On the Inceptive Complementation Cycle in the History of German

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Inceptive Cycles in West-Germanic: Lexical Cycle

Z A S

Old English → Middle English → Present-day English

onginnan *aginnan* *beginnan* *ginnan*	*aginnen* *beginnen* *ginnen*	*begin* *start*

Mainly based on: Brinton (1988), Funke (1922), Los (2005), Ogura (2002), Sims (2011).

Old High German → Middle High German → Present-day German

inginnan *anafahan* ***beginnan*** *(gi)stantan* *arheven*	*anafahan* ***beginnan***	*anfangen* ***beginnen*** **starten*

„The Linguistic Cycle is a name for changes where a phrase or word gradually disappears and is replaced by a new linguistic item." (van Gelderen 2009: 2)

Inceptive Cycles in West-Germanic: Syntactic Cycle

Z A S

English:

bare infinitives   ➔   *to*-infinitives   ➔   *-ing*-complements

German:

bare infinitives   ➔   *zu*-infinitives   to be extended
(1. Status)   (2. Status)

Overview of the talk:

1.   *Begínnan* in Old High German
2.   *Begínnan* + infinitive clauses
3.   Subject control versus subject-to-subject raising
4.   *Begínnan* + finite *that*-clauses
5.   Conclusion

Begínnan patterns in Old High German: an overview

A: Matrix verb + infinitival complement:

[1] *ther*   *bi*   *sinemu*   *fatere*   *lebendemu*   **bigunsta**   *riih-|hison*

     he.NOM   next   his   father   living   began.3SG   govern.INF

     'he began governing with his father who was still alive' [Isi 38.17]

B: Matrix verb + correlate[GEN] + infinitival complement:

[2] *tház*   *sie*   *thes*$_i$ **bigínnen,**   [*iz*   *úzana*   *gisíngen*]$_i$

     that   they   COR.GEN   begin.3PL   it.ACC   by.heart   sing.INF

     'that they began singing it by heart' [OtfE I,1: 109]

C: Matrix verb + DP[GEN]:

[3] *so*   *ér*   *thera*   *réisa*   **bigunni**

     as   he   the   trip.GEN   began.3SG

     'as he began his trip' [OtfE IV, 4: 20]

D: Matrix verb + *that*-complement:

[4] *Óba*   *thu*   *ouh*   **bigínnes**   *thaz*   *thu*   *zi*   *góte*   *thinges,*
    if   you   also   begin.2SG   that   you   to   God   hope.2SG

    ínti   *thu*   *githénkes*   *thaz*   *thin*   *gibét*   *wirkes*
    and   you   recall.2SG   that   your   commandment   fulfill.2SG

    'I am wondering if you also begin to hope for God and if you remember to fulfill your commandment.' [OtfE II, 21: 1-2]

E: Matrix verb + correlate[GEN] + *that*-complement:

[5] *Óba*   *thu*   *thes*$_i$ **bigínnes,**   [*thaz*   *thu*   *géba*   *bringes*]$_i$
    if   you   COR.GEN   begin.2SG   that   you   gifts   bring.2SG

    'I am wondering if you begin to bring the gifts.' [OtfE II, 18: 19]

Begínnan + infinitival complements

In OHG, 213 occurrences of *begínnan* + infinitive can be found:

Source:	*Isidor*	Otfrid	*Tatian*	Notker	Williram
Century:	8th	9th	9th	11th	11th
Occurrences:	2	85	37	83	6

Table 1: *Begínnan* + infinitive in OHG

Speech verbs like *redinôn* ('talk'), *zellen* ('relate'), *bredigôn* ('preach'), *ruafan* ('call'), *anwurten* ('answer'), etc. are the most frequently embedded infinitives:

[6] **Bigunston** *ouh* | *erist* *umbi* *sinan* | *namun* *sprehhan*
began.3PL also first over his name speak.INF
'They began talking about his name.' [Isi 524-5]

In *Tatian*, for instance, 17 (= 46%) out of 37 examples contain a speech predicate. The most frequently embedded one is *quœdan* ('speak') (19% of all occurrences).

In addition to the favored speech predicates, *begínnan* selects every kind of Aktionsart. Following Vendler's (1957) classification it appears compatible with activities, accomplishments, achievements, and states:

[7] *Síe* **bigan** *er scówon fráwalichen óugon*   Activity
    her.ACC began.3SG he look.at.INF happy eyes

    'He began looking at her with happy eyes.' [OtfE II, 15: 23]

[8] **Peginno** *ih uuezzen min suert*   Accomplishment
    begin.1SG I sharpen.INF my sword.ACC

    'I begin sharpening my sword.' [NotP3, p. 1098-9]

[9] *ther* **bigán** *thó sterban*   Achievement
    he began.3SG then die.INF

    'Then he began dying.' [Tat 55, 2: 20]

[10] *So thie mán sih thanne irwínnent*   State
    as the people REFL then get.excited.3PL
    joh drúnkanen **bigínnent:** *so skenkit állan*
    and be.drunk.INF begin.3PL so pour.3SG whole
    then dag súlih sos iz wésan mag
    the day such once it be.INF may.3SG

    'When people then get excited and begin to be drunk, he pours for only some of
    them for the rest of the day.' [OtfE II, 8: 49-50]

Subject control versus subject-to-subject raising

Since Perlmutter (1970) *begin* has been treated both as a subject control verb and as a subject-to-subject raising verb.

Subject control verbs usually contain a(n) animate/human subject:

[11] *Jan*   ***beginnt***   *zu*   *unterrichten*
      John   begin.3SG   to   teach.INF

      'Jonn begins teaching.'

Subject-to-subject raising verbs do not assign a Θ-role to their external arguments.
  → they are compatible with weather verbs:

[12] *Es*   ***beginnt***/   **versucht*   *zu*   *regnen*
      it   begin.3SG   try.3SG   to   rain.INF

      'It begins/*tries to rain.'

  → they can embed experiencer verbs (psych verbs):

[13] *Mich*   ***beginnt***/   **versucht*   *zu*   *frieren.*
      me.ACC   begin.3SG   try.3SG   to   freeze.INF
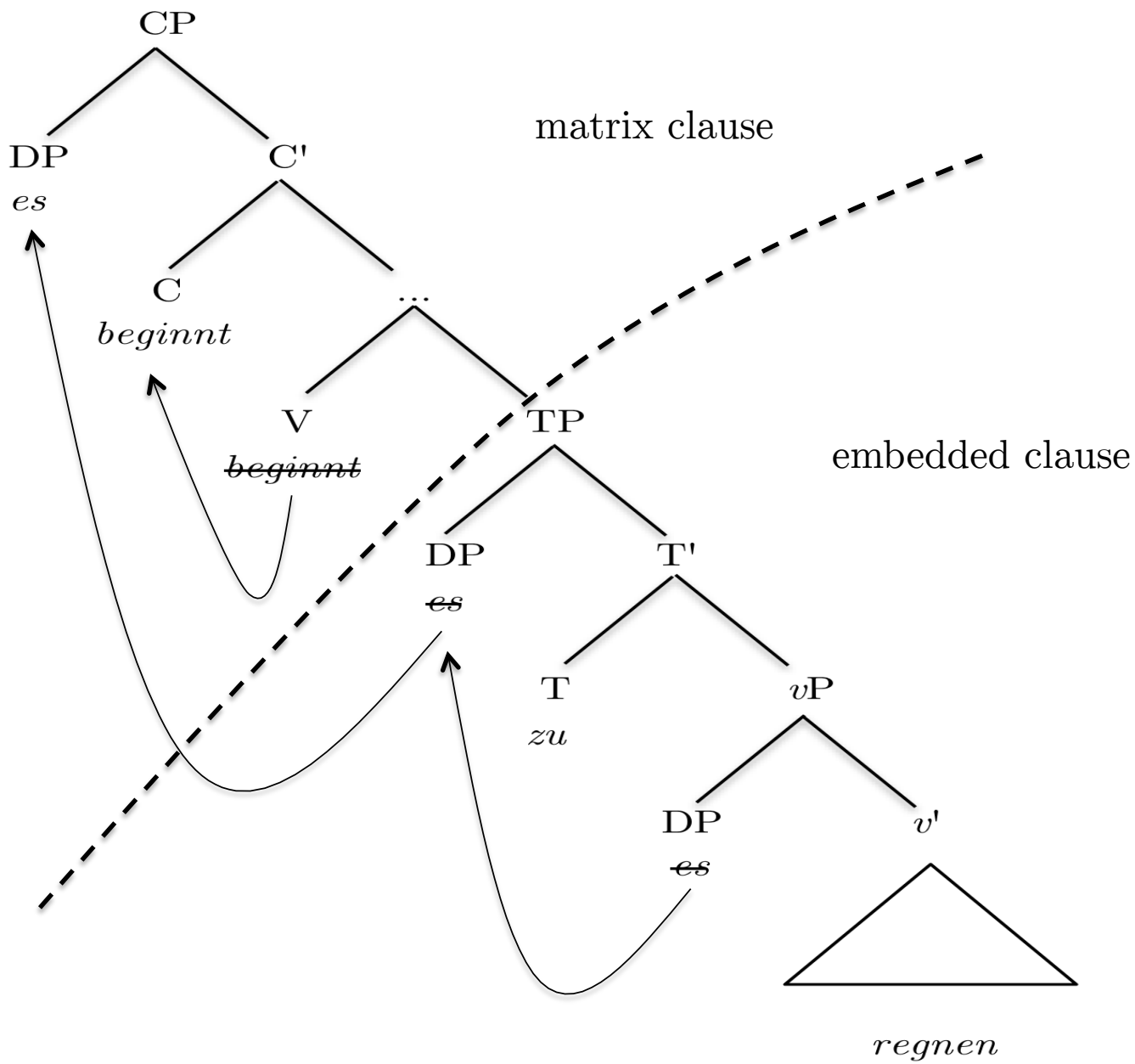
      'I start/*try to freeze.'

Figure 1: Subject-to-subject raising in German

How do subject-to-subject raising predicates emerge?

[A] "all raising verbs undergo incipient grammaticalization" (Traugott 1997: 191)

ALL?

[B] "raising constructions arise from non-raising ones" (Traugott 2011: 36)

What about classical phase predicates (e.g. *begin*)?

[C] "In fact, what is commonly known as Raising may encompass different grammaticalization phenomena. Subjectification is one, exemplified by such verbs as *promise* and (...) *seem.* What to do with verbs such as *begin, persist* and *finish* is less clear, however. They do not obviously involve subjectification (...)." (de Haan 2007: 135)

However, recent studies have shown that there is no evidence for treating phase predicates as control verbs:

a) animate/human subject: no! (cf. Reis 2007)
b) imperative mood: no! (cf. Rochette 1999)
c) phase predicates = lexical V-heads: no! (cf. Fukuda 2012)
d) *do so* anaphor: no! (cf. Newmeyer 1975)
e) -*er* nominalization: no! (cf. Fukuda 2007)

Interim conclusion: all phase predicates are (i) functional heads,
(ii) raising predicates.

Source:	*Isidor*	Otfrid	*Tatian*	Notker	Williram
Century:	8th	9th	9th	11th	11th
Occurrences:	2	85	37	83	6

Table 1: *Begínnan* + infinitive in OHG

Obligatory versus optional raising

According to van der Auwera & Noël (2011: 24) and van der Auwera (2012: 75), "the older West Germanic languages did not manifest (S)ubject-to-(S)ubject-Raising (...), and Modern German still does not have it".

Optional raising:

(a) matrix predicate + infinitival clause (raised variant),
(b) matrix predicate + *that*-clause (non-raised variant).

Example: subject-to-object raising (van der Auwera & Noël 2011: 3):

[14a] *I believe that John is ill.*
[14b] *I believe John to be ill.*

Obligatory raising (only infinitival clause is possible; van der Auwera & Noël 2011: 7):

[15a] **It so ceased that John was ill.*
[15b] *John ceased to be ill.*

Notice, however, that OHG *begínnan* ('begin') can be attested as a subject-to-subject raising predicate in the oldest texts of German:

(I) Implicit personal predicates (psych-verbs):

[16]   *Wárun*   *wir*   *firhúarot*   *mit*   *ábgoton*   *thuruh*   *nót*
were.1PL   we   corrupted   with   idols   through   hardship

mit   *míssidatin*   *mánagen,*   ***bigan***   ***úns***   ***iz***   ***harto***   ***gáganen***
with   sins   many   began.3SG   us.DAT   it   very   suffer.INF

'If we were corrupted through many sins and idols, we began to suffer.'
(OtfE IV, 5: 17-8)

[17]   *Dó*   ***begonda***   ***ánderên***   ***uuola***   ***sin*** .   ***mir***   ***uuê***   ***sîn.***
then   began.3SG   others.DAT.PL   well   be.INF   me.DAT   sore   be.INF

'Then it began to go well for others, whereas I began to suffer.'
(NotP 3,3; p. 1062)

(II) Weather verbs:

[18] *Hîer   ist   náht .   híer   uaaltent   unrehte   dero   rehton.*
here   is   night   here   reign.3PL   wrongs   the   rights.GEN

*Sô   diu   naht   fergât .   unde   **iz   hina   tágen***
when   the   night   pass.by.3SG   and   EXPL   PTC   dawn.INF

***begínnet** .   so   uualtent   aber   rehte   dero   únrehton*
begin.3SG   then   reign.3PL   but   rights   the   wrongs.GEN

'Here it is night. Here preside the wrong over the right. If the night is past and
it begins to dawn, then the right presides over the wrong.' (NotP 3,2, XLVIII)

[19] *In   mórgen   fóre-stân   ih   dir .   unde   gesího   díh.*
in   morning   before.stand.1SG   I   you.DAT.SG   and   see.1SG   you.ACC.SG

Sô   dísiu   uuérlt   hína-uuírt .   unde   daz   êuuiga
when   this   world   PTC-become.3SG   and   the   eternal

*táges-líeht   **pegínnet   chómen** .   dánne   gesího   ih   díh*
day-light   begin.3SG   come.INF   then   see.1SG   I   you.ACC.SG

'In the morning I will stand before you until I see you. When this world is
shattered and the eternal daylight begins, then I will see you.' (NotP 3,1, V)

This situation is not surprising, since in other Germanic languages similar raising patterns can be attested as well. Kageyama (1975) and Denison (1989) provide more evidence for raising usage of OE *onginnan* ('begin'):

[20] *Đa   mec   ongon   hreowan   þæt ...*   Old English

then   me.ACC   began.3SG   rue.INF   that

'Then I began to feel regret that ...'
(Denison 1989: 148)

Faarlund (2004) gives the following example for raising configuration of Old Norse *taka* ('begin'):

[21] *er   hausta   tók*   Old Norse

when   become.autumn.INF   began.3SG

'When autumn began to fall.'
(Faarlund 2004: 279)

Falk (1995) discusses some Old Swedish examples:

[22] *honom   begynte   storliga   ångra   at...*   Old Swedish

he   began.3SG   much   regret.INF   that

'he started regretting ...'
(Falk 1995: 218 cited in Barððal 2000: 37)

Begínnan + finite *that*-clauses

In OHG, *begínnan* can also embed finite *that*-clauses:

D: Matrix verb + *that*-complement:

[4] *Óba* *thu* *ouh* **bigínnes** *thaz* *thu* *zi* *góte* *thinges,*
    if   you   also   begin.2SG   that   you   to   God   hope.2SG

    ínti *thu* *githénkes* *thaz* *thin* *gibét* *wirkes*
    and   you   recall.2SG   that   your   commandment   fulfill.2SG

    'I am wondering if you also begin to hope for God and if you remember to fulfill your commandment.' [OtfE II, 21: 1-2]

  E: Matrix verb + correlate[GEN] + *that*-complement:

[5] *Óba* *thu* *thes*$_i$ **bigínnes,** [*thaz* *thu* *géba* *bringes*]$_i$
    if   you   COR.GEN   begin.2SG   that   you   gifts   bring.2SG

    'I am wondering if you begin to bring the gifts.' [OtfE II, 18: 19]

[4] *Óba* [**thu**]i *ouh* **bigínnes** [*thaz* [**thu**]i/*j *zi* *góte* *thinges*],
    if   you   also   begin.2SG   that   you   to   God   hope.2SG

    ínti *thu* *githénkes* *thaz* *thin* *gibét*   *wirkes*
    and   you   recall.2SG   that   your   commandment   fulfill.2SG

    'I am wondering if you also begin to hope for God and if you
    remember to fulfill your commandment.' [OtfE II, 21: 1-2]

[25]   _i **Arxizo**   [*na*   _i/*j *grafo*]   Modern Greek
         begin.1SG   PRT   write.1SG

    'I begin to write.' (Roussou 2009: 1815)

What [4] and [25] have in common is that:

- ❖ the subject of finite embedded clauses is co-referential with the matrix subject,
- ❖ they exhibit a typical control behavior, i.e. the bound interpretation,
- ❖ embedded clauses lack semantic tense,
- ❖ they disallow independent temporal modifications,
- ❖ the matrix clause and the embedded clause form a single event

Conclusion: *begínnan* is an optional subject-to-subject raising predicate.

Concluding remarks:

✧ *begínnan* embeds in OHG every kind of Aktionsart,

✧ it is employed as a subject-to-subject raising verb,

✧ *begínnan* can be classified both as an optional raising predicate and as an obligatory raising predicate,

✧ there is no empirical evidence for grammaticalization of *begínnan*,

✧ *begínnan* used to embed canonical finite *that*-complements.

Thô begínno íh thankon ...

Abbreviations:

1/2/3	1st/2nd/3rd person
ACC	accusative
COR	correlate
DAT	dative
EXPL	expletive
GEN	genitive
INF	infinitive
NEG	negation
NOM	nominative
P.PTCP	past participle
PASS.AUX	passive auxiliary
PL	plural
PTC	particle
REFL	reflexive pronoun
SG	singular

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Primary sources (Old High German):

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