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## SYSTEM OF STRONG CONJUGATION IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN AND NORWEGIAN: A CONTRASTIVE AND TYPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

### *Abstract*

Contrastive research on topics in Germanic morphology have in recent years been overshadowed by contrastive-typological research of other linguistic phenomena. The researchers have not always focused on a contrastive-typological-diachronic research on strong verbs or systems of strong conjugation, although the phenomenon is old and extremely complex. This paper takes a diachronic perspective in defining common features of strong verbs and strong conjugations in German and Norwegian, establishing thus a common denominator for present-day converging features. It uses a synchronic contrastive-typological perspective to establish and motivate diverging processes which result in a pronounced morphological asymmetry within the system. Although the diverging processes are numerous and heterogeneous, and the morphological asymmetry more than visible, the authors conclude, based on the criterial common features, that the systems of strong conjugation are synchronically part of the same typological paradigm.

*Key words:* strong conjugation, verbal categories, apophony, metaphony, introflexion, extroflexion, divergency, convergency

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

So far, the researchers haven't been concerned with more comprehensive contrastive-typological research on the conjugation systems of German and Norwegian, two genetically, typologically and geographically close languages, although the data could prove to have significant theoretical and practical consequences. From the theoretical standpoint, one could establish the causes of gradual divergencies concerning the conjugation systems of German and Norwegian which show pronounced quantitative and qualitative morphological asymmetry from a synchronic perspective. Furthermore, once the similarities and differences have been established, one could clearly see a general morphological tendency within the conjugation systems of continental Germanic languages from a prospective angle. In addition to this, the practical implications of a contrastive-typological approach could have an explanatory value for an improved approach to diverse language teaching challenges concerning German and Norwegian as foreign languages.

There as on the contrastive-typological approach to the systems of strong conjugation in these two languages has been some what neglected stems from less attention that morphology, as a traditional linguistic discipline, has received in the last couple of decades in these languages, and the fact that contrastive studies have been focusing predominantly on other linguistic systems. The contrastive research on verbs has so far been more concerned with the defectiveness of Norwegian subjunctive mode, and with establishing equivalent structures in the instances of the absolute modal asymmetry concerning German subjunctives and corresponding structures in different types of Norwegian texts. It's important to note that this type of research is to a much lesser extent concerned with a morphological perspective, but with pragmatic, translation, and textual perspectives (Fabricius Hansen 2004: 119–155; Solfjeld 2009: 219–250). The matters of contrastive inflectional morphology are part of a comprehensive research program *ProGr@mm* (started in 2007), with Norwegian being only one of the contrasted languages, with

the primary goal to analyze German inflection from the perspective of other European languages and to establish a morphological propedeutics for native experts on German language, but also for experts from other countries. Taking the number of contrasted languages into consideration, as well as the project goals, it's clear that the project could not include a systemic diachronic-typological or prospective approach (Augustin 2009: 9, 11, 13–14).

## 2. COMMON GROUNDS OF STRONG CONJUGATION IN GERMAN AND NORWEGIAN

The Germanic language has two systems of conjugation: the strong and the dental system. The strong system is historically older and is a partial inheritance of Indo-European conjugation system, while the dental (or weak) is a Germanic innovation. Common features for both are synthetic paradigms and the reduction of categorial opposites within the Proto Indo-European, apart from the tripartite category of Person. The reduction of primary ie. categorial oppositions resulted in a “morphological simplification” of the complete Germanic conjugation. The loss of dual within the category of Number has established the opposition between Singular and Plural, while the formal conflation of the subjunctive (i.e. conjunctive) with optative, and the loss of injunctive, have caused the tripartite modal opposition (indicative, subjunctive, imperative). Meanwhile, the IE temporal paradigm which comprised multiple members, and which according to several authors was more akin to aspect (Streitberg 1974: 276–281; Stanišić 2006: 252), got reduced to present and preterite tense in Germanic. The zero opposition within diathesis (Voice) concerns solely West Germanic and is brought about by complete disintegration of medial and passive voice, while Gotho-Nordic still shows some features of the mediopassive (Krahe 1969: 50–51; Ranke/Hofmann 1979: 68–69; Pudić 1972: 151–152).

The strong Germanic conjugation is predominantly thematic with a smaller number of athematic *mi*-verbs. This conjugation type is primarily characterized by four verbal stems, progressive loss of

reduplication, a special system of extroflexive markers, systemically preserved introflexion, West and North-Germanic metaphony, the possibility of simultaneous marking of grammatical categories by using both introflexive and extroflexive elements, as well as significantly lesser degree of syncretism in comparison with dental paradigms (Krahe 1967: 95–115).

## 2.1. INTROFLECTIVE ELEMENTS OF THE STRONG GERMANIC CONJUGATION

### 2.1.1. *The functionalization and persistence of apophony*

The four canonic verbal forms of the strong conjugation are based on *apophony*, the oldest known qualitative-quantitative vowel alternation present in inflection forms of the same word or etymologically related words. Its causes have to this day remained unclear but are often linked to accent features in ProtoIndo-European (Meier-Brügger 2002: 151–152; Beroić 1980: 78). When compared with IE, Germanic languages have developed, functionalized and systemized the seven IE rows of apophony (i.e., ablaut) as markers of Tense opposition with present tense vs. preterite (OHG. *bëran* 'carry' – *bar*, ON. *bera* – *bar*) as well as the opposition in Number (OHG. *bar* (Singular) – *bârum* (Plural), ON. *bar* (Singular) – *bárum* (Plural)), and in West Germanic also the category of Person (Krahe 1967: 100; Pudić 1972: 144). Due to the fact that it expresses clear grammatical meaning (marking of Tense), the apophony within the strong Germanic conjugation has the status of a positionally specific, but at the same time variable *implicit* or *replacive morph* and represents obligatory expression of the strong verbal *introflexion* within the language group as well as in contemporary language (Bilandžija 2017: 20; Schippan 1992: 83).

### 2.1.2. *The grammatical alternation of consonants*

With certain Germanic strong verbs, the opposition in Number can alternatively be marked by the *grammatical consonant alternation* (Ger. *grammatischer Wechsel*). This phenomenon comprises of a regular

change of Germanic voiced and devoiced fricatives which developed from IE tenues (IE. *p, t, k* > germ. *f/b, Þ/d, χ/g*), and it includes *rhotacism* (IE. *s* > Germ. *r*). These alternations are caused by intervocalic position of the IE tenues/fricative *s* and the stressed vowel following the fricative and different branches of the Germanic language have preserved and developed it in varying degrees (Krahe 1966: 87–88). In addition to being the secondary inflective marker of plural form, the grammatical consonant alternation can also be qualified as the secondary marker of the opposition between present and preterite, considering that it is a subject of obligatory *temporal determination*, appearing exclusively in the preterite and preterite participle forms<sup>1</sup>:

OHG. *kiosan – kōs – kurun – gi-koran* 'to choose'  
*friosan – frōs – frurun – gi-froran* 'to freeze'  
 ON. *kiōsa – kaus – kōrom – kōrenn*  
*frīōsa – frauṣ – frōrom – frōrenn*

### **2.1.3. West- and North-Germanic metaphony as marker of inflection**

In contrast with apophony, the *metaphony* (i.e. Umlaut) appears extremely seldom as the singular marker of a specific categorial feature of a strong verb, e.g. 2. person singular of the Imperative in West Germanic (OHG. *hēlfan – hilf* 'to help' – 'help!'). In this case one is dealing with the *inorganic metaphony*, presumably appearing due to an analogy with the preliterate *i*-umlaut within the present tense (Streitberg 1974: 347). The inorganic *iR*-metaphony (Nedoma 2006: 35) extremely sporadically marks the categories of Tense, Person and Number within the North-Germanic (OI. *koma – kōm* 'to come – (I) come'). In this case also, one can see the analogy with the 2. and 3. person singular, where the causer of metaphony was present in Old Norse, in contrast to the 1. person (Ranke/Hofmann 1979: 67).

Since the metaphony represents a partial regressive vowel assimilation, it appears predominantly together with an extroflexive

<sup>1</sup> The comparative-historic approach uses the term *preterite participle*. The equivalent terms in research on contemporary linguistic processes, both within German and Nordic linguistic tradition, are *perfect participle* or *participle II*.

marker which provokes it, and which is the primary bearer of the categorial features. Except for the aforementioned cases, the West and North Germanic metaphony in the oldest periods of Germanic should be considered the allomorphy of the verbal stem. In contrast to apophony, the preliterate West and North Germanic metaphony in the strong verb system has never reached the status of a systemic and primary (thus also singular) inflective marker of a grammatical category.

## 2.2. THE PROGRESSIVE LOSS OF REDUPLICATION

The simplification of the Germanic strong conjugation also implies the progressive loss of the IE reduplication as the preterite marker. The reduplication syllable appears before the verbal stem and comprises of the initial consonant within the IE verb root and the vowel *e*, followed usually by further simplification of complex consonant combinations (Stanišić 2006: 263). It occurred within the paradigms of the verbs in the seventh row of apophony. It is best attested in Gothic taking into consideration the time when the first written documents appeared (mid-4th century) and appears significantly less in Old Norse (ON. *róa* 'row' – *rera* – *rerum* – *róinn*). The evidence of its existence in West Germanic are the forms with resistant reduplication in preterite singular of the athematic verb *tuon* 'do' until the Middle High German period (de Boor/Wisniewski 1973: 134–135):

OHG. *teta*, *tâti*, *teta*

MHG. *tete*, *tæ te*, *tete*

It is probable that the loss of reduplication in the Germanic preterite can be related to it being redundant as the Tense marker, considering that the apophony was persistent and the general tendency towards it being a systemic and functionalized feature as the unequivocal temporal marker.

### 2.3. CO-OCCURENCE OF THE INTROFLECTIVE AND EXTROFLECTIVE MARKERS IN THE STRONG CONJUGATION

One of the characteristics of the strong Germanic conjugation is also the general *possibility* of simultaneous realization of both the introflective and extroflective markers of verbal categories. This co-occurrence is *morphologically determined* and this systemic possibility shows *clear topology* within the conjugation system. The simultaneous occurrence of introflective and extroflective markers is in all Germanic languages related to *secondary markers of Tense and Mode*, and its nature is always complex considering the fact that it can be *double* (more common), encompassing preterite singular/plural and preterite participle, but also *triple* (less common), encompassing preterite plural and preterite participle, but it can also occur in preterite singular by means of analogy (Schmidt 1996: 196). The double one shows frequent combination of apophony and extroflective markers:

OHG. *gēban-gâb-i - gâb-un-gi-gëb-an* 'to give'  
ON. *gefa - gaf-t- gaf-um - gef-inn*

The triple marking of grammatical categories shows without exception apophony and grammatical consonant alternation as the introflective elements in combination with secondary extroflective markers:

OHG. *fahan - fîang-i-fîang-um - gi-fang-an* 'to get, take, receive'  
ON. *fá-fekk-t - feng-um - feng-inn*

### 3. CAUSES OF MORPHOLOGICAL DIVERGENCIES BETWEEN GERMAN AND NORWEGIAN STRONG CONJUGATIONS

The linguistic causes<sup>2</sup> that lead to divergencies between the German and Norwegian strong conjugations are not morphologically

<sup>2</sup> In addition to purely linguistic factors, there have been additional non-linguistic factors which had undoubtedly influenced divergencies between the western and northern Germanic languages. The most prominent one is the early migration of

motivated in its nature but should be considered within the framework of historical accentology and the historical phonetics of Germanic languages.

### 3.1. GERMANIC ACCENT AND SYNCOPE / APOCOPE PERIODS

One of the crucial innovations occurring while the Germanic sub-family was differentiating itself from the Indo-European is the loss of melodic and non-fixed accent. Germanic carries on with the dynamic (expiratory) stress and gradually makes it fixed to the root vowel (the acrostatic type of fixed accent). Definitive finalization of the Germanic accent as initially intensive was a lengthy process, and the proof for this statement is the correlative relationship between voiced and devoiced fricatives as in Werner's Law. The acrostatic character of Germanic accent, its expiratory nature, and the dissolution of its amphikinetic character in Germanic paradigms can be characterized as the oldest, as well as primary cause that had further, far-reaching consequences for the profiling of Germanic inflectional morphology.

This type of accent has provoked the lenition of full vowels in medial and final syllables in West and North Germanic and has resulted in *syncope* – the loss of vowels in medial positions, but also complete medial syllables. In addition to this, the nature and position of the new Germanic accent caused the processes of *apocope* – the loss of vowels, but also whole syllables in final position. Syncope and apocope are common conjugation features of both Germanic language groups but the *significantly different timing* of these processes in West and North Germanic can undoubtedly be considered. the cause of the divergencies.

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Germanic tribes from their primary territories (southern Scandinavia, present day Denmark and northern Germany) in completely different directions, such as north-eastern Europe, islands in the Atlantic Ocean, as well as Middle and Southeastern Europe. It was relatively early in their development that different directions of migration, insular dislocation and geographical distance brought about weaker and weaker direct linguistic contact (Haarmann 2004: 37–38, 150; Schmidt 1996: 43, 55–58).



In contrast to German, which had preserved full unstressed vowels in atonic syllables until 1050, more precisely until the beginning of Middle High German, the north Germanic branch had been influenced by the syncope much earlier, during the later Proto Nordic period (V–VIII centuries). The syncope started with short Proto Nordic vowels, while the long vowels in medial syllables got secondarily shortened in order to go through syncope later. The same is true for the north Germanic apocope. It begins much earlier than the Middle High German period, also during the later Proto Nordic period, and is co-occurrent with syncope. The mechanism of Proto Nordic apocope is identical to that of the syncope: it is the short vowels that disappear first in final position, and the others then go through the shortening and secondary loss (Ranke/Hofmann 1979: 37).

The said phonetic laws which were caused by the initially intensive Germanic accent had brought about not only the significantly earlier *quantitative syllabic deprivation* in North Germanic, but had direct consequences for the earlier, but more pronounced simplification of the synthetic verbal inflection due to the weakening and loss of extroflexive markers. These phonetic processes have resulted in a relatively early *loss of certain grammatical categories*, and *increased degree of syncretism* in North Germanic in comparison with High German. This morphological asymmetry has been preserved to this day since newer periods within the history of Norwegian have not showed a secondary restitution of extroflexive markers.

### **3.2. EARLY NIVELLATION OF THE GRAMMATICAL CONSONANT ALTERNATION**

It's a well-known fact that different Germanic languages show a varying degree of grammatical consonant alternation, also within the system of strong conjugation. Based on written documents we know that voiced and devoiced fricatives were nivellated early in Gotho-Nordic (towards the devoiced), while the alternation was best preserved on Old Saxon and High German (Pudić 1974: 70).

It is still unclear why the grammatical consonant alternation was nivellated so early in North Germanic, but the process can with

certainly correlate with extremely early and intensive syncope and apocope. They have often resulted in *monosyllabic infinitives* (as in contemporary NO. *dra* 'to drag, travel') that have lost the consonant ('g') which could have gone through the alternation, with preterite and preterite participle that were in later stages formed in analogy with the monosyllabic infinitive, and no longer had the possibility to retain the consonant alternation. As the monosyllabic infinitive developed so early, several verbs in contemporary Norwegian can synchronically show only *latent grammatical consonant alternation* which can also be characterized as *pseudoepithetic*.

In contrast to Norwegian, West Germanic has nivellated the grammatical consonant alternation at a much slower rate, the infinitives in High German have retained their full form in all phases, and that is the reason this introflective phenomenon shows a much higher degree of *diachronic resistance* with a continuous tendency towards *quantitative simplification* in later stages of language history. After the Early New High German period (1350–1650) had ended, the grammatical alternation persisted with few strong verbs in contemporary language (GER. *erkiesen* – *erkor* – *erkoren* 'to choose', *schneiden* – *schnitt* – *geschnitten* 'to cut', *ziehen* – *zog* – *gezogen* 'to drag').

### 3.3. ABSENCE OF PRELITERARY METAPHONY IN NORTH GERMANIC PRESENT TENSE

Although the preliterate metaphony was provoked by the same factors in West and North Germanic, in the latter it didn't occur in the present tense singular forms (Ranke/Hofmann 1979: 67). Its absence is potentially caused by early processes of extroflective apocope, i.e., the fact that the factor provoking the combinatorial change of the root vowel had been lost much earlier than in West Germanic. Although the metaphony is not a qualitative vowel alternation which functions as a grammatical morph, but rather an allomorph, the North Germanic present tense paradigm shows much more reduction in morphology in comparison with Old High German:

Table 1. Differences in Old Icelandic and Old High German paradigms (indicative mood)

OIsl. <i>gefa</i> 'to give'	OHG. <i>gëban</i>
1. <i>gef</i> 1. <i>gefum</i> 2. <i>gefr</i> 2. <i>gefið</i> 3. <i>gefr</i> 3. <i>gefa</i>	1. <i>gibu</i> 1. <i>gebemes</i> 2. <i>gibis</i> 2. <i>gebet</i> 3. <i>gibit</i> 3. <i>gebant</i>

### 3.4. FUNCTIONALIZATION OF AN ORIGINALLY WEAK MARKER WITH STRONG PRETERITE PARTICIPLE

Germanic languages could form preterite participle forms in two ways: with the help of IE. *\*-ne/no-* with strong verbs showing apophony and possible reduplication, and with the help of IE. *\*-te/to-* with verbs with dental preterite. Since the dental participle marker is older than the weak verb group, one can assume that it could also occur with strong preterite participles, especially in those cases where the participles had converted to nouns or adjectives (Streitberg 1974: 195–196, 287).

The German strong preterite participles have been consequent in keeping the IE. *\*-ne/no-* marker, contemporary *-en*, while the nowadays systemic occurrence of the weak participle marker *-(e)t* within strong verb paradigms in verbal complexes is not explained as an analogy with weak participles, but as the fact that it is historically the inflected neuter participle form (Næs 1965: 173, Hanssen et al. 1975: 82). Synchronically speaking, the difference is striking: GER. *gebunde-en*: NOR. *bund-et* 'bound'<sup>3</sup>. Without the diachronic approach, the Norwegian strong participles show signs of *morphological descentence* towards the weak conjugation<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> In contemporary Norwegian this is the non-congruent participle form, used in complex tenses and passives. Reflexes of the old participle ending *-inn* (ON. *kominn, fundinn, spunnninn*), today: *-en*, can still be seen in when them as c/fem. forms of participles are used as attributes, as well as in definite and plural forms, e.g. *skreven, skrevne*.

<sup>4</sup> Participle sending in *-et* are considered to be strong participles, while many strong verb participles today are essentially weak (Næs 1965: 173; Faarlund et al 1997: 486).

#### 4. RECENT PROCESSES OF STRUCTURAL CONVERGENCIES BETWEEN THE GERMAN AND NORWEGIAN CONJUGATIONS

The high degree of syncretism, provoked by the syncope and apocope, had resulted in a general tendency towards analytic verbal forms in both languages. The primary tense opposition between the present and preterite tense becomes more complex by the appearance of the perfect, past perfect and future tenses, and additionally first and second conditional in Norwegian as integral components of the system of tenses. The analytic forms appear additionally within the infinitive and become more and more related to the voice and tense categories (present/perfect infinitive, active/passive). Both languages increase the number of auxiliary verbs (Ger. *haben*, *sein*, *werden*, *bekommen* and *gehören*, Nor. *ha*, *væ re*, *bli*, with the addition of the originally modal *skulle* and *ville*). Both languages show the tendency towards expressing the passive voice analytically, with co-occurrent semantic specification (Ger. *werden-*, *sein-*, *bekommen-* and *gehören-* passive, Nor. *bli-*, *væ re-* and *få-* passive, with the certain preservation of the synthetic modal *s-passive*).

#### 5. MORPHOLOGICAL ASYMMETRY FROM A SYNCHRONIC PERSPECTIVE

Present-day morphological asymmetry between German and Norwegian strong conjugations can be considered both from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective, but one has to remark that they overlap. The morphological simplification in Norwegian results in a qualitative asymmetry within the strong verb conjugation in the examined languages. Quantitatively the asymmetry is present in the number of verbal categorial features, the oppositions that are present, the number of possible extroflexives, but also the inventory of strong verbs. It's important to note that the system of strong conjugation in German, formally speaking, preserves the reflexes of a more conservative language stage to a higher degree.

**5.1. ABSOLUTE VS. PARTIAL SYNCRETISM OF PERSON. ASSYMETRY OF NUMBER.  
THE INVENTORY OF EXTROFLECTIVES.**

The quantitative asymmetry is present in the categories of Person and Number, but also considering the number of potential extroflexive elements. In contrast to Norwegian, where the categories of Person and Number are *de facto* lost, they have been preserved in German. The non-existence of Person in Norwegian is a consequence of the nivellation of extroflexive markers and the *absolute recurrence* of just two markers: *-(e)r* and *{-ø}* in all the “finite” paradigms. Compared with Norwegian, German shows a *partial recurrence* of Person and Number markers: *-e*, *-(e)st*, *-(e)t*, *-(e)n* and *-ø*. The result of this quantitative asymmetry in the number of extroflexive provokes an *absolute qualitative syncretism* of Person and Number in Norwegian, and a *partial qualitative syncretism* of Person and Number in German, while the degree of syncretism in German can be additionally reduced by allomorphy of the verbal stem (transition of *e* to *i*, umlaut):

NO. *jeg/du/han/hun/den/det/vi/dere/de gi-r, gav-ø*  
 GER. *ichgeb-e, du gib-st, er gib-t, wir/sie/Siegeb-en, ihrgeb-t*  
*ich/er/sie/esgab-ø, dugab-st, wir/sie/Siegab-en, ihrgab-t*

**5.2. REDUCTION OF SUPPLETIVISM WITHIN NORWEGIAN STRONG CONJUGATION**

Suppletivism is a peripheral phenomenon in Germanic strong conjugation. It is originally connected to the athematic *mi*-verb: OHG. *bim/bin*, ON. *em* '(I) am'. The canonical forms of infinitive and present tense are formed from IE. roots *\*(e)s-*, *\*bhu-/bheu-*, while the preterite is formed from the IE. root *\*yes-* (GOT. *wisan*, OHG. *wesan*) and show signs of rhotacism:

ON. *em – var – várum – verit*  
 OHG. *sin – bim – was – warun – giwesan*

In contrast to contemporary German, which has preserved the suppletive forms of all verbal roots from the protolanguage, followed by the grammatical alternation of consonants (*sein – bin – war –*

*gewesen*), the present tense stem \**bhu-/bheu-* from the protolanguage was lost exceptionally early. Neither the infinitive is formed from the \*(*e*)*s*-stem from the protolanguage, since the process of intensive nivellation of the infinitive towards the plural preterite forms had already started around year 1200, something that had brought about the loss of rhotacism (Ranke/Hofmann 1979: 65). In contrast to German, the suppletivism in contemporary Norwegian is restricted exclusively to the present tense paradigm without a synchronically explicit rhotacism: *jeg/du/... er*.

### 5.3. MANIFEST VS. LATENT GRAMMATICAL CONSONANT ALTERNATION

As a secondary introflective marker of Tense and Number, the grammatical consonant alternation has in both languages quantitatively been reduced to a smaller number of strong verbs. The differences can synchronically be said to follow this set of rules: in contemporary German it presents as *predominantly manifest* (exception: *hauen – hieb* 'to hit, beat') because it occurs in all basic forms. In Norwegian it presents as *a latent alternation with the restitution of the primary consonant*. From a strict synchronic perspective one can interpret it as *consonant pseudoepithesis*. The latent character of the grammatical alternation arrived when the full forms of infinitive got reduced to monosyllabic forms without the primary consonant that could have alternated with the consonant in the preterite form:

GER. *schneiden – schnitt–geschnitten* 'to cut', *ziehen – zog–gezogen* 'to drag'  
NOR. *gå – gikk–gått* 'to go'

### 5.4. FLUCTUATION IN PRETERITE FORMS

The preterite fluctuation is an extremely complex phenomenon, especially in contemporary Norwegian where it's still much more pronounced than in German. There are several causes responsible

for this phenomenon, which leads to different types of preterite fluctuation in contemporary language.

#### **5.4.1. Homotype fluctuation as a result of vowel nivellation**

The main cause of this type of preterite fluctuation is the fact that strong verbs in both languages have in later stages of language development gone through spontaneous processes of *vowel nivellation*. This term denotes that root vowels became the same in the singular and plural forms, which in turn leads to the apophony no longer functioning as the marker of Number (in both languages), leading to a more explicit profiling of Tense. Vowel nivellation in both languages could be twofold: 1. present-day preterite forms have preserved the vowel from former singular forms, and 2. present-day preterite forms have preserved the vowel from former plural forms. This has resulted in fewer canonical forms both in German and Norwegian from four to three (infinitive – preterite – perfect participle). The vowel nivellations are crucial in the system of strong conjugation since they are historically the last major change that has led to the profiling of present-day strong conjugation in both languages.

In contemporary German one can consider the vowel nivellation had ended by around 1650, marking thus the end of Early New High German, with sporadic stabilization until the beginning of 18. century (Srđić 2008: 69; Hartweg/Wegera 2005: 164). In contrast to this, the vowel nivellation in the Norwegian strong verb system shows a more pronounced *synchronic dynamism*, which also today provokes a frequent *homotypical fluctuation*, since its results in two forms of preterite. In contemporary German, the homotypical fluctuation is no longer systemic – it is a rare phenomenon occurring with the verbs *dreschen*, *heben*/*schwören*:

NOR. *bite* – *bet/beit* 'to bite', *fyke*–*føk/fauk* 'to blow', *klyve*–*kløv/klauv* 'to climb'

GER. *dreschen*–*drosch/drasch* 'to thresh', *heben* – *hob/hub* 'to lift', *schwören* – *schwor/schwur* 'to swear'

#### **5.4.2. Homotypical fluctuation with consonant restitution**

A special subtype of homotypical fluctuation appears on contemporary Norwegian with those verbs who have previously undergone intensive diachronic tendency of infinitive shortening towards monosyllabic structure. Present-day preterite forms fluctuate between a synchronically motivated form and a form with a consonant restitution (from previous infinitive forms). This phenomenon is system wise not specific for contemporary German:

NOR. *be – ba/bad* 'to prey, to ask', *dra – dro/drog* 'to drag', *lyge–løy/laug* 'to lie'

#### **5.4.3. Heterotypical fluctuation as a result of descendance towards weak conjugation**

This subtype of preterite fluctuation is inherent to both languages and is caused by a general tendency of strong verbs adapting or transitioning of to weak conjugation, which is nowadays considered prototypical in all Germanic languages. Considering the fact that this type of fluctuation is present in both languages, one does not consider it to be a pure morphological asymmetry, but one can determine that two opposing tendencies can be observed in the two languages: it is *more frequent* in Norwegian, but at the same time, in contrast to German, it is *less likely* to reflect a semantic difference. The result of the heterotypical preterite fluctuation is a parallelism between an older, strong form and a newer, weak inflection form and has no correlation with lexical semantic contiguity between verbs in German and Norwegian:

NOR. *Jeggravde/grov et hull*. 'I dug a hole'  
GER. *Siewebte/wobaneinemTeppich*. 'shewove a carpet'

The preterite fluctuation shows that the strong conjugation in Norwegian is less stable, that it shows pronounced synchronic dynamism as well as a more pronounced transitioning towards the weak conjugation.



### 5.5. STRONG PARTICIPLE CIRCUMFIX

There is a complete morphological asymmetry between the two languages considering the strong participle circumfix *ge-...-(e)n* as it is a German characteristic. This circumfix is different from the weak participle circumfix *ge-...-(e)t*, which means that this infinite form shows a much more obvious markedness in relations to the infinitive and preterite forms in case of identical vocalism in basic verb forms. The Norwegian perfect participles have not developed a systemic circumfix considering the fact that the former Germanic derivational element *ga-*, *gi-*, *ge-* (with perfective meaning) was specific for Gothic, West Germanic and Anglo-Saxon, according to the earliest written documents (Krahe/Meid 1969: 37–38). Based on this, the morphological opposition between the preterite and perfect participle is less defined, and can in some cases even show syncretism:

NOR. *falle – falt – falt* 'to fall', *holde – holdt – holdt* 'to hold'  
 GER. *fallen – fiel – gefallen* 'to fall', *heben – hob – gehoben* 'to lift'

In addition to this, the present-day strong participle marker *-et*, which is a historical rest of inflected neuter form, makes all strong participles in Norwegian formally close to weak participle endings (*-t, -d, -dd, -dt*). Based on this, one can conclude that Norwegian strong conjugation is less morphologically marked in contrast to the weak conjugation.

### 5.6. THE PHENOMENON OF *T*-EPITHESES IN NORWEGIAN STRONG PRETERITE

A number of strong Norwegian verbs add a final unmotivated dental ending *-t*. In these cases, the dental ending doesn't have the status of a grammatical marker, but is a case of *epithesis*, probably emerging by means of analogy with a prototypical dental preterite. Synchronically speaking, epithesis can be qualified as a type of „weakening“ of otherwise strong preterital forms:

NOR. *falle – falt* 'to fall', *vinne – vant* 'to win', *spinne – spant* 'to spin'

From a synchronic perspective the *t*-epithesis can easily be wrongly identified either with latent grammatical alternation, but also with consonant restitution. It differs from consonant restitution by the fact that *t*-epithesis appears with verbs that have preserved full infinitive forms. It differs from latent grammatical alternation by means of etymology: if former full infinitive forms used to have the dental consonant *d*, and present-day preterite has a *t*, one has to have latent grammatical alternation in mind.

### 5.7. MORPHOLOGICAL (UN)MARKEDNESS OF MODAL OPPOSITION

Although modally syncretic forms do exist, the trifold Mode opposition between indicative – subjunctive – imperative still exists in contemporary German and is much more consistently marked than in Norwegian. The causes for pronounced asymmetry within the category of Mode should certainly be identified with the maximal reduction of the Norwegian extroflexive system, at the same time as the apophony is specialized for marking the Tense, which have brought about a pronounced defectiveness of Norwegian verbal Mode.

The divergencies concerning the subjunctive arise from the 13. century onwards. German shows a tendency towards multiplying an originally binary subjunctive paradigm and begins to develop periphrastic forms also within the subjunctive paradigm. The Norwegian system is at the same time experiencing a pronounced reduction in the number of extroflexive markers, pronounced simplification of the rows of apophony and their nivellation, but is also going through a gradual loss of preterite subjunctive (Seip 1955: 321). The intensive and early processes where extroflexive markers went through apocope have resulted in that present-day present subjunctive in Norwegian is morphologically unmarked and shows syncretism with present infinitive. This has diachronically led to the loss of free syntactic use, and the subjunctive has survived in sentence structures with a predominantly optative meaning, where one also has to consider the process of phraseologisation:

NOR. *Leve kongen!* 'long live the king' *Gudvelsignedeg!* 'god bless you'

In contrast to Norwegian, German subjunctive paradigms are morphologically marked by primary (-e, -en), but also secondary extroflexive markers (-est, -et) with obligatory metaphony of the vowels *a*, *o* and *u* in preterite subjunctive, showing thus allomorphy (*käme*, *löge*, *trüge*). In addition to this, a few strong verbs in German have preserved *recessive preterite subjunctive forms* (*hülfe*, *stünde*, *würfe*).

Also imperative in Norwegian is less marked than imperative in German. The verbs with monosyllabic infinitive forms show syncretism, while the verbs with full infinitive form imperative by losing the infinitive marker -e. In contrast to German, the imperative forms in Norwegian never experience vowel metaphony, which in German marks more clearly not only the category of Mode, but also of Person. In addition to this, there is an optional and archaic extroflexive marker -ein German for 2. person singular, while the 1. person plural and distant forms are expressed by present subjunctive (adhortative subjunctive):

NOR. *Gimeg boka!*

*Hjelpmeg!*

GER. *Gib mir das Buch! Gebt mir das Buch! Geben Sie mir das Buch!*

*Hilf mir! Helft mir! Helfen Sie mir!*

*Seien wir jetzt ruhig!*

Based on this, one can conclude that the Norwegian strong conjugation is morphologically speaking “spared for” allomorphy, but also for secondary modal extroflexive markers.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Contemporary German and Norwegian are two genetically, geographically and typologically related languages, but nevertheless show a high degree of morphological asymmetry within strong verb conjugation. This asymmetry is a result of historically divergent

development of the two languages. The markers of strong Germanic conjugation were originally uniform and can positionally be classified as internal and external. Internal or introflective markers of strong Germanic conjugation are ablaut (apophony), umlaut (metaphony or regressive vowel assimilation) and regular grammatical consonant alternation. Ablaut is to be considered as specific replacive morph which indicates the category of tense. These features have invariant topology, i.e., they appear in precisely allocated positions within strong verbal paradigms.

External markers comprise of a specific system of inflection markers without dental elements, and they mark the verbal categories of person, number, tense, and mode. The inflectional system of the strong Germanic conjugation shows pronounced allomorphy. One marker can appear in multiple inflection forms, and that is why the strong conjugation also comprises of syncretic forms. Also suppletive forms can appear within the conjugation, but they are rare.

The authors have contrasted the aforementioned features and principles in German and Norwegian and have established the tendency towards weak conjugation in Norwegian. This is all due to the loss of subjunctive, the disappearance of old inflectional endings and the destruction of the paradigm but is also due to the fact that old sound changes have a less prominent role within verbal paradigms. On the other hand, German shows a tendency towards stability within the strong conjugation, preserving several sound changes, as well as strong inflectional markers. Due to that, on the synchronic level, the morphology of strong conjugation clearly differs from both weak and mixed conjugations.

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DAS SYSTEM DER STARKEN KONJUGATION IN DER  
DEUTSCHEN UND NORWEGISCHEN GEGENWARTSSPRACHE  
AUS KONTRASTIV-TYPOLOGISCHER SICHT

Zusammenfassung

Obwohl starke Verben und starke Konjugation als sehr alte und typisch germanische morphologische Phänomene zu gelten haben, sind sie bisher in der einschlägigen Literatur aus der kontrastiv-typologisch-diachronen Sicht nur unzureichend beschrieben worden. Die vorliegende Arbeit stellt eine Vereinigung von zwei nur oberflächlich gegensätzlichen Betrachtungsweisen dar, dank denen äußerst komplexe und verschiedenartige Prozesse der sprachlichen Konvergenzen und Divergenzen zwischen den deutschen und norwegischen starken Verbalsystemen erhellt werden konnten. Mithilfe der diachronen Betrachtungsweise wurde eine gemeinsame deutsch-norwegische Grundlage der starken Konjugation festgestellt, auf der die heutigen konvergenten Prozesse beruhen, während mithilfe der synchronen Betrachtungsweise Divergenzen im heutigen System der starken deutschen und norwegischen Verben beschrieben wurden. Obwohl Divergenzen, die auf verschiedene Ursachen zurückzuführen sind, zwischen der gegenwärtigen deutschen und norwegischen starken Konjugation sehr zahlreich und heterogen sind, was in der äußerst ausgeprägten morphologischen Asymmetrie zum Vorschein kommt, kann aufgrund der vorliegenden Untersuchung festgestellt werden, dass die beiden Systeme dem gleichen typologischen Paradigma angehören.

*Schlüsselwörter:* starke Konjugation, verbale Kategorien, Ablaut, Umlaut, innere Flexion, äußere Flexion, Divergenzen, Konvergenzen