb-first adverbial clauses.

Abstracts should be submitted in PDF format to lukasz.jedrzejowski@uia.no, with all non-standard fonts embedded. Abstracts must not exceed two pages, including data. An additional third page may be used for references. Submissions should be in letter or A4 format, with 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins on all sides, single-spaced, and in a font no smaller than 11 pt. Abstracts must be anonymous. Please ensure that PDF files do not contain any identifying metadata. Each author may submit one individual and one joint abstract, or two joint abstracts.

Please submit abstracts to lukasz.jedrzejowski@uia.no no later than September 20, 2025.

Notification: 30 September 2025

For inquiries, please send an e-mail to lukasz.jedrzejowski@uia.no

References

- Axel-Tober, Katrin & Angelika Wöllstein. 2009. German verb-first conditionals as unintegrated clauses: A case study in converging synchronic and diachronic evidence. In: *The Fruits of Empirical Linguistics*, vol. 2: *Product* ed. by S. Featherston & S. Winkler, 1–36. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bliß, Anna. 2017. Die syntaktische Kategorisierung von *als*. In: *Probleme der syntaktischen Kategorisierung: Einzelgänger, Außenseiter und mehr* ed. by S. Döring & Jochen Geilfuß-Wolfgang, 193–218. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.
- Bliß, Anna. 2018. *Zum Konjunktiv in unter Nomina eingebetteten Verbzweitsätzen*. MA thesis. Leipzig: University of Leipzig.
- Christ, Rüdiger. 2014. *Zur Satzfügung im Deutschen. Vornehmlich am Beispiel adversativer Satzgefüge*. Tübingen. Stauffenburg.
- Eisenberg, Peter. 2020. *Grundriss der deutschen Grammatik. Der Satz. 5.*, aktualisierte und überarbeitete Auflage. Stuttgart: Metzler.

- Frey, Werner. 2023. Types of German causal clauses and their syntactic-semantic layers. In: *Micro- and Macro-variation of Causal Clauses. Synchronic and Diachronic Insights* ed. by Ł. Jędrzejowski & C. Fleczonek, 51–100. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Freywald, Ulrike. 2013. Uneingeleiteter V1- und V2-Satz. In: *Satztypen des Deutschen* ed. by J. Meibauer, M. Steinbach & H. Altmann, 317–337. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Iatridou, Sabine & David Embick. 1994. Conditional inversion. In: *Proceedings of the North East Linguistic Society (NELS) 24* ed. by M. González, 189–203. Amherst, MA: GLSA.
- Leuschner, Torsten. 2016. Afhankelijke V1-zinnen: conditioneel, contrastief, concessief: functioneel-typologische en constructionele perspectieven. *Nederlandse Taalkunde* 21(1): 61–79.
- Leuschner, Torsten & Daan Van den Nest. 2015. Asynchronous grammaticalization: V1-conditionals in present-day English and German. *Languages in Contrast* 15(1): 34–64.
- Müller, Sonja. 2017. Kausale/konzessive Verberst- und wo-Verbletzt-Sätze. *Deutsche Sprache* 3: 245–276.
- Pittner, Karin. 2011. Anmerkungen zur (Un-)Integriertheit von Konditionalsätzen mit Verberststellung. *Zeitschrift für germanistische Linguistik* 30(1): 75–105.
- Pittner, Karin. 2011. Subsidäre Begründungen. In: *Konnektoren im Deutschen und im Sprachvergleich: Beschreibung und grammatische Analyse* ed. by G. Ferraresi, 157–182. Tübingen: Narr.
- Pittner, Karin. 2023. Pragmatic subordination: Causal clauses with verb first position in German. In: *Micro- and Macro-variation of Causal Clauses. Synchronic and Diachronic Insights* ed. by Ł. Jędrzejowski & C. Fleczonek, 101–128. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Reis, Marga. 1992. Satzeinleitende Strukturen im Deutschen. Über COMP, Haupt- und Nebensätze, w-Bewegung und die Doppelkopfanalyse. In: *Erklärende Syntax des Deutschen* ed. by W. Abraham, 271–311. Tübingen: Narr.
- Reis, Wöllstein. 2010. Zur Grammatik (vor allem) konditionaler V1-Gefüge im Deutschen. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 29(1): 111–179.
- Taigel, Sonja. 2021. On the interpretation and use of causal verb-first-clauses in German. *Studia Linguistica* 75(1): 24–71.
- Weisser, Philipp. 2019. Equal rights for all conditionals. *Linguistics Vanguard* 5(s3): 1–10.
- Zifonun, Gisela, Ludger Hoffmann & Bruno Strecker (eds.). 1997. *Grammatik der deutschen Sprache*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.

The workshop is funded by a German Research Foundation grant to Łukasz Jędrzejowski (grant number 455700544).