Two grammars, one speaker: the case of Low German verbal clusters

Marie Schnieders & Ankelien Schippers
Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

CARL VON OSSIETZKY universität OLDENBURG

Speech & Music Lab
Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

Background

West Germanic (WG) verbs cluster in clause-final position

1. ... dass Markus ein Buch gelesen$_2$ hat$_1$
   ... that M.   a   book read   has

2. ... dass Markus ein Buch hat$_1$ lesen$_3$ müssen$_2$
   ... that M.   A   book had read   must

> Logically possible orders (numbers show order of semantic selection)
> 2 verb clusters:
> • 1-2 (Mod-V/Aux-V)
> • 2-1 (V-Mod/V-Aux)
> 3 verb clusters:
> • 1-2-3 (Aux-Mod-V) • 1-3-2 (Aux-V-Mod)
> • 2-1-3 (Mod-Aux-V) • 2-3-1 (Mod-V-Aux)
> • 3-1-2 (V-Aux-Mod) • 3-2-1 (V-Mod-Aux)

- Three-verb clusters as in (2) show the Inifinitivus Pro Participio Effect (IPP): modal shows up as an infinitive (*müssen*), not a participle (**gemusst*).
- IPP correlates with presence of *ge*-prefix (Hoeksema 1980; Lange 1981; Vanden Wyngaard 1994; Zwart 2007) and reordering (Hoekstra 1994; De Schutter 1995)
- WG languages and dialects show considerable order variation in these clusters: [...] *superregional possibilities could be seen as the sum of options found in several dialects* (Wurmbrand, 2017: 13).

Research questions:

- What is the acceptability of various orders in Low vs. High German?
- Is there transfer in judgments from both varieties and in which direction?

We investigated this in:

- 2-verb clusters with a V (participle) + auxiliary and with a V (infinitive) + modal.
  - → HG: 1-2 orders more frequent with modal than perfective auxiliaries (Dubenion-Smith 2010). Across WG: 1-2 orders more common with modal than with perfective auxiliaries (Wurmbrand 2017).
- 3-verb clusters consisting of a auxiliary + modal + V (infinitive)
  - → LG lacks ge-prefix, predicting different orderings in LG vs HG.

Method

- Variant of the speeded grammaticality judgment task (Bader & Schmid 2009).
- Sentences presented auditorily, recorded with a native bilingual speaker.
- Participants had to judge (un)grammaticality of a sentence within 3 seconds.

Participants

- 18 speakers of the Löningen dialect (*Oldenburger Platt*/North Lower Saxon dialect)
- Age 43 – 83 years, 10 female, 8 male
- All spoke Low German from birth, age of onset High German ranged from 0-6.
- Except for 2 participants, no higher education
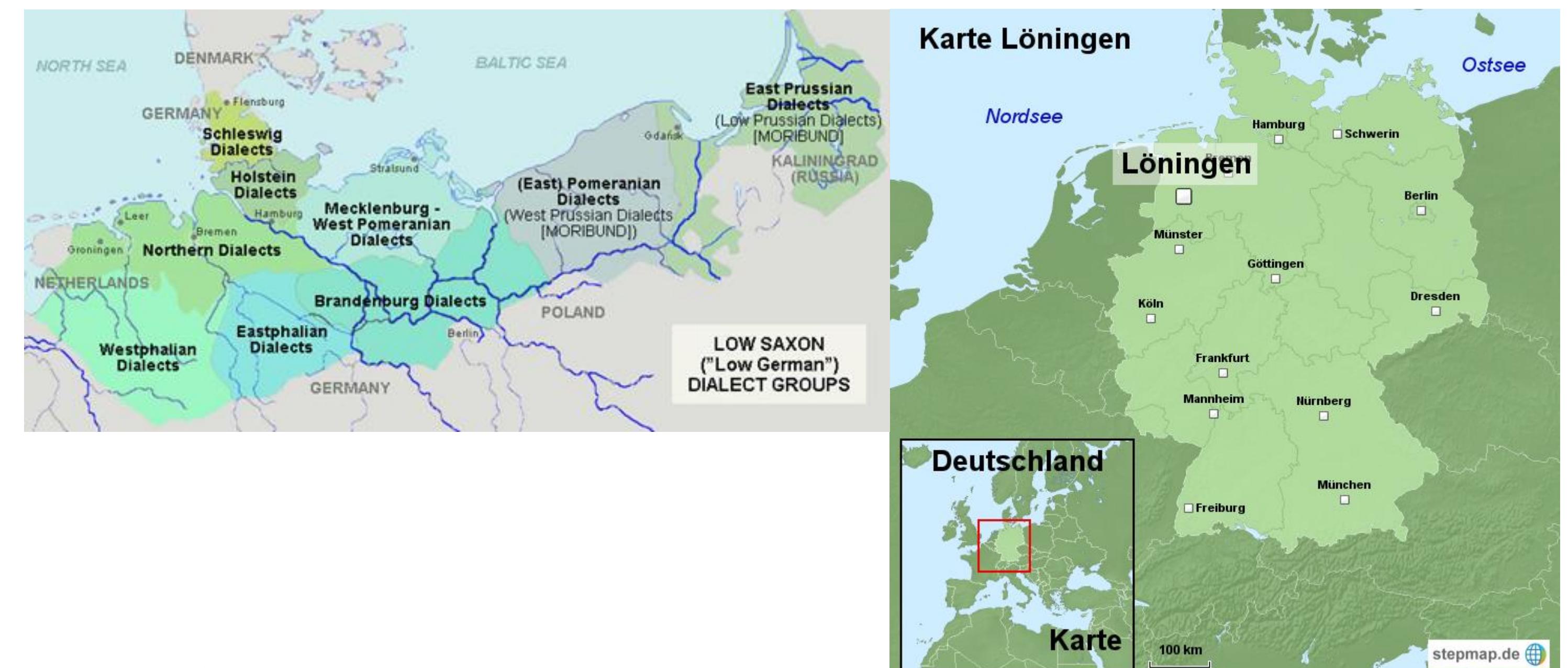
Materials

Condition	Example	Items
V – Aux 2 1	Hanna denkt, dass er die Socken gestrickt hat. Hanna thinks that he the socks knit has	8
Aux - V 1 2	Hanna denkt, dass er die Socken hat gestrickt. Hanna thinks that he the socks has knit	8
V – Mod 2 1	Hanna denkt, dass er die Socken stricken kann. Hanna thinks that he the socks knit can	8
Mod – V 1 2	Hanna denkt, dass er die Socken kann stricken. Hanna thinks that he the socks can knit	8
Aux – V – Mod 1 3 2	Peter denkt, dass sie die Pflanze hat gießen müssen. Peter thinks that she the plant has water must	8
Aux – Mod – V 1 2 3	Peter denkt, dass sie die Pflanze hat müssen gießen. Peter thinks that she the plant has must water	8
V – Aux – Mod 3 1 2	Peter denkt, dass sie die Pflanze gießen hat müssen. Peter thinks that she the plant water has must	8
V – Mod – Aux 3 2 1	Peter denkt, dass sie die Pflanze gießen müssen hat. Peter thinks that she the plant water must has	8

Results

GRAPH 1: 2-VERB CLUSTERS
Low German / High German
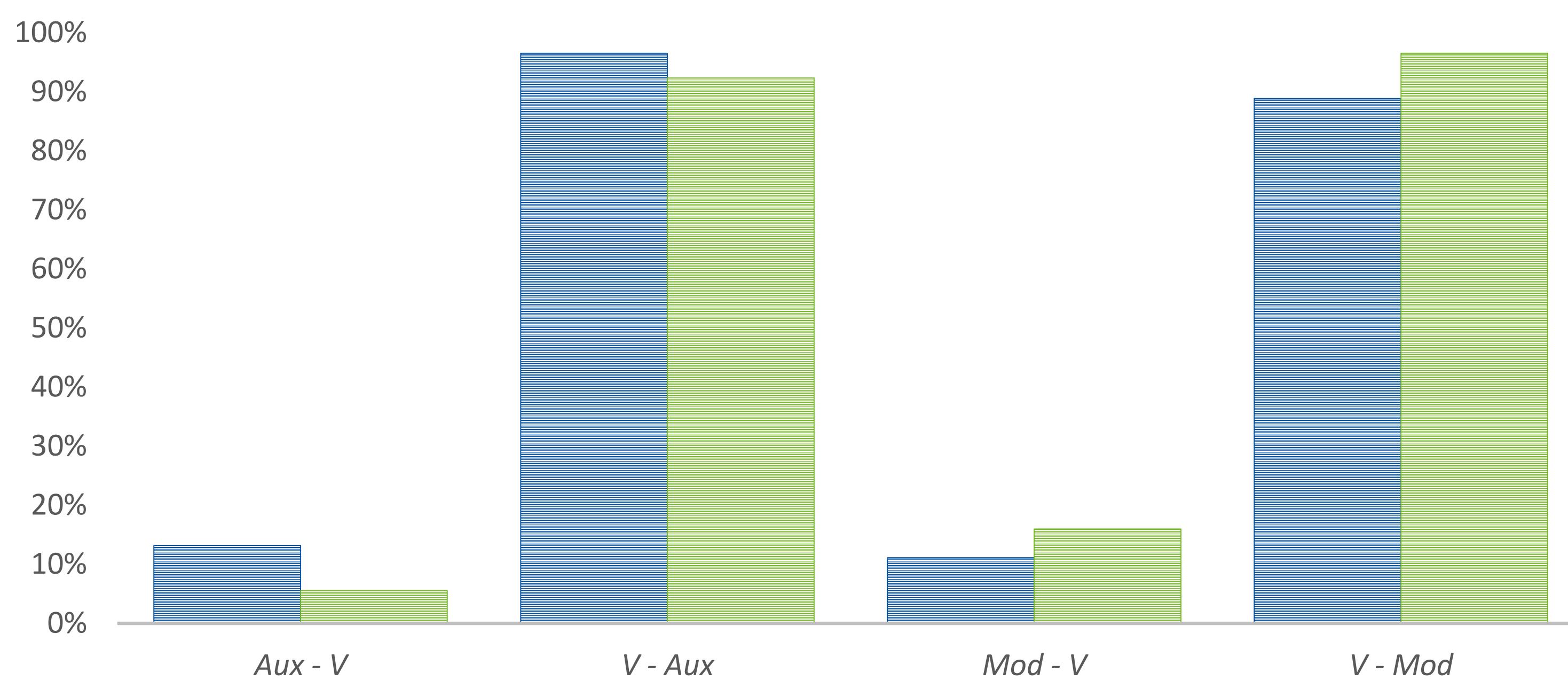
GRAPH 2: 3-VERB CLUSTERS
Low German / High German
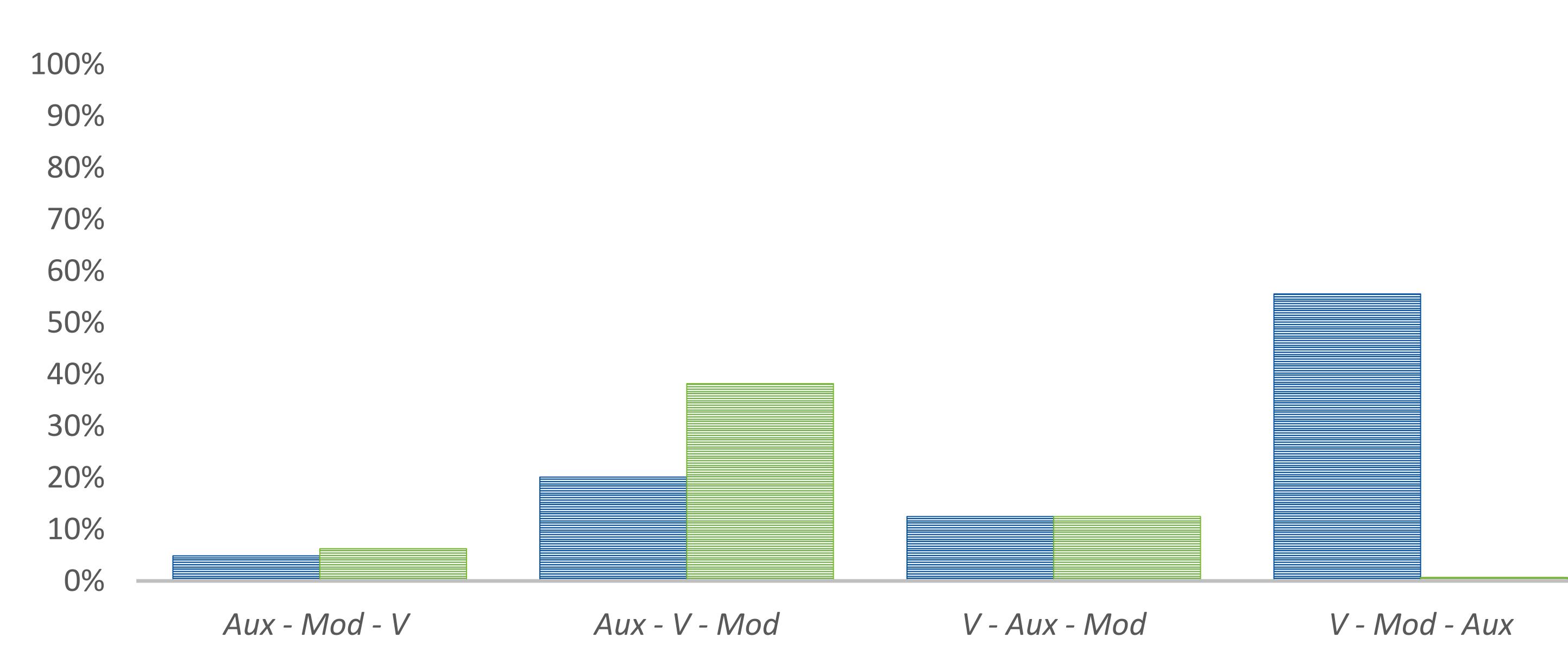
Discussion

2-verb clusters:
- Both varieties: 2-1 orders preferred.
- 1-2 orders more acceptable with modals than with auxiliaries in High German.
- No evidence for transfer from one variety into the other.

3-verb clusters
- Different patterns: preferred Low German Verb$_3$-Mod$_2$-Aux$_1$ order virtually unacceptable in High German → absence of *ge*-prefix/IPP in Low German.
- Aux$_1$-Verb$_3$-Mod$_2$ orders preferred in High German (Bader & Schmid 2009, Wurmbrand 2004), but also 2nd best in Low German -> Transfer

3-verb clusters: complexity effect
- Lange (1981): Low German has a preference for using preterite instead of present perfect → reducing 3-verb cluster to 2 verbs:
  - *... dass M. ein Buch hat lesen müssen* → *... dass M ein Buch lesen musste*
- This transfers to High German, open question what causes this.

IPP, absence of ge- and reordering
- For our speakers: Verb$_3$-Mod$_2$-Aux$_1$ orders not allowed in High German, contra Bader & Schmid (2009).
- Hypothesis: *ge*-prefix forces reordering.
- For non-dialect speakers of HG, this correlation between *ge*- and Verb$_3$-Mod$_2$-Aux$_1$ order is not transparant.

References ▪ BADER, M. & SCHMID, T. (2009). Verb clusters in colloquial German. *The Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*, 12, 175-228. ▪ BADER, M. & HÄUSSLER, J. (2010). Toward a model of grammaticality judgments. *Journal of Linguistics*, 46, 273-330. ▪ De Schutter, G. (1995). Werkwoordvolgorde en het IPP-effect in het Nederlandse taalgebied. *Taal en Tongval*, 31-39. ▪ DUBENION-SMITH, S. (2010). Verbal complex phenomena in West Central German: Empirical domain and multi-causal account. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics*, 22(2), 99-191. ▪ HOEKSEMA, J. (1980). Verbale verstrengeling ontstrengeld. *Spektator*, 10, 221-249. ▪ HOEKSTRA, E. (1994). Woordvolgorde en het Infinitivus-pro-Participio Effect in het Zaans. *Taal en & Tongval*, 46, 132-141. ▪ LANGE, K. P. (1981). Warum Ersatzinfinitiv? *GAGL* 19, 62-81. ▪ WURMBRAND, S. (2004). West Germanic verb clusters: The empirical domain. Verb clusters: A study of Hungarian, German and Dutch, 69, 43. ▪ Vanden Wyngaerd, G. (1994). IPP and the Structure of Participles. In: J.-W. Zwart (ed.), *GAGL* 37: *Minimalism and Kayne's Asymmetry Hypothesis*. Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit, 265-275. ▪ WURMBRAND, S. (2017). Verb clusters, verb raising, and restructuring. The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Syntax, Second Edition, 1-109. ▪ ZWART, J. W. (2007). Some notes on the origin and distribution of the IPP-effect. GAGL: Groninger Arbeiten zur germanistischen Linguistik, (45), 77-99.