Germanic ‘courage’ modals: Form, function, and history

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Linguistische Werkstatt, University of Bamberg, 28 Jun 2017

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

De-auxiliarization in the Dutch and English modals: A comparative diachronic corpus investigation

Collaboration with the University of Antwerp

English *dare*

→ Variable inflection	*s/he dare* vs. *s/he dares*
→ Variable infinitive	*dare go* vs. *dare to go*
→ Variable *do*-support	*dare not* vs. *don't dare*
→ Transitive use	*I dare you* etc.

Cf. e.g. Quirk et al. (1985: 138f)

English *dare*

(1) Present-Day English

a. so this means you **daren't give** him anything now

BNC (1993, S_meeting)

b. the draftsman **did not dare to risk** such Kafkaesque accuracy

BNC (1990, W_ac_polit_law_edu)

c. she moved over to the wall, where a sofa seemed to **dare her** to sit on it

BNC (1993, W_fict_prose)

English *dare*

‘marginal modal’

Quirk et al. (1985: 138)

‘marginal auxiliary’

Biber et al. (1999: 484)

‘blurring’ of auxiliary/verb distinction

Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 109f)

‘modal and full verb constructions’

Warner (1993: 42)

Danish *turde*

(2) Present-Day Danish

a. *Meteorologerne **tør** ikke **give** os fuld garanti for lyse dage*
‘The meteorologists do not dare to guarantee us sunny days’
KorpusDK (1990, newspaper)

b. *Men vi måtte også spørge os selv, om vi **turde at løbe** risikoen*
‘But we also had to ask ourselves if we dared to run the risk’
KorpusDK (1999, newspaper)

Dutch *durven*

(3) Present-Day Dutch

a. *Veel fietsers **durven** niet gebruik **te maken** van de roltrappen*

‘Many cyclists don’t dare to use the escalators’

Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands (2003, newspaper)

b. *Er waren collega’s die er weddenschappen op af hadden **durven sluiten** dat ik het zou halen*

‘Some colleagues had dared to place bets that I would make it’

Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands (1995, newspaper)

Degrammaticalization in English?

	Old English	**Modern English**
Inflection	irregular (*dearr*, *dorste* etc.)	variable (*dare(s)*, *dared*)
Infinitive	without *to*	variable (± *to*)
Semantics	bleaching?	no bleaching?
Transitive use	not attested	*I dare you* etc.

- development from modal to ‘marginal modal’ (Nagle 1989)
- ‘split development’ into modal and non-modal variants (Warner 1993)
- counterexample to unidirectionality of grammaticalization (Beths 1999)
- a possible case of de-auxiliarization (Schlüter 2010)
- moving from one subtype of auxiliary to another (Krug 2000)

‘Bleaching’ in Old English?

(4) Old English (11th c.)

Hwa ***dear*** *nu gedyrstlæcan, þæt he derige þam folce*

who DARE now dare that he harms.SBJV that.DAT people.DAT

‘Who would now dare to harm these people’ (tr. Beths 1999)

DOE Corpus (ÆHomM 14, 306)

Degrammaticalization in Danish?

	Earlier Danish	**Modern Danish**
Infinitive	without *at*	variable (± *at*)
Semantics	‘have justification for’?	‘dare’

- a case of ‘degrammation’ (Andersen 2008)
- development from modal to full verb (Hansen & Heltoft 2011)

Plan for today

1. Form and etymology
2. The meaning of *dare*
3. Transitive *dare* in English
4. Future work

Data sources

DOE Corpus (doe.utoronto.ca)
Old English

CMEPV (quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme)
Middle English

EEBOCorp1.0 (Petré 2013)
Early Modern English

BNC (corpus.byu.edu/bnc)
Present-Day English (British)

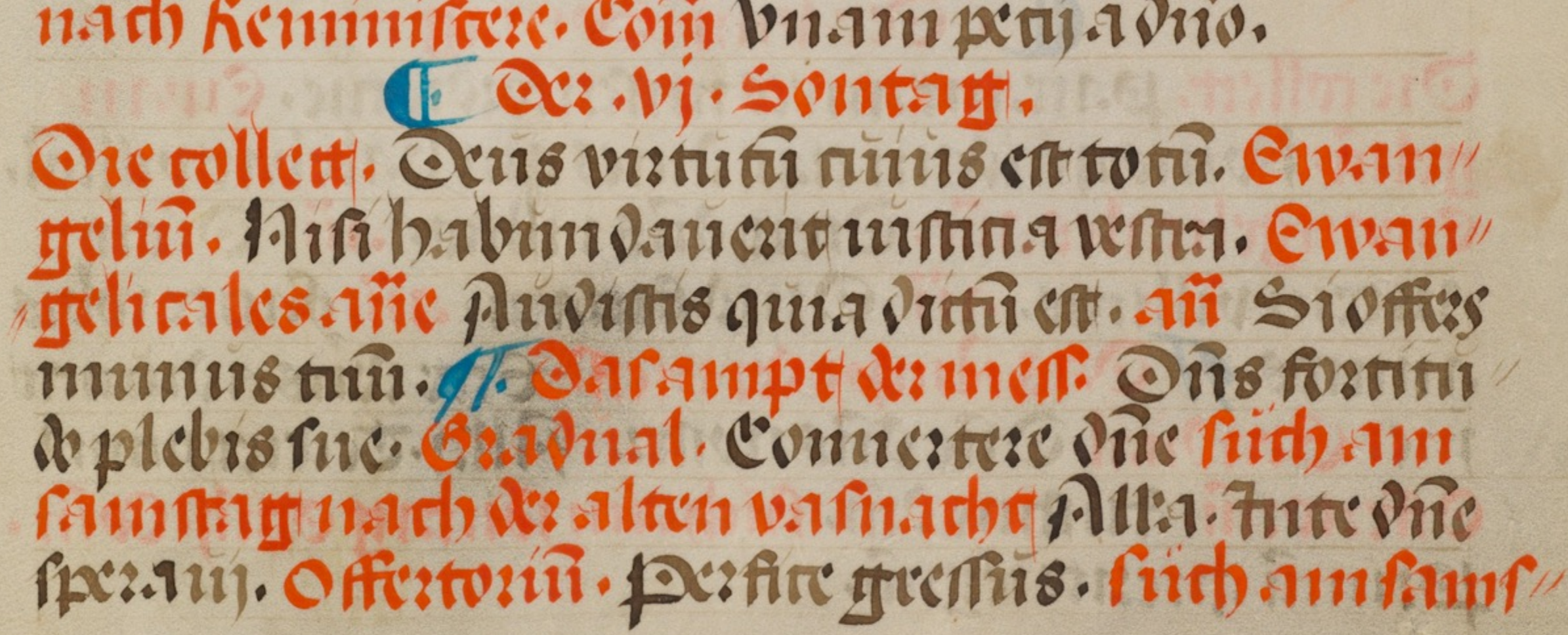
Homemade corpus
Early Modern Danish

KorpusDK (ordnet.dk/korpusdk)
Present-Day Danish

Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands
(corpushedendaagsnederlands.inl.nl)
Present-Day Dutch

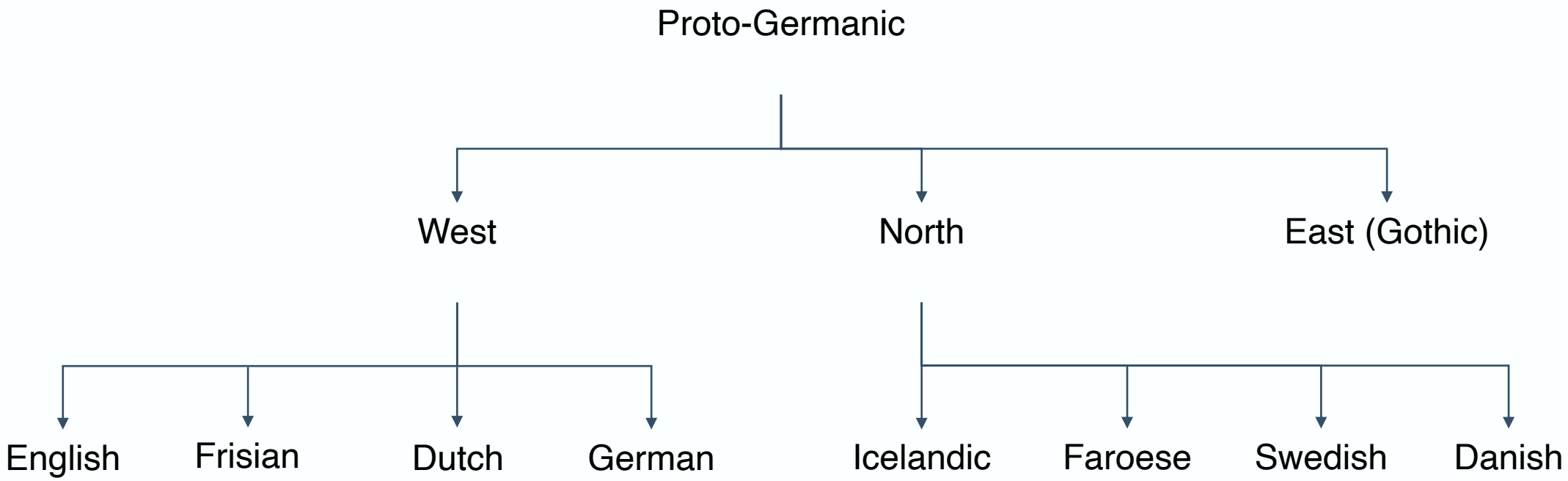
Questions

1. Did *dare* have ‘bleached’ semantics in Old English?
2. Is the meaning ‘dare’ secondary in Danish *turde*?
3. How did transitive *dare* develop in Early Modern English?

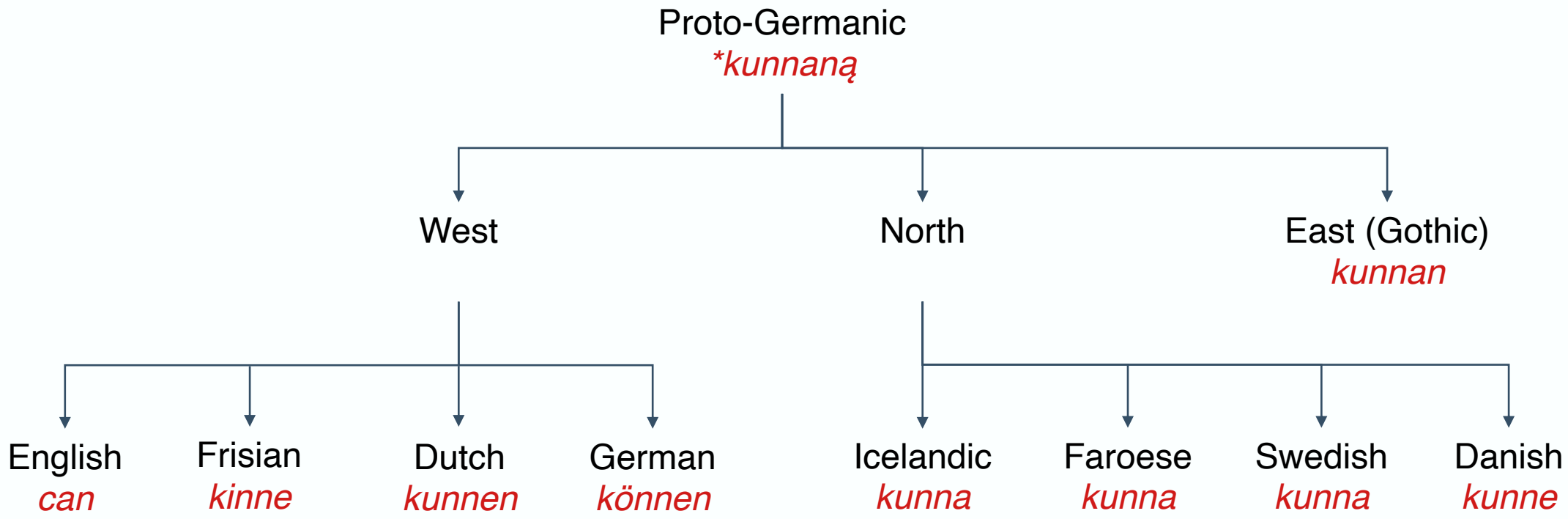


Form and etymology

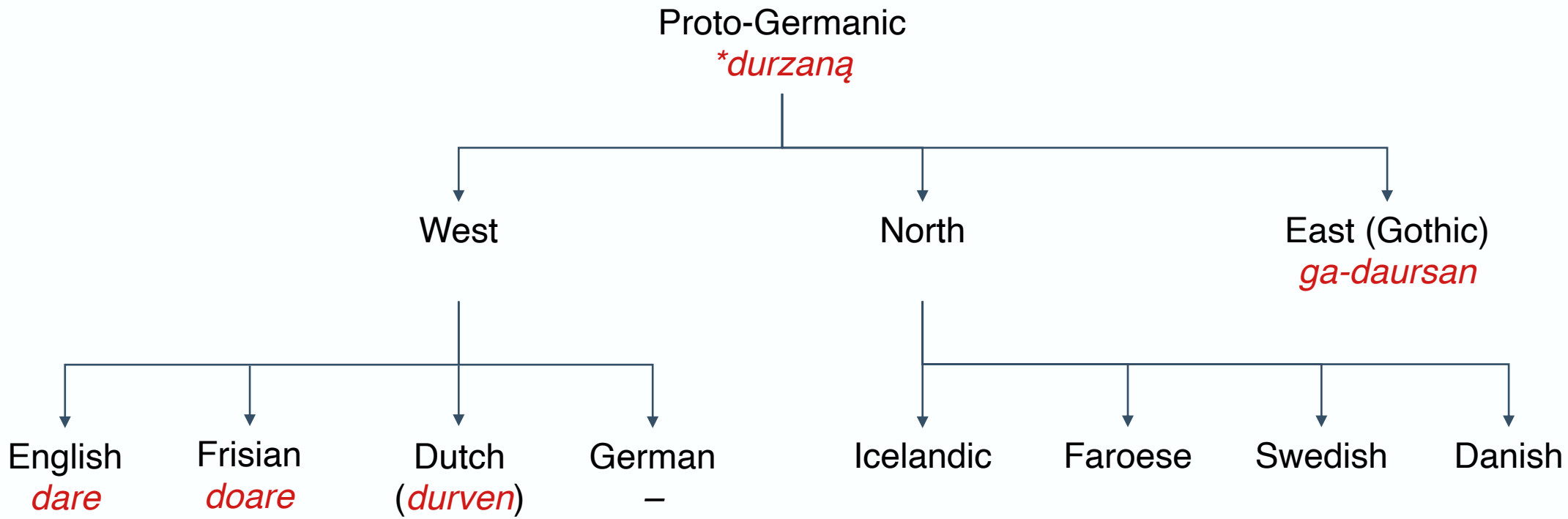
Germanic languages



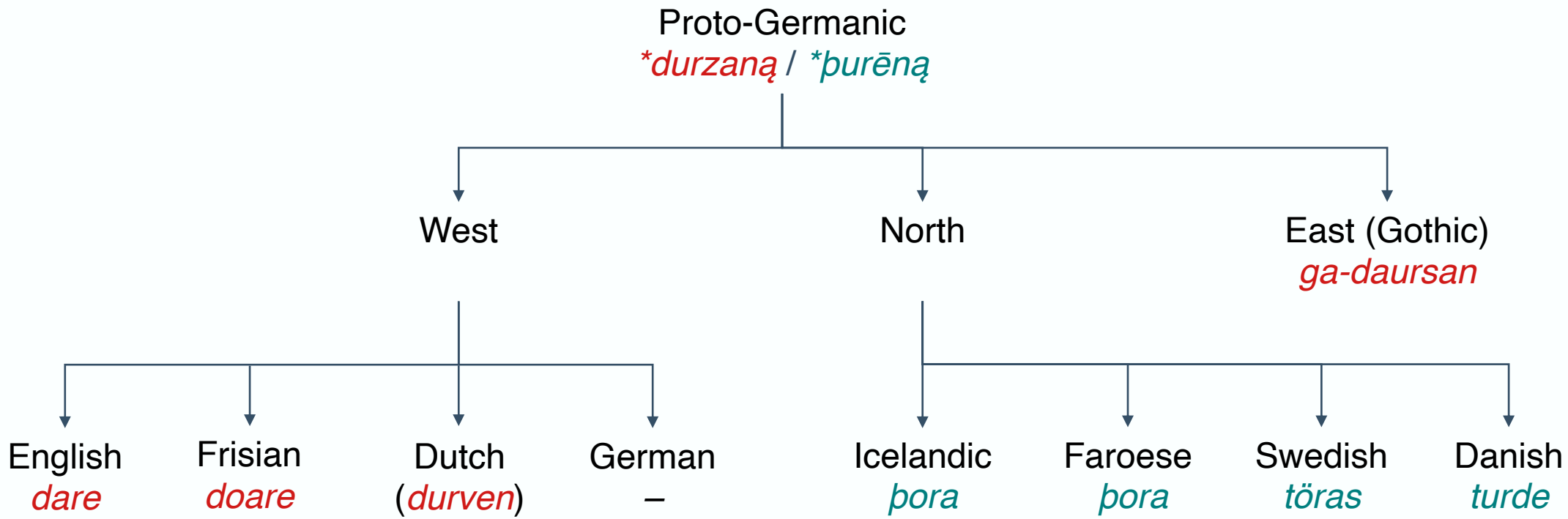
Germanic modals: *can*



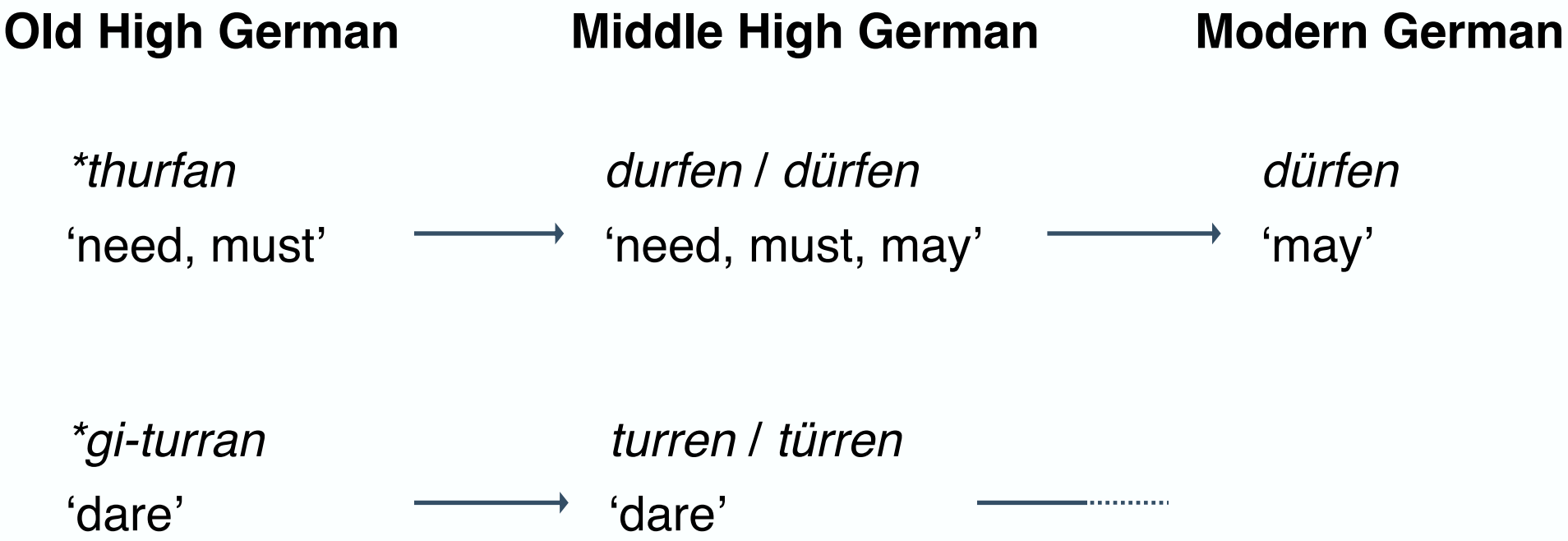
Germanic modals: *dare*



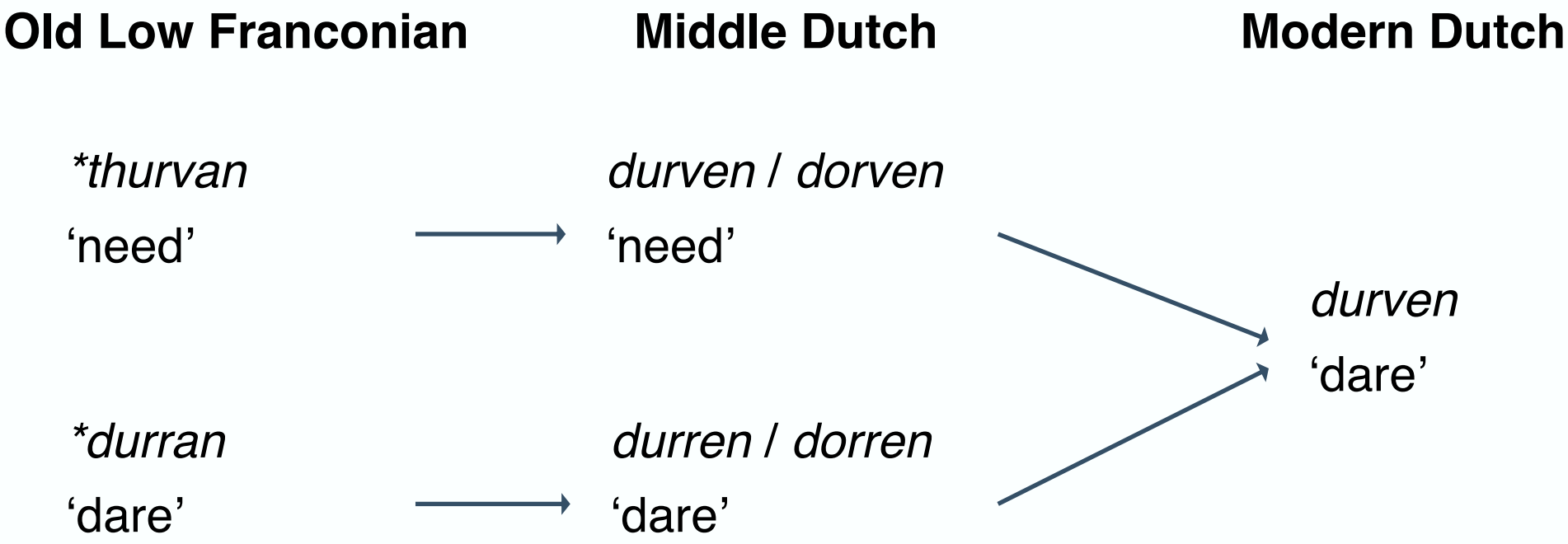
Germanic modals: *dare*



German *dürfen*



Dutch *durven*



Preterite-present → weak verb

	Old English	Early Modern English	Present-Day English
3S PRES	*dearr*	*dare* / *dareth*	*dare* / *dares*
3S PAST	*dorste*	*durst* / *dared*	*dared*

Weak verb → preterite-present

	Old Norse	Early Modern Danish	Present-Day Danish
3S PRES	*þorir*	*tør*	*tør*
3S PAST	*þorði*	*torde*	*turde*

The meaning of *dare*

Dearr in Old English

(4) Old English (11th c.)

Hwa ***dear*** *nu gedyrstlæcan, þæt he derige þam folce*

who DARE now dare that he harms.SBJV that.DAT people.DAT

'Who would now dare to harm these people' (tr. Beths 1999)

DOE Corpus (ÆHomM 14, 306)

→ semantic bleaching of *dare*

Beths (1999), Loureiro-Porto (2009), Tomaszewska (2014), Los (2015)

Semantic bleaching

"This is not an isolated example … and it might well indicate that the meaning of the pre-modal is totally bleached, since otherwise it would be redundant to have two verbs expressing the same meaning in the same verbal unit. It is clearly redundant to say *who dares to dare?*"

Loureiro-Porto (2009: 69)

Context: Esther 8

King Xerxes executes his advisor Haman for planning to kill the Jews

MS KB 78 D 38 II, f. 15v (c. 1430)
Source: Koninklijke Bibliotheek

Context: Esther 8

“Se cyning þa andwyrde þære cwene þus and eac Mardocheo swiðe mildelice: Aman ic aheng and his æhta þe betæhte.

Hwa **dear** nu **gedyrstlæcan**, þæt he derige þam folce?

Awritað nu gewritu, beþam þe ge willaþ, þæt eall beo aidlod Amanes sirwung ongean þam Iudeiscum and him ne derige nan man.”

DOE Corpus (ÆHomM 14)

‘The king then answered the queen and Mordecai very gracefully: “I’ve executed Haman and given you his possessions. Who now **dares to be so bold** [foolhardy] that he is going to harm those people? Now write a decree, such as you see fit, so that all of Haman’s plotting against the Jews is made useless and no one is going to harm them.”’

Dearr in Old English

(4′) Old English (11th c.)

Hwa ***dear*** *nu gedyrstlæcan, þæt he derige þam folce*

who DARE now be.so.bold that he harms.SBJV that.DAT people.DAT

‘Who now dares to be so bold/foolhardy that he is going to harm those people’

DOE Corpus (ÆHomM 14, 306)

→ no semantic bleaching of *dare*

Another example

(5) Old English (10th c.)

Forðam	*ic*	*ne*	***dorste***	*geðristlæcan*	*þara*	*minra*	*awuht*	*fela*	*on*	*gewrit*	*settan,*
therefore	I	not	DARED	presume	DEM.GEN.PL	mine.GEN.PL	at.all	many	in	writing	put

forðam	*me*	*wæs*	*uncuð,*	*hwæt*	*þæs*	*ðam*	*lician*	*wolde*	*þe*	*æfter*	*us*	*wæren*
because	me.DAT	was	unknown	what	it.GEN	those.DAT	please	would	who	after	us	were.SBJV

‘I did not dare to take the liberty to write down many of my own [laws], since it was unknown to me what of it would please those that are to come after us’

DOE Corpus (LawAfEl, 49.9)

Geþristlæcan

(6) Old English

a. Þa sæde he him, þæt on þære ylcan nyhte, þe he se ærendraca him æfter asended wæs, se healica papa wearð þurh nihtlice gesihþe on swefne swiðe gebreged, hu he **dorste** geþristlæcean, þæt he hete þone Godes man swencean & him to gelangian. (GD 1 (H), 192)

b. Ne sy nan sacerdhades man ne læwedes hades þe ma þe **durre** geþristlæcan þæt aðer oððe calic oððe disc oððe ænig þara fata þe to godcundum bigonge gehalgod bið to ænigum woruldþinge do. (ThCap 1 (Sauer), 57)

c. Þa sona swa þæt ongæton ealle þa Langbearde, þe on ðam lande wæron, hi ne **dorston** ofer þæt geþrystlæcan, þæt hi ohte grettan þa halgan stowe rihtgeleaffullra manna. (GDPref and 3 (C), 622)

Gedyrstlæcan

(7) Old English

a. Witodlice þa lareowas þe us lar of com, hi bododan þam hæðenum and þam hetelum ehterum, and heora lif sealdon for Godes geleafan; ac we ne **durran** nu to þam gedyrstlæcan, þæt we Cristenum cyninge oððe Cristenum folce Godes beboda and Godes willan secgan. (ÆHom 19, 183)

b. He genam þone cniht be þam loccum & eft mid færlicum ryne gecyrde. & þa sona swa he þæt land gehran, he wæs cyrrende to him sylfum & on bæc beseah. & þa forþon þe he ongæt, þæt he ne mihte ne ne **dorste** to þon gedyrstlæcan, þæt he swa ferde, gif he hit wiste, he wæs wundriende þa wisan & aforhtode & þa cyrde to þam fædær & gesæde þa wisan him swa gedone. (GD 2 (C), 7.115)

Geneðan

(8) Old English

a. [Unferð] ... Selfa ne **dorste** under yða gewin aldre geneþan, drihtscype dreogan; þær he dome forleas, <ellenmærðum> (Beo, 418)

b. Nænig þæt **dorste** deor geneþan swæsra gesiða, nefne sinfrea, þæt hire an dæges eagum starede (Beo, 543)

c. On þæm dagum wæs swa micel ege from ðæm wifmonnum, þætte Europe ne Asiam ne ealle þa neahþeoda ne mehton aþencean ne acræftan hu hi him wiðstondan mehten, ær þon hie gecuron Ercol þone ent þæt he hie sceolde mid eallum Creca cræftum beswican. & þeah ne **dorste** he geneðan þæt he hie mid firde gefore, ær he ongan mid Creca scipun þe mon dulmunus hætt, þe mon sægð þæt on an scip mæge an þusend manna (Or 1, 10.30)

Old English ‘courage’ verbs

Verb	**Meaning**	**With DARE**
gedyrstlæcan	‘be so bold/foolhardy’, ‘take the liberty’	3
geþristlæcan	‘be so bold/foolhardy’, ‘take the liberty’	4
geneþan	‘venture, put at stake, risk’	3

dearr ‘have sufficient courage to’

→ a PARTICIPANT-INHERENT (marginal) modal meaning?

turde, ‘dare’

(9) Present-Day Danish

Hun undrer sig samtidig over, at direktør Rasmus Trads i PFA Byg
she wonders REFL simultaneously about that director R. T. in [real-estate firm]

turde *at forfalske garantierne*
DARED to forge guarantees.DEF

‘At the same time, she wonders how Rasmus Trads, director of PFA Byg, dared to forge the guarantees’

Inf 9.3.1999 [newspaper]
Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 778)

turde, ‘may, might’

(10) Danish (archaic)

man	***tør***	*forvente,*	*at*	*man*	[…]	*kan*	*naa*	*til*	*stadig*	*præcisere*	*Forstaaelse*
one	DARE	expect	that	one		can	reach	towards	still	precise.COMP	understanding

af	*Sprogets*	*centrale*	*Rolle*	*i*	*Erkendelsen*
of	language.DEF.GEN	central	role	in	cognition.DEF

‘one may expect that it is possible to reach an increasingly precise understanding of the central role language plays in cognition’

Diderichsen (1947: 70) [linguistics paper]
Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 778)

Loss of modal meaning in Danish?

“The verb *turde* has almost lost its modal semantics in present-day Danish and now has the meaning ‘to dare’ [at vove] as a productive verb.”

“the previously common modal meaning ‘have justification for, have the right to’ [have hjemme til, have ret til]”

Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 778)

Possible diachrony of *turde*

EPISTEMIC/CIRCUMSTANTIAL

‘may, might’

PARTICIPANT-INHERENT

‘dare, have sufficient courage to’

Old Norse *þora* = ‘dare’

(11) Old Norse (Iceland, 13th c.)

ok	*þótt*	*Þorkeli*	*væri*	*sárr*	*matr,*	***þorði***	*hann*	*þó*	*ekki*
and	although	Thorkel.DAT	was.3S.SBJV	painful.NOM.SG.MASC	food(MASC).NOM	DARED	he	yet	not

at	*synja*	*þeim*	*gistingar*
to	deny	them.DAT	lodging.GEN

‘and although losing the food would be painful for Thorkel, he did not dare to deny them hospitality’

Fóstbræðra saga, Ásmundarson (1891: 24)
Cleasby, Vigfússon & Craigie (1962: s.v. *þora*)

Early Modern Danish

ADL (adl.dk)
Archive of Danish Literature

RSD (renaessancesprog.dk)
Renaissance Language in Denmark

DUDS (duds.nordisk.ku.dk)
Digital Investigations of the Danish Language

DB (danmarksbreve.kb.dk)
Letters of Denmark

En Forſkreckelig Oc
ſand beſcriffuelſe/ om mange Troldfolck:
ſom ere forbrende for deris Miſgierninger ſkyld/
fra det Aar 1589. regnendis: Oc huad deris vd-
retning oc bekendelſe haffuer været/ man-
gen til en tro at-
varſel.
Deſligeſte om en Troldkarl ved naffn ſiumme Peder/
huilcken ſom kunde giøre ſig til en Varulff formedelſt hans
Troldoms Konſt. Oc huorledis hand er grummelige henrettet til
Døde/ vdi en By ved naffn Øpper/ tre Mile fra Colne/
vdi det Aar 89. Oc huad ont hand haff-
uer bedreffuet.
Først tryckt vdi Colne/ met Caſpar Schumans
aff Erfurt bekoſtning ꝛc.
Oc nu vdi Kiøbenhaffn / aff Laurentz Benedicht/ 1592

50 attestations

File (year + text)	Genre	Hits
1509.bønner	theology	2
1509.karlmagn	chronicle	3
1516.pfefferkorn	pamphlet	1
1523.kroenike	chronicle	1
1530.malmoe	theology	1
1532.luthersk	theology	2
1532.mickelsen	theology	2
1537.catechismus	theology	1
1539.ordinans	theology	2
1553.dv71	ballad	1
1555.dgf172	ballad	1
1555.dv1	ballad	1
1556-58.trolle	letters	1
1556.alterbog	theology	1
1557.musculus	theology	2
1559.smedeken	pamphlet	1
1564-73.krognos	letters	1
1565-74.pernoxe	letters	2
1568-74.pederoxe	letters	1
1570-81.ulfstand	letters	2
1570.dgf481	ballad	2
1570.livsens	theology	3
1571.vedel	eulogy	3
1572.hemmingsen	theology	2
1580.dgf156	ballad	2
1583.dgf145	ballad	1
1583.dgf52	ballad	1
1584.dgf11	ballad	3
1584.dgf480	ballad	1
1590.dgf251	ballad	2

turde, ‘dare’

(12) Early Modern Danish (16th c.)

Der Hector den Troianiske Kempe leffuede oc kunde bruge sin haand oc
when H. the Trojan warrior lived and could use REFL hand and

styrcke imod sine Fiender, da ***torde*** *neppeligen nogen af de Greker*
power against REFL.PL enemies then DARED hardly any of DEM.PL Greeks

see hannem ret vnder øyne
look him directly under eyes

‘When the Trojan warrior Hector was alive and able to use his hand and power against his enemies, hardly any of the Greeks dared to look him in the eye’

1571.vedel (Vedel, *Predicken over Kansler Friis*, DUDS)

turde, ‘may, might’

(13) Early Modern Danish (16th c.)

Finge du nu børn effter din begering, da ***torde*** *Dieffuelen oc Kiød oc*
got.SBJV 2S.NOM now children according.to your desire then DARED devil.DEF and flesh and
Blod føre dig vdi det, dig ilde skulde betale paa det sidste
blood lead you into that 2S.OBL badly would repay at DEM.NEUT last.DEF

‘If it were so that you had children according to your desire, the devil and your flesh and blood might lead you into that which would repay you badly on your last day’

1572.hemmingsen (Hemmingsen, *Om Ecteskab*, DUDS)

turde, unclear meaning

(14) Early Modern Danish (16th c.)

ieg haffuer met mig selffue oc *mine egne Synder/ dess ver/ mere end formegit*

I have with myself and my own sins unfortunately more than too.much

at gøre met Gud at ieg ***tør*** *icke besuare mig met fremmede Synder/*

to do with God that I ? not burden me with other sins

‘I have, unfortunately, more than enough to do with God concerning myself and my own sins, so that I [?] not concern myself with the sins of others’

1557.musculus (Palladius, *Om Sværgen og Banden*, ADL)

German influence?

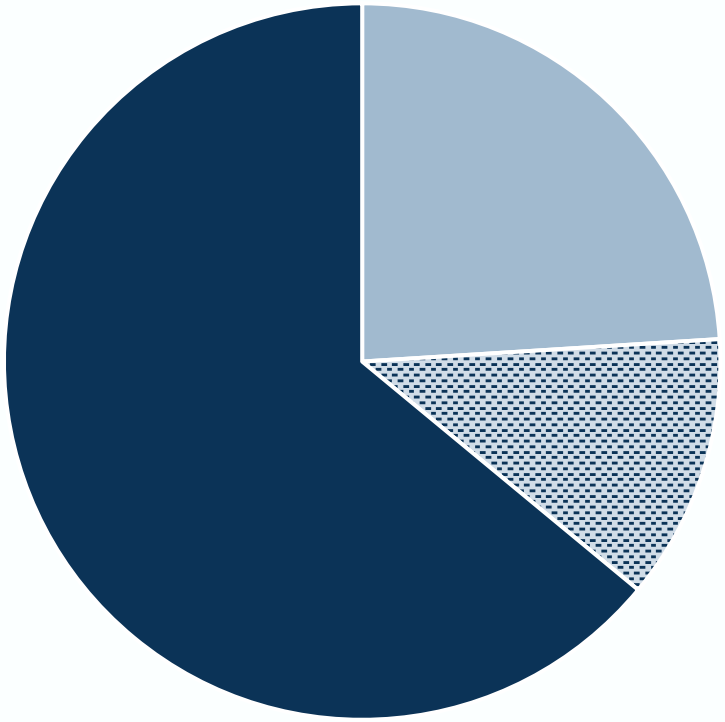
(15) Early Modern German (16th c.)

[…] und one das mit mir selber und meinen eigen sünden leider mehr denn zu viel mit Gott zuthun habe / daß ich mich nicht **darff** mit frembden sünden beladen

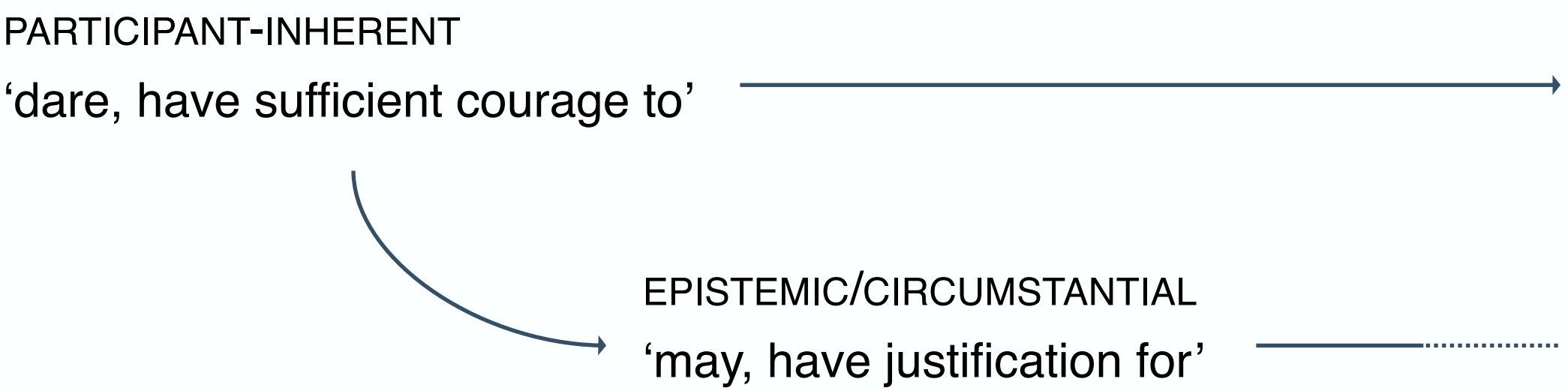
Musculus 1564 [1556], *Fluchteuffel*
Digitized by Google and The British Library

Results

	n	%
EPIST/CIRC ‘may’	12	24%
ambiguous	6	12%
INHERENT ‘dare’	32	64%
total	50	100%



More likely diachrony of *turde*



Marginal development in English

(16) Early Modern English (16th c.)

No towne, noe Citie, is there (I **dare** say) in this whole Shyre, comparable..with this our Fleete

OED: 1576 W. LAMBARDE *Perambulation of Kent* 274

Transitive *dare* in English

I dare you etc.

(17) Early Modern English (17th c.)

These [creatures] ride in triumph, as hauing conquered the wits of Man; and still they **dare them** to come out of their dens of instincts, intelligences, and hidden qualities

EEBOCorp1.0 (1619, Rous, *The arte of happines*)

I dare you etc.

(18) Late Modern English (19th c.)

dare (dæə). Children in quarrelling say, "I dare you," "I dog dare you," "I black dog dare you," "I double dog dare you," "I double black dog dare you." [In Michigan *dare* and *double dare.*]

"Kentucky Words", *Dialect Notes* I, p. 229 [1896]
Source: The Internet Archive

A line of poetry

Cotton MS. Nero A.x, f. 37r
Source: Wikimedia Commons

(19) Middle English (14th c.)

Hys	*fraunchyse*	*is*	*large*	*þat*	*euer*	***dard***
his	privilege	is	large	that	ever	?

To	*Hym*	*þat*	*matʒ*	*in*	*synne*	*rescoghe*
to	him	that	makes	in	sin	rescue

Pearl, ed. Gordon (1953: ll. 609-10)

Another *dare*

1. dare, *v.*[1] View full entry — c1000
   To have boldness or courage (*to do* something); to be so bold as.

2. dare, *v.*[2] View full entry — c1220
   To gaze fixedly or stupidly; to stare as one terrified, amazed, or fascinated. *Obs.*

Oxford English Dictionary

(20) *And at þat sy3t vche douth con* ***dare***
‘And at that sight every host did tremble’

Pearl, Gordon (1953: l. 839)

Dare, transitive verb

(21) Like vnto men that **dare** larkes, which holde vp an hoby [falcon], that the larkes eies beyng euer vpon the hoby, shuld not see the nette that is layd on theyr heades.

OED: 1551 T. Cranmer *Answer S. Gardiner* 121

(22) **daring** of larkes [...] a very good sporte and full of delight, to sée the fearefull nature of the silly Larke, with the great awe and subiection that the Hobbie hath her in

Turbervile (1611 [1575]: 57)

The Booke of Faulconrie or Hau-
KING, FOR THE ONELY DE-
light and pleaſure of all Noblemen and Gentlemen:
Collected out of the beſt auctors, aſvvell Italians as Frenchmen,
and ſome Engliſh practiſes withall concernyng Faulconrie, the contentes
whereof are to be ſeene in the next page folowyng.
By George Turberuile Gentleman.
NOCET EMPTA DOLORE VOLVPTAS.
Imprinted at Londo n for Chriſtopher Barker, at the ſigne of
the Graſhopper in P[illegible]les Churchyarde. Anno. 1575.

Turbervile 1575
Source: The British Library

Dare, transitive verb

Lambeth Palace Library MS. 6, f. 243 (late 15th c.)
Source: Wikimedia Commons

(23) Siles doun on aithire side selcuth kniȝtis,
Sum **darid**, sum dede, sum depe wondid.

MED: c1450(?a1400) *Wars Alex.*(Ashm 44) 3044

(24) For our approach shall so much **dare** the field / That England shall crouch down in fear and yield

Henry V, IV. ii. 34-5 (c. 1599)

Formal similarity

(25) Enclos'd the bush about, and there him tooke
Like **darred** larke, not **daring** up to looke

Spenser (1805 [1596]: 199-200)

(26) *to* **Dare**, *an old English word, for to* stare, *because they which behold a man stedfastly with a wide open* staring eie, *are said to bee* bold *or* **daring**

Minsheu (1627: 197)

Bridging context?

(27) An English man hath three qualyties, he can suffer no partner in his love, no straunger to be his equal, or to **be dared** by any

EEBOCorp1.0 (1580, Lyly, *Euphues and his England*)

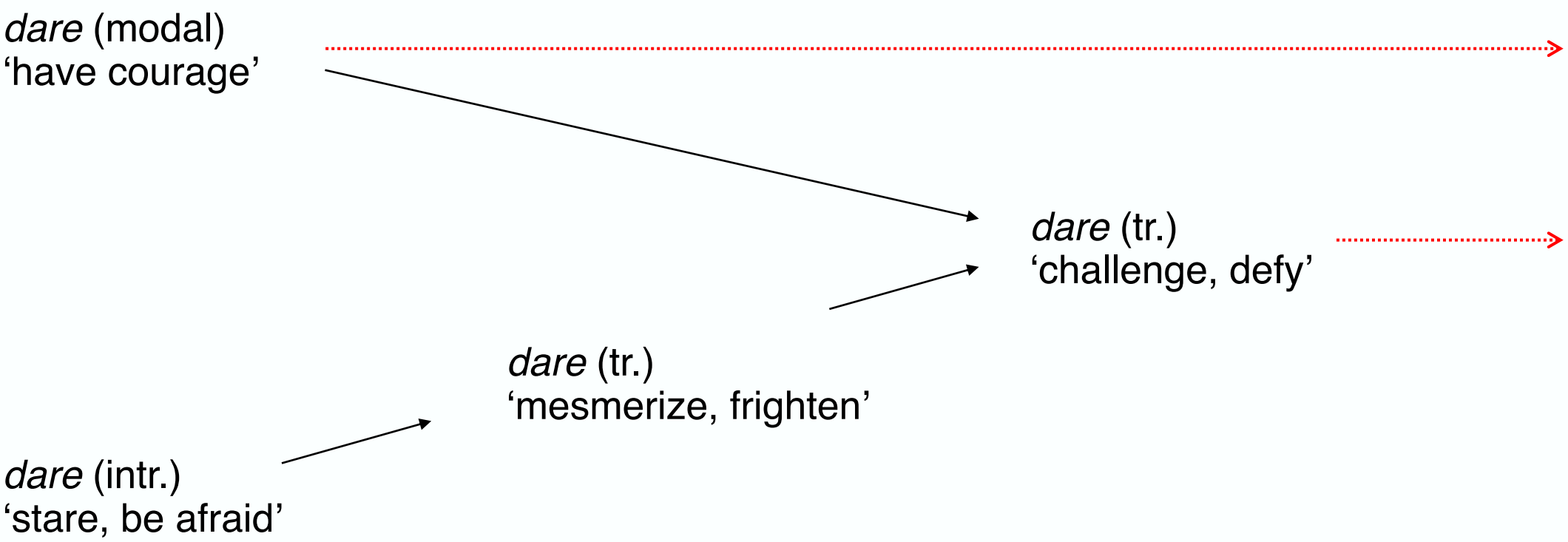
(28) Of heauen, or hell, God, or the Diuell, he earst nor heard nor carde
Alone he sought to serue the same that would by none **be darde**

EEBOCorp1.0 (1597, Warner, *Albions England*)

(29) Hauing so godly agouernoure, and uertewes consolers, whois yeys cannot **be darid** with these manifest and open abhominacions

EEBOCorp1.0 (1547, Hooper, *An answer...*)

Hypothesis


dare (modal)
‘have courage’
dare (tr.)
‘challenge, defy’
dare (tr.)
‘mesmerize, frighten’
dare (intr.)
‘stare, be afraid’

Questions and answers

1. Did *dare* have ‘bleached’ semantics in Old English?
   → no – *dare* distinct from other ‘courage’ verbs

2. Is the meaning ‘dare’ secondary in Danish *turde*?
   → no – more likely ‘dare’ > ‘may’

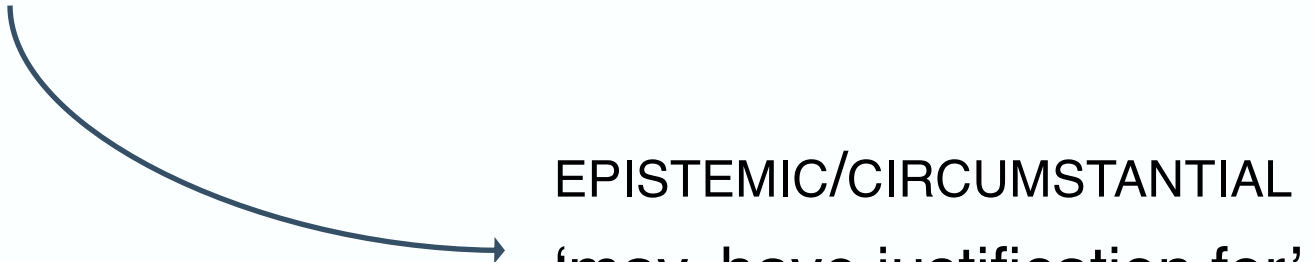
3. How did transitive *dare* develop in Early Modern English?
   → through conflation with *dare* v.[2]?

Future work

How common is this development?

PARTICIPANT-INHERENT

‘dare, have sufficient courage to’



EPISTEMIC/CIRCUMSTANTIAL

‘may, have justification for’

Dare with complement clause?

(30) Middle English, 13th c.

Ne dear ich þ^{t} ha deopluker ne witeluker schriue hire to ȝeung preost her abuten

not dare I that she deeply.COMP nor openly.COMP confess REFL to young priest here.about

'I dare not that she makes confession more deeply or openly to a young priest about this'

PPCME2: CMANCRIW-2,II.255.148
Cotton MS. Cleopatra C vi.

Other open questions

1. The semantic field of ‘courage’ in Old English – where did all these verbs go in Middle English?

2. What was the extent of German influence in Early Modern Danish *turde* (and other modals)?

3. Possible support for the ‘conflation hypothesis’?

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Illustrations

Slides 1 and 66: BnF, Français 91, fol. 31r (15th c.)

Slide 14: Hermetschwil, Benediktinerinnenkloster, Cod. membr. 9, fol. 16r (16th c.)

Slide 23: BnF, Français 91, fol. 71r (15th c.)

Slide 48: BnF, Français 91, fol. 85r (15th c.)

Slide 59: BL, Royal 18 E III, fol. 24r (12th c.)

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This research was carried out at the Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication.

Financial support from the NWO is gratefully acknowledged (grant 326-70-001).

Thank you!