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***Hearsay* and lexical evidentials in Old Germanic languages, with focus on Old English**

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This article offers a paradigmatic survey of auditory evidential constructions in Old English: direct-perception constructions – *accusativus cum infinitivo* (ACI) introduced by the auditory *(ge)hieran* ‘to hear’ (*(ge)hieran*+ACI) – and hearsay-evidence constructions, consisting of the verb *(ge)hieran* with the infinitive of a verb of utterance (*(ge)hieran*+Inf), followed by a compliment clause, a prepositional clause, or a parenthetical. Comparative data from other Old Germanic languages suggests a common origin of both constructions. It is further hypothesised that these two do not go back to the same Proto-Germanic construction: *(ge)hieran*+ACI is more likely to have arisen from the reanalysis of the verbal noun in *I heard his speech* into an ACI with a verb of ‘speaking’ *I heard him speak*, while *(ge)hieran*+Inf could have developed from *I heard the story* into *I heard (the) say* with the verb of ‘saying’.

1. Introduction

It is a well-known fact that Germanic languages, and Western European languages more generally, do not encode evidentiality in the verbal morphology (Chafe 1986; Aikhenvald 2004:355; Whitt 2010:1–3; Wiemer 2010:62–67). What these languages do instead is signify information source by various lexical means: perception verbs (e.g. ‘see,’ ‘hear’), modal verbs (e.g. ‘must’), verbs of utterance (e.g. ‘speak,’ ‘say’), sentential adverbs (e.g. ‘apparently,’ ‘supposedly’), etc. (Diewald & Smirnova 2010b:1–6).¹ Among these means, perception verbs and verbs with a ‘say’-component are ones that occur most frequently cross-linguistically and often

1. For a survey of these lexical means in English and German, see Whitt (2010:14–39). A classification of hearsay lexemes in other European languages (defined geographically and including Turkish, Armenian, Georgian, and Estonian) is given in Wiemer (2010:69–113); see also other contributions to Diewald and Smirnova’s 2010a volume.

grammaticalise into morphological evidentials (Aikhenvald 2004: 271–274). It is the relation between these two groups (perception and utterance) that I investigate here and illustrate with data from the Old Germanic languages, which seldom come into typological discussions of evidentiality in literature. More specifically I address Old English auditory perception verb (*ge*)*hieran*² ‘hear’ and its infinitival complements and compare these findings to cognates of (*ge*)*hieran* in other Old Germanic languages and their complementation patterns. I, thus, share a broader understanding of evidentiality and evidential markers, one that includes not only grammatical mark-up but also lexical means (see Diewald & Smirnova (eds.) 2010a in general and Wiemer (2010: 60) in particular), such as verbs of perception and verbs or verbal phrases denoting hearsay evidence. Following existing classifications, I distinguish between two basic groups of evidentials, with two subgroups within the second group:

1. Direct/first-hand perception
2. Indirect perception
 - a. Indirect/second-hand inference
 - b. Indirect/second-hand hearsay evidence (Chafe 1986: 261–264; Willett 1988: 57; Aikhenvald 2004: 25, 63–66; Plungian 2010: 35–38).

I address these groups in more detail in the relevant sections of this article, illustrate them with Old English (OE) examples and supply comparative material from other Old Germanic languages if it is available. The aim of this comparison (presented in Sections 3.1 and 3.2) is to establish whether auditory evidential constructions in OE and other Old Germanic languages developed from a common stock, to analyse the specific construction types in which (*ge*)*hieran* and its cognates are used, and to find out what specific evidential meanings are bound to these constructions. These findings are summarised in Section 3.3. Further in 3.4, I attempt a more detailed analysis of the verbs of utterance that are used in evidential constructions in combination with (*ge*)*hieran* in Old English and address the co-lexicalisation of *hear-say* in English and German, which is to lay the ground for my discussion of the origin of the direct auditory perception and hearsay evidence constructions in Proto-Germanic in Section 3.5. The bulk of my data presented in Section 3 deals with *hear*+Inf constructions which would in present-day English correspond to something like *I’ve heard say that he is a nice chap*. These are typically treated in literature as *accusativus cum infinitivo* (ACI) constructions with ellipsis of the accusative (see Note 13 below). Thus, a full construction would be *I’ve heard people say that he is a nice chap*. In 3.5 I suggest that *hear*+Inf

2. I use the spelling (*ge*)*hieran* to refer collectively to both the prefixed verb *gehieran* and the simplex *hieran*.

and *hear*+ACI could have developed independently of each other at a stage when Proto-Germanic infinitives were still construed as verbal nouns. Corpus data for the study is introduced in Section 2.

2. The data

OE data for this study come from the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (DOEC), “an online database consisting of at least one copy of every surviving Old English text” (c. 700–1150) and containing about 3,033,000 words, and from the syntactically annotated *York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (YCOE). For comparative Old Germanic material, I consulted *Heimskringla Project*, an online database of some 2,000 Old Norse texts (primarily the *Eddas*, the Icelandic sagas and skaldic poetry); *Project Wulfila*, an online database of surviving Gothic texts (Gothic Bible and minor fragments), with syntactic annotation; and TITUS online database (*Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien*) for Old High German and Old Saxon. The chief criterion for choosing these resources on the Old Germanic languages was their availability. In selecting Old Germanic examples for this study, I limit my upper time frame to the end of the OE period and only include those whose composition can be dated to before 1150 to be able to compare roughly contemporary developments. Later material is quoted on a few occasions when this criterion cannot be met. It is not my intention here to attempt a statistical evaluation of auditory and hearsay evidentials in Gothic, Old High German, Old Saxon, and Old Norse, but rather to suggest a typology of cognate constructions in these languages and to check whether they could have developed from a common stock. It is to be hoped that with the emergence of new electronic resources for these languages, the results of this study could be revisited and corroborated with a more extensive analysis of data going beyond Old English. To trace the long-term diachronic development of English auditory and hearsay evidentials, I also examined the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (CME) and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED).

3. OE (*ge*)*hieran*: Its complements and cognates

To obtain OE data from the YCOE, I ran CorpusSearch Programme with several input commands, such as

```
node: IP*
query: ((IP-MAT dominates IP-INF*)
AND (geher*|gehyr*|gehir*|gehier* precedes IP-INF*))
```

I also searched for simplex forms of *hieran* (with spelling variants) preceding the infinitival clause (IP-INF) and for the reversed order of constituents – infinitival clauses followed by (ge)*hieran*. I then supplemented these data with proximity searches in the DOEC for collocations of (ge)*hieran* with the infinitives that had been yielded by the YCOE, so as to obtain the data from verse texts and to make sure that I get the constructions which might have been missed by the parser.³ This procedure yielded a total of 166 hits. The complete list of verbs used as infinitival complements of (ge)*hieran* is as follows:

- *secgan* ‘to say’ (106 tokens)
- *rædan* ‘to read, explain’ (23)
- *sprecan* ‘to speak’ (15)
- *nemnan* ‘to name, call’ (7)
- *reccan* ‘to tell, explain’ (7)
- *cweþan* ‘to say’ (2)
- *cyþan* ‘to tell’ (2)
- *maþelian* ‘to speak’ (2)
- *hrutan* ‘to snore’ (1)
- *huntan* ‘to hunt’ (1)⁴

Among these the source of information (the direct object of the perception verb) is implicit (henceforth (ge)*hieran*+Inf construction) in 144 tokens (or 87 per cent of the data), as below:

- (1) *Hwæt, we nu gehyrdon secgan hwylc hit is on helle*
 what we now hear-PRET-PL say-INF which it is in hell
to bionne (HomS 4 222)
 to be
 ‘Lo, we have now heard say what it is like to be in hell’

In the remaining 22 tokens (13 per cent), we have a full *accusativus cum infinitivo* (ACI) construction (henceforth (ge)*hieran*+ACI construction):

- (2) *Of þære tide, þe ic ærest mid þe on þisum westene eardode,*
 of that time that I first with thee in this wasteland lived
ic þe gehyrde sprecan on æfenne and on
 I thou-ACC hear-PRET-1SG speak-INF on evening and on

3. This double-checking proved to be useful in my previous studies: Timofeeva (2010) and Kilpiö & Timofeeva (2011).

4. I examine the example with *huntan* in my dissertation (Timofeeva 2010) on p. 135. For the reasons explained there, I consider it very marginal for the present analysis.

ærenmergen, ic nat mid hwæne (LS 10.1 (Guth) 20.73)
 early-morning I not-know with whom
 ‘At the time when I first lived with you in the wilderness, I heard you speak
 in the evening and early morning I did not know with whom’

In what follows I survey these complementation patterns in more detail. Comparative material from other Germanic languages: Gothic, Old High German (OHG), Old Saxon (OS), and Old Norse (ON) is provided (if available) for each OE pattern.

3.1 Direct perception

Auditory evidentials are part of a bigger subsystem of sensory or non-visual perception. They introduce information acquired through hearing and signal direct access to this information (Chafe 1986:267; Willett 1988:57; Plungian 2010:37). Thus hearing and the event that is heard are construed as happening simultaneously. Compare examples from present-day English and German: *I hear Karen singing*; *Ich höre Karen singen* (Whitt 2010:9).

3.1.1 (ge)hieran+ACI construction

Syntactically this evidential value can be coded by full ACI constructions in OE (similarly to modern and present-day English (Whitt 2010:140–145)). Infinitival complements in these constructions are typically verbs of sound emission (Timofeeva 2010:135), as below:

- (3) *Ða he þæne cyrcward gehyrde ofer eall*
 when he that-ACC churchwarden-ACC hear-RET-3SG over all
hrutan, þa ne wænde he him nanes incymes (Leof 31.34)
 snore-INF then not thought he him no entrance
 ‘when he heard the churchwarden snore very loudly, he thought that it
 would not be possible for him to enter [the church]’

More specifically and overwhelmingly so – 20 out of 22 occurrences – the complements are verbs of utterance (see Table 1):

- (4) *Hwæt ða cempa ða hine gelæhton. for þan ðe*
 what the soldiers then him seized for that that
hi gehyrdon hine be þam cyrclicum
 they hear-RET-PL he-ACC of the churchly
maðmum spreca (ÆCHom I,29 420.70)
 treasures speak-INF
 ‘Lo, then the soldiers seized him, for they heard him speak of the treasures
 of the church’

Direct perception of St Lawrence’s words in this homily is taken as evidence against him. He is seized by the soldiers of the prefect of Rome precisely because they have heard him mention the treasures of the church in his prayer (ÆCHom I,29 420.68).⁵ Both here and in (3), the focus is on hearing itself rather than on reported information (cf. Whitt 2010: 140).

Table 1. Direct auditory perception: (ge)hieran+ACI constructions

<i>seġan</i>	10
<i>spreċan</i>	7
<i>maþelian</i>	2
<i>reccan</i>	1
<i>hrutan</i>	1
<i>huntan</i>	1
Total	22

Previous research has shown that ACIs with verbs of direct perception are a common feature in Old Germanic languages (Callaway 1913: 185–186; Scheler 1961: 92; Mitchell 1985: §§3741–3743). Accordingly, we find similar uses of *hōrian* and *heyra* with an ACI complement in the ninth-century OS (*Heliand*) and ON (the Eddic *Old Lay of Guthrun*, whose composition is dated to before 1000, but the surviving manuscript to 13th century):

- (5)

quāðun

that sie

ina

selbon

seġgian

gihôrdin,

[they] said

that they

he-ACC

self-ACC

say-INF

hear-PRET-3PL

that he

[mahti]

teuuerpen

thena uuîh

godes

that he

[could]

knock-down

that

shrine

of-god

(Heliand lx.5073–5074)

‘they said that they had heard himself say that he could knock down the shrine of god’
- (6)

þá

heyrir

þú

then

hear-PRES-2SG

thou

hrafna

gjalla,

ravens-ACC

cry-INF

örnu

gjalla

eagles-ACC

cry-INF

5. To prevent the church property being seized by the prefect, St Lawrence distributed it among the poor and suffering of Rome, for which he was imprisoned and martyred.

æzli fegna,
 carrion happy
varga þjóta
 wolves-ACC howl-INF
of veri þínum (Guðrúnarkviða in forna 8.3–8)
 of husband thine
 ‘then you (will) hear / the ravens cry, / the eagles cry / happy with carrion, /
 the wolves howl / about your husband’

Here again direct auditory perception helps to interpret facts and to verify rumours: the guilt of Christ is established by the law-interpreters who have heard him promise to destroy the old temple (5), while the death of Sigurd is revealed to Gudrun by the cries of wolves and birds of carrion at his corpse (6).

3.1.2 (ge)hieran+Inf

First-hand auditory perception can also be coded by an (ge)hieran+Inf construction. In these cases, context typically suggests habitual events or immediate past reference, as below:

- (7) *On þam halgan godspelle þe ge gehyrdon nu rædan us*
 on that holy gospel that ye hear-PRET-PL now read-INF us
segð be Lazare (ÆHom 6 1)
 says of Lazar
 ‘in the holy gospel that you have heard [me] read just now we are told
 about Lazar’

Example (7) reflects a common medieval situation when people would listen to books being read to them but could not read themselves. Thus, here we can envisage a preacher who has just finished reading the Gospel in Latin (which is suggested by the adverb *nu*) and is now going to explain and comment on its contents in English. A direct reference to the preacher is, however, omitted.

A similar use of *hōrian* taking an infinitive without the accusative NP is found in the OS *Heliand* (ninth century):

- (8) *Manag fagonoda*
 many rejoiced
uuerod aftar [them] uuīha: gihōrdun uuilspel mikil
 people at [the] shrine hear-PRET-3PL good-news great
fon gode seggean (Heliand vi.526–528)
 about god say-INF
 ‘many rejoiced among the people at the shrine/[as] they heard say great
 and welcome news about God’

This example refers to prophetess Anna whose words about the birth of the Saviour have been quoted in the preceding verses (cf. Luke 2.36–38). Thus, the source of information is omitted but can be retrieved from previous context.⁶

3.1.3 (ge)hieran+Inf+PP

This structure can be seen as an extension of (ge)hieran+Inf, in which the source of information is indicated overtly by a prepositional phrase with *fram* ‘from’, *of* ‘from’, or *þurh* ‘through’ followed by an animate human noun:

- (9) *Ond monige men þa ðe þas þing gehyrdon secgan*
 and many men when they these things hear-PRET-PL say-INF
from þæm forsprecenan were, wæron bærnde
 from that abovementioned man were kindled
in geleafan (Bede 4 23.330.16)
 in faith
 ‘And in many people who had heard this man speak about these things faith was kindled’

Similarly in the early-thirteenth-century *Yngvar’s Saga*:

- (10) *Glúmr hafði numit at föður sínum, en Þórir hafði numit af*
 Glum had taken from father his, and Thorir had taken from
Klökku Sámssyni, en Klakka hafði heyrt segja ina
 Klakka Samsson, and Klakka had hear-PART2 say-INF among
fyrri frændr sína (Yngvars saga víðförla xiv)
 older of-family his
 ‘Glum had got it from his father, and Thorir had got it from Klakka Samsson, and Klakka had heard it told by the elders in his family’

Because my data on this type is limited to 3 occurrences of (ge)hieran+secgan+PP in OE, it is rather difficult to conclude whether it is equivalent to the ACI construction: does *I heard say from him* imply *I heard him say*, and thus is it a clear case of direct evidentiality? As in 3.1.2. the interpretation depends on the focus. If it is placed on the information and its source, Examples (9) and (10) qualify as hearsay evidence; if, on the other hand, the focus is on hearing, they are direct auditory evidence (mark the importance of multiple witnesses in (9) and possible contrast between *hafði numit* and *hafði heyrt segja* in (10)).⁷

6. An alternative interpretation is proposed in 3.5.

7. Whitt is inclined towards the former interpretation (2010: 142, 156–158).

3.1.4 Gothic data

My searches in the *Project Wulfila* database revealed that Gothic cognate of (*ge*) *hieran* – (*ga*)*hausjan* – can take *accusativus cum participio* (ACP) as complement. There are five constructions of this type with participle 1 (John 7.32; Luke 18.36; Mark 12.28, 14.58; and Thessalonians II 3.11) and two constructions with participle 2 (Luke 4.23, 9.7) in the Gothic New Testament.

- (11) *hausidedun þan Fareisaieis þo managein*
 hear-PRET-3PL then Pharisees this-ACC multitude-ACC
birodjandein bi ina þata (John 7.32)
 murmur-PART1-ACC about him this
 ‘then the Pharisees heard people murmuring such things about him’

Closer examination showed, however, that all seven occurrences of the ACP translated similar participial constructions of the Greek original. There are no attestations of (*ga*)*hausjan*+ACP in the original Gothic *Skeireins*, a commentary on the Gospel of St John, to ascertain whether this construction could be used in Gothic independently of a Greek source text. Further my analysis of ACPs as complements of perception verbs in OE suggests that these constructions are also mostly found in translations from Latin (Timofeeva 2010: 139–141). It seems therefore that the Gothic data on ACPs should best be treated as ambiguous and not be included in the typology of auditory evidential constructions in the Old Germanic languages.

3.2. Indirect perception

Indirect evidence requires either inference, reasoning, interpretation of the perceived information or verbal report, hearsay, folklore (Chafe 1986: 268; Willett 1988: 57–58). Both types of indirect evidence first have to be acquired through some form of perception (typically, visual or auditory) in order to be interpreted or passed on as hearsay (cf. Whitt 2010: 10–11).

Inferential evidence in modern and present-day English is typically coded by *see* with a finite clause as complement (Boulonnais 2010: 18–22; Whitt 2010: 40, 57–61):

- (12) *Leaphorn could see Dashee was hating this. He'd pushed his uniform cap back on his head. His face was flushed. His forehead was beaded with perspiration.* (T. Hillerman, 1998, quoted in Boulonnais 2010: 19)

This use of *see* involves a semantic shift SEE → REALISE/UNDERSTAND and includes seeing some signs or symptoms and interpreting their meaning. In (12) Leaphorn observes the cap, flushed face and perspiration of Dashee and concludes that the

latter is uncomfortable and hates the situation he is in. Similarly in OE, inferential evidence is coded by visual *(ge)seon* ‘see’ (see Timofeeva 2010: 138–141). Because inference indicated by auditory *(ge)hieran* is not attested in my data, I do not discuss this evidential meaning any further, but concentrate instead on hearsay. According to Whitt (2010: 136), *hear*+finite complement clause with or without *that*-complementiser is the default encoding of hearsay evidence:

- (13) *I heare she is worthe a thousande pounde and more.* (Helsinki Corpus: CEPLAY1A, Nicholas Udall, *Roister Doister* (1500–1570), p. L. 131, quoted in Whitt 2010: 137)

The event has not been heard directly – nor can being worth a thousand pound and more be virtually heard – but acquired from a second-hand unspecified source. Importantly for the purposes of the present study, Whitt remarks that hearsay “sometimes is explicitly marked as such, i.e. the speech-act verb *say* occurs right alongside the perception verb *hear*” (2010: 138):

- (14) *I heard say that your husband would now put you in your hood, and silke gowne, I pray you is it true?* (Helsinki Corpus: CEFICT2B, Thomas Deloney, *Jack of Newbury* (1619), p. 70, quoted in Whitt)

The content of the proposition in the complement clause was reported by a non-specified individual(s) and perceived through hearing. We are now going to see what precursors this encoding of hearsay evidentiality had in OE and its cognate languages.

3.2.1 *(ge)hieran*+*Inf*+*þæt*- / *wh*-clause

There are three ways to indicate hearsay evidence in OE, in which *(ge)hieran* co-occurs with a verb of utterance. The first one is to use a finite form of *(ge)hieran* with an infinitive (typically of the verb *secgan*, see Table 2) and a finite complement clause introduced by *þæt*⁸ (24 occurrences):

- (15) *ic gehyrde secgan þæt þu wære gleaw þæron* (Gen 41.15)
I hear-PRET-1SG say-INF that thou were skilful thereon
‘I have heard say that you are skilful in that [in interpreting dreams]’
- (16) *Forðam we gehyrað reden on ðam godspelle þæt Crist*
for-that we hear-PRES-PL read-INF on that gospel that Christ

8. Cross-linguistically this is often the underlying etymological structure of morphological hearsay evidentials (Anderson 1986: 285).

cwæde þæt he were weig and soðfasnes and lyf (Solil 1 51.11)
said-SUBJ that he were way and truth and life
‘For we hear it read in the Gospel that Christ said that he was the way
and truth and life’

The speaker (pharaoh) in (15) indicates that his information derives from an unspecified source. Although it has been perceived through hearing, auditory perception here is the means by which this information has been acquired rather than direct evidence for it. Similarly in (16), the focus is on the report of what Christ said, rather than on the fact that the Gospel was read and listened to. The proposition in the complement clauses may or may not be true (mark also the subjunctive of *þu wære* and *Crist cwæde*).

Further, there are 9 occurrences of finite *wh*-complement clauses after (*ge*) *hieran*+*secgan*, see example (1) which I reproduce here for convenience:

- (1) *Hwæt, we nu gehyrdon secgan hwylc hit is on helle to bionne* (HomS 4 222)

Table 2. Hearsay evidence: (*ge*)*hieran*+Inf+*þæt*- / *wh*-clause

<i>secgan</i>	30
<i>cyþan</i>	1
<i>rædan</i>	1
<i>reccan</i>	1
Total	33

These encodings of hearsay evidence are attested in other Old Germanic languages, compare examples with OHG *hōrran* and ON *heyra* below:⁹

- (17) *Ik gihorta ðat seggen,* (Hildebrandslied 1–3)
I hear-PRET-1SG that say-INF
ðat sih urhettun ænon muotin:
that each-other challengers alone met
Hiltibrant enti Hadubrant untar heriun tuem
Hildebrand and Hadubrand between armies two
‘I have heard it say / that warriors met each other alone / Hildebrand and
Hadubrand, between two armies’

9. See also example (317) in Whitt (2010: 156).

In ON (again I quote one of the Eddic lays recorded in the 13th century) the complement clause can be introduced by *hvé*:

- (18) *Heyrða ek segja*
 hear-PRET-1SG I say-INF
í sögum fornum,
 in sagas old
hvé mæðr of kom
 how maiden came
til Mornalands (Oddrúnarkviða 1.1–4)
 to Morningland
 ‘I have heard say / in old sagas / how a maiden came / to Morningland’

Because both tokens occur in the opening lines of the poems (cf. also examples 19, 24, 26, 29, and the conclusion of *Yngvar's Saga* in 10), this suggests a common Germanic strategy to mark hearsay when a poet was about to begin his narrative and wanted to evoke the authority of the oral tradition (cf. a similar observation on Germanic and non-Indo-European heroic poetry in Bowra 1952: 40).

3.2.2 (ge)hieran+Inf+PP

Another way to introduce indirect evidence is to use a combination of ‘hear’ and ‘say’ together with ‘about’ prepositional phrase (*be, fram, of, ymbe*). PPs in this construction do not introduce the source of information (as in 3.1.3), but rather the focus of the report transmitted via hearsay. Only *secgan* and *sprecan* are attested in these constructions (see Table 3).

- (19) *Hyrde ic secgan gen bi sumum fugle*
 hear-PRET-1SG I say-INF also about some bird
wundorlicne [***] (Part 1–2)
 wonderful
 ‘I have also heard it say about a certain wonderful bird ...’
- (20) *In þære stowe wæs gewuna, þæt man hwilum ymb*
 in that place was custom that one sometimes about
fisc gehyrde sprecan & þær næs næfre
 fish hear-PRET-3SG speak-INF and there not-was never
nan gesewen (GD 1 (C) 1.11.16)
 none seen
 ‘In that place, people were accustomed to hearing reports about fish but none of them had ever seen a fish’

“Exotic” animals – partridge (19) and fish (20) – have never been observed in the communities implied in (19) and (20), but people know about them from folklore and other second-hand accounts.

Table 3. Hearsay evidence: (ge)hieran+Inf+‘about’-PP

<i>secgan</i>	24
<i>sprecan</i>	6
Total	30

Hearsay markers with prepositional phrases are often found either within a relative clause – as in (21) – or in a superordinate clause that introduces a relative one – as in (22), where hearsay evidence is made even more tentative by the use of the pre-modal verb *magan*.

- (21) *Ða þohte ic þæt þæt wære seo helle þe ic oft on life*
 then thought I that that were the hell that I often in life
embe secgan gehyrde (ÆCHom II, 23 200.31)
 about say-INF hear-PRET-1SG
 ‘Then I thought that this was Hell about which I have often heard say’
- (22) *Magon we nu gehyran secgan þe suman halgan men*
 may-PRES-PL we now hear-INF say-INF about some holy man
se wæs on gastlice gesyhðe gelæded (HomU 55 (Thorpe) 69)
 that was in spiritual vision led
 ‘Now we can hear say a story about a holy man who was instructed in a spiritual vision’

Again the emphasis is on the objects/persons – *Hell* and *a holy man* – that are introduced or described by the PPs, while the knowledge about them is clearly second-hand.

3.2.3 (ge)hieran+secgan in swa-parentheticals

Yet another way to encode hearsay is a parenthetical clause connected by means of *swa* ‘so, as’:

- (23) *To þissum dagum þurh haligne gast þis fæsten &*
 to these days through holy ghost this fast and
þas gangdagas geset weron, swa we oft on bocum
 the gang-days set were as we often in books
gehyrdon secgan (HomS 33 (Först) 26)
 hear-PRET-PL say-INF
 ‘this fasting and the procession days have been observed until these days through the holy spirit, as we have often heard say in books’

We can only hypothesise a generic reference to some wise men of the books whose authority is evoked here to emphasise the importance of fasting and religious processions. Intensifying adverbs – such as *oft* ‘often’, *gelome* ‘frequently’,

and *soplice* ‘indeed, truly’ – can be used to emphasise the reliability of rumours or tradition.

- (24) *swa we soplice secgan hyrdon* (Beo 273)
 as we truly say-INF hear-PRET-PL
 ‘as we have truly heard say’
- (25) *swa we oft & gelome secgan gehyrdon* (HomS 24.1 (Scragg) 33)
 as we often and frequently say-INF hear-PRET-PL
 ‘as we have often heard say’

A total of 12 *swa*-parentheticals (only with *secgan*) are attested in the DOEC.

There are several attestations of *so*-parentheticals in the early-thirteenth-century manuscripts of the *Song of the Nibelungs*. The examples from the oldest manuscript B are lines 901, 3801, 7151, 7611, and 10561, all of them containing the following formula:

- (26) *so wir horen sagen*
 as we hear-PRES-PL say-INF
 ‘as we hear say’

As we see, first person prevails in these constructions. Whitt observes that the use of hearsay markers with *as*-parentheticals in English (and with *wie*-parentheticals in German) signals a heightened degree of intersubjectivity “among parenthetical constructions ... There is a greater awareness of a larger speech community, and therefore an implicit acceptance of alternate possibilities of perception, evidence, and interpretations thereof” (2010: 150–151, at 151, cf. 164–165).

3.2.4 Gothic data

There is only one example of *hausjan*+ACI encoding hearsay evidence in the surviving Gothic texts.

- (27) *unte gairnjands was allaize izwara jah unwunands,*
 for longing he-was (after) of-all you and distressed
in pizei hausideduþ ina siukan (Philippians 2.26)
 in that hear-PRET-2PL he-ACC sick-INF/-ADJ-ACC
 ‘for he longed after all of you and was distressed, because you had heard
 that he had been sick’

My gloss in (27) and the analysis of the compilers of the *Wulfila Project* indicate that the status of *siukan* is ambiguous: it can be interpreted both as an infinitive

and as a weak masculine adjective in the accusative plural. Interestingly, *hausid-eduþ ina siukan* translates a *that*-finite complement clause of the Greek source. Nevertheless, even if this example represents original Gothic usage, it is not possible to decide how it fits into the Old Germanic system of auditory evidentials, let alone to reconstruct whether anything like *hausjan*+**sagjan* or *hausjan*+*qīþan* had a place in it.

3.3 Some conclusions

This survey has shown that in terms of lexical means OE and other Old Germanic languages (with the exception of Gothic, for which we do not have enough data) seem to have similar ways of marking direct auditory perception and hearsay evidence. In fact the degree of overlap is high enough to suggest common origin of both *hear*+ACI and *hear*+Inf constructions in Proto-Germanic (or at least in West and North Germanic). More corpus research on individual languages and more comparative work on their later stages, therefore, would be very welcome as both will help to reveal diverging tendencies and to explain the differences of the present-day situation (see, e.g. Whitt 2010).

3.4 Verbs of utterance and their syntactic context

It may have become clear already that different verbs of utterance favour different types of syntactic context. In this section, I provide a brief survey of the structures in which verbs of utterance occur or which they take as complements. I begin with the less frequent and proceed to *secgan*.

3.4.1 *cweþan*

Both examples of *cweþan* have a *to*-PP complement occurring in a (ge)*hieran*+Inf construction. One of them is followed by direct speech:

- (28) *Me wæran mine tearas for hlafas, ægþer ge on dæg ge on*
to-me were my tears for bread, both on day and on
niht; þonne ic gehyrde <to> <me> cweþan, Hwær is þin
night; then I hear-RET-1SG to me say-INF, where is thy
God, þe þu to hopast? (PPs (prose) 41.3)
God, that thou hope-to
‘I had my tears for bread night and day; and then I heard it spoken to me,
Where is your God in whom you put hope’

No other verb in my data takes a *to*-PP. Both occurrences of (ge)*hieran*+*cweþan* imply direct auditory perception.

3.4.2 *cyþan*

On one occasion *cyþan* takes *þæt*-clause as complement:

- (29) *Hwæt, we þæt hyrdon þurh halige bec*
 what, we that hear-PRET-PL through holy books
tacnum cyðan, þæt twegen mid him
 tokens tell-INF, that two with him
geþrowedon, ond he wæs þridda sylf
 suffered, and he was third self
on rode treo (EI 852)
 on rood tree
 ‘Lo, we heard it told through symbols in the holy Gospels that two men
 suffered with him, and he himself was the third on the rood’

The source of information is introduced by *þurh*-PP. Mark also that here *(ge)hieran-cyþan* occurs again in the opening lines of the narrative, when St Helena is going to give a brief account of the crucifixion story to wise Jewish men in Jerusalem. The second instance of *cyþan* is found in an extended phrase where *(ge)hieran* takes four infinitives as complements, while each infinitive takes an NP as direct complement in turn.

- (30) *þonne we gehyron Godes bec us beforan reccean*
 when we hear-PRES-SUBJ-1PL God's books us before explain-INF
& rædan, & godspell secggean, & his wuldorþrymmas
 and read-INF, and gospel say-INF, and his heavenly-glories
mannum cyþan (HomU 20 (BlHom 10) 73)
 to-men tell-INF
 ‘when we would hear God's books explained and read before us, and gospel
 said, and his heavenly glories made known to people’

3.4.3 *maþelian*

The two instances of *maþelian* occur within ACI constructions (see Table 1), indicating direct auditory perception:

- (31) *þonne ic sigedrihten,*
 then I victory-lord
mihtigne god, mæðlan gehyrde
 mighty god speak-INF hear-PRET-1SG
strangre stemne, and me her stondan het (GenA,B 523)
 strange voice-ACC and me here stand ordered
 ‘then, o Lord of victory, mighty God, I heard a strange voice speak, which
 ordered me to stand here’

3.4.4 *nemnan*

Among the seven instances of (ge)hieran-*nemnan*, the following pattern emerges: *nemnan* occurs in a relative clause (4 instances) or a temporal clause (3 instances) and takes a direct object:

- (32) *Swelce þone mæran morgensteorran,*
 just-as that greater morning-star
þe we oðre naman æfensteorra
 that we other name evening-star
nemnan herað, *ðu genedest þone*
 name-INF hear-PRES-1PL thou force that-one
þæt he þære sunnan sið bewitige (Met 4.13)
 that he that sun's journey observe
 'Just as You force this greater morning-star [moon], which we also hear
 named by another name – evening-star, to observe the journey of the sun'
- (33) *þonne þu gehyrst nemnan þone fæder. þonne*
 when thou hear-PRES-2SG name-INF that father, then
understent þu ðæt he hæfð sunu (ÆCHom I, 20 339.128)
 understandest thou that he has son
 'when you hear Father mentioned, then you understand that he has a Son'

In 5 instances, direct objects are proper names as in (32). Only one example with *nemnan* in my data is an ACI construction (Beo 2023).

3.4.5 *reccan*

Reccan is typically used in combination with another infinitive: *secgan* (3 instances) and *rædan* (2 instances, see example (30)). It thus produces a somewhat tautological effect, which is, however, characteristic of many OE texts (see Koskeniemi 1968). *Reccan* is used once within an ACI construction (LS 13 (Machutus) 17r.17) and once to introduce a *þæt*-clause (Bo 35.98.25).

3.4.6 *sprecan*

Like *maþelian*, *sprecan* has a tendency to be used in ACI constructions (see Table 1), as in example (2), which I reproduce here for convenience:

- (2) *Of þære tide, þe ic ærest mid þe on þisum westene eardode, ic þe gehyrde sprecan*
on æfenne and on ærenmergen, ic nat mid hwæne (LS 10.1 (Guth) 20.73)

This probably has to do with the fact that both verbs are semantically verbs of 'speaking' rather than 'saying/quoting' and are thus better suited to participate in direct auditory perception rather than hearsay (I return to this distinction shortly). Cf. also example (4).

3.4.7 *rædan*

As has been observed in Section 3.1.2 (example (7)), (*ge*)*hieran-rædan* reflects a situation specific to predominantly illiterate communities.¹⁰ The recurrence of this combination in the sources (particularly in homilies) points to the importance of reading aloud as part of religious life and instruction.

- (7) *On þam halgan godspelle þe ge gehyrdon nu rædan us segð be Lazare*
(ÆHom 6 1)

The agent who does the actual reading can generally be reconstructed as ‘priest’ or ‘preacher’. The distinction between those people in the audience who could read themselves and those who could not is made explicit in 6 instances out of 23:

- (34) *þonne we bec rædað oððe rædan gehyrað,*
when we books read-PRES-1PL or read-INF hear-PRES-1PL,
þonne sprecð God to us þurh þa
then speaks God to us through those
gastlican rædincge (ÆLS (Pr Moses) 60)
spiritual readings
‘when we are reading the [holy] books or hear them read for us, God speaks to us through those spiritual readings’

Rædan typically (20 occurrences out of 23) takes an accusative NP as complement, which means either ‘scripture’, ‘gospel’ or ‘book’ (normally synonymous to the former two) or then ‘story, account’ (referring to the Bible or lives of saints). Alternatively (3 occurrences) information source can be marked by an *of*- or *on*-PP (as in (7)).

3.4.8 *secgan*

Examples with *secgan* amount to some 64 per cent of my data and naturally present a greater variety of patterns, most of which, however, have featured in the above sections: ACIs in 3.1.1, *þæt*- and *wh*-clauses in 3.2.1, PPs in 3.2.2, and *swa*-parentheticals in 3.2.3. Many other examples are combinations of the above patterns. I would like, however, to concentrate here on patterns that differ from those already discussed.

On four occasions (*ge*)*hieran-secgan* is used in an abbreviated negative clause without any complement or PP:

10. On the notions of mediated literacy and vocality (Vokalität) which describe such communities and the role of educated elites in them, see Schaefer (1992). I am grateful to Dr. Annina Seiler Rübekil for this reference.

- (35) *Sipþan Romane þæt gesawan þæt him mon swelcne wrenc to*
 then Romans that saw that them one such trick to
dyde swelcne hie ær ne gesawon ne secgan
 did such they before not saw nor say-INF
ne hirdon (Or 4 1.84.15)
 not hear-PRET-PL

‘Then the Romans realized that one has played such a trick at them, as they had never seen or heard told of before’

Negation eliminates all possible evidence here: such a thing was never witnessed visually and never heard of in a story, thus there is neither direct perception nor hearsay evidence for it.

Yet another pattern emerges in late OE:

- (36) *þa þe cyng Willelm geherde þet secgen, þa wearð*
 when the king William hear-PRET-3SG that say-INF then became
he swiðe wrað (ChronE 1066.35)
 he very angry
 ‘when king William heard/learnt this, he got very angry’
- (37) *Ða herde Ægelric biscop þet gesecgon. þa*
 when hear-PRET-3SG Ægelric bishop that say-INF then
amansumede he ealle þa men þa þæt yfel dæde
 excommunicated he all those men who that evil deed
hæfden don (ChronE 1070)
 had done
 ‘when bishop Ægelric heard/learnt this, he excommunicated all the men who had done this wicked deed’

In both instances, *þet* refers anaphorically to some piece of news reported via hearsay in the previous context. This use in my data is mostly limited to the late annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (6 occurrences altogether). According to my very preliminary research into ME infinitival phrases with similar structure, it gradually becomes more frequent; however, more corpus work and statistical checking would have to be done on this point. If my observations are correct, they will also have some bearing for the following hypothesis.

The fact that anaphoric patterns become slightly more frequent towards and during ME probably signals that semantic change is underway. What these new patterns do is state that someone got informed about a certain fact. Although the implication still is that the information was received through an auditory medium, *hear-say* no longer introduces a report but rather follows it. This change may point to a semantic development that involves a shift from ‘hear-say’ to ‘learn/get

informed.’ This shift is also observable in more frequent (ge)hieran+Inf patterns. The following late OE example of a synonymous pair ‘heard-say’ – ‘learnt’ may point to the same conclusion about the semantic change:

- (38) *Mid þy he gehyrde secgan and he leornode be*
 when he hear-PRET-1SG say-INF and he learnt about
þam ancerum (LS 10.1 (Guth) 2.106)
 that hermit
 ‘When he found out and learnt about the hermit’

Further the word order of *hear* and *say* constituents becomes increasingly more bound, which also suggests that the two verbs may have been construed as one semantic unit, as below:

- (39) *We iherden sæcgen þurh sumne wisne mon þæt*
 we hear-PRET-PL say-INF through some wise men that
moyses ... becom he to þare stowe þe inemnæd is
 Moses ... came he to that place which named is
quinguaginta fnिकास (LS 5 (InventCrossNap) 3)
 fifty palm-trees
 ‘We have learnt from wise men that Moses came to a place called “fifty palm-trees”¹¹ [Helim]’
- (40) *And eallswa se cynincg Carolus of Francene rice*
 and also the king Charles of Franks’ kingdom
geherde secgan of his micclan godnesse (LS 9 (Giles) 400)
 hear-PRET-3SG say-INF of his great virtue
 ‘And also king Charles of France heard it told about his great virtue’

It has been observed cross-linguistically that the complement verb can be raised into the main clause and the two predications merged together to share one set of grammatical relations and one phonological outline. Thus the two verbs co-lexicalise (Noonan 1985:73–76; Givón 2001: ii, 59–63; Song 2001:278). I suggest that this process begins in OE and extends into the ME period. Univerbated *heardsay* spellings appear from ME2 onwards, so that conceptual and syntactic proximity, already observable in OE, results in lexical and semantic unity and the emergence of a new lexical item. Because the OED dates the first attestation of the noun *hear-saying* to 1340, I assume that the ultimate co-lexicalisation of the

11. Some mistake: Example 15.27 and Num 33.9 talk about seventy palm-trees.

verb *hearsay* should have taken place between 1250 and 1340 (but again more work is needed to verify this). Interestingly enough there is comparative evidence to support this scenario: in Middle High German the noun *hærsagen* is attested from 1362 onwards (*Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, s.v. *hærsagen*).¹² Thus, the development of German *Hören-sagen* might also have started with two verbs, which co-lexicalised into one and were later on converted into a noun.

To sum up, this survey has revealed that direct auditory perception in OE can be coded most unambiguously by the *(ge)hieran*+ACI construction. Statistically the verbs of ‘speaking’ – *sprecan* and *maþelian* – are used more frequently in ACIs than other verbs. The evidential meaning of the *(ge)hieran*+Inf construction (and its extensions) is predominantly hearsay evidence, although in 39 per cent of the occurrences of *(ge)hieran*+Inf, the agent of the infinitive can either be retrieved from previous context or reconstructed from our background knowledge of medieval routine practices (such as the reading practices discussed in 3.4.7) or overtly introduced by a PP (3.1.3). In these cases it is possible to interpret *(ge)hieran*+Inf as constructions that encode direct perception (but see Section 3.5 below). In terms of text types, two observations can be made: hearsay evidential constructions are prominent in poetry where they are used to refer to the oral tradition (which is in line with Aikhenvald’s observations (2004: 310–315)), and in sermons and homilies where they are used to evoke the authority of the Bible, the Church Fathers, etc. *Secgan* is the most frequent verb, it is used in all types of constructions discussed above, indicating both direct perception and hearsay evidence. Its frequency seems to have contributed to the semantic shift ‘hear-say’ → ‘get informed, learn’ and the ultimate univerbation of *hearsay* in the Middle English period. Comparative data from other Old Germanic languages suggests that these evidential constructions and some of their diachronic developments might not be unique to Old English.

3.5 Origin

It has been observed that the division of infinitival complements into ACIs and infinitives without the accusative subjects seems to coincide with the semantic division of verbs into ‘speaking’ and ‘saying/quoting’ respectively. I would like to argue that these divisions correspond to deeper structural differences than may at first sight seem. The emergence of such structures as OE *He heard say* is normally

12. Cf. also DWB Online, s.vv. *Hörensagen*, *Hörsage*, and *Hörsagen*. Swedish also has *hörsägen* ‘hearsay, rumours’, which is a clear case of loan translation from German, dated to as late as 1865 (*Ordbok över svenska språket*, s.v. *höra*).

seen as an ellipsis of *He heard people say*.¹³ However, I do not see the existence *He heard people say* as a necessary precursor of *He heard say*.

It is well known that Indo-European infinitives go back to verbal nouns, and Germanic infinitives (those that give rise to the so-called ‘uninflected form’) go back to verbal nouns in the accusative *-onom* (e.g. Beekes 1995: 251). Reconstructions of the origin and evolution of ACI constructions in Indo-European also suggest that infinitives were initially more nouny and only later developed tense, voice and mood characteristics (Coleman 1985: 308–311, 327, 332). Moreover, the accusative in ACIs is the result of reanalysis of some other case – genitive, accusative, dative, or even locative (see Woodcock 1959: 17; Coleman 1985: 310–311, and a summary in Timofeeva 2010: 77–78).

Further, Ross (1973/2004) advocates the existence of a linear *squish* between verbs and nouns that allows for a “quasi-continuous hierarchy” between the two categories, whose boundaries become increasingly blurred towards the centre of the squish. Ross sees the *nouniness squish* as.

- (40) *that* > *for to* > *Q* > *Acc Ing* > *Poss Ing* > Action nominal > Derived nominal > Noun

These types of complements can be exemplified as follows:

- (41) a. *that* = *that*-clauses (*that Max gave the letters to Frieda*)
 b. *for to* = *for NP to V X* (*for Max to have given the letters to Frieda*)
 c. *Q* = embedded questions (*how willingly Max gave the letters to Frieda*)
 d. *Acc Ing* = [NP + Acc] V + *ing X* (*Max giving the letters to Frieda*)
 e. *Poss Ing* = NP’s + *ing X* (*Max’s giving letters to Frieda*)
 f. Action Nominal ({*Max’s/the*} *giving of the letters to Frieda*)
 g. Derived Nominal ({*Max’s/the*} *gift of the letters to Frieda*)
 h. Noun (*spatula*) (Ross 1973/2004:1)

Ross’s quasi-hierarchy suggests that “some squish of nouniness,” some “squishoid” system, rather than the clear-cut categories of verb and noun, is part of every speaker’s language competence (1973/2004: 389–391). This explains the diversity of nouny and verby forms synchronically. I believe, however, that nouniness squish can also explain why Indo-European verbal nouns could be reanalysed as infinitives in the first place, and, thus, account for the diachronic developments. If there is indeed a noun–verb continuum, we might expect the fuzzy verbals and nominals in its middle portion to evolve towards more verby or more nouny categories. Suppose we see Ross’s (g) through (d) chronologically:

13. Cf. OED, s.v. *hear* 3b: “Hence, by ellipsis of such objects as *people, persons, some one*, before the infinitives *say, speak, talk, tell*, the phrases *to hear say, hear tell*, etc. [emerge].”

- (42) Derived Nominal > Action Nominal > *Poss Ing* > *Acc Ing*

If we apply this scenario to the category of ‘speaking’ noun–verb continuum, we could reconstruct the development of *hear*+ACI as:

- (43) I heard his speech > I heard his speaking > I heard his speak > I heard him speak

in which nouns gradually acquire verby features and develop into infinitives, while the possessive is reanalysed as accusative. This construction from the outset focuses on sounds (including sounds of speech) and source/agent of the sounds, hence direct perception evidentials are more likely to develop from this pattern.

The stages in the development of constructions with verbs of ‘saying/quoting’ can be reconstructed as follows:

- (44) I heard {his/the} story¹⁴ > I heard {his/the} saying >
 a. > I heard his say > I heard him say
 b. > I heard (the) say

For this type, sounds (media) are much less relevant than stories (results), hence *hear*+Inf constructions coding hearsay evidence are probably more likely to develop here (44b). However, this does not exclude the possibility of a parallel development of ACIs with ‘say’ (44a) by analogy with ACIs with ‘speak’ or independently of them.

One further piece of evidence to support the development *I heard the story* > *I heard say* is that *(ge)hieran*+Inf but not *(ge)hieran*+ACI allows for a PP extension. The emergence of constructions with PPs indicating the source of information can be seen as:

- (45) I heard this story from my dad > ... > I heard say from my dad

Thus the answer to my own query in 3.1.3 is that *I heard say from him* and *I heard him say* are not equivalent, neither structurally nor semantically. The following reconstruction can be proposed for *(ge)hieran*+Inf+PP indicating the focus of the report:

- (46) I heard a story about a bird > ... > I heard say about a bird

All in all, I suggest that the ellipsis of the accusative in the ACI construction cannot account for the emergence of *(ge)hieran*+Inf, which is different from the ACI both in structure and in evidential semantics. Moreover, chronologically, and my corpus evidence with the preponderance of *(ge)hieran*+Inf over *(ge)hieran*+ACI occurrences seems to support this, *(ge)hieran*+Inf was probably the first to emerge,

14. Etymologically *saga* would probably be more appropriate here.

as cross-linguistically hearsay evidence is marked more often than direct auditory perception (Cinque 1999: 85; Aikhenvald 2004: 23, 31–34, 75–78). As the infinitives became more verby, however, *hear*+Inf is likely to have been reanalysed as ACI with ellipsis, or even as something less grammatical than the ACI, and eventually became obsolescent when new lexical means, e.g. hearsay adverbs *reportedly*, *allegedly*, etc. came into being. I believe that in the case of *hear*+*say* construction, univerbation of *hearsay* in ME2 and the emergence of the noun *hearsay* in early ME3 can be taken as the terminus post quem this structure became less analysable. These stages are, however, open to debate and further research.

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