Morphosyntactic innovations in linguistic border zones: Evidence from Northern Germany and Eastern Poland

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Abstract: Border zone varieties are sometimes known for peculiar uses of morphosyntactic constructions involving function words. This paper focuses on two such constructions from two distant border zones: a) the innovative use of the preposition dla ‘for’ in Eastern Polish dialects in the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian-Ukrainian border zone, where these constructions appear in dative contexts that are reserved to the dative only outside the border zone, and b) the innovative use of the conjunction un ‘and’ in Low German varieties in the Danish-German border zone, where it combines with the infinitive in many functional settings. While the literature describes the origin of these innovative constructions as a result of the contact situation, not much is known about the distribution of these innovative constructions, especially their relation to functionally equivalent, but “unmarked” constructions that are not restricted to the border zone. This paper is a comparative corpus study of the variation between unmarked and innovative constructions in two distant border zones, based exclusively on dialect material. It argues that the restrictions, emergence and expansion of the innovations show a comparable pattern when measured against the distribution of their unmarked counterparts. The paper shows that the introduction of a new, innovative alternative to preexisting unmarked ones is a way to deal with the multiplied relations between functionally equivalent constructions in a plurilingual border zone.

1. Introduction: Innovative morphosyntactic constructions in two distant linguistic border zones

Linguistic border zones can be more stable than the (national) borders that cross their territory and that help to define them. One frequent common factor is that their inhabitants are usually plurilingual to some degree, i.e. they possess a repertoire of linguistic resources coming from “different” languages, although the implicit or explicit rules and conventions for when to use which language can certainly shift as national borders can. While the linguistic elements that a plurilingual speaker possesses might lead the linguist to trace them back to their origins in different language systems, they might be more appropriately described as parts of a “diasystem”, as e.g. Höder (2012a, 2018) suggests (cf. also Weinreich 1954, cited after Höder (2012a: 245)), which contains and relates elements, that are shared between the languages involved, as well as elements that are specific only to some languages (at least one) and used according to different communicative situations.

Another stability factor can be that the border zone diasystem can contain (or produce) constructions, i.e. combinations of form and function that are unique to it and that do not have an equivalent outside the territory. Thus, while individual plurilingualism makes it hard to draw geographical borders between linguistic areas (cf. Auer 2013: 7-8), these innovative constructions have a potential of being indexical for the border zone and thus of reestablishing the relation between language and space, the border zone as a ‘third space’, to use Auer’s (2013: 25) term.

In this paper I wish to discuss two such innovative morphosyntactic constructions from two different border zones, one found in the “Schleswig Low German” dialect in the Danish-(Low) German-Frisian border zone in the northernmost parts of Germany (henceforth: NLGer), the other from Polish dialect varieties on both sides of the present Eastern Polish border, where Polish contacts with Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian and Lithuanian varieties (henceforth: EPol).
If we define the concept of border zone by a relative proximity to the actual national border, then these two border zones are of a remarkable size, at least in a historical perspective, since political borders shifted on several occasions in the course of history\(^1\), so that individuals in autochthonous language communities could find themselves on different sides of the border during a lifetime. The westward movement of the Eastern Polish border after the end of World War II and the southward movement of the Northern German border after the plebiscite of Schleswig in 1920 eventually resulted in the present borders.

The two constructions in question both involve a specific and innovative use of function words: the Low German conjunction *un* 'and' and the Polish preposition *dla* 'for', often in its reduced form *l'a* (with an Eastern Slavonic palatalized [l’]), as exemplified here:

(1) NLGer\(^2\) He is bi *un* arbeiden
he is at AND work:INF
ʽHe is workingʼ (lit.: ʽHe is at and workʼ) (example from Höder 2012b: 188)

(2) EPol ja lamałam *dla* jej plot
I damaged FOR\(^3\) she:GEN fence
ʽI damaged her fenceʼ (lit.: ʽI damaged for her the fenceʼ) (corpus example\(^4\) from

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\(^1\) For historical overviews of the political shifts and their implications for the linguistic situation see Moser (2002), Kurzowa (1993), Karaś (2001), Dzięgiel (2009) for the Eastern Polish border zone, and Fredsted (this volume) or Höder (2021) for the Danish-German border zone.

\(^2\) To designate different language varieties, the following abbreviations are used: Belar = Belarusian; Dan = Danish; EPol = Eastern Polish Dialects; LGer = Low German; Lith = Lithuanian; NFris = North Frisian; NLGer = Schleswig Low German varieties, Pol = Polish; Russ = Russian; SJut = Southern Jutish; Ukr = Ukrainian

\(^3\) Abbreviations in capitals used throughout this paper: AGR = agreeing verb form; AND = Low German *un* and Danish *og*; DAT = dative case; FOR = Polish *dla* and Eastern Slavonic *dlja* and Lithuanian *del*; GEN = genitive case; INF = infinitive; TO = Low German *to*, Danish *at*, Petuh *szu*.

\(^4\) If not otherwise stated, the EPol examples come from the corpus gathered for the large scale analysis in Behnke (2014). For references, see Behnke (2014: 147-148).
Wędziagoła (Lithuania))

In both examples, morphological material known from Low German or Polish is used in innovative ways that are restricted to the border zone, i.e. the usage is innovative in the sense that the function words are used in constructions, where none of the varieties outside the border zone show them. In (1) the conjunction *un* ‘and’ connects two verb forms, which can be said to form a complex verb with an aspectual (here: durative) meaning. Low German *un*, which is known as a coordinating conjunction outside the border zone, appears here with a following infinitive, typical for subordination, where Low German has only *to* and Standard German *zu* (both: ‘to’). In (2) the preposition *dla* ‘for’ plus genitive is innovative in the sense that it is used in a context, where Polish outside the border zone allows the pure dative case only. In (2) the innovative character of the construction becomes particularly clear, since the construction marks the “external possessor”, and not, as would be the case in Standard Polish, the beneficiary of the state of affairs.

Restricting the investigation of these phenomena to Low German or Polish varieties is somewhat arbitrary, because equally innovative constructions can also be found in other varieties within the border zone that genetically belong to other languages, which suggests that we are dealing with an areal phenomenon (cf. also Höder 2021). The *un*-infinitive is noted in South Jutish, North Frisian and “Petuh”6, a mixed Danish-Low German-Standard German variety, mainly associated with the city of Flensburg (cf. Fredsted 1983, 2013):

(3) SJut Hun pust lidt aw ó gik et Vaehn /
She breathed little and went a turn(?)
Hen ó se ue a e Vinne
AND see:INF out from the window
‘She drew her breath and went to take a look out of the window’ (lit.: ‘went and see out of the window’) (song text by Karsten Thomsen; example from Fredsted 2013: 341)

(4) NFris Ett Waar baigennd enn keem epp oon à Tünne
the water began AND come:INF up in the gardens
‘The water began to come up in the gardens’ (example from Hoekstra 2009: 262)

(5) Petuh wenn ich hier beichhe un putzen ein büschen die Fenstern?
if I here begin AND clean:INF a little the windows
‘if I begin to clean the windows?’ (example from Molzen 1976)

And an innovative *dla*-construction in a dative context (here the recipient) is noted for the following varieties within the border zone, all of them dialectal:

(6) Lith dāvę šiënų del gi.vulū
gave hay FOR cattle:GEN;PL
‘gave hay to the cattle’ (example from Tuomienē 2006: 433)

(7) Belar ale davaj dl’a joho hrošy
but give FOR him:GEN money
‘but give him money’ (example from Šehen’ 2001: 125)

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5 Throughout the paper, geographical names are given in their Standard German or Standard Polish form.
6 The designation comes from *partout* which refers to a season ticket on a steamboat on the Flensburg Firth, apparently a popular place for Petuh speakers to meet.
It is interesting to note, however, that these innovative constructions seem to be absent from the corresponding roofing standard languages within the areas, which is why this analysis is restricted to non-standard varieties.

Both phenomena have been widely discussed in the literature. These discussions usually focus on finding explanations of how the emergence of the innovative constructions can be explained as the result of a merger between forms and structures of the different contact languages within the area. The trigger for NLGer _un_ as an infinitive marker is assumed to lie outside Low German and is seen in the phonetic merger of the corresponding Danish infinitive marker _at_ ’to’ and the coordinating conjunction _og_ ‘and’ in [ɔ] (cf. Fredsted 2013: 341-343, who emphasizes the special role of Southern Jutish here, the closest neighbor to the (Low) German language territory).

Innovative NLGer _un_ is explained as the result of an identification of _un_ with this merged form [ɔ], which in NLGer can then appear both with agreeing verb forms (just as its Danish equivalent _og_ [ɔ]) and with a subordinated infinitive (just as its Danish equivalent _at_ [ɔ]).

As regards innovative EPol _dla_, researchers also seem to agree that its origin must be sought in one of the contact varieties of Polish (cf. Dzięgieł 2009). In Behnke (2014) it was proposed that the construction goes back to cases of external possessor marking, where Eastern Slavonic languages (i.e. Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian) have two alternative coding strategies (the pure dative case and a prepositional construction involving the preposition _u_ ‘at’):

The Eastern Slavonic (here Belarusian) construction pair provides the structural pattern for the EPol _dla_-construction (as in example (2) above). Polish has _dla_-dative-variation in other structural positions (see below) and EPol extends this variative pattern to external possessor contexts, with the innovative _dla_-construction matching the Eastern Slavonic prepositional construction structurally. The dative is the necessary bridging element, being one of the alternative constructions in all cases. This extension is further facilitated by the potential homophony between another Belarusian

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preposition lja ’at’ which formally coincides with (d)l’a in its reduced form and overlaps semantically with u ’at’ in its local sense, while it does not seem to share the latter’s use in possessive constructions.

(12) Belar Staljarnja [...] stajala na ūkrajku lesu, lja vozera.
shed stood at edge forest at lake:GEN
‘The shed stood at the edge of the woods, at the lake’ (example from Jaūnevič 1977: 163)

In the following sections, the two innovative constructions described above will be compared, the assumption behind such a comparison obviously being that they share something that makes them comparable. The two scenarios outlined above give explanations for the origins of the corresponding innovative constructions, and as such it would seem arbitrary to discuss them together or even compare them. But while the literature on these innovative constructions focuses on their emergence, not much attention is being paid to their distribution, and/or potential restrictions of their use. It will be argued that this can be better understood if we analyse the relations of these innovative constructions to other constructions that alternate freely with the innovative ones (cf. Trubetzkoy’s concept of “free variation” (Trubetzkoy 1939)). It is assumed that knowledge about the relation between innovative and alternating unmarked constructions is part of the knowledge determining the choice of constructions from the diasystematic repertoire of the potentially plurilingual speaker in border zones. It will be argued that the mechanisms influencing this choice share common traits in both (and possibly other) border zones.

2. Variation between alternating constructions
In the following sections, instances of variation between alternative constructions as expressions of the same function will be discussed: first, variation between innovative and unmarked constructions within each of the two border zones (2.1.); second, intralinguistic variation between unmarked constructions (2.2.). The term unmarked will be used here to designate constructions whose occurrence is not limited to the border zone.

2.1. Variation between innovative and unmarked morphosyntactic constructions in two distant linguistic border zones
The two innovative constructions described above are not obligatory for the expression of a given function. In both border zones we can see that alternative, but functionally equivalent constructions are in use.

In EPol dialects, for example, we can find innovative dla-constructions as well as unmarked alternative constructions with the preposition u plus genitive, denoting the external possessor of a state of affairs. Note, that the u-construction is itself a “calque” (Kurzowa 1993: 300) from Russian, since Standard Polish u-constructions are restricted to local senses (cf. Dąbrowska 1997: 133). However, it must still be regarded as unmarked, since its use as a marker of external possessors is attested in all Eastern Slavonic varieties outside the EPol border zone.

(13a) EPol i dla pannej młodej zdejmowali buty też
and FOR bride:GEN took.off shoes also
‘and they also took the bride’s shoes off’ (lit.: took for the bride the shoes off) (corpus example from Elk, Northeastern Poland)

(13b) skradziono u mnie płaszcz
stolen at I:GEN coat
‘My coat was stolen’ (lit.: stolen at me the coat’) (example from the Wilno region, Lithuania, taken from Kurzowa 1993: 300)
But *u*-constructions are not the only alternative for innovative *dla*. Here is an example where it alternates with the unmarked pure dative case as a marker of the addressee of a verbal transfer, which is a possible marker in all varieties in- and outside the border zone.

(14a) EPol a co ten esesowiec powiedział dla tej staruszki
and what this SS-man said FOR this:GEN old.woman:GEN
ʽand what did this SS-man say to the old woman’ (corpus example from Komaje, Belarus)

(14b) ja siostrze mówię, ty próbuj
I sister:D AT say you try
ʽI say to my sister: You try’ (corpus example from Kabiszki, Lithuania)

An equivalent scenario holds for NLGer dialects: Innovative *un*-infinitive constructions can appear as well as unmarked infinitive constructions with the particle *to* (the Low German equivalent to Standard German *zu* ‘to’), here as expressions for a state of affairs denoting existence (with the typical (Standard and Low) German existential predicate *geven* (‘give’)):

(15a) NLGer Dat geev twee Orten un speelen Bliestück
It give:PST two kinds and play:INF Bliestück
ʽThere were two ways to play Bliestück (a game)’ (Simonsen 2007: 25)

(15b) Vun disse Seemannsfamilie gifft dat veel to vertellen
Of this sailor.family give:PRS it much TO tell:INF
ʽThere is a lot to tell about this sailor family’ (Simonsen 2007: 93)

But, again, unmarked *to*-infinitives are not the only alternative for innovative *un*-infinitives. Another unmarked alternative can be a construction where *un* functions as a coordinating conjunction followed by a sentence with an agreeing verb form, as in (16), where the *un*-construction appears in a durative verb construction with *sein* ‘be’ and the adverb *bi* ‘at’ (cf. Mensing 1927-35: I, 331)

(16a) NLGer un Mudder weer grade bi un böten de Backaaben an
and mother was just at AND heat:INF the oven
ʽand mother was just about to heat the oven’ (Simonsen 2007: 97)

(16b) De Knech is al bi un spannt dat Peerd af
the groom is just at AND unhitch:AGR the horse
ʽthe groom was just about to unhitch the horse’ (Simonsen 2007: 59)

2.2. Unmarked intralinguistic variation between alternative constructions

2.2.1. Constructions involving dative and prepositional constructions in Slavonic languages

Now, variation between two alternative coding strategies as expressions of a given function is not unknown in the varieties outside the border zone, the only difference being that the innovative variant is not an option there. Instead, instances of variation between unmarked constructions are reported for each of the languages involved here, without any reference to any kind of contact between them, i.e. they are examples of intralinguistic variation. Often this variation is interpreted as a synchronic symptom of an ongoing diachronic change within each separate language, where one of the alternates gradually substitutes the other (cf. Hentschel 2001a). The possibility of two alternatives to encode a certain function, therefore, does not mean that both are evenly distributed in language use.

For example, all Slavonic languages involved here show variation between *dla*- and dative constructions in specific contexts, e.g. for the encoding of the experiencer of a state of affairs. Here is an example from Polish:
(17) Pol niezrozumiały komu / dla kogo
incomprehensible who:DAT / FOR who:GEN
both: ‘incomprehensible to whom’ (example from Buttler 1976: 168f.)

Another context of unmarked variation between Polish dla (or its Eastern Slavonic etymological and functional equivalent dlja) and dative is the beneficiary, illustrated here with an example from Ukrainian:

(18) Ukr Syn kupyyv materi / dlja materi knyhu.
son bought mother:DAT / FOR mother:GEN book
‘The son bought a book for his mother.’ (example from Gorodenskaya & Buniyatova 1995: 146)

Research has identified effects of the animacy hierarchy on the choice of the morphosyntactic marker here where the prepositional option is slowly climbing up the hierarchy (cf. Bartels 2005; Hentschel 2001b). Furthermore, Hentschel (2001b) identifies the syntactic status of the (adjectival) predicate as another factor steering the choice of the marker for experiencers, with nominalized adjectives turning out to be the dla-friendliest ones.

As noted before (see examples in (11)), there is also unmarked variation between u-constructions and dative ones for marking the external possessor. Here is another example from Russian:

(19a) Russ Emu otnjali nogu
he:DAT took.off leg
‘They took his leg off.’ (lit.: ‘Him took they off the leg.’)

(19b) Vdrug u Judina otnimut ruki
suddenly at Judin:GEN will.take.off hands
‘suddenly they will take off Judin’s hands’ (lit.: ‘suddenly at Judin they will take off the hands’)

(both examples from Hentschel & Menzel 2002: 332)

Hentschel & Menzel (2002: 342) observe (for Russian) that the two alternatives are not evenly distributed: In ditransitive constructions, denoting an ablative transfer a prepositional marking of the possessor is more frequent than the dative marking.

2.2.2. Co- and subordinating constructions involving infinitives and agreeing verb forms in Low German and Danish

Turning to the languages involved in the German-Danish border zone, Herslund (2007) reports that as for Danish, coordinate constructions involving og ‘and’ plus agreeing verb seem to be gradually replacing subordinate constructions in cases where the two verb forms denote a single state of affairs. The shift from a subordinating construction with at ‘to’ plus infinitive towards a coordinating construction with og ‘and’ plus agreeing verb is facilitated if the forms involved are homonymous. As we have already seen, og and at are merged phonetically to [ɔ], so that the functional load to differentiate between an agreeing verb form and an infinitive lies solely on the verb form following [ɔ]. However, there are instances where these two verb forms are homonymous as well, at least potentially in spoken language, as can be seen in the following example:
Cases like these are particularly suitable for a reanalysis from subordinate to coordinate constructions (cf. Herslund 2007: 66-67). The coordinative construction spreads to cases where there is no formal merger between agreeing and infinitive verb form, and eventually leads to constructions which are not acceptable for all:

(21) Dan De plejer jo [ɔ] kan nå det they use AND can:AGR make it

’They use to make it’ (example from DR, 1 28.3.07, taken from Herslund 2007: 67 and adapted)

Here the infinitive form would be kunne instead of kan.

Because of the potential phonetic merger between the two coding strategies, it is interesting to look at how the tendency might be manifest in writing. Fenyvesi (2021) has analyzed transcriptions of utterances from a corpus of spoken Danish in the context of verb forms of prøve ‘try’ in constructions where it governs a second verb form. In contrast to English (or German), Danish prøve has a variant that has grammaticalized into an imperative marker (see example (20)) and is frequent in spoken language. She observes that transcribers choose to write [ɔ] as <at> in the vast majority of cases, unless prøve appears in the imperative as prøv, where the percentage of <og>-spellings is slightly higher. Assuming that phenomena of language change need more time until they find expression in written language, Fenyvesi’s observations neatly fit in the overall picture. In this context, it is interesting to note that there are instances where the spread of <og>-spellings seems to have gone much further, e.g. in constructions like

(22) Dan Vi har været ude og lege.

‘We have been outside to play’ (example from Brandt 1995: 54)

(23) Vi gik ud og lege.

‘We went out to play’ (example from Brandt 1995: 54)

Brandt (1995: 52-54) calls constructions like these “adverbial purposives”, owing to the fact that they need a (static (22) or directional (23)) local adverbial, which denotes the place where the purposive action is to take place. According to him, the preferred written form for the infinitive marker here is <og> ‘and’, but “grammatical formalists frown upon the practice” (Brandt 1995: 53) and would consequently prefer <at> (’Vi har været ude at lege’). The example differs from (20) and (21) in that the first predicate is not encoded verbally, but in the adverbial. Interestingly, the preference for <og>-spellings, which are usually associated with agreeing verb forms, seems strongest where the agreement between the two verb forms is secondary. The choice of an agreeing verb form following <og> (’Vi gik ud og legede ‘We went out and played’) would probably indicate an unintended conceptual separation within “going” and “playing”, so the purposive relation would become unclear. This example indicates that the attested tendency towards og-marked coordinative constructions in Danish is stronger than a tendency to preserve at-constructions. The og-construction in adverbial purposives might be a way to solve the ambiguity between at and og caused by their phonetic merger.
The dominance of *og*-constructions does not mean, however, that *at*-constructions have completely disappeared from purposive constructions. They are rather reintroduced in combination with a preposition (*for* ‘for, in order’), which expresses the purposive relation more explicitly. Brandt (1995: 54) sees the “orthographic puzzle” between *<og>*- and *<at>*-spellings as one of the contributing factors for the “modern preference” for prepositional purposive constructions with *at* such as: *Vi har været ude for at lege*. The result of this development would then be that the alternation between *og* and *at* is replaced by an alternation between *og* and the more explicit *for* *at*. Other prepositions can also govern the infinitive with *at*, denoting other semantic relations, and Brandt (1995: 59) identifies 17 Danish prepositions that can govern the infinitive with *at*, so that one could assume an alternation between *og*- and PREP *at*-constructions.

Turning to Low German, a similar alternation is frequently described in the literature. In his *Schleswig-Holsteinisches Wörterbuch*, Mensing (1927-35: V. 228), for example, observes a preference for coordinative constructions in colloquial speech (“Volkssprache”) (as in 24a)⁸, where the written language (“Schriftsprache”) prefers subordination (as in 24b), for example with the verb *bigahn* ‘begin’, which marks an ingressive aktionsart:

(24a) LGer nu gah man bi un ȩt wat
    now go just AND eat:AGR something
    Examples (24a/b) indicate that the difference between un ‘and’ and to ‘to’ correlates with a difference in word order, with VO-order in the sentence following un:

(25) he is so driest un deit dat
    he is so cheeky AND do:AGR that
    ‘He is so cheeky to do that’ (example from Mensing 1927-35: I. 347)

As we have seen for Danish, the formal difference disappears with growing homonymy between the forms involved: For example, the agreeing and infinitive verb forms in the second verb merge if the first verb is an infinitive, or a verb form that is homonymous with the infinitive itself, for example:

(26) LGer wo kann he so verrückt sien un glöben dat
    how can he so crazy be:INF AND believe:INF/AGR that
    ‘How can he be so crazy to believe that?’ (example from Mensing 1927-35: V. 228)

Note, that the word order of the sentence following un follows the one with the finite verb in (25): instead of the typical German verb-final position, the verb precedes the object, while the infinitive appears in final position in the sentence preceding un (cf. also Fuckel 1912; Teuchert 1921; Appel 2007: 154). Although the VO order corresponds to Danish word order, these authors give no indication of Danish influence here.

2.3. Shared or separate constructions in a diasystem with multiplied form-function relations

The knowledge about the relations between alternating coding strategies in given functional contexts should be thought of as being a part of the plurilingual repertoire in a given border zone. It seems

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⁸ The preference for coordinating constructions is frequently reported in the literature on Low German, cf. for example, Dost (1975: 135), Appel (2007: 124).
plausible to assume that the multiplied relations and tendencies between alternative constructions with both formal and/or structural overlap make it more complex to differentiate between shared and not-shared elements in the border zone than in any of the separate languages for themselves. In the next section (3), an attempt based on corpus material is being made to show how this complexity is being dealt with, and how the introduction of innovative structures can be seen as a possible solution to reduce complexity within the border zone.

After a brief presentation of the corpus material (3.1.), we will first turn to “restrictions” for the emergence of innovative constructions, i.e. types of constructions where no (or almost no) alternative innovative construction could be attested (3.2.). Next, we will turn to instances where three alternative options are attested, and discuss in what sense these could have served as “bridges” to help the innovation come about (3.3.). Finally, we will turn to instances where the innovation has “expanded”, i.e. where the innovative construction reaches its highest frequency (3.4.).

3. A corpus-linguistic investigation of the variation between alternative constructions involving function words in two distant border zones

3.1. Corpus analysis

3.1.1. Corpus design and method

To investigate the distribution of innovative constructions and their functional alternatives, two different corpus analyses were carried out: EPol dialects were analyzed in a relatively large-scale corpus analysis of dialect texts from four different subareas within the zone on both sides of the present eastern Polish border (cf. Behnke 2014). These texts are available as transcriptions of spoken data from 221 locations west and east of the current Eastern Polish border. They were gathered by numerous Polish dialectologists between 1952 and 2002 (with 85% of the utterances gathered between 1982 and 2002) and published in various different publications (see Behnke 2014: ch. 4.2 for a complete list of references). The average age of the informants was about 72 years at the time their speech was recorded. From running text, the first 3,200 instances with either dative or (d)l’a- constructions (both innovative and unmarked) were extracted and annotated according to both formal and structural (semantic and syntactic) properties. The amount of utterances was evenly distributed across the four subterritories, which differed according to their contact situations: 1) territories within Poland (with Standard Polish as a roof language), 2) Wilno-region (which was part of the Polish state until WW II and shows significant Belarusian influence), 3) Kowno-region (with only historical influence of Belarusian and dominant contact to Lithuanian), 4) Ukraine (with substantial influence from Ukrainian). Only dla- and dative constructions were part of the quantitative analysis, while u-constructions were only regarded qualitatively.

The NLGer corpus material used here is of a very different character. Due to a lack of access to large-scale authentic Low German spoken text corpora from the Schleswig area, the analysis is based on written literary texts: Fritz Simonsen (*1900 in Süderbrarup between Schleswig and Kappeln, around 30 km southeast of Flensburg, † 1987 in Plön), whose autobiographical hand-written notes were first published in 2006 under the title Ut mien Kinnerjohrn (‘From my childhood’), and Klaus Peter Asmussen’s (*1946 in Handewitt near Flensburg) collection of translations of fairy tales De smuckste Deern vun’e Welt (‘The prettiest girls in the world’). Both texts are written in dialect varieties of the Schleswig region and show innovative un plus infinitive-constructions. From running

9 The use of literary dialect texts can, of course, raise doubts about the authenticity of the dialect features that it contains since their use might have a dramaturgical purpose. Especially in the case of salient features, the author might use them with a higher (exaggerated) frequency than in spoken language and thus “stylize” the speakers. We will follow Wilcken (2015: 191-192), whose description of the mixed Low German – Standard German variety “Missingsch” is also based on literary texts: She argues that there are limits as to how much a literary version can deviate from its authentic counterpart since the intended readers, who often come from the border zone themselves, must still be able to recognize the language use as an example of their dialect.
text, the first instances of all three potentially alternating variants (a. innovative un plus infinitive; b. unmarked un plus agreeing verb form and c. unmarked to plus infinitive) were selected and again annotated according to syntactic and semantic criteria, altogether 807 tokens. Ambiguous cases like de sünd bi un und fahr ‘n INF?/AGR? Koorn in (Asmussen 2019: 55) (‘they are about to bring in the corn’), where it is not clear if the verb form following un is an infinitive or the homonymous agreeing third person plural, were marked separately.

The analysis of the NLGer-corpus was supplemented by data from Petuh, the above-mentioned mixed variety which is associated with the city of Flensburg. In total, 217 tokens of all three construction types were taken from two literarized Petuh texts: Renate Delfs’ (*1925 in Flensburg; †2018 Flensburg) Ohaueha, was’n Aggevars (1995) and Gerty Molzen’s (*1906 in Flensburg; †1990 in Glücksburg) Petuhfahrt nach Glücksburg (around 1966). Petuh differs from Schleswig Low German in that both Danish and Standard German elements (both in lexicon and grammar) are much more prominent, but like Schleswig Low German, Petuh is marked by un plus infinitive-constructions. Fleischer & Vikner (2022) subsume both varieties under the term “slesvigtsky” (‘Schleswig German’) in their analysis of whether it represents an example of an SOV- or SVO-language. But since Petuh un-infinitives appear to behave quite differently from Schleswig Low German in other aspects, they were analyzed separately and not consistently here.

3.1.2. Overall distributions

The overall distribution between dative- and dla-constructions, both unmarked and innovative ones in the four subareas of the EPol border zone can be seen in figure 2. This distribution will serve as a reference point for comparisons with the distribution in more specific contexts.

![Fig. 2: Distribution of dative- and dla-constructions in four EPol subareas, n=3200 (4 x 800).](image)

As can be seen, the dative is still in the majority in all areas. The Kowno-region sticks out as being particularly dla-friendly and, as we shall see later, this is also true for innovative dla-constructions. Here, innovative dla-constructions marking an external possessor can already be found in texts dating

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10 One example would be that the construction das war ja kein Wetter un und jagen inf ein Hund aus in ‘lit.: that was no weather to chase a dog out in’ (Delfs 1995: 11) with a postposed preposition in was not attested in the Schleswig Low German data. Another example is the frequent Petuh construction with sehen ‘see’ plus un-infinitive Bei diese Hitze laß uns man sehen un und chriegen inf ein Szelter ‘In this heat let us go (lit.: see) and get some water’ (Molzen 1976: 13), which could not be attested in the Schleswig Low German data. Both constructions show that Petuh draws much more heavily on Danish surface syntax than Schleswig Low German.
back to the late 19th century (cf. Dowojna-Sylwestrowicz 2006 [1887]). Since Standard Polish does not show dla-constructions for external possessors and since contact to the developments in Standard Polish in the Kowno-region was the least intense after World War I, it is assumed that Standard Polish had a negative effect on the spread of innovative dla and that it is the Kowno-region, where it can still be observed relatively undisturbed (cf. Behnke 2014: 109-114).

There is nothing innovative in the form of the innovative dla-construction as compared to unmarked ones, but its innovative character is only revealed when it is used to encode specific semantic roles, as for example the external possessor. But the situation is a little different in the case of NLGer. Here it is the form of the un-infinitive itself that is innovative. As a point of departure, we will therefore compare the distribution of innovative un-constructions differently, i.e. a) as an alternative for unmarked un-constructions (i.e. with agreeing second verbs) and b) as an alternative for unmarked to-infinitives. In cases where both an interpretation as agreeing and as infinitive verb form was possible, the instances were marked “ambiguous”. The overall distribution in Low German and Petuh can be seen here:

Fig. 3: Distribution of innovative un-constructions compared to different unmarked constructions in two varieties (NLGer: n=746; Petuh: n=182).

As can be seen, innovative un-constructions are much more frequent in Petuh than in Low German, which could be a result of their indexical character that was deliberately and thus more frequently used by the authors wishing to mark their protagonists as Petuh-speakers. Note also that the share of unmarked to-infinitives as opposed to innovative (and ambiguous) ones is constant in both varieties.

3.2. Restrictions for the use of innovative constructions in border zones

The investigation of the distribution of innovative constructions begins with contexts where they do not occur as alternatives for other unmarked constructions, although these unmarked constructions are known to be alternatives to innovative constructions in other contexts.

3.2.1. Eastern Polish dialects (EPol)

As was shown above, innovative dla-constructions can appear in the EPol border zone as alternatives for another prepositional construction with u ‘at’ plus genitive to mark an external possessor (see examples (13a/b)). However, other construction types present in the border zone and involving u plus genitive do not seem to be exchangeable with dla. This is the case, where the u-construction does not mark a possessor, but a participant which is the source of a verbal request. A prepositional construction with u is not usual in Standard Polish to encode this role, but it is typical in Eastern Slavonic languages. Here are two examples from Ukrainian and Belarusian:
(27) Ukr Vin zapytav u chvorych, jak tut u hospitali
He asked at patients:GEN how here at hospital
‘He asked the patients (lit.: at the patients), what it is like at this hospital’ (Buttke 1977: 662)

(28) Belar paprasic’ u nastašnik
‘to ask a teacher’ (lit.: ‘at a teacher’) (Šuba 1971: 152)

When meanings like these are expressed, EPol show either the Standard Polish accusative or the Eastern Polish variant, but no innovative dla-construction. Since u-constructions were not analyzed in the EPol-corpus analysis, here is an example from the literature:

(29) EPol prosić u rodziców 10, 20 rub. na swe wydatki
ask at parents:GEN 10, 20 rubles for their expenses
‘ask the parents for 10, 20 for your expenses’ (Mędelska 1993: 159)

This restriction is illuminating for a better understanding of the factors that allow the alternative innovative dla-can to appear and factors that block them: It seems to be the case that the variation between unmarked datives and unmarked u-constructions is the condition for an innovative dla-construction to appear, so there is no innovative dla-construction without a dative as an alternative. One could say that it is not the dla-construction in itself that is innovative, but that it is an innovative alternation between dative and dla-alternatives that is characteristic for EPol. This can be seen as a compromise solution: It combines an alternation between dative and a prepositional pattern, known from Eastern Slavonic, with a formal alternation between dative and the form dla, which is known from other functional contexts (see (18) and (19)) from all the Slavonic languages involved, including Polish. At this stage, one variation is substituted by another. Where u-constructions do not alternate with dative ones (as in examples (27)-(29)), no innovative dla can appear. As we shall see later, at a later stage of the development the condition of a u-dative-alternation will be dropped for other innovative dla-constructions to appear (see 3.4.).

There is no instance where the dative alone can appear in EPol without having an innovative dla-alternative, so that we can say that no dative context blocks the possibility of using an innovative or unmarked alternative dla-construction, although the distribution of both marking strategies is not equal in different contexts.

3.2.2. Schleswig Low German (NLGer)
Innovative un-infinitives appear to be excluded where the two sentences combined by un are in an “additive” relation. Under this label, all instances were annotated where the two verb phrases combined were interchangeable. This semantic relation can exclusively be expressed through a construction with un plus agreeing verb form of the verb following un, as in

(30) NLGer De Lehrer weer noch jung un heeter Bänsch
the teacher was still young AND was.called:AGR Bänsch
‘The teacher was still young and his name was Bänsch’ (Simonsen 2007: 71).

Other instances were also classified as additive, although no interchangeability is possible. This is the case where the relation is merely temporal, as in

(31) Do smitt he ehr t’rügg in’t Water un fangt
there throws he it back into the water AND chatch:AGR
wirklich en grote Barg Fisch
really a big bunch fish
‘Then he throws it back into the water and really catches a big bunch of fish’
(Asmussen 2019: 24)

Almost 54% of all Low German corpus utterances fall into this additive category. Although it might seem obvious, it is important to note that additive contexts such as these do not only exclude innovative un-infinitives, but also unmarked to-infinitives.

A reverse scenario is also attested. The corpus contains a few types of constructions, which seem to be reserved to unmarked to-infinitives, and neither innovative un-infinitives nor un-constructions with agreeing verbs occur, as in

(32) NLGer Jeder Morgen, wenn wi wat to schrieven harrn,
each morning when we something TO write:INF have,
stunn he achter uns
stood he behind us
‘Each morning, when we had to write something, he stood behind us’ (Simonsen 2007: 72)

(33) Dat heff ik to bestimmen
that have I TO decide:INF
‘I have to decide that.’ (Asmussen 2019: 72)

(34) Bi de Praat keemen se uk up Westerland
during the conversation came they also about Westerland
TO talk:INF
‘During the conversation they also got to talk about Westerland’ (Simonsen 2007: 64)

(35) Wenn de Speler sein Bliestück ünner de anner to liggen keem
if the player his Bliestück under the other TO lie:INF came
‘If the player’s Bliestück [a toy, LB] happened to lie under the other’ (Simonsen 2007: 25)

(36) Am meisten kreegen wi to hörn von Hopa
mostly got we TO hear:INF about Grandpa
‘We got to hear mostly about Grandpa.’ (Simonsen 2007: 35)

(37) Kort na de Hochtied kriggt de morsgrimmige Süster to weten,
shortly after the marriage gets the ugly sister TO know:INF
what happened has
‘Shortly after the marriage the ugly sister got to know what had happened’
(Asmussen 2019: 34)

(38) sein schöne Kopp is man so eben to sehn
his beautiful head is just so just TO see:INF
‘His beautiful head could just be seen’ (Simonsen 2007: 56)

(39) weil ‘n nich to bruken weer
because it not to use was
‘because it was of no use’ (Simonsen 2007: 61)

In all these cases, the verb governing the to-infinitive is a kind of auxiliary: hebben ‘have’ in (32) and (33) adds a modal meaning of “necessity” to the sentence, kamen ‘come’ in (34) and (35) marks the state of affairs as accidental, kreegen ‘get’ in (36) and (37) adds a “passive-transferential” or
“experiential” meaning, as Lenz (2009: 68-69) puts it, and finally *sien* ‘be’ expresses a passive modal meaning. As we shall see in 3.3., auxiliary status alone does not prevent an innovative *un*-infinitive from occurring, but here it is interesting to note that all these *to*-constructions do not have an unmarked alternative construction with *un* plus agreeing verb, in spite of the latter’s tendency to expand. As with examples (27)-(29) from EPol, lack of variation between unmarked constructions seems to be a restricting factor for the occurrence of innovative *un*-infinitives. Where only one of the unmarked constructions is possible for the expression of a certain function, there is apparently no basis for the introduction of an innovative *un*-infinitive as an alternative. Variation between innovative and unmarked constructions in border zones seems to imply variation between unmarked constructions in some of the languages involved.

3.3. *Bridging contexts – The introduction of innovative constructions in border zones*

In the following cases, innovative constructions are attested to some extent as alternatives to one of the two other unmarked constructions (or to both). What is specific about these examples is that they show some kind of ambiguity and are thus prone to reanalysis which in turn paves the way for the innovative construction to enter the scene.

3.3.1. Eastern Polish Dialects (EPol)

As we have seen above (sentence (2)), innovative *dla*-constructions occur as a marker of the external possessor in EPol in ditransitive sentences, next to a) *u*-constructions (both requiring the genitive case) and b) pure dative cases (as in examples in (11a/b)), where the state of affairs is a kind of ablative transfer, i.e., a transfer where something is taken away from the possessor. It is argued here that the possibility of variation between the two unmarked variants is a precondition for the emergence of innovative *dla*-constructions. But the question is how *dla*-constructions, which are known from Polish, came about to extend their functional spectrum to include the marking of external possessors in the border zone repertoire.

One possible candidate for a basis of such an extension are sentences that encode a specific kind of transfer, namely one of attaching something to a person. As we already know (see 2.2.1.), *dla*-constructions and dative ones are common in Polish as a marker of the beneficiary of a state of affairs, i.e., of a kind of adlative transfer. What is special about the following examples is that the *dla*-referent can both be interpreted as a beneficiary and as a possessor, since what is established by the transfer is what comes closest to a (new) possessive relation in the narrow sense, because the place of attachment is the referent’s clothes or body parts, which is usually referred to as “inalienable possession”.

(40a) EPol *i* kokardkę przyszpilają *dla* młodego
and ribbon they.attach FOR bridegroom:GEN
‘and they attached a ribbon on the bridegroom’ (example from Żegowicze, Lithuania)

(40b) *chłopcom* przyczepiali mirt z taką wstążką
boys:DAT they.attached myrtle with such ribbon
‘they attached a myrtle with such a ribbon on the boys’ (example from Kiemielszki, Lithuania)

The recipient/beeneficiary encoded in these adlative transfers can be conceptually reanalyzed (or additionally analyzed) as an external possessor, which would be the domain, where *u*-constructions would be a third coding-possibility.11

11 Cf. the possibility to encode the possessor in a non-ablative transfer with the verb *celovat* ‘kiss’ in Russian, e.g. *celovat’
Although this type is not frequent and dative- or dla-construction almost only attested in the Kowno-region in a sufficient number (13 x), it is still interesting to look at the distribution of the two constructions here:

![Fig. 4: Distribution of dative- and dla-constructions with verbs of attaching in the Kowno-region (verbs of attaching: n=13; all other contexts: n=787).](image)

The data show that verbs of attaching are a particularly attractive context for innovative dla-constructions to appear, where they encode a beneficiary of an adlative transfer but, at the same time, encode the possessor in a newly established possessive relation.

If one compares these data with the ones for external possessors, where the dla-construction is clearly innovative, we can see that the distribution roughly matches the overall distribution, with a slight increase of innovative dla in the particularly dla-friendly Kowno-region.

![Fig. 5: Distribution of dative- and innovative dla-construction in external possessor contexts in ditransitive sentences, n=98 (PL: 46 – KO:14 – WI: 14 – UK: 24).](image)

The argument suggested here is that the marking of the beneficiary in ditransitive sentences with verbs of attaching, whereby a possessive relation is established, provides a basis for reanalysis of the dla-construction as a marker for the external possessor in ditransitive ablative sentences. The

ruku babuške / dlja babuški (both: ‘to kiss grandmother’s hand’) (example from Glovinskaja 1996: 242).
association of dla-constructions with external possessors makes them a possible option in non-adlative contexts where they must be regarded as innovations.

3.3.2. Schleswig Low German (NLGer)
When we observe the occurrences of innovative un-infinitives in NLGer, one can identify a few contexts where they appear as a third possibility with a relatively low frequency, without replacing the other alternatives. These instances have in common that there is a stronger degree of semantic integration between the two verb forms connected by un or to than there is with additive relations discussed in 3.2.2. These constructions differ from additive ones in that they rather denote one single state of affairs (or different aspects of it) and cannot be mutually exchanged. In a sense, they behave like serial verb constructions, although the term is reserved for cases without an “overt marker of coordination” (cf. Aikhenvald 2006, but cf. Herslund 2007, who applies the term to Danish coordinating constructions).

Innovative un-constructions appear, for example, in cases, where the first verb marks a specific aktionsart, e.g. ingressive, as in

\[(41a)\] NLGer Do fung he an to lachen
there began he PREFIX TO laugh:INF
‘Then he began to laugh’ (Simonsen 2007: 69)

\[(41b)\] Aver bald fungen de Lütten an un weenern
but soon began the little.ones PREFIX and cried:AGR
‘But soon the children began to cry’ (Simonsen 2007: 28)

\[(41c)\] Vadder hett öft […] vertellt, dat he fröh anfungen harr un schmöken
father has often told that he early begun has and smoke:INF
‘Father has often said that he began to smoke early’ (Simonsen 2007: 19)

There are other ingressive verbs than anfangen ‘begin’ (the most frequent being beigehen with the same meaning.) and there seems to be a slightly stronger tendency to to-constructions if the ingressive verb is anfangen, which can be used both in Low and Standard German, than with beigehen, which is typical for Low German.

Here is another example, with verbs denoting a durative aktionsart, here with the verb bisien ‘be in progress’ (see also Thies 2018), with (16b) repeated as (42b):

\[(42a)\] NLGer Mal is he bi to fischen
once is he DURATIVE TO fish:INF
‘One time he was fishing’ (Asmussen 2019: 24)

\[(42b)\] De Knech is al bi un spannt dat Peerd af
the groom is just at AND unhitch:AGR the horse
‘the groom was just about to unhitch the horse’ (Simonsen 2007: 59)

\[(42c)\] He weer de ganse Namiddag bi un marsen
he was the whole afternoon DURATIVE AND toil:INF
in’e Kantüffeln
in.the potatoes
‘He has been toiling in the potatoes the whole afternoon’ (Simonsen 2007: 71)

Again, other verbs were also classified as durative markers, including positional verbs such as sitten ‘sit’ or lügen ‘lie’, which can have a durative function in Low German (cf. Thies 2018).

Apart from these two larger groups of verbs there were smaller groups of “serial construction verbs”, where innovative un-constructions occurred with only one of the two other variants, e.g.
conative verbs:

(43a) Mudder versöchter, ehr to beruhigen
mother tried her to calm down
‘Mother tried to calm her down’ (Simonsen 2007: 98)

(43b) He versöchter un schuven de Schneer över de Hāk
he tried AND push:INF the sling over the hedge
‘He tried to push the sling over the hedge’ (Simonsen 2007: 41)

Taken together, the distribution of *un*- and *to*-constructions in these three verb groups looks like this:

Fig. 6: Distribution of *un*-infinitives compared to a) *un*-constructions with agreeing verbs and (NLGer: *n* = 649; Petuh: *n* = 126), b) *to*-infinitives in constructions with ingressive, durative and conative functions (NLGer: *n* = 243; Petuh: *n* = 142).

We can see that the percentage of innovative *un*-infinitives is slightly higher than in the overall distribution in figure 3 above, both in NLGer and in Petuh. (We can also see, that innovative *un*-infinitives are considerably more frequent in Petuh than in NLGer.)

Another group of sentences was categorized as “purposive”, where the state of affairs in the second sentence could be interpreted as intended by the subject of the first sentence. One would probably not go as far as to say that the two verbs denote a single event as in the “serial” cases above, but still there is a stronger semantic integration. Purposive constructions are also open to all three marking strategies:

(44a) NLGer Ik bliev hier in’t Holt to freten
I stay here in the wood TO eat:INF
‘I’ll stay here in the woods in order to eat’ (Asmussen 2019: 64)

(44b) Do geiht he na de Preester un vertellt em de heele Saak
there goes he to the priest AND tell:AGR him the whole thing
‘Then he goes to the priest to tell him the whole thing’ (Asmussen 2019: 48)

(44c) De lütte König Hanni freut sik düchtig un marscheert munter
the little king Hanni was glad much and marches happily
‘The little king Hanni is very glad and marches happily off to see his father and mother’ (Asmussen 2019: 42)

Here the distribution of constructions showed roughly the same amount of *un*-infinitives in relation to *un*-constructions with agreeing verb, but a more diffuse picture with *to*-infinitives, which were
slightly less frequent than in the overall distribution in NLGer, but more frequent in Petuh. Still, also here, all three construction types were attested.

Sometimes sentences like the ones discussed in this section (i.e. ingressive, durative, conative and purposive) are used in constructions where the first verb appears as an infinitive, e.g., if it is required by a modal verb. The form of the second verb is then ambiguous as to the interpretation as an agreeing or an infinitive form since this difference is formally neutralized. Sentences like these therefore provide a basis for reanalysis leading to an infinitive interpretation, which would be plausible because the structure is semantically subordinate and alternates with an analogous to-construction where subordination is not in doubt. Two examples can be found here:

(45) NLGer un he kunn versöken un blacken een af
    and he could try AND knock:AGR?/INF? one off
    ‘and he could try to knock one of them off’ (Simonsen 2007: 26)

(46) dar kunn een kamen un ehr weghalten
    there could one come AND her take.away:AGR?/INF?
    ‘Someone could come and take her away.’ (Asmussen 2019: 41)

With un-constructions being ambiguous, it is still worth noting that the percentage of to-infinitives decreases significantly, as figure 7 shows, so that there is reason to believe that modal embeddings of ingressive, durative, conative and purposive constructions support un-infinitives and provide a point of entry for the innovation:

Fig. 7: Distribution of un-infinitives compared to to-infinitives in constructions with ingressive, durative and conative functions, embedded in modal constructions (NLGer: n=18; Petuh: n=26).

Another facilitating factor for a reanalysis of un-constructions with agreeing verb forms as innovative un-infinitives is word order. Generally, there is a strong correlation between the three construction types and the linear order of the second verb and its object, with to-infinitives showing OV-order and unmarked un-constructions (with agreeing verbs) showing VO-order.

Another case of formal ambiguity involving word order is when the first verb form is in the first or third person plural, as in:

(47) NLGer Denn gahn se bi un spelen
    then begin they AND play:INF
    ‘Then they begin to play’ (Asmussen 2019: 10)

(48) Se holen gar nich up un swögen vun
they stop at all not AND rave:AGR?/INF? of
dat Glück vun se’s Fründin
the luck of their friend
‘They do not stop ravelling about their friend’s luck’ (Asmussen 2019: 19)

Equivalent constructions in Danish always show VO-order in the infinitive, and since in Low German unmarked un-constructions are associated with VO-order, too, because of the preference for paratactic sentence organization with main verbs in second position (see 2.2.2.), this order is taken over by un-infinitives as well. Together with the semantic subordination of the second verb, an interpretation of the verb form as a non-agreeing infinitive seems justified.12

3.4. Expansive innovative constructions
The analysis of the border zone material so far has shown that the two innovative constructions can occur as a third alternative to two unmarked constructions in contexts where these unmarked constructions are known to be alternative coding strategies, i.e. examples of intralinguistic variation, in at least one of the languages involved in the contact situation. Specific circumstances facilitate a reanalysis of the surface structure and thus help the innovation to enter the scene. We have also seen that innovative constructions seem to be blocked if the precondition of intralinguistic variation is not met.

This last section will now focus on contexts that are particularly innovation-friendly, i.e., where their frequency is highest. These high frequencies will be interpreted as symptomatic for the direction of an expansion of the innovative constructions. The corpus material shows that these are contexts, where no variation between two alternating constructions is known from the participating languages outside the border zone. So why are innovative constructions not blocked as in the “conservative” instances described in 3.2.? The reason proposed here is that these innovation-friendly contexts share some structural properties with contexts that are “friendly” to one of two unmarked alternatives known from intralinguistic variation (see 3.2.). The preference for a given innovative construction within the border zone repertoire would be symptomatic of the same structural factors that regulate intralinguistic variation outside the border zone in at least one of the languages involved. As a consequence, innovative constructions no longer appear as a third alternative to two unmarked alternates, but as an alternative to the one unmarked construction only, which is the preferred option to the other unmarked one. This could be a way to reduce the complexity caused by the multiplied relations between alternative constructions in the border zone repertoire.

3.4.1. Eastern Polish dialects (EPol)
The most preferred context for innovative dla-constructions are ditransitive constructions, where the dla-construction marks the third argument role, either a recipient, beneficiary or – as we have seen in 3.3. – the external possessor. In all the standard languages involved here, the ditransitive category includes verbs where only the dative is allowed without any alternative, most typically as a marker of the recipient role of the verb give. Other verbs require either the dative or another prepositional construction, but not dla (e.g. verbs of saying where the addressee can be encoded with the pure dative or with the preposition do ‘to’ plus genitive in Polish as in examples (14a/b) above, cf. Hentschel & Chachulska 2007). Here are two other examples from the corpus with innovative dla and unmarked dative:

(49a) EPol Ona to wszystko dla świni dawala

12 The correlation between to and un and word order is weaker in sentences where the first verb form is embedded by a modal verb (see also 2.2.2.), where both OV- and VO-orders occur.
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As mentioned in section 2.2.1., Hentschel & Menzel (2002: 342) have found out that there is a preference for prepositional marking (with the preposition \(u\) ‘at’) of the external possessor if the “possessed” appears as the object of the sentence, resulting in a ditransitive construction. It is less frequent if it appears as the subject, resulting in an intransitive construction.

The distribution of dla-constructions (including innovative ones) in this corpus shows a significant preference for ditransitive constructions as in (49a/b) and (50a/b) as opposed to intransitive constructions as in

\[
\begin{align*}
(49b) & \quad \text{she} \quad \text{it} \quad \text{all} \quad \text{FOR pigs:GEN} \quad \text{gave} \\
& \quad \text{‘She gave it all to the pigs’ (example from Stare Szpaki, Eastern Poland)} \\
(50a) & \quad \text{ale} \quad \text{dał} \quad \text{ksiądz} \quad \text{organiście} \quad \text{gołębia} \\
& \quad \text{but} \quad \text{gave} \quad \text{priest} \quad \text{organist:DAT} \quad \text{dove} \\
& \quad \text{‘But the priest gave a dove to the organist’ (example from Radoryż Kościelny, Eastern Poland)} \\
(50b) & \quad \text{i} \quad \text{przysłali} \quad \text{dla} \quad \text{mnie} \quad \text{sukienkę} \quad \text{i} \quad \text{welon} \\
& \quad \text{and} \quad \text{sent} \quad \text{FOR I:GEN} \quad \text{dress} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{veil} \\
& \quad \text{‘and they sent me a dress and a veil’ (example from Puńsk, Eastern Poland)} \\
(51a) & \quad \text{właśnie} \quad \text{mnie} \quad \text{przysłał} \quad \text{sweter} \quad \text{niedawno} \\
& \quad \text{just} \quad \text{I:DAT} \quad \text{sent} \quad \text{sweater} \quad \text{recently} \\
& \quad \text{‘He just sent me a sweater recently’ (example from Bujwidze, Lithuania)}
\end{align*}
\]

The preference of dla-constructions for ditransitive constructions in external possessor-contexts is more or less paralleled by a more general preference for ditransitive constructions in the border zone, including innovative ones, as an alternative for the dative, see figure 8.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(51a)} & \quad \text{EPol} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{nie} \quad \text{puchnieje} \quad \text{dla} \quad \text{mnie} \quad \text{nic} \\
& \quad \text{there} \quad \text{not} \quad \text{swells} \quad \text{FOR I:GEN} \quad \text{nothing} \\
& \quad \text{‘Nothing swells on me’ (example from Puńsk, Eastern Poland)} \\
\text{(51b)} & \quad \text{zachorował} \quad \text{mi} \quad \text{mąż} \\
& \quad \text{fell.ill} \quad \text{I:DAT} \quad \text{husband} \\
& \quad \text{‘My husband fell ill’ (example from Bzów, Eastern Poland)}
\end{align*}
\]

Fig. 8: Distribution of dla-constructions and alternative dative constructions in a) ditransitive sentences (\(n=1691\)) and b) intransitive sentences (\(n=147\)).

While the alternation between \(u\)-constructions and datives was still necessary for innovative dla-constructions to occur in possessor contexts, this is no longer needed once the innovative construction has been associated with ditransitivity (including the dative). Here it can occur as an innovative
alternative for the “conservative” dative alone. It thereby also follows another tendency where dla-constructions are on the rise, namely as a marker of the beneficiary (cf. Hentschel 2001b), which can also occur in ditransitive constructions.

3.4.2. Schleswig Low German (NLGer)

The friendliest context for innovative un-infinitives are constructions which were labelled “non-verbal” constructions here, because the un-infinitive either adds information to a noun or an adjective contained in the first sentence. Examples of this category were given in (15a/b), where the un-infinitive and the alternative to-infinitive add information to the object of geven ‘give’ in an existential sentence (dat geev twee Orten un$_{AND}$ spielen$_{INF}$ Bliestück ‘there were two kinds to play Bliestück’ and Vun disse Seemannsfamilie gift dat veel to$_{TO}$ vertellen$_{INF}$ ‘There is a lot to tell about this sailor family’). Here are examples of the most frequent construction types within this diverse category. (Where only the innovative construction is presented, no alternating unmarked construction could be found in the corpus):

a) constructions of the type hebben ‘have’ + noun + to/un-infinitive

(52a) NLGer Wenn he mitënner mal Lust harr un schmöken
‘when he felt like smoking’ (Simonsen 2007: 44)

(52b) En arme Deern, de […] geern wat to eten habben will
‘a poor girl, who would like to have something to eat’ (Asmussen 2019: 35)

b) constructions of the type sien ‘be’ + noun + to/un-infinitive

(53) Ehr erste Arbeit weer nu un braden mi mien Fisch
‘Her first task was to fry me a fish’ (Simonsen 2007: 42)

c) constructions of the type sien ‘be’ + adjective + to/un-infinitive

(54a) Nu is dat verbaden un hebben bi Nacht Licht in’e Stallen
‘now it is forbidden to have lights on in the stable by night’ (Asmussen 2019: 61)

(54b) Petuh das war nicht leicht zu hausen bei mich die letzte Szeit
‘it has not been easy living with me lately’ (Molzen 1976: 9)

d) constructions with pronominal adverbs + to/un-infinitive

(55) NLGer As de Mann dar mit sin Deern oever snackt
‘When the man talks to his daughters about marrying Hannes Grimmbass’

(Asmussen 2019: 50)

e) other constructions of the type verb + noun + to/un-infinitive

(56a) Do kriggt he Lust un heiraten dar een vun
‘He felt like marrying one of them.’ (Asmussen 2019: 49)

(56b) de eene na de anner […] haler wat to spelen
‘one after the other fetches something to play with’ (Simonsen 2007: 104)

The corpus shows the following distribution between un-infinitives and to-infinitives in “non-verbal”
contexts:

![Graph showing distribution of innovative un-infinitives and unmarked to-infinitives](image)

Fig. 9: Distribution of innovative un-infinitives and unmarked to-infinitives in “non-verbal” contexts, n=124 (NLGer: n = 70; Petuh: n = 54).

*Un*-infinitives, which emerge in contexts where unmarked to-infinitives and unmarked *un*-constructions with agreeing verbs alternate (see 3.3.2.), give up the link to the latter and spread further through the diasystem as alternates to to-infinitives in “non-verbal” contexts, where they reach their highest frequency. In 3.2.2., we have seen cases where *un*-infinitives were blocked because they were reserved to to-infinitives (e.g. in the context of the verbs *kamen, kreegen* or modal *hebben or sien*). The reason why *un*-infinitives appear as alternatives to to-infinitives as the most preferred option here is that they follow the same path of expansive unmarked *un*-constructions attested in- and outside the border zone, substituting the other unmarked alternative with to.

As was shown in section 2.2.2., Low German *un* ‘and’ (as its Danish equivalent *og*) is often the preferred option over to because there is a tendency towards coordination instead of subordination, so *un* has an expansive potential. It correlates with agreement between verb forms and, in the case of parataxis, usually with VO word order in the sentence following it. As we have seen, the expansive potential of *un* in NLGer was particularly clear when the two verb forms denote one single event (e.g., durative, ingressive meanings), where to-infinitives would be an alternative. In these cases *un*-infinitives are a kind of compromise construction between subordinating to-infinitives and coordinating *un*-constructions with agreeing verbs. Innovative *un* loses its association with verb agreement, but it still correlates with VO-order. The gradual loss of the correlation between *un* and verb agreement is least restricted in contexts such as (52)-(56), where the *un*-construction adds information to a non-verbal and not a verbal element, which might be the reason why this turns out to be the most *un*-infinitive-friendly structure.

As was shown for Danish purposive construction (see 2.2.2.), there are signs of a rearrangement of the relation between *at*-infinitives and *og*-constructions with agreeing verbs, with to-infinitives giving place to og-constructions, eventually leading to written og-infinitives as in adverbial purposive constructions (*Han var ude og legeINF* ‘He was outside to play’). At-infinitives only reenter the scene as part of a larger construction with an initial preposition (*for at, til at, med at etc.*), which are semantically more specific than the more general og-alternative. NGer *un*-infinitives might ally with this expansive tendency of their Danish equivalents, especially in contexts where agreement is irrelevant.

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13 In our corpus there are only rare instances where the verb-second position is filled by an auxiliary, with the main verb moving to final position.
4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to identify possible common patterns for the distribution of innovative morphosyntactic markers in two distant border zones. The analysis is an attempt to describe their distribution as a reaction to intra- and interlinguistic variation patterns between closely related unmarked constructions, which are not specific to the border zone, but which are multiplied in the border zone repertoire as a consequence of the contact situation between the language varieties involved. The corpus data suggest that one can distinguish different stages in the expansion of innovative constructions, from contexts where they are excluded, via contexts where they emerge as a third alternative to two unmarked ones, to contexts where they expand at the expense of one of the unmarked alternatives. These scenarios are not language-specific. Figure 10 is an attempt to summarize the results:

![Diagram showing the distribution of innovative morphosyntactic constructions and their alternatives in diasystematic border zones repertoires.](image)

Fig. 10: Scheme of the distribution of innovative morphosyntactic constructions and their alternatives in diasystematic border zones repertoires.

The arrows pointing right on top of the scheme signify that the scenario left of the arrow is the precondition for the scenario right of the arrow for the innovative construction to appear. The arrows pointing downwards signify that the innovative construction appears as a reaction of the behavior of unmarked constructions. Although the innovative constructions may seem idiosyncratic for each border zone, the results of this corpus study suggest that they actually share a mechanism of how the innovation comes about, which might be of relevance for the investigation of innovative morphosyntactic constructions in other border zones.

It must be added that the corpus material gathered here represents language usage from the past. None of the informants, be they speakers from Eastern Poland or writers from Northern Germany, are representatives of the younger generation. But the intention of this study is to find typologically relevant explanations for the distribution of alternative marking strategies in border zone areas, independent of time and space.

As we have seen, both innovative constructions can be seen as compromise solutions between other competing constructions so one could see them as examples of linguistic convergence. This is perhaps remarkable in the light of many other cases, where it is reported that a national border rather has the opposite effect and leads to divergence phenomena of the border varieties involved (see Auer
It is interesting to see that speakers in border zone varieties extend the use of variation patterns, i.e. patterns, where at least two forms have the same function, to contexts where the contacting languages know 1:1-relations between form and function. In monolingual approaches, intralinguistic variation seems to be a sign of instability because an unambiguous 1:1-relation between form and function is regarded as cognitively optimal from an intralinguistic perspective and a symptom of language change. But in the plurilingual border zone repertoire where alternatives to express one and the same function are multiplied, variation between two constructions seems to have a stabilizing effect.

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