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 efter 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).
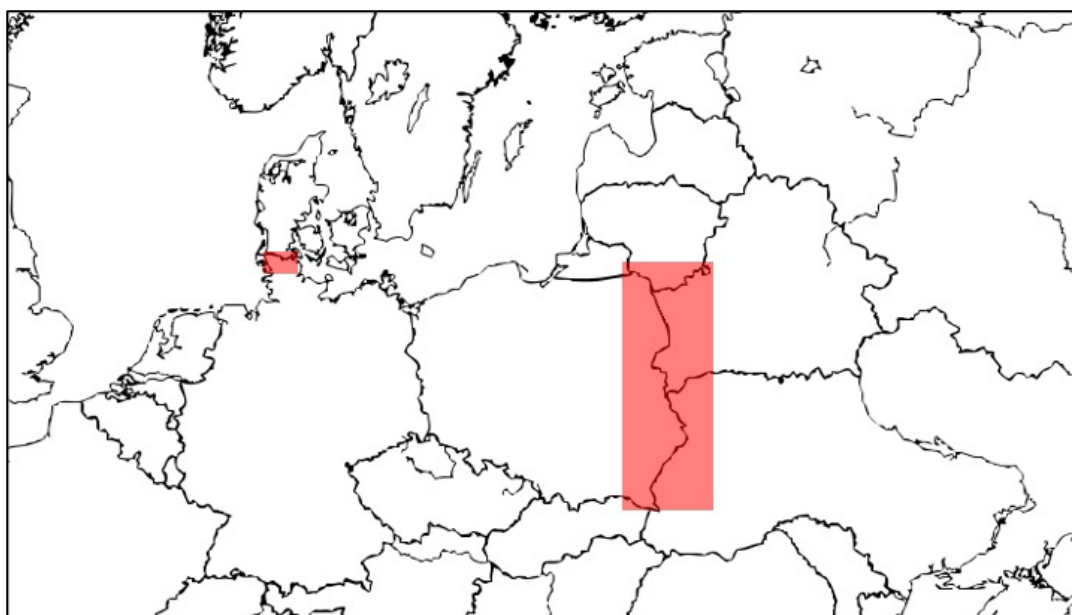
Research article

Fig. 1: Two linguistic border zones investigated for this study – between Germany and Denmark and between Poland and Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine.

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
                 'He is working' (lit.: 'He is at and work)' (example from Höder 2012b: 188)
(2)   EPol   ja   łamałam   *dla*   *jej*   płot
                 I   damaged   FOR[3]   she:GEN   fence
                 'I damaged her fence' (lit.: 'I damaged for her the fence)' (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 Easten 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[5] (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 ä   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 beicheh *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 dã·vẹ šiẽnọ *dẹl*   *gi.vulũ*
gave hay   FOR   cattle:GEN;PL
'gave hay to the cattle/' (example from Tuomienė 2006: 433)

(7) Belar ale davaj *dl'a* *joho*   hrošy
but give   FOR   him:GEN money
'but give him money' (example from Sehen' 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.

(8) Russ   *dlja   menja*   v   gorode   rasskazyvali
           FOR   me:GEN   in   town   told
           'they told me in town' (Beispiele aus Grek-Pabisowa & Maryniakowa 1980: 57)
(9) Ukr   daj *dla   tel'-iet-a*
           give FOR   calves:GEN
           'give [it] to the calves' (example from Czyżewski 2000: 61)

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.[7] 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).

(10) Dan   Begynd *at*[ɔ] *synge* / *og*[ɔ] *syng*   nu!
           begin   TO   sing:INF / AND   sing:AGR   now
           'Begin to sing now!' (example from Herslund 2007: 67)

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. Dzięgiel 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'):

(11a) Belar jon *mne*   ruku   razrėzaŭ
            he I:DAT   arm   cut
            'He cut my arm' (lit.: 'He cut me the arm') (example from Avanesav 1968: 274)
(11b)   Chto   ukraŭ *u Ani*   hrošy?
            who   stole at Anya:GEN money
            'Who stole Anya's money?' (lit.: 'Who stole at Anya money?') (example from
            Sehen' 2001: 159)

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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[7] NLGer *un*: Bock (1933), Fleischer & Vikner (2022), Fredsted (2013, this volume), Höder (2021, 2012b), Laur (1975);
    EPol *dla*: Behnke (2014), Breza (1993), Dzięgiel (2009), Dubicka-Dwilewicz (1996), Kurzowa (1993), Masojć (2001), Saniewska (1980), Wróblewska (1978).

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   ŭkrajku 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 Jaŭnevič 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 Ełk, 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
              ʿand what did this SS-man say to the old woman' (corpus example from Komaje, Belarus)
(14b)   ja *siostrze*   mówię, ty   spróbuj
              I   sister:DAT say   you   try
              ʿI 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
              'There 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
              'There 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
              'and 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
              'the 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 kupyv *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:

(20)   Dan   Prøv *at [ɔ]   åbne   /   og [ɔ]   åbn   døren!
              try   TO   open:INF/   AND   open:AGR   the.door
              both: 'Open the door!' (lit.: 'Try to/and open the door!') (example from Herslund
              2007: 67)

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   out   AND   play:INF
              'We have been outside to play' (example from Brandt 1995: 54)
(23)   Vi   gik   ud   *og   lege.*
              we   went   out   AND   play:INF
              '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*TO *lege*INF). 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*   *et*   wat
              now   go   just   AND   eat:AGR   something
(24b)   nu   gah   man   bi   wat   *to*   *eten*
              now   go   just   something   TO   eat:INF
              both: 'Now you go and eat something' (examples from Mensing 1927-35: I. 347)

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: V. 228)

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.[9] From running

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[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*$_{AND}$ *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 Aggewars* (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 "slesvigtysk" ('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[10], 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.
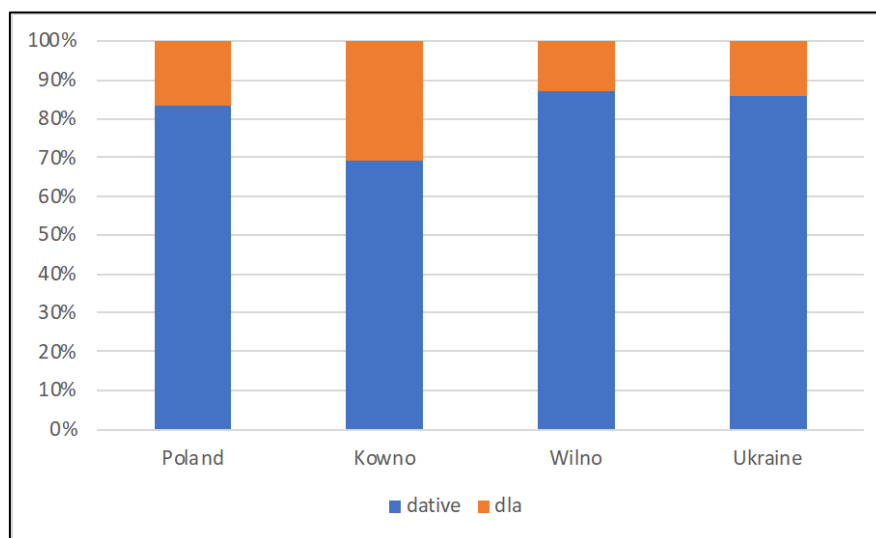

Fig. 2: Distribution of dative- and *dla*-constructions in four EPol subareas, *n*=3200 (4 x 800).

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*$_{AND}$ *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 *szehen* 'see' plus *un*-infinitive *Bei diesze Hitze laß uns man szehn un*$_{AND}$ *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:
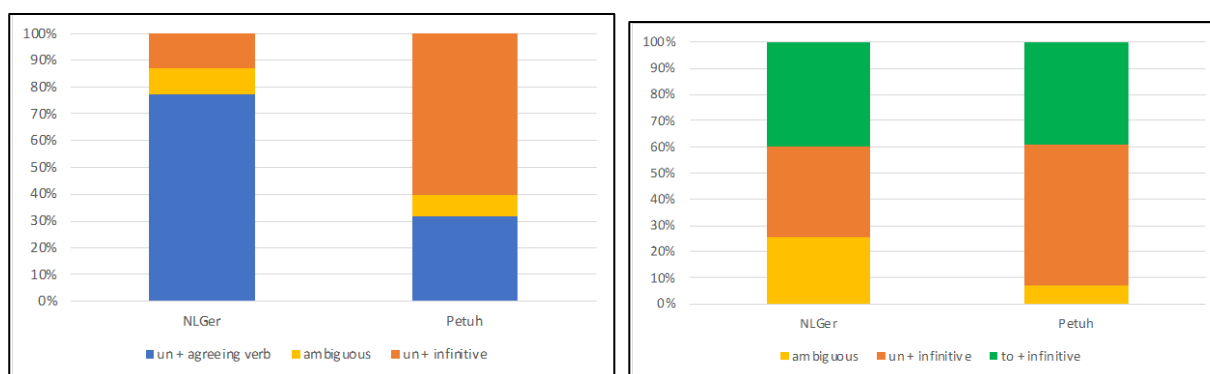

Fig. 3: Distribution of innovative *un*-constructions compared to different unmarked constructions in two varieties (NLGer: *n*=746; Petuh: *n*=182).

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 nastaŭnika*
            ask   at teachter:GEN
            '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 datives 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

würklich   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   schnacken
      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
      wat   passeert   is
      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 Kiemieliszki, 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]

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[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:
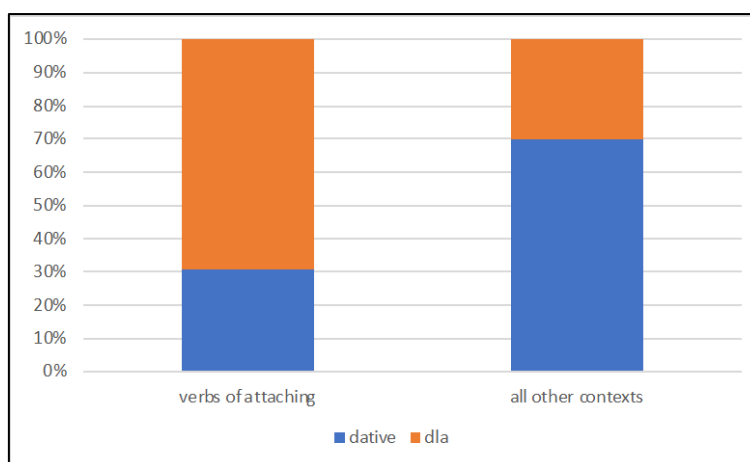

Fig. 4: Distribution of dative- and *dla*-constructions with verbs of attaching in the Kowno-region (verbs of attaching: *n=*13; all other contexts: *n=*787).

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.
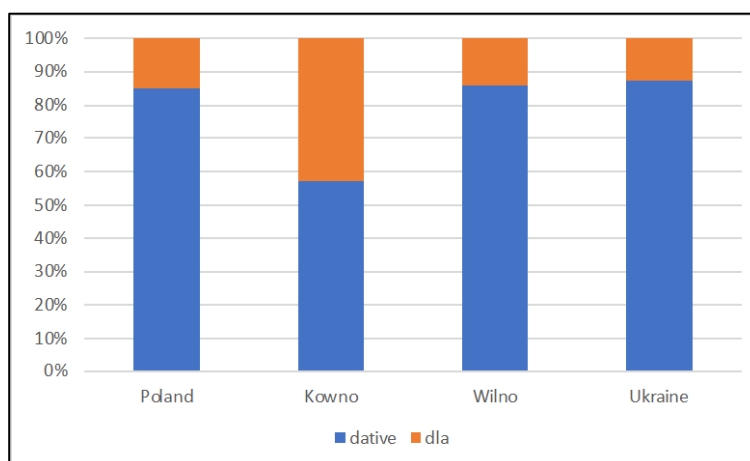

Fig. 5: Distribution of dative- and innovative *dla*-construction in external possessor contexts in ditransitive sentences, *n*=98 (PL: 46 – KO:14 – WI: 14 – UK: 24).

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

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ruku babuške$_{\text{DAT}}$ / *dlja*$_{\text{DLA}}$ *babuški*$_{\text{GEN}}$ (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. ingressives, 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 *liggen* '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   Häk
               he   tried   AND push:INF the sling   over the   hedge
               'He tried to push the sling over the hedge' (Simonsen 2007: 41)

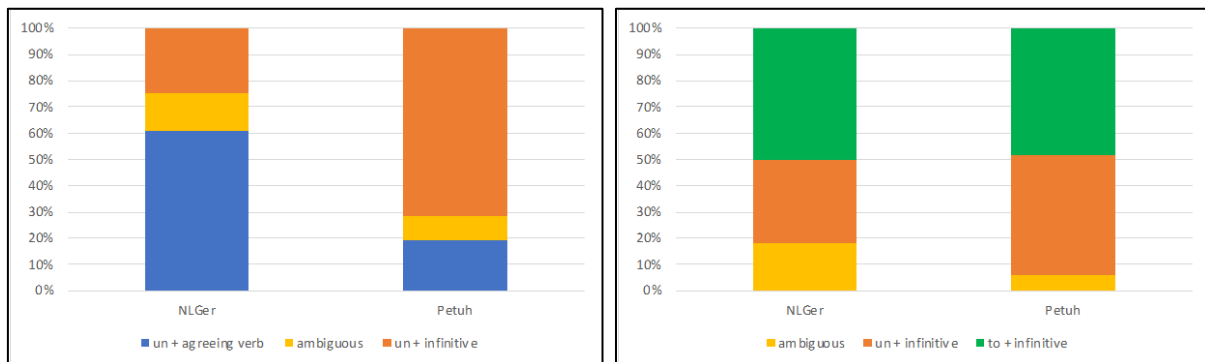Taken together, the distribution of *un-* and *to-*constructions in these three verb groups looks like this:

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
             afste' för *un   kamen*   t'rügg na sin Vadder un   Mudder
             away for AND come:INF back   to   his father   and   mother
             '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   *weghalen*
                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:
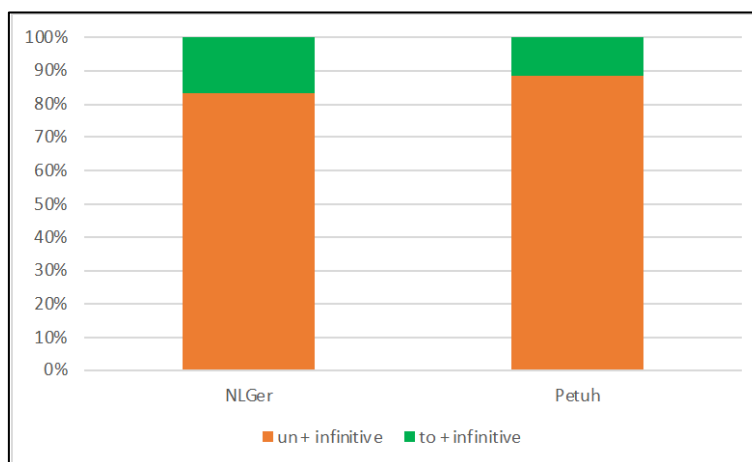

Fig. 7: Distribution of *un*-infinitives compared to *to*-infinitives in constructions with ingressive, durative and conative functions, embedded in modal constructions (NLGer: *n*=18; Petuh: *n*=26).

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:

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[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.

(49a) EPol   Ona   to   wszystko *dla*   *świni*   dawała
           she   it   all   FOR   pigs:GEN   gave
           'She gave it all to the pigs' (example from Stare Szpaki, Eastern Poland)

(49b)   ale   dał   ksiądz   *organiście*   gołębia
           but   gave   priest   organist:DAT   dove
           'But the priest gave a dove to the organist' (example from Radoryż Kościelny, Eastern Poland)

(50a)   i   przysłali *dla mnie*   sukienkę i   welon
           and   sent   FOR   I:gen   dress   and   veil
           'and they sent me a dress and a veil' (example from Puńsk, Eastern Poland)

(50b)   właśnie *mnie*   przysłał   sweter   niedawno
           just   I:DAT   sent   sweater   recently
           'He just sent me a sweater recently' (example from Bujwidze, Lithuania)

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

(51a) EPol   tam   nie   puchnieje *dla mnie*   nic
           there   not   swells   FOR   I:GEN   nothing
           'Nothing swells on me' (example from Puńsk, Eastern Poland)

(51b)   zachorował *mi*   mąż
           fell.ill   I:DAT   husband
           'My husband fell ill' (example from Bzów, Eastern Poland)

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.
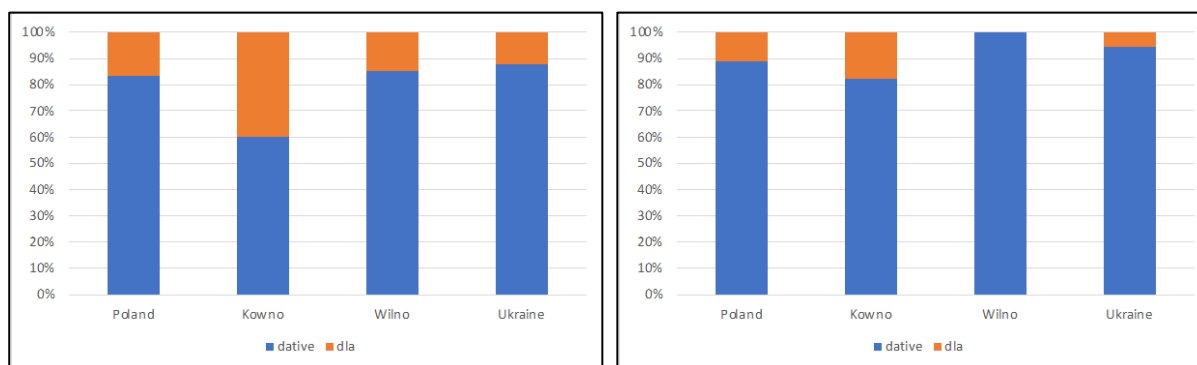

Fig. 8: Distribution of *dla*-constructions and alternative dative constructions in a) ditransitive sentences (*n*=1691) and b) intransitive sentences (*n*=147).

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 mitünner mal Lust harr *un schmöken*
           when he sometimes desire has AND smoke:INF
           'when he felt like smoking' (Simonsen 2007: 44)
(52b)   En arme Deern, de […] geern wat *to eten* habben will
           a poor girl who gladly something TO eat:INF have wants
           '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 eerste Arbeit weer nu *un braden* mi mien Fisch
           her first work was now AND fry:INF me my fish
           '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 is it forbidden AND have:INF by night light in.the stable
           'now it is forbidden to have lights on in the stable by night' (Asmussen 2019: 61)
(54b) Petuh das war nicht leicht *szu hausen* bei mich die letzte Szeit
           it was not easy TO live:INF at me the past time
           '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 Deerns oever snackt
           when the man PRON.ADV with his girls about talks
           un heiraden Hannes Grimmbass
           AND marry:INF H.G.
           '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
           there gets he desire AND marry:INF them one of
           'He felt like marrying one of them.' (Asmussen 2019: 49)
(56b)   de eene na de anner […] haler wat *to spelen*
           the one after the other fetches something TO play:INF
           'one after the other fetches something to play with' (Simonsen 2007: 104)

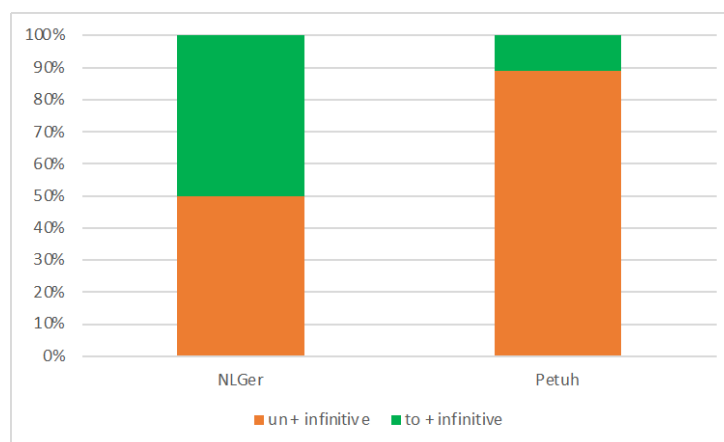The corpus shows the following distribution between *un*-infinitives and *to*-infinitives in "non-verbal" contexts:

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.[13] 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*_{AND} *lege*_{INF} '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:
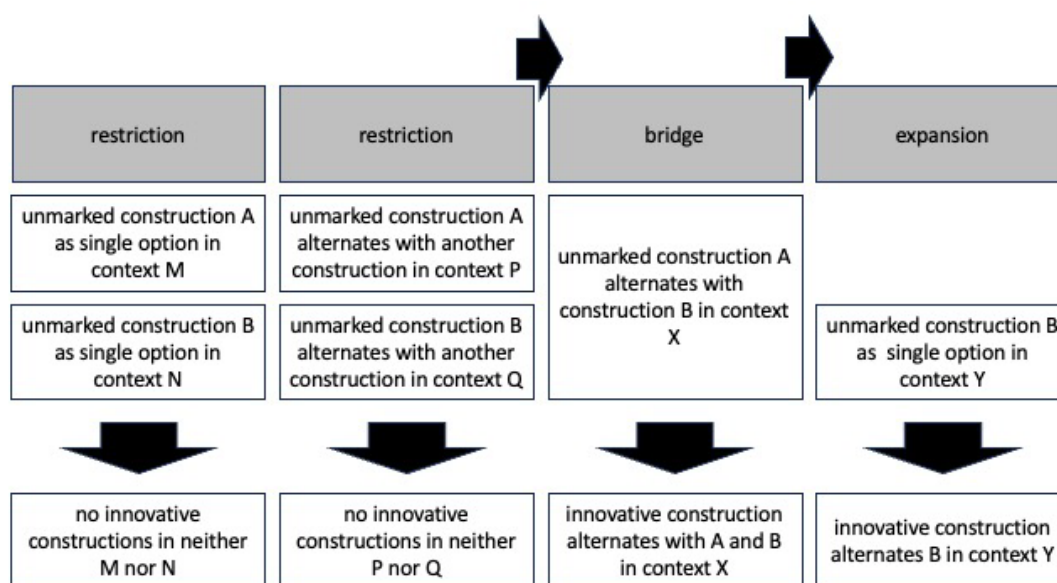

Fig. 10: Scheme of the distribution of innovative morphosyntactic constructions and their alternatives in diasystematic border zones repertoires.

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

2013: 19 for an overview).

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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