

Workshop on Interfaces at the Left Periphery

July 14th, 2013 at the University of Michigan

Panel: Clause boundaries and peripheries from a diachronic perspective

Try and: the development of subordination out of coordination

***Abstract:** In this talk I will describe the diachronic development of a complementizer out of a coordinating conjunction in the phrase ‘try and’ over the past 500 years and show how this particular kind of pseudocoordination has unique properties, along with a preliminary discussion of the present-day syntactic situation.*

Pseudocoordination: (1) I try and be on time every day. (2) I go and get lunch every day.

1. Development of complementizers from coordinators?

Heine & Kuteva (2002: 43): *VP-AND* > *SUBORDINATOR*

!Xun, Khoisan (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 44)

3) yà /oa tci ta yà fia t̥hi.
3SG NEG come and 3SG PROG be.sick
‘He doesn’t come because he is sick.’

Manam, Oceanic (Lichtenberk 1983: 449)

4) wása ŋúsi i-ema?-i-be i-moaŋúsu
wind loin.cloth 3SG-cause-3SG-and 3SG-move
‘The wind made the loincloth move.’

Mingrelian (Harris & Campbell 1995: 290; cf. Georgian *da* ‘and’)

5) skua koŋundu-a da, gverdo yureli iŋuapudu-a
child.NOM have-QUOT if half dead be-QUOT
‘If he had a child, he would be half dead.’

Tok Pisin, English-based creole in PNG (Verhaar 1995:121; Philip Tama, p.c.)

6) Yu stap we na u kam? 7) Em (i) tra-im na singsing.
you be/stay where and you come 3SG PRED try-TRANS and sing
‘Where are you coming from?’ ‘He tries/tried to sing.’

Frisian *Imperativus pro Infinitivo* (de Haan 1990, Veldman 1991, *inter alia*)

8) it idee en lis de Lauwerssee droech is net alhiel nij.
the idea and make the Lauwerssea dry is not completely new
‘The idea to dry the Lauwerssea is not entirely new.’

- Rare, and the exact path of grammaticalization is undocumented in these cases.

2. Properties of Pseudocoordination

- Found in various languages around the world to varying extents (Ross 2013): Indo-European, Semitic, Oceanic, Khoisan, etc.

Property 1: shared subject for both verbs

- 9) I will go and get the book.
- 10) *I will go and you get the book.¹

- This relates to the “same subject” part of switch-reference systems; cf. “echo-subject” (ES) in southern Vanuatu languages (Lynch 1983):

- 11) i-im-vin (kani) m-im-apul (Lenakel; Lynch 1983: 211)
1-PAST-go (and) ES-PAST-sleep
‘I went and slept.’

Property 2: parallel morphology on both verbs (cf. Wiklund 2007)

- 12) I went and got the book.
- 13) *I went and have the book.

- Both properties will be relevant for *try and* pseudocoordination below.
- Pseudocoordination like this has been analyzed as subordination (cf. Wiklund 2007, *inter alia*), but this is controversial; the *try and* case is much clearer.

3. Historical Development of *try and* in English

*Starting Point: Old/Middle English, borrowing of *trie* from French:*

Meaning of ‘attempt’ often expressed with *to*, but not pseudocoordination:

- 14) Hig hine sohton to nimanne. (c.1000: West Saxon Gospels, John 7:30)
‘At this they tried to seize him.’

Purposive use of pseudocoordination for motion verbs (Shearin 1903: 12-13):

- 15) Farað and āxiað geornlice be þām cilde. (c.1000: W. Sax. Gospels, Matt. 2:8)
‘Go/travel and ask diligently about the child.’

c.1200 *trie* borrowed from French meaning ‘separate out, refine, examine, test’:

- 16) Þey turned ageyn, and tryde þe Bretons fro ilk Romeyn (OED *try*, c.1330)
‘They turned again, and separated the Britons from Roman kin.’

Meaning of ‘attempt’ first with nominals (cf. Lewis et al. (eds.) 1996: 1092):

- 17) Nou ich habbe of þe ferste yteld, þat oþer wyl ich trye. (c.1333)
‘Now I have told the first, I will try the other.’

¹ Grammaticality judgments are on the semantics of pseudocoordination; alternative interpretations (“and then”) linking two independent events are ignored. Those readings are always available, at least in English.

Stage 1: first uses of try and, limited to non-finite contexts, especially following to:

Originated in ambiguous coordination:

18) Ferst forto gete it out of Myne / And after forto trie and fyne. (Gower c.1390)
'First to get it out of the mine, and then to try/test and refine [the metal].'

First instances of *try and* mid-1500s, grammaticalizing these ambiguous forms:

19) We maye wel trye and knowe all the rowte of Antichristes generacion.
(EEBO TCP corpus: Philpot c.1556)

At about the same time, *try to* also appears:

20) Bycause the Romanes durst not trye to stoppe theyr passage.
(EEBO TCP corpus: Watson 1581)

- See Chart 4 to compare *to* and *and*.

Stage 2: extended to contrastively unambiguous contexts, late 1700s:

Usage in contexts that would entail the second verb under normal coordination:

21) ...I fhall try and get her a good Hulband.
(Google Ngrams: Chaigneau 1753: 58)

- Developing c.1750, found frequently after 1800. See Charts 1 & 2.

Stage 3: reanalysis leads to present tense usage of try and in mid-1800s:

Bare present tense usage:

22) Do sit down by the fire, whilst I try and get you some breakfast.
(Google Ngrams: Gascoigne 1841: 111)

- More evidence: present tense usage considered prescriptively incorrect (in contrast to nonfinite usage) throughout 1800s (cf. Waddy 1889: 110-111).
- See Chart 2 for the development of present-tense usage.

Stage 4: be permitted in bare present tense in mid-1900s:

Infinitival *be* licensed by *and* in present-tense:

23) If I try and be terribly good they think I am wicked.
(Google Ngrams: Hastings 1926: 71)

- Found occasionally after c.1925, but only frequent after 1980; see Chart 3.

4. Similar grammaticalization in Faroese (cf. Heycock & Petersen 2012: 274)

‘Try and’ acceptable in infinitives and imperatives:

- 24) Royn og sel húsini!
try.IMP and sell.IMP house.DEF
‘Try and sell the house!’

Unacceptable in present-tense usage:

- 25) *Eg royni og lesi bókina.
I try.1SG and read.1SG book.DEF

Some speakers accept 3PL colloquially because it is identical with the infinitive:

- 26) Tey royna og lesa bókina.
they try.3PL.PRES and read.INF/3PL.PRES book.DEF
‘They try and read the book.’

5. Toward a syntactic analysis of *try and*

Summary of *try and* development in English:

- Stage 1: I want to try and do that. *Ungrammatical until mid-1500s.*
Stage 2: I will try and do that. *Ungrammatical until late 1700s.*
Stage 3: I try and do that. *Ungrammatical until mid-1800s.*
Stage 4: I try and be happy. *Ungrammatical until mid-1900s.*

- Stage 1 may be based on pragmatic implicature alone; both *trying* and *doing* are asserted, but in a non-entailing context; *trying* is easier than *doing*, and the implicature follows, that one might *try* but not succeed.
- Stage 2 is a restricted instance of standard pseudocoordination: two verbs that must have parallel morphology, restricted by the fact that the second must be an infinitive for semantic reasons; at this point the *and* must be a subordinator, because the second conjunct is not entailed.
The morphological parallelism is at the level of syntactic features.
- Stage 3 extends Stage 2 to present-tense usage where it only *looks like* the morphology is parallel, at the surface level: note that in the surface form both verbs look like infinitives and also appear to agree with the subject. A possible explanation is Pullum & Zwicky’s (1986) Resolution Principle: under coordination [here, pseudocoordination], a syntactic feature conflict can be resolved if there exists an appropriate ambiguous form:
27) *Either you or I are/am/is a linguist.
28) Either we or they are linguists.

However, note that the RP is proposed as universal, which would not explain the distinct stages of development in English, nor the idiolectal differences in (colloquial) Faroese discussed above.

- Stage 4 is only subtly different from Stage 3, but in an important way: *be* does not even appear to agree with the subject; it is clearly a bare infinitive, licensed under *and*, with no matrix-subject agreement. Yet, as described by Carden & Pesetsky's (1977) *bare-form condition*², the first verb still must not be inflected:

29) *He tries and sing(s). / *We tried and sing/sang.

I propose a two-part explanation with theoretical consequences:

i) V1 is a matrix verb, and thereby must realize tense and subject-agreement morphology (30); V2 is a bare infinitive licensed under *and*, with no matrix-level agreement/morphology (31):

30) *He try and do that.

31) *He tries and does that.

ii) Any inflection realized on V1 must also be realized on V2, in the same sense as the general morphological parallelism found in pseudocoordination, but at the *level of inflections*, not syntactic features. The bare-form condition is derived due to the inherent bare nature of V2, which cannot realize any inflections; therefore, V1 cannot either (32, 33):

32) *He tries and do that.

33) *I am sure and do that. (cf. I will be sure and do that.)

Property (ii) is not merely based on *sounding alike*, as in (34):

34) *I tried and put the book on the table.

- Other verbs that are used (by some speakers) in present-day English *try and* pseudocoordination include: *be sure, remember, pretend, promise, decide*, etc. (These are limited to *subject-only control verbs*.)

What kind of subordinator is and, following Rizzi (1997)?

- Unlike *to*, *and* is not a T-head, as shown by negation:

35) I will try not/never to do that again.
36) *I will try not/never and do that again.
- Nor is *and* lower in the clausal structure:

37) I will try to not/never do that again.
38) I will try and not/never do that again.
39) I will try to be elected president.
40) I will try and be elected president.
- This leaves the CP-domain, but there can be no intervening TopP or FocP:

41) *I will try and the book read (but the magazine throw away).
- Conclusion: *and* appears to be a Fin-head.

² Technically this generalization is incorrect, as shown by the Faroese data. Based on only the English data, with which Carden & Pesetsky made the generalization, there is no distinction between infinitival/non-finite and literally bare forms; however, there is no principled reason why this should be the case.

6. What's next? Ongoing research and further grammaticalizations:

Tok Pisin uses *try and* pseudocoordination, apparently borrowed from English, but without any restrictions (Philip Tama, p.c.):

- (7) Em (i) tra-im na singsing.
3SG PRED try-TRANS and sing
'He tries/tried to sing.'
- 42) Em (i) tra-im na help-im mi.
3SG PRED try-TRANS and help-TRANS me.
'He tries/tried to help me.'
- There is no parallel morphology requirement, with overt transitivity marking.

Similarly, infrequent examples from South African English (43, 44) and possible speech errors in American English show the potential grammaticalization for *and* to become functionally equivalent to *to*, with no morphological restrictions on the first verb, and a bare infinitive licensed as the second verb, for all matrix contexts:

- 43) Noeleen tries and find answers and solutions.
(http://www.tvsa.co.za/default.asp?blogname=coming_up_on_3Talk&ArticleID=2903)
- 44) It's a comical battle every night trying and get him to sleep in his own bed.
(<http://www.african-boerboel.co.za/newowners4.htm>)
- 45) [They offered an immunity deal] and they tried and go after John Gotti Jr.
(Bo Dietl on *Imus in the Morning*: May 23, 2011)

Dialectal variation can also reinforce or clarify the syntactic analysis:

- In Norfolk English, 3SG agreement is optional (46), which allows (47) to be grammatical (Faarlund & Trudgill 1999):
46) He like it very much.
47) He try and see us every day.

Ongoing research:

- Investigate the ongoing grammaticalization in Faroese to more precisely relate it to the stages of development for English, such as with irregular verbs (e.g., *be*).
- Investigate the apparent ongoing grammaticalization in South African English. (Preliminary survey results indicate that these forms are ungrammatical, yet they do exist.)
- Investigate the patterns found in dialects with generalized *-s* present tense marking (including eastern Canada), to see which constraint is stronger: morphological parallelism or bare infinitives.
- Determine the significance for syntactic theory that there may be inflection-sensitive parallelism.
- Establish a cross-linguistic typology of pseudocoordination and related phenomena.
- Consider the implications regarding the traditional coordination/subordination dichotomy, for which pseudocoordination seems anomalous.

Appendix: generalized extender *and*, some examples from TV shows³

- Rare usage reveals a semantically bleached, syntactically anomalous *and* that joins an extra idea to sentences
- Range of meanings broader than *and*, *to*, *that*, etc.
- Similar to Frisian *Imperativus-pro-Infinitivo*.
- Found with unlicensed bare forms in a variety of contexts.

From *Castle*, April 1, 2013:

—I figured the trickiest part would be fooling you and keep a straight face.

From *Castle* Season 1, Episode 2:

—How could she go into the room, drop the phone, and you not see her?

From *Don't Trust the B**** in Apartment 23*, Season 2, Episode 12:

—Maybe it is better if James focuses on training and not have distractions from me.

From *Teen Wolf* July 1, 2013:

—Derek, don't! You can't do this and no one gets hurt.

From *The Following* Season 1, Episode 1:

—(Told you not to drink.)

—I'm not interesting enough and not drink.

From *Hart of Dixie* Season 2, Episode 15:

—(What do you say? [Do you want to come?])

—Actually, you guys go. I could really use the time and do my homework instead.

From *Walking Dead* February 24, 2013:

—So you went and welcome them to the neighborhood?

From *Falling Skies* July 7, 2013:

—...if anybody else had've acted like an alien and shoot people, you'd've [shot them]...

A similar phenomenon is found in the so-called GoToGo construction, which is marginal in English but grammatical for some individuals (cf. Zwicky 2002; Staum 2004):

48) We're going to the American people and tell 'em the truth...
(Staum 2004: 1)

³ These are from scripted TV shows, so they could be due to typos in the script or speech errors while pronouncing the (perhaps awkward) lines, but even so, there is still something interesting about how they occur as a repair strategy, and we could imagine future grammaticalization of this form.

Corpora

EEBO TCP: *Early English Books Online - Text Creation Partnership*. Available online at <http://www.textcreationpartnership.org/tcp-eebo/>.

Google Ngrams: Jean-Baptiste Michel, Yuan Kui Shen, Aviva Presser Aiden, Adrian Veres, Matthew K. Gray, William Brockman, The Google Books Team, Joseph P. Pickett, Dale Hoiberg, Dan Clancy, Peter Norvig, Jon Orwant, Steven Pinker, Martin A. Nowak, and Erez Lieberman Aiden*. Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books. *Science* (Published online ahead of print: 12/16/2010). Available online at <http://books.google.com/ngrams/>.

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Chart 1: Origin of *try and in infinitives*

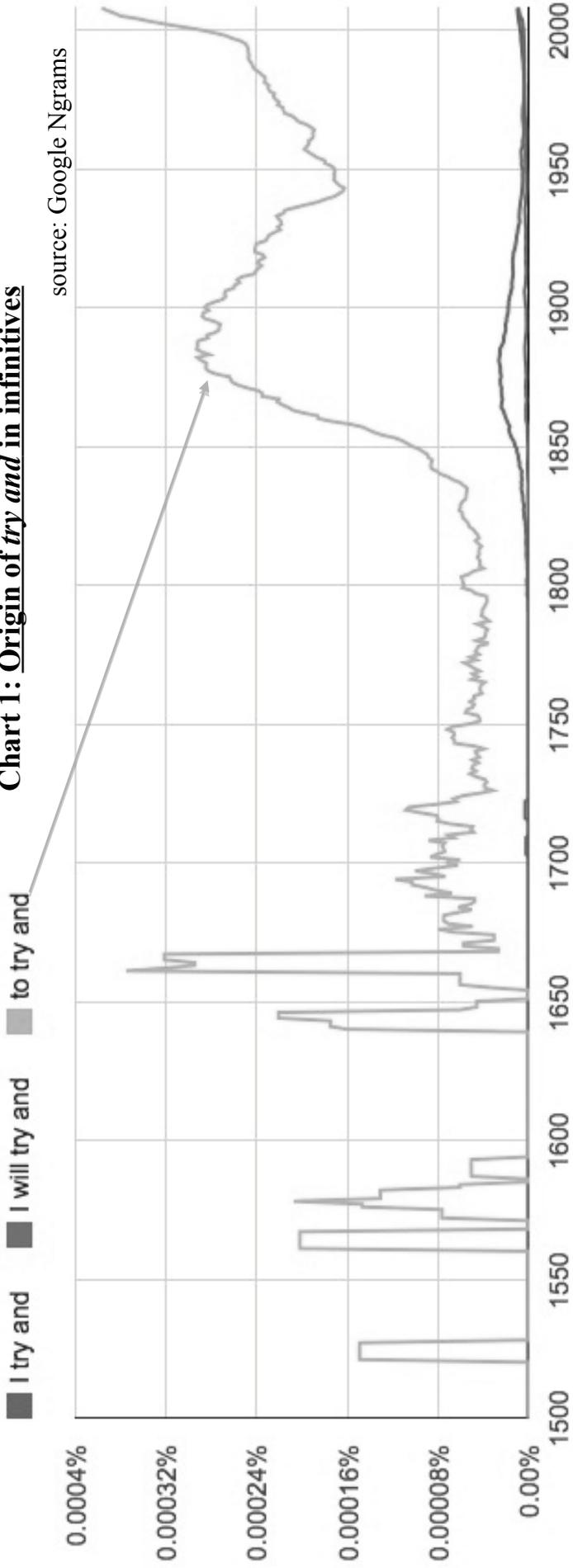


Chart 2: Use of *try and in present tense*

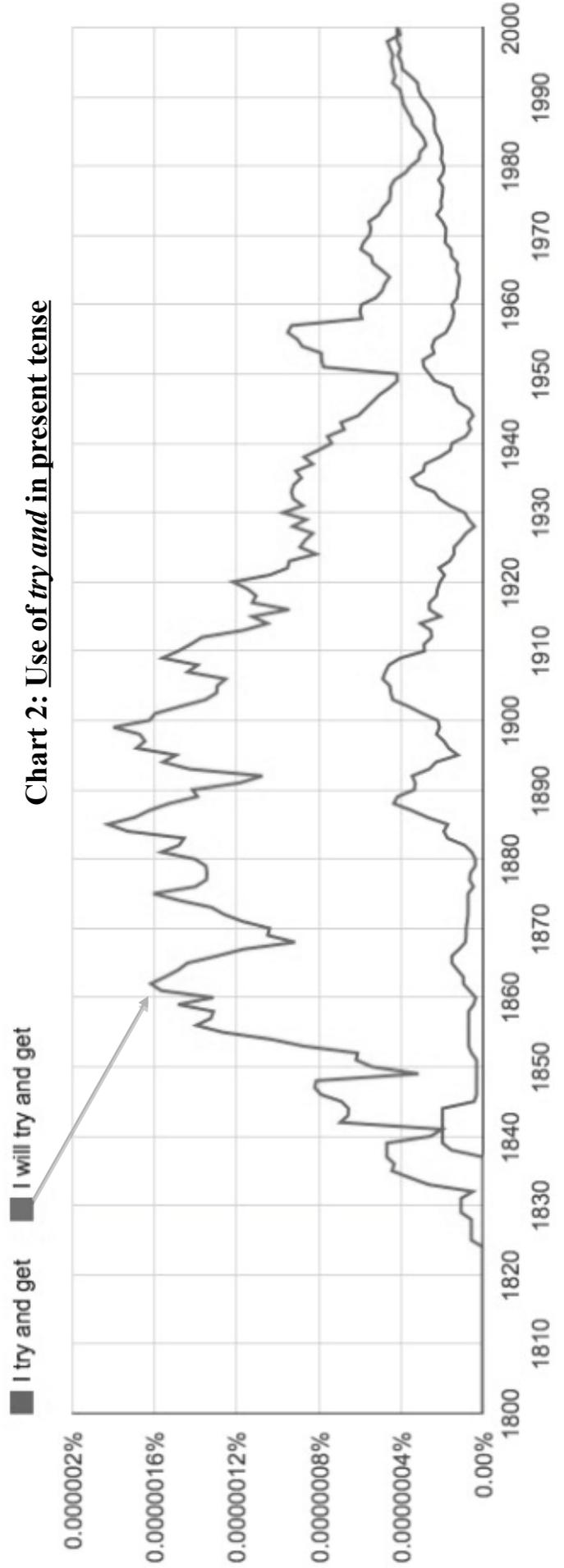


Chart 3: Licensing of *be* in present tense

source: Google Ngrams

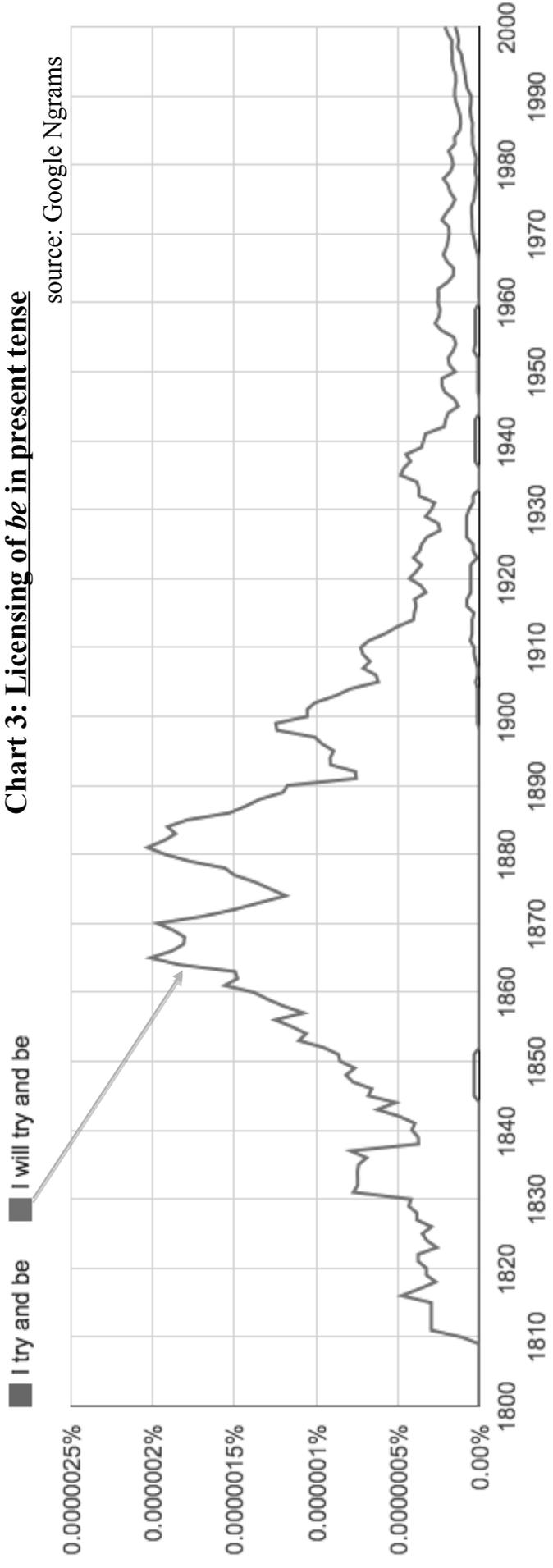


Chart 4: Frequency of *try and* vs. *try to*

