

THE BREAKUP OF OLD ENGLISH *TO*-INFINITIVE:  
CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this paper is to account for the recategorisation of the Old English *to*-infinitive and the consequent rise of *for* before the Middle English *to*-infinitive. We argue that the loss of D feature has two consequences. The first consequence is that V+Inf-*to*-D movement was lost resulting in the break-up of the (morphological and) syntactic unity of the *to*-infinitive. The second consequence, a consequence of the first consequence, concerns the appearance of the so-called split infinitive, i.e. the development of a preverbal adverb, negation and object position. This crucial evidence marks the drift of the infinitive towards VP behaviour. Given that D was lost in early Middle English (i.e. 1150-1200) and the split infinitive appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the paper concludes that the change from a PP to a TP status was gradual and not simultaneous with other changes.

Introduction

One rather striking difference between Old English (OE) and Middle English (ME) concerns the use of the word *for* in infinitival constructions, indicated in (1) and (2), respectively:

1)

- a. heo freo lefnesse sealdon deofolgyld *to bigongenne* þam folcum  
they free permission gave idols to worship the people  
'They gave free permission to the people to worship idols'  
(Bede *Eccles. History* II, 5, 6; Miller 1898: 112)

- b. hwæs wilnast þu fram me *to hæbbenne* oþþe *to witenne*  
 what desire you from me to have or to know  
 ‘What do you wish to have from me or to know?’  
 (Ælfric *Lives of Saints* XXIII, 223; Skeat 1881: 14)
- c. he dyde monig heofonlic wundor, þa sendon ealle swiðe lange *to*  
 he did many heavenly wonders which are all very long to  
*areccanne*  
 relate  
 ‘He performed many divine miracles, which are all too long to relate.’  
 (*St. Simeon* 11; Herzfeld 1899: 130)
- d. ða cwað Moyses: ðis is se hlaƿ ðe Drihten eow seald *to etenne*  
 then said Moses: this is the loaf that Lord you gave to eat  
 ‘Then Moses said: this is the bread that the Lord gave you to eat.’  
 (Ælfric *Exodus* XVI, 15; Crawford 1922: 253)
- 2)
- a. ne cam ic noht te giuen gew for-bisne of mire agene wille to donne, ac  
 neg came I not to give you example of my own will to do, but  
 i cam *for to donne* mines fader wille  
 I came to do my father’s will  
 ‘I came not to give you an example of doing my own will, but I came in or-  
 der to do my Father’s will.’  
 (1200 *Vices & virtues* 10; Holthausen 1921: 15)
- b. to onelich men & wymmen & to alle oþer þat desiren *for to seruen* god  
 to only men & women & to all other who desire to serve god  
 ‘to men & women & to others who wish to serve God’  
 (c1230 *Ancrene Riwle* M.6, 11; Zettersten 1976: 2)
- c. he hopeth *for to lyve* longe and *for to purchacen* muche riches for his  
 he hopes to live long and to purchase much riches for his  
 delit= delight  
 ‘He hopes to live long and to acquire much wealth for his own delight.’  
 (c1386 Chaucer *Cant. T X*.1065; Benson 1987: 327)
- d. we ben bounde *for to serve* hym bi oure resoun & wil  
 we are bound to serve Him with our reason & will  
 ‘We are bound to serve Him with our reason & will.’  
 (c1443 Pecoock *Reule of Crysten Religioun* 9b; Greet 1927: 24)

While such infinitival constructions are never introduced by *for* in Old English (1),<sup>1</sup> they very frequently are in Middle English (2). Indeed, in the course of the ME period we see that infinitival constructions are increasingly introduced by *for*. The central question investigated in this paper is the recategorisation of the OE *to*-infinitives as InfPs and the diachronic source of *for* in ME *to*-infinitival constructions.

This paper is organized as follows. Firstly, we will take a close look at the status of the OE *to*-infinitive. Secondly, we discuss the traditional proposal which holds that the fading away of the dative ending facilitated the rise of *for*. Thirdly, it will be argued that the disintegration of the OE case system has its repercussions on the internal structure of the *to*-infinitival complements. That is, the internal structure of the *to*-infinitive underwent a radical change such that verb movement to D was lost because D was lost. As we will see, this resulted in the disintegration of the syntactic unity of the *to*-infinitive.

## 2. The structural status of OE *to*-infinitive

The line of reasoning which is pursued in this paper argues that *to* heads its own prepositional phrase (PP) and takes a dative phrase (DP) as its complement. Primary evidence for this lies in the characteristic dative inflection on the head of the DP. The preposition *to* has its own inherent case feature morphologically realised on D as the dative inflection. The difference between OE and ME *to*-infinitives is explained as a difference in the nature and syntactic status of the infinitival marker *to* in these two periods. This analysis has advantages over those of Lightfoot (1979), Roberts (1992), and Kageyama (1992) in that it covers a wider range of OE facts. On the other hand, this analysis is not without problems but we will argue below that criticism of the PP-analysis can be more easily overcome than the problems created by the other analyses.<sup>2</sup>

The differences between OE and ME/ModE are explained by our assumption that the OE inflected infinitives are dominated by a PP. This assumption is supported by the fact that the OE inflected infinitives occur in coordination with ordinary PPs, as in (3):

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of a few examples from late OE (cf. Shearin 1903; Visser 1963-73: §949).

<sup>2</sup> The PP-analysis of Old English *to*-infinitive might have problems in accommodating examples where the object precedes *to* given the fact that extraction from PP is impossible in Old English. In dealing with this problem, we can say that there is no general ban on extraction from PP but on preposition stranding because P is not a proper governor for the Empty Category Principle (ECP) (cf. Van Kemenade 1987). Many problems remain, we leave them unaddressed.

3)

- a. ut eode *to his gebede* oððe *to leornianne* mid his geferum  
 out went to his prayer or to study with his comrades  
 ‘[He] went out to his prayers or to study with his comrades.’  
 (Bede *Eccles. History* III.5, 7; Miller 1898: 162)
- b. wa ðan ðe strang bið *to swiðlicum drencum* and *to*  
 Woe then the strong be to such drinking and to  
*gemencgenne* ða micclan druncennysse  
 confusion then great drunkenness  
 ‘alas then the strong be to such drinking and confusion then great drunken-  
 ness’  
 (Ælfric *Homilies* II, 322, 15; Visser 1963-73: §897)
- c. efne þes sunderhalga...hæfde opene eagan *to forhæfednysse*, *to*  
 Even this Pharisee had open eyes to temperance to  
*ælmesdædum* *to ðancigenne* God...  
 alms-deeds to thanking God  
 ‘Even this Pharisee had open eyes to temperance, to alms-deeds, to thanking  
 God.’  
 (Ælfric *Cath. Hom.* ii, 430.33; Mitchell 1985: §965)

These examples argue in favour of a PP analysis of the *to*-infinitive. We have found no examples of a PP coordinated with a (for) *to*-infinitive in Middle English.<sup>3</sup> The absence of this possibility shows that the *to*-infinitive has lost its prepositional property. It is worth recalling Callaway’s (1913: 20-21, 60-71) remarks that the inflected infinitive tends to appear with verbs that take a prepositional object or an object in the dative or genitive, and that the uninflected infinitive tends to appear with verbs that subcategorise for an accusative object. This tendency underlines the close relation between infinitives and case in Old English.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the regular occurrence of the *to*-infinitive compared with the rare occurrence of the bare infinitive with adjectives (dative case-assigners)

<sup>3</sup> In fact, Denison (1993: 189) cites one ME example of a PP coordinated with a *to*-infinitive.

<sup>4</sup> Los (2005) has shown that Callaway’s claims are problematic, and that the *to*-infinitive competes with subjunctive *that*-clause complements rather than bare infinitive complements, a conclusion independently arrived at by Fischer (1996). Fischer (1996) and Los (2005) found that verbs which occur with a *to*-infinitive also occur with a subjunctive *that*-clause, and that there are quite a number of instances in which they found the *that*-clause being replaced by a *to*-infinitive. We realize that Fischer’s (1996) and Los’ (2005) interesting findings create problems for our proposed analysis, but would like to leave the discussion of these problems for further research.

and nouns (genitive case-assigners) further signifies the relation between *to*-infinitives and case (see Callaway 1913: 181; Mitchell 1985: §§925-929, and Visser 1963-73: §§926, 938).<sup>5</sup> On the basis of this evidence, we would like to claim that both bare and *to*-infinitives are nominal.

Traditional grammarians have observed that there is a close relation between infinitives and nouns. There are languages, for instance, Dutch, Standard Arabic, Brazilian Portuguese, etc, where infinitives can combine with articles, adjectival modifiers, etc. The following examples from Dutch (taken from Fischer and van der Leek 1981: 344), Standard Arabic, and Brazilian Portuguese (thanks to Heloisa Salles (p.c.) for 4e & f):

4)

- |    |  |                        |
|----|--|------------------------|
| a. | het huilen staat me nader dan het lachen<br>the cry-INF stands me closer than the laugh-INF<br>'I'm nearer to crying than to laughing.'    | (Dutch)                |
| b. | een keer hard schreeuwen doet een mens goed<br>one time hard shout-INF does a man good<br>'to shout out loud now and then does a man good' | (Dutch)                |
| c. | D- Darb- u li-l-walad-i<br>the beating-Nom of-the-boy-Gen<br>'the beating of the boy'  | (Standard Arabic)      |
| d. | D- Darb- u ?al aniif- u li-l- walad-i<br>the beating-Nom the violent-Nom of-the-boy-Gen<br>'the violent beating of the boy'                | (Standard Arabic)      |
| e. | o bater no garoto<br>the beating in-the boy  | (Brazilian Portuguese) |
| f. | o violento bater no garoto<br>the violent beating in-the boy<br>'the violent beating of the boy'   | (Brazilian Portuguese) |

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<sup>5</sup> Callaway (1913: 149) counts 241 instances of inflected infinitive and 6 instances of uninflected infinitive as complements of adjectives. He also counts 242 instances of inflected infinitive and 4 instances of uninflected infinitive as complements of nouns (1913: 173). This suggests that *to* may be a realizer rather than an assigner of inherent case.

Building on the traditional observation, we argue that OE *to*-infinitival clauses behave like nominals with respect to feature checking. More specifically, the fact that the head of the dative DP shows morphological realisation of dative case, suggests that the head has a case feature, call it the DAT-feature, which is subject to feature checking. We argue that the head of the infinitival DP covertly adjoins to the head of PP to check its DAT-feature. This is consistent with our claim that *to* is a preposition heading its own PP and taking a DP as its complement. We argue that the infinitival verb has an infinitival feature, call it the Inf-feature. We also argue that the infinitival verb, i.e. V+Inf has a nominal feature, call it the D-feature, which is subject to feature checking. The question that arises here is how the infinitival verb checks its D-feature. Assuming that the infinitival DP is dominated by a PP, there is one possible way for the head of the DP to check its feature: the infinitival head moves to a position where it can check its D-feature. Since feature-checking takes place in a highly local domain, the infinitival head must move overtly to Inf to check its Inf-feature and then the complex [Inf V+Inf] moves to D to check its D-feature and the feature contained in D. We assume that the D-feature attracts the verb or more precisely V+Inf to move to D. So in an example like (5a), whose simplified structure is given in (6),<sup>6</sup> the infinitival verb moves out of its base position in VP to Inf to check its infinitival feature forming the complex [V+Inf], which moves on to D where Inf's D-feature is checked.<sup>7</sup>

5)

a. we synd gearwe nu *to gewinnenne* þæt land  
 we are ready now to conquer that land  
 'We are ready now to conquer that land.'  
 (Ælfric *Numbers* XIV, 40; Crawford 1922: 320)

b. ond symle mid his mode wæs flegende þa heofonlecan *to lufienne & to*  
 and ever with his mind was hastened the heaven to love, & to  
*Biddenne & to secenne*  
 desire & to seek

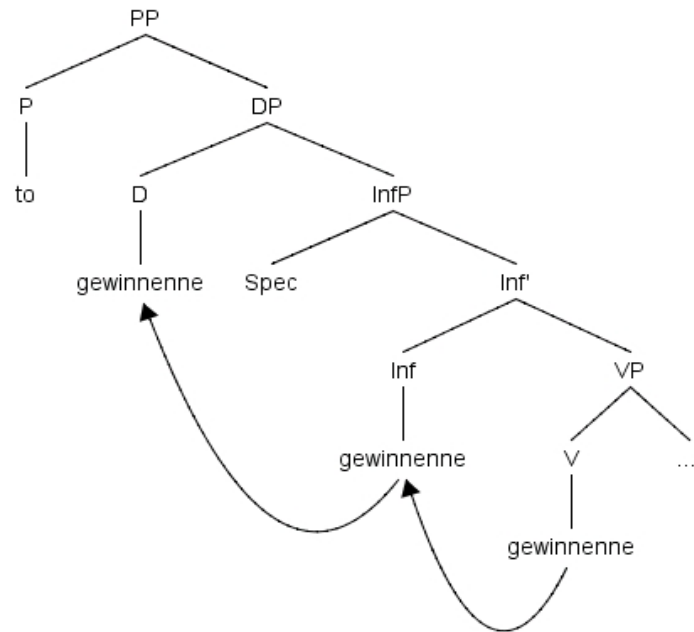
<sup>6</sup> To simplify the structure, covert adjunction of the complex head [<sub>D</sub> V+ Inf] to *to* is not represented here.

<sup>7</sup> In a pre-minimalist approach (Chomsky 1981), the infinitival verb is said to be transformationally derived as follows: the verbal stem first moves to Inf to give the complex head [V + *en*] which, in turn, adjoins to D to give the full infinitival verb form. It is interesting to note that the movement of the infinitival verb to D goes along with Baker's (1989) *Mirror Principle*, which states that the linear order of affixes be a direct consequence of syntactic head movement, assuming head-movement is always left-adjunction.

‘and ever in his mind he was in haste to love, to desire and seek the things of heaven’

(Bede *Eccles. History* II, 6, 7, 32; Miller 1898: 116)

6)



In fact, there is quite a lot of evidence which suggests that the infinitival verb moves to D. The evidence comes from coordinated structures. In a set of coordinated infinitives, the second infinitive very commonly matches the initial one in its marker (i.e. *to* is repeated in both conjuncts) and very rarely exhibits reduced marking (i.e. *to* is not repeated in the second conjunct). The tendency towards reduced marking increases considerably in ME (see Kenyon 1909: 159-60; Quirk – Svartvik 1970: 402-3, and Fischer 1992, 1996). Consider the following examples where the infinitive in the second conjunct is identical to that of the first. In other words, the second *to*-infinitive is coordinated to the first, and both are governed by the matrix predicate, as the bracketing illustrates:

7)

- a. gescead is ðære sawle forgifen [[*to gewyssiennes*] and [*to styrennes*]]  
 reason is the soul given to direct and to govern  
 hire agen lif and ealle hire dæda

its own life and all its deeds  
 ‘reason is given to the soul to direct and govern its own life and all its deeds’  
 (Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints* I, 108; Skeat 1881: 16)

- b. hwæðer is [[*to lufigenne*] oððe hwan lac [*to offrigenne*]]  
 which is to love or whom sacrifice to offer  
 ‘which is to be loved, or to whom is sacrifice to be offered’  
 (Ælfrics *Lives of Saints* XIV, 38; Skeat 1881: 310)
- c. he hæfde þa gleawnesse Godes bebodu [[*to healdanne*] and  
 he had the wisdom God's ordinances to keep and  
 [*to læranne*]]  
 to teach  
 ‘He had the wisdom to keep and to teach God’s ordinances.’  
 (Bede *Eccles. History* III, 17, 10; Miller 1898: 206)
- d. heo onfeng mynster [[*to timbrenne*] and [*to endebyrdienne*]]  
 she undertooke monastery to build and to put in order  
 ‘She undertook to construct & arrange a monastery.’  
 (Bede *Eccles. History* IV, 5; Miller 1898: 334)
- e. þæt him leofre wære wið hiene [[*to feohtanne*] þonne gafol  
 that to-them pleasant were against him to fight than ransom  
 [*to gieldanne*]]  
 to pay  
 ‘They would rather fight against him than pay ransom.’  
 (Alfred *Orosius* 13; Onions 1950: 23)

The examples in (7) conform with the requirement that only phrasal constituents can be coordinated. Crucial in (7) is the fact that the appearance of the dative ending on the infinitival verb in both conjuncts is triggered off by the presence of *to* immediately before the infinitival verb. Exceptions to this statement are found in the following examples, where the infinitival verb in the second conjunct exhibits the dative ending without the presence of *to*. According to Visser (1963-73: 1020), this can be ascribed to the fact that the force of *to* in the first conjunct is sometimes carried over to the infinitival verb in the second conjunct.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning that the use of a second infinitive without *to* but with the dative



Crucially, the V+Inf-*to*-D movement schematized in (6) results in the fact that *to* and the infinitival verb forms an inseparable (morphological and) syntactic unit on a par with a PP where P cannot be separated from the complement DP. As long as V+Inf-*to*-D movement is attested, the (morphological and) syntactic unity of the OE *to*-infinitive cannot be broken up by intervening elements like adverbs, objects, etc. The loss of V+Inf movement to D has several consequences on the internal structure of the OE *to*-infinitive. We will come back to this crucial point in more detail in section 3.1.

Now we return to the question as to whether or not *to* is a preposition. The fact that it was impossible for prepositions to precede the *to*-infinitive in OE provides yet another argument in favour of our claim that *to* was a preposition. This goes along with Stowell's (1981: 146) *Case Resistance Principle* (CRP), which states that categories with Case-assigning features cannot appear in Case-marked positions. The CRP predicts that Case cannot be assigned to a category bearing the categorial feature [-V, -N], since this too is a Case-assigning category. In OE we see that this prediction is borne out. In fact, there is a good piece of evidence which suggests that PP must not be assigned Case. Specifically, PP may never appear in a Case-marked position such as the object position of a preposition which obligatorily assigns Case. It is important to bring into focus the remarks made by Callaway (1913: 78) and Visser (1963-73: 1031). Callaway points out that he has found no clear example of an infinitive used as the complement of a preposition.<sup>9</sup> Visser says that in OE the *to*-infinitive does not seem to occur after prepositions. As we will see in section three, the rise of prepositions before the (*for*) *to*-infinitive from 1200 onwards can be ascribed to (i) the loss of the dative case feature of *to*, (ii) the demise of the dative ending *-ne*, and (iii) the fact that prepositions started to subcategorise for sentential complements.

The idea that the OE *to*-infinitive is headed by a P explains why the *to*-infinitive as subject was rare in OE.<sup>10</sup> This fact is accounted for by the general ban on PPs in subject position. The fact that the subject *to*-infinitive becomes more frequent in the ME period shows that *to* lost its prepositional property and started to function merely as an infinitival marker, as in (8):

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infinitival ending *-(e)nne* expressed is extremely rare in Old English. Fischer (1996: 113) has found one example of a coordinated infinitive without *to* but with *-(e)nne* in the OE section of the Helsinki Corpus.

<sup>9</sup> In fact, Callaway (1913: 78) has found a few examples mostly occurring after *butan*, which he explains as conjunctive adverb, not a preposition.

<sup>10</sup> Callaway (1913: 7, 10) and Mitchell (1985: §1537) give one example of a *to*-infinitive in clause-initial position typical of nominal subjects. Subject *to*-infinitives of copula constructions appear to be a direct translation from Latin. When the *to*-infinitive occurs with an impersonal verb, it should be interpreted as a complement rather than a subject of the impersonal verb (cf. Fischer 1992 and Traugott 1992, among others).

8)

- a. for an *euel to donne* nis non strence, ac is unmihte  
because evil to do is-not strength, but is impotence  
'because to do evil is no strength, but is impotence'  
(c1200 *Vices & virtues* 129/4; Holthausen 1921: 129)
- b. *his sedes to sowen, his medes to mowen, his plowes to drive*...this is the  
his seeds to sow, his meadows to mow, his plows to drive...this is the  
cnihtes lage  
knight's duty  
'to sow his seeds, to mow his meadows, to drive his plows, this is the  
knight's duty'  
(c1200 *Proverbs Ælfred* 89; Visser 1963-73: §901)

Callaway (1913: 7), Kenyon (1909: 112-114), Mitchell (1985: §§1537-9), Mustanoja (1960: 522), and Visser (1963-73: §898) found no clear case of a *to*-infinitive used as the subject of a verb in OE; the examples in (27) therefore show an innovation in the function of the *to*-infinitive in early ME. This in turn means that the *to*-infinitive itself lost its nominal status. Lightfoot (1979) assumes that the *to*-infinitives were nominals in OE, but underwent categorial change and became VPs in ME. We differ from Lightfoot in that we take the infinitival verb as the only element which bears nominal features, as opposed to his claim, that the *to*-infinitive is nominal. We see the change from the PP status to the TP status as gradual and not simultaneous with other surface changes as is assumed by Lightfoot (1979: 194).

Concerning the morphological and categorial make-up of the infinitive, we would like to propose that it is a combination of two features: nominal and verbal. It is nominal in that it realises the D-feature of *to*. On the other hand, it is verbal in that it has some accusative case features to check with a DP complement in the relevant configuration. This dual function of the infinitive leads us to categorise it as being [+D, +V].<sup>11</sup> We suspect that the form of the infinitive changed its categorial feature from [+D, +V] to [-D, +V]. As the process of morphological attrition went on, the infinitival verb lost some of its nominal nature and assumed more and more the character of a verb.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It might be sufficient to say that it is a V, but incorporation to D turns it into a nominal. (This would be the opposite of N-incorporation to V, cf. Baker 1988). Maybe verb movement to D is driven by the affixal nature of D. Therefore, the demise of the dative ending means (absence of D-head, and this, in turn, means) absence of incorporation. So there is only the verbal part remaining.

<sup>12</sup> The change was the occasion of the perfect and progressive forms of the *to*-infinitive com-

3. Explanations for the rise of *for* in Middle English *to*-infinitive

The nature and the origin of *for* has been the subject of much speculation in traditional studies. In the majority of these studies, most attention seems to have been paid to the semantics of *for to* versus *to*, and relatively little to the syntax of *for to* versus *to*. Let us now look at the proposals that attempt to explain the rise of *for* before the ME *to*-infinitives, starting with the traditional view which claims that the demise of the dative ending made it possible for *for* to rise.

3.1. The demise of the dative ending *-ne*

The first explanation which has been put forward for the rise of *for* attributes its appearance to the demise of the dative ending *-ne*. Recall that OE inflected infinitival constructions are introduced by *to*, a word which governs the dative case. Consequently, the infinitive also has the dative ending *-ne*. Infinitival constructions, therefore, are marked by three elements: *to* + infinitival ending *-en/an* + the dative ending *-ne*. When after 1100 the dative ending started to die out, the infinitive becomes marked by *to* and the infinitival suffix *-en*. The disappearance of the dative ending *-ne* is ascribed in part to phonological erosion and in part to standard processes of morphological levelling which tend to apply to paradigms of inflectional morphology. According to some linguists (Lightfoot 1979: 190) this would have effected the appearance of a new infinitival marker: *for*. In order to test this assumption, let us consider the following examples from late Old English:

9)

- a. se kyng hit dide [[*for to hauene* sibbe of se eorl of Angeow] & [*for*  
the king it did to have peace from that earl of Anjou & for  
*help to hauene* togænes his nue Willelm]]  
help to have against his nephew William  
'The king did it in order to have peace from the Earl of Anjou and to have  
aid against his nephew William.'  
(1127 *Chron*, I, 373, 30; Visser 1963-73: §949)

- b. al ðe almisse þe mon deð sunderlīpe *for to quemene* ure drihten  
all the alms which man does specially to please our Lord  
'all the alms which a man does specially to please our Lord'  
(*OE Homilies* I; Morris 1873: 137)

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ing to be employed in ME. The change from DP status to a purely VP status of the infinitival verb parallels that of the gerund, which developed from nominal to verbal except that it remained unspecified for tense (cf. Lightfoot 1979).

There is probably a connection between the disappearance of the dative ending *-ne* and the appearance of *for*, since a few infinitival constructions functioning as adverbial clauses of purpose have both *for* and the dative ending *-ne*.

### 3.2. The disintegration of the syntactic unity of the Old English *to*-infinitive

As we mentioned in section 2, since D has a strong feature, the infinitival verb must move there to check its D-feature and the feature contained in D. The difference between OE and ME reduces to a difference in movement: in OE, but not in ME, the infinitival verb can move to D. The parameter responsible for this difference between OE and ME is the strength of the D parameter: D is strong in OE, but not in ME. One consequence of this is that V+Inf-*to*-D movement is not possible in ME since there is no trigger for that movement.

We argue that the disintegration of the OE case system has its repercussions on the internal structure of the *to*-infinitival complements.<sup>13</sup> That is, the internal structure of the *to*-infinitive underwent a radical change such that the demise of *-ne* resulted in the demise of D, and this led to the disintegration of the syntactic unity of the *to*-infinitive. As we saw in section 2, this point is important because, unlike ME and ModE, the *to*-infinitive in OE is a single (morphological and) syntactic unit.

An important piece of evidence for the disintegration of the internal structure of the *to*-infinitive in OE (i.e. the loss of Inf-*to*-D movement) comes from the fact that the *to*-infinitive in ME can be separated by an adverb, object, etc. (see Visser 1963-73: §§ 977-982, and van der Gaaf 1933). This is not surprising since syntactic elements cannot intervene between P-DP but can between T and Inf (see the ME structure in (12) below). Now compare the OE examples in (10) with the ME ones in (11):

10)

- a. gif ge rohton **hit** *to gehyrenne*  
if you cared it to hear  
(Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* XXI, 122; Skeat 1963-73: 440)
- b. \*gif ge rohton *to* **hit** *gehyrenne*
- c. \*gif ge rohton *to*[**VP e**]
- d. \*gif ge rohton hit *to* **not** *gehyrenne*
- e. \*gif ge rohton hit *to* **Adv** *gehyrenne*

<sup>13</sup> See van Kemenade (1987) for a description of the changes in the morphological case system which took place in early ME (i.e. during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries). (Cf. also Lightfoot 1991 and Roberts 1992, among others).

11)

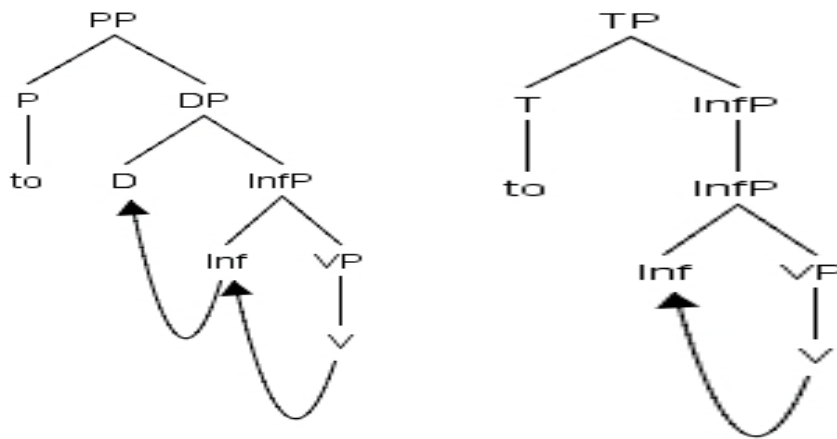
- a. he sal þe send Angels *for to þe defend*  
 he shall you send angels to you defend  
 ‘He shall send you angels (in order) to defend you’  
 (c13.. *Curs. Mundi* 12965; Visser 1963-73: §978)
- b. but wyle ye alle foure do a þyng þat Y prey yow *to [VP e]*  
 but will you all four do a thing that I beg you to  
 ‘but will all four of you do a thing that I pray you to (do)?’  
 (c1303 R. of Brunne *Handlyng Synne* 8024; Sullens 1983: 202)
- c. it is good *forto not ete* fleisch & *forto not drynk* wyn  
 it is good to not eat flesh and to not drink wine  
 ‘It is good not to eat flesh and not to drink wine.’  
 (c1380 Wyclif *Rom.* 14,21; Visser 1963-73: §979)
- d. ffor þe proof of þis natural eende is ynoug to my present purpos, which  
 for the proof of this natural end is enough to my present purpose which  
 is *forto þerby fynde out* and proue þat god is  
 is to thereby find out and prove who God is  
 ‘because the proof of this natural end is enough to my present purpose which  
 is thereby to find out and prove who God is’  
 (c1443 Pecoock *Reule of Crysten Religioun* 21b; Greet 1927: 55)

The examples in (10b-e) are unattested in OE. We can probably assume that they are ungrammatical. The examples in (11) clearly show that the syntactic unity of the *to*-infinitive is broken up by elements like adverbs and objects. The syntactic unity of the *to*-infinitive is also broken up by the stranding of *to*, i.e. *to* is left on its own after the VP within the infinitival clause has been deleted, as illustrated in (11b). In fact, since there is no D any more, the relationship between *to* and the rest becomes looser, so that other elements can intervene. We assume that the break-up which took place in the internal structure of the *to*-infinitive paved the way for the rise of *for*. The crucial question which poses itself is: how did this break-up come about? We assume that the demise of the dative case and the consequent loss of verb movement made *to* and Inf end up further away from each other than they had been in OE. Given the significant occurrence of *for* before the *to*-infinitives in early ME (i.e. 1150-1200), we take this period to be the date of the loss of dative case, and the consequent loss of V+Inf-*to*-D movement. This loss was the main factor in the disintegration of the syntactic unity of the internal structure of OE *to*-infinitives, and the consequent

appearance of *for* before the infinitival marker *to* and adverbs before the infinitival verb. We also take this period to be the date of the Diachronic Reanalysis of the *to*-infinitive, as indicated in (12):

12)

OE  $\xrightarrow{\hspace{15em}}$  ME



The ME structure implies simplification of structure and elimination of one movement, i.e. *Inf-to-D* movement. Roberts (1992) and Clark and Roberts (1993) argue that these are the hallmarks of syntactic change. The ME structure also shows that the positions between T and Inf are now available to adverbs, negation, and possibly scrambled objects. Further and more importantly, the absence of D in the ME structure implies that the *to*-infinitive lost its PP status. The change from the PP status to the TP status took place in two steps: (i) the gradual fading away of the dative ending which began in late OE up to 1100, and (ii) the emergence of *split infinitive* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the increased frequency of adverbs used as VP-modifiers. The change in (i), which is a morphological change, removed some crucial evidence that infinitives were nominals in PPs. It may be that only (ii) represents the syntactic change. The change in (i) fed the parametric change between OE and ME by removing the morphological evidence for nominal infinitives. In this respect, children acquiring ME *to*-infinitives would have had to set the relevant parameter of their I(nternal)-language differently from the setting underlying their trigger experience, i.e. their parents' E(xternal)-language (cf. Chomsky 1986). We assume that acquirers of ME *to*-infinitives chose to adopt that setting because acquirers always go for the simplest structural representation they can get away with. A syntactic structure with more steps is supposed to be a harder structure to proc-

ess than a structure with fewer steps (cf. Roberts 1992 and Clark – Roberts 1993). The question then arises as to what they did exactly. Presumably, there was no evidence that infinitives involved [<sub>DP</sub> D InfP], so they simplified this to [InfP] and reanalysed *to* as an infinitival marker.

To summarise this section: we argued that the loss of D led to the breakup of the internal structure of the *to*-infinitive. Another aspect of the change is the recategorisation of *to* from P to T. We will deal with this point below.

#### 4. The recategorisation of the Old English *to*-infinitive

The DR of the OE *to*-infinitive given in (6) above captures the traditional assumption that *to* was reduced from a preposition expressing motion, purpose, direction, etc. to a semantically empty form functioning as a mere sign of the infinitive. Recall that in OE *to* was only used before a dative form of the infinitive ending in *-enne/-anne*. It denoted a relation of purpose, as in (13):

13)

- a. *gif drihten...sylð me hlaf to etenne & reaf to werigenne*  
 if Christ....gives me bread to eat & clothes to wear  
 ‘if Christ gives bread to eat and clothes to wear’  
 (Ælfric *Genesis* XXVIII, 20; Crawford 1922: 157)
- b. *gif þu wilt me befæstan cnapan to lærenne*  
 if you wish me entrust servants to teach  
 ‘if you wish to entrust me to teach servants’  
 (Ælfric *Lives of Saints* XXXVI, 76; Skeat 1963-73: 44)

When the purposive force of *to* was weakened, some other device was needed to express the notion of purpose.<sup>14</sup> This may have given rise to the use of *for* before the *to*-infinitive. The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s (OED) earliest example of this is dated 1175. Shearin (1903), (cited in Kenyon 1909) points out that there are only two cases of *for to* and infinitive which he has found in OE.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Susan Pintzuk (personal communication) raised the following question: what evidence is there that the purposive force of *to* was weakened? We believe that the evidence comes from the spread of the *to*-infinitive to infinitival constructions (e.g. as subject, as complement to predicates which only select bare infinitive, etc) which it was barred from.

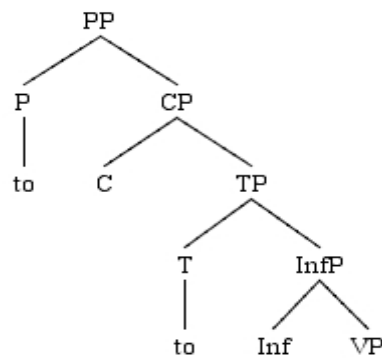
<sup>15</sup> But see Visser (1963-73: §949) for more examples.

14)

- a. and ich bidde eou alle ðæt ge bien hym on fultume at þys cristendome  
and I ask you all that you be to-him in help at this Christiandom  
Godes yerichtten *for* [[*to setten*] and [*to driuen*]]  
God's dues to deposit and to pursue  
(*Cod. Dipl.* IV, 306, 3; Visser 1963-73: §949)
- b. se kyng hit dide [[*for to hauene* sibbe of se eorl of Angeow] & [*for*  
the king it did to have peace from that earl of Anjou & for  
*help to hauene* togænes his nue Willelm]]  
help to have against his nephew William  
'The king did it in order to have peace from the Earl of Anjou and to have  
aid against his nephew William.'  
(1127 *Chron*, I,373,30; Visser 1963-73: §949)

We assume that purpose clauses are always introduced by prepositions, and so we take it that *for* in (14) must be a preposition. It is a purposive preposition in (14a), since it is followed by conjoined *to*-infinitives. The *for-to* clauses in (14) have the following structure:

15)



It should be noted that the complement of *for* in (9) is a CP rather than a TP because (i) clausal complements have to be CPs, and (ii) TPs cannot be complements of lexical items; they are always complements of functional heads.

In considering the emergence of *for* in infinitival constructions, Visser (1963-73: §949) writes: "The use of *for to* instead of *to* before the infinitive of purpose may have arisen from either the fact that the directive force of *to* was



too much toned down, or to a trend to reinforce the directive force of the preposition *to*. The early introduction of *for to* makes the second conjecture more probable. *for to* is widely used alongside of *to* during the whole mediaeval period". The development seems to have taken place as follows: *for* was first used in purpose-type infinitival complements only, then from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was no longer any difference of meaning between *to* and *for to*, and *for to* and *to* were used interchangeably. That is, the two forms were, at that point, in free variation.<sup>16</sup> An interesting clue comes from the fact that in the 12th century, *for* without *to* is found before infinitives as the sign of purpose, as the following examples illustrate:

16)

- a. Corineus was to wode ivare *for hunti* deor wilde  
 Corineus was to woods gone to hunt animals wild  
 'Corineus had gone to the woods in order to hunt wild animals.'  
 (c1250 *Lazamon's Brut* 1422; Visser 1963-73: §976)
- b. ðe king mornede swiðe *for habbe* hire to wifue  
 the king worried greatly to have her to wife  
 'The king worried greatly to have her as a wife.'  
 (c1250 *Lazamon's Brut* B14369; Visser 1963-73: §976)

These examples provide ample evidence that *for* could function as a purpose marker (on a par with OE *to*). This is not implausible if we assume that when *for* is used in purpose clauses, it is a preposition, but when it is used in raising and control structures, it is in T. The following examples argue in favour of the latter assumption, i.e. that non-purposive *for* is part of the infinitival marking which is situated in T.

17)

- a. he nyst how best hire herte *for t'acoye*  
 he not-knew how best her heart to soothe  
 'He did not know how best to soothe her heart.'  
 (c1387 Chaucer *Troil.* V. 782; Benson 1987: 570)

<sup>16</sup> The use of *for to*-infinitives was still vigorously alive in early ModE, but has been constantly losing ground since. In present English it survives only in dialects. The discussion of *for to*-dialects in Modern English however falls beyond the scope of the present study and will not, therefore, be attempted. For discussions of these dialects see Carroll (1983) for Ottawa Valley English and Ozark English, and Henry (1992) for Belfast English.

- b. my lord...enspired *my hert for to hate* synne  
 my lord inspired my heart to hate sin  
 ‘My lord inspired my heart to hate sin.’  
 (c1340 R. Rolle *Psalter* 3,5; Visser 1963-73: §2074)
- c. but he; semed *for t<sub>i</sub> to ben* of grete auctorite  
 but he seemed to be a man of great authority  
 ‘but he seemed to be a man of great authority’  
 (Chaucer *HF* 2157; Benson 1987: 373)

The compatibility of *for* with (17a) subject control, (17b) object control, and (17c) raising structures implies that *for* underwent a process of diachronic re-analysis similar to that which happened to *to* in late OE. In other words, *for* was a purpose marker separate from *to* in early ME, later becoming fully coalesced with *to* in T. The coalescence may have taken place at different times in different dialects and different contexts.

We pointed out in section 2 that the rise of prepositions before the *to*-infinitive from 1200 onwards can be keyed to (i) the loss of the dative case feature of *to*, (ii) the demise of the dative ending *-ne*, and (iii) the fact that prepositions started to subcategorise for nonfinite sentential complements. (i) and (ii) are presumably connected and were the trigger for the DR in (6). Perhaps (iii) does as well, if we say that *to* vacated the P-slot, and made room for other prepositions. After the DR the complement was no longer a DP but InfP, i.e. a kind of clause. This follows from the *Case Resistance Principle*. In OE *for+to*-infinitive is ruled out because both *for* and *to* assign case. Once *to* stops being a case-assigner, *for* and other prepositions can take it as their complement. Consider the following examples:

18)

- a. *rædy till to wissenn* himm and lærenn  
 ready till to instruct him and advise  
 ‘I am ready to instruct and advise him.’  
 (1200 *Orm.* 16998; Visser 1963-73: §976)
- b. þah se feor & se forð ha mahen beon istopen *in* sotliche  
 but so far & so forth they may be advanced in foolishly  
*to luuien* þet nanes weis ne schulen ha stewen hare heorten  
 to love that no way no shall they subdue their hearts  
 ‘but they may be so advanced in foolish love that they cannot by any means  
 subdue their hearts’  
 (1230 *Seinte Margarete* 25; Millett – Browne 1990: 68)

- c. bliss of herte þat comþ of god *to louie*  
 bliss of heart that comes of God to love  
 ‘bliss of heart that comes from the love of God’  
 (1340 *Ayenbite* 93; Visser 1963-73: §976)
- d. this false juge gooth now faste *about to hasten* his delit al that he may  
 this false judge goes now fast about to hasten his delit all that he may  
 ‘This treacherous judge went about without delay to gratify his lust.’  
 (c1386 Chaucer *Cant. T.* VI, 158; Benson 1987: 192)

The absence of the dative ending on the infinitival verb in the above examples clearly shows that *to* is no longer interpreted as a dative case assigner. We suspect that the absence of such evidence suggests that *to* lost its prepositional property and consequently was reanalysed as a mere infinitival marker. The decline of *to*'s ability to assign dative case might have helped other prepositions to subcategorise for *to*-infinitival clauses.

The important conclusion that must be drawn from the analysis of OE *to*-infinitive presented here, together with the analysis of *for-to*-infinitive presented in this paper is along the lines of (19):

19) Old English: *to* is a purpose P (followed by a Dat DP); *for* is a locative/temporal/purpose P (followed by DP), so *for to* is ruled out.

Early ME: *to* is T (followed by InfP); *for* is a purpose P (followed by CP), so *for to* is fine.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we summarise the main points with which this paper has been concerned. The main goal of this paper was to account for the recategorisation of the OE *to*-infinitive and the rise of *for* before the ME *to*-infinitives. We have argued that the loss of D has two consequences. The first consequence is that V+Inf-*to*-D movement was lost resulting in the break-up of the (morphological and) syntactic unity of the *to*-infinitive. The second consequence, a consequence of the first consequence, concerns the appearance of the so-called split infinitive, i.e. the development of a preverbal adverb, negation and object position. This crucial evidence marks the drift of the infinitive towards VP behaviour. Given that D was lost in early ME (i.e. 1150-1200) and the split infinitive appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, we have concluded that the change from a PP to a TP status was gradual and not simultaneous with other changes, as discussed in Lightfoot (1979). We saw that the purposive meaning of *to* was weakened in late OE, and, consequently, *for* was introduced to emphasise the idea of purpose.

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