On the Development of the Infinitival Marker zu 'to' in the History of German. A corpus-based analysis

Łukasz Jędrzejowski & Katrin Goldschmidt

Universität Potsdam (Germany)

jedrzejo@uni-potsdam.de & katrin.goldschmidt@uni-potsdam.de

22nd International Conference on Historical Linguistics

University of Naples, July 30, 2015

What is this talk about?

Following Bech (1955/57) three different types of non-finite verbal forms are distinguished in Modern German:

1st Status	2nd Status	3rd Status
sprechen ('speak')	*zu sprechen* ('to speak')	*gesprochen* ('spoken')

Table 1: Non-finite verbal forms according to Bech (1955/57)

In our talk we focus on infinitival forms (= 1st and 2nd status), in particular on the development of 2nd status complements.

What is this talk about?

The presence/absence of the infinitival marker depends on distributional properties of a particular infinitive-embedding predicate:

[2] *Der Held muss das Land *zu verlassen*
the hero must the country to leave.INF
'The hero has to leave the country'

[3] *Der Held ist verpflichtet, das Land *(zu) verlassen*
the hero is obliged the country to leave.INF
'The hero is obliged to leave the country'

What is this talk about?

However, in older stages of German predicates requiring *zu* in Modern German could embed bare infinitives too. *Beginnen* 'begin' is a case in point:

[3] *Die   Dinge   beginnen   *(zu)   sprechen*
     the   things   begin.3PL   to   speak.INF

    'The things begin to speak.'
    (DeReKo, *Mannheimer Morgen*, 24/11/2000)

[4] *Bigunston   ouh   erist   umbi   sinan   namun   sprehhan*
    begin.3PL.PST   also   first   about   his   name   speak.INF

    'Then, they began to speak about his name.' (Isi 524-5)

Leading questions

1. When did the 2nd status occur for the first time? (Are there any differences among the infinitive-embedding predicates?)

2. When did 2nd status complements start gaining ground over 1st status complements? (Under what circumstances?)

3. When did 1st status complements disappear?

Roadmap

Infinitive-embedding predicates: synchronic facts

Infinitive-embedding predicates: overview

	Predicate	Status	Syntactic orientation	Semantics
1.	*gedenken* ('intend')	2	subject control	intentional predicate
2.	*bitten* ('request')	2	object control	manipulative predicate
3.	*beginnen* ('begin')	2	subject raising	phase predicate

Table 2: Overview of the infinitive-embedding predicates under investigation

A case-study: diachronic observations

Diachronic background

According to Abraham (2004) *zu* underwent a grammaticalization process: from a locative-allative [P]reposition to an [Inf]initive [P]article:
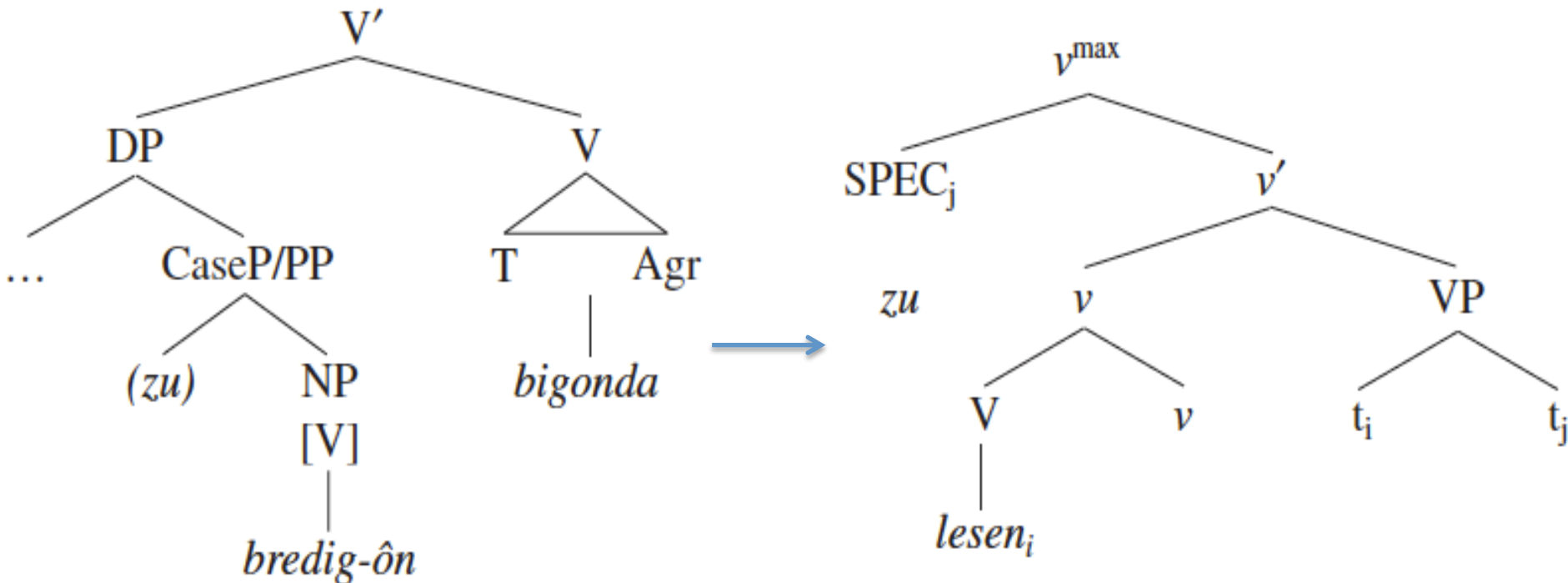

Figure 1: Grammaticalization of *zu* as infinitive particle according to Abraham (2004)

Sources

Old High German (750 - 1050)
all available sources

426.022 (4,46%)

Middle High German (1050 - 1350)
Titus-DB, MHBDB, selected other sources

772.456 (8,08%)

Early New High German (1350 – 1650)
RefKorp FNHD, Mercurius-Korpus

775.484 (8,11%)

New High German (1650 – 1900)
Mercurius-Korpus,
COSMAS II: historical texts

7.584.625 (79,35%)

In total: 9.558.587

Data

Our queries looked as follows:

- *beginnen*   (be)g[i|a|u|o]n.*

- *bitten*   (ge)?b[i|a|e]t(t)?(en)?

- *gedenken*   (ge)d[e|a][n(c)?k|ch].*

In our queries we ruled out cases in which a matrix predicate selects for an adverbial clause with a covert C–element, e.g. *um* (lit. 'about') 'in order to' in purpose clauses:

[5] | *der* | *mensch* | *gebraucht* | *des* | *feuers* | *sich* | *zu* | *wermen* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| the | man | use.3SG | the | fire.GEN | REFL | to | warm.INF |

'The man uses the fire in order to warm himself'
(Grimm & Grimm 1878: 1826-36)

a) *der mensch* [VP [V^0 *gebraucht*] [DP *des feuers*]] [CP *sich zu wermen*]

b) *der mensch* [VP [V^0 *gebraucht*] [INF *des feuers sich zu wermen*]]
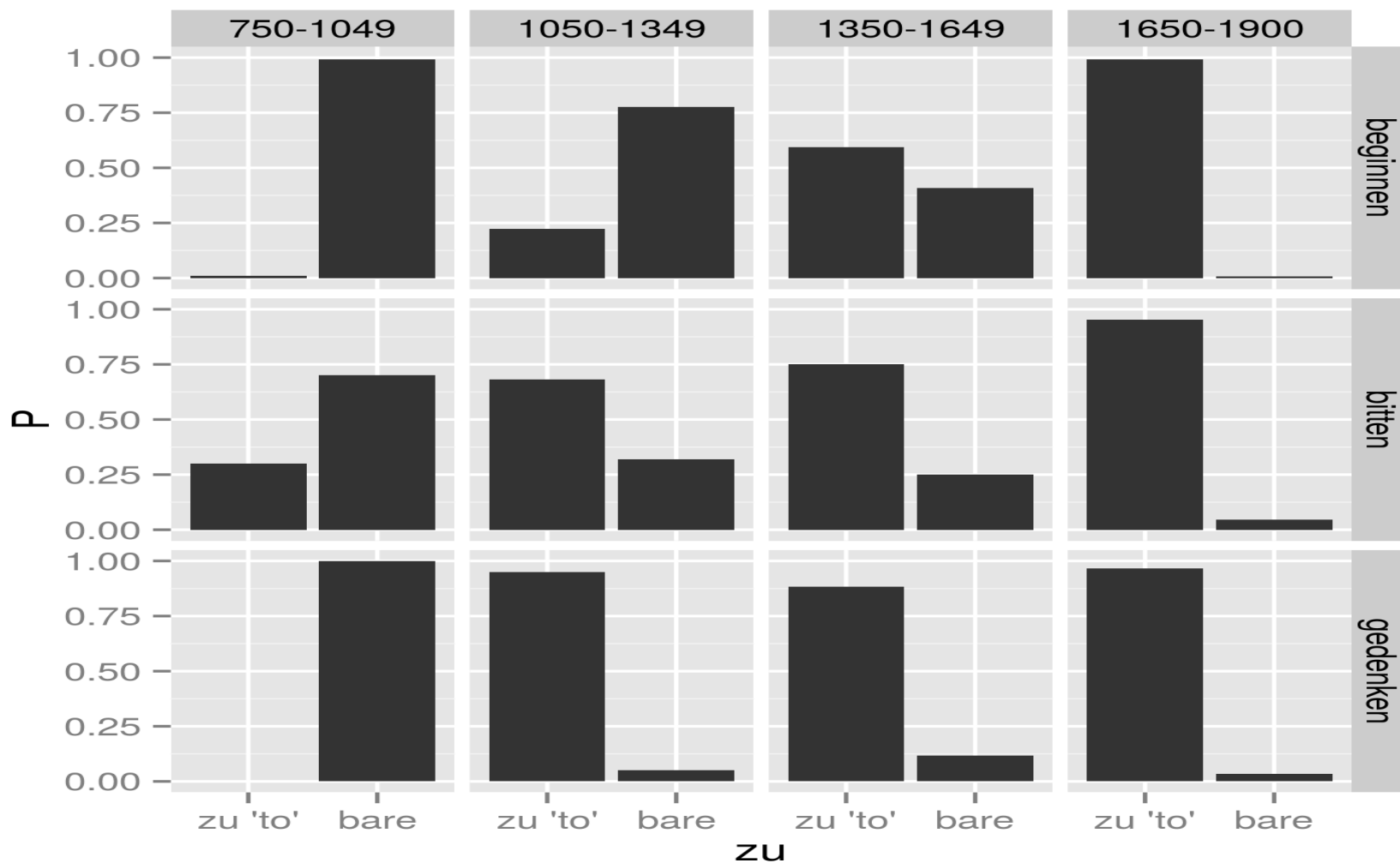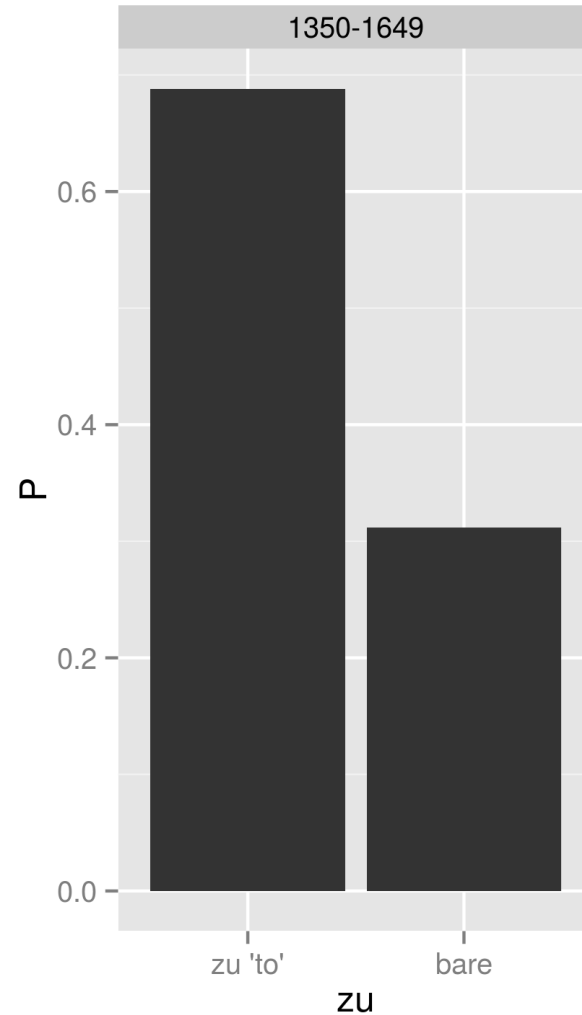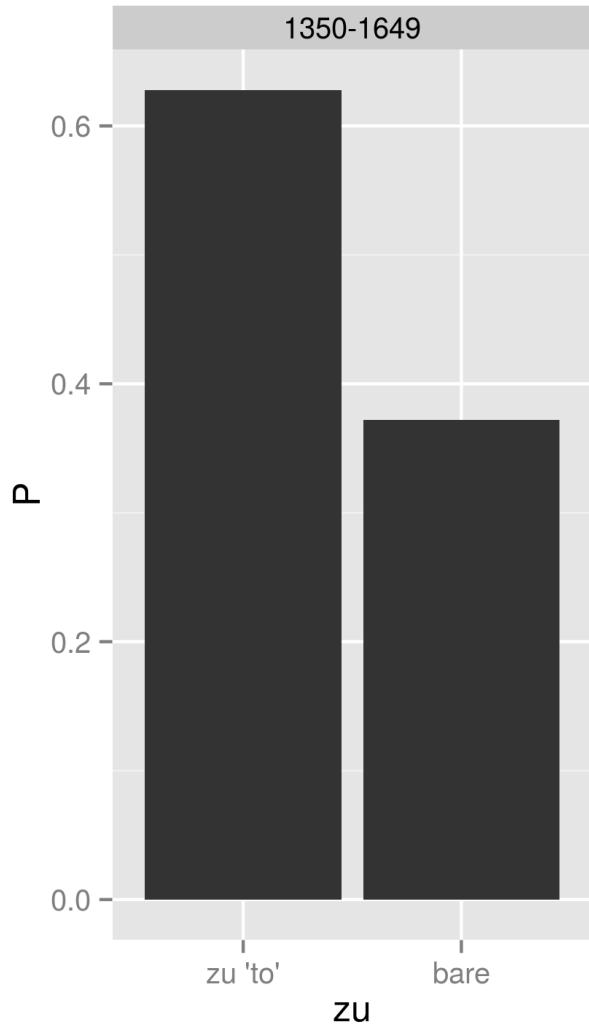
Quantitative data

Figure 2: *Beginnen, bitten* and *gedenken* as infinitive-embedding predicates in the history of German

Quantitative data II

Beginnen, bitten and gedenken as infinitive-embedding predicates

All verbs selecting infinitive clauses

Diachronic observations

➢ There is a solid empirical evidence for grammaticalization of *zu*. All three predicates used to select for 1st status complements.

➢ In OHG the 1st status outnumbered the 2nd status, whereas in New High German a reverse scenario is to be observed.

➢ However, there are differences as to when the three predicates began to favor 2nd status complements. While *beginnen*'s 2nd status complements got of the better of their 1st status counterparts first in ENHG, both *gedenken* 'intend' and *bitten* 'require' favored the 2nd status already in MHG.

Discussion

What does the quantitative data reveal about the development of *zu* as infinitive particle?

Previous approaches

REFERENCE	APPROACH	OUR DATA
1. Haspelmath (1989)	Grammaticalization: A semantic path	No (see also Demske 2001)
2. Smirnova (2011)	Directives: Coexistence of *that*-clauses and *to*-infinitives ?Absence of bare infinitives	No (see also Speyer 2015a)
3. Speyer (2015b)	Aspectual distinction: *to*-infinitives: perfective bare infinitives: imperfective	No

Concluding remarks

✓ The main aim of this talk has been to shown, in particular from an empirical perspective, that *zu* grammaticalized into an infinitive marker.

✓ The grammaticalization process started already in OHG and its last traces are to be observed in the 19th century.

✓ The transition from MHG to ENHG is the most important step in the development of *zu*. While in MHG 1st status complements still outnumber their 2nd status counterparts, 'to'-infinitives get the better of bare infinitives in ENHG.

✓ The differences among the three predicates seem to follow from their semantics and syntactic status.

Secondary references

Abraham, Werner (2004): The grammaticalization of the infinitival preposition – towards a theory of grammaticalizing reanalysis, in: *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 7: 111-170.

Bech, Gunnar (1955/57): *Studien über das deutsche Verbum infinitum.* 1. Band. København: Munksgaard.

Demske, Ulrike (2001): Zur Distribution von Infinitivkomplementen im Althochdeutschen, in: *Modalität und Modalverben* ed. by Reimar Müller & Marga Reis, 61-86. Hamburg: Helmut Buske.

Haspelmath, Martin (1989): From purposive to infinitive – a universal path of grammaticalization, in: *Folia Linguistica Historica* 10(1-2): 287-310.

Smirnova, Elena (2011): Zur diachronen Entwicklung deutscher Komplementsatz-Konstruktionen, in: *Konstruktionsgrammatik III. Aktuelle Fragen und Lösungsansätze* ed. by A. Lasch & A. Ziem, 77-93. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

Speyer, Augustin (2015a): AcI and control infinitives: How different are they? A diachronic approach, in: *Journal of Historical Linguistics* 5(1): 41-71.

Speyer, Augustin (2015b): Semantic factors for the status of control infinitives in the history of German, in: *Infinitives at the Syntax-Semantics Interface. A Diachronic Perspective* ed. by Łukasz Jędrzejowski & Ulrike Demske. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Thank you for your attention!