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From ‘il s’envole hors’ to ‘il sort du nid’: a typological change in French motion expressions¹

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In this chapter, I describe the evolution from Latin to French, focusing on a specific typological change: that from a Satellite-framed to a Verb-framed language, in the (much debated) dichotomy established by Talmy (1985). The goal of the paper is to describe in detail the loss, between Medieval and Modern French, of one important feature of Satellite-framed languages: Satellites. In order to do this, I rely on a quantitative and qualitative diachronic corpus study of a series of adverbs with particle uses in Medieval French, following their decline throughout the diachrony of French. I describe the uses of these adverbs and their gradual disappearance, which has left room for other spatial grams, mainly adpositions.

Keywords: particles, adpositions, typology, diachrony, corpus, spatial grams

1. Introduction

Starting at least with stylistic considerations on differences between French and German (e.g. Bally 1932), scholars have long noticed that languages differ in the way they encode motion. Talmy (1985, 2000) has summed this up neatly with his verb-framed vs satellite-framed (henceforth VF/SF) typology, later taken up by Slobin (1996, 2004), among many others. In the wake of a large body of research on space in language, this VF/SF typology has been the focus of many studies in the last twenty or thirty years. It is now commonly assumed, for instance, that Germanic and Slavic languages tend to be SF, and Romance languages VF. Indeed, many studies have highlighted the specificities of Romance languages, esp. vis-à-vis Germanic languages (see already Aske 1989).

However, there seems to be a good deal of within-type differentiation, and even closely related languages can behave quite differently with respect to the Talmian typology (Fagard et al. 2013, 2017). Indeed, the limits of a simple VF/SF typology for Romance languages have been shown on multiple occasions, especially for Italian and Italian dialects (from Gsell 1982 to Iacobini 2009). Perhaps the most interesting fact concerning the VF/SF typology in Romance languages is that Romance languages, which are globally VF, derive from Latin, which is clearly an SF language, with a productive use of dynamic spatial verb prefixes (Iacobini and Fagard 2011). From this point of view, French is one of the Romance languages which has gone furthest in the shift from SF to VF. More exciting yet, this shift can be clearly tracked and documented, since Old French (OF) is still structurally SF (Kopecka 2006, 2009, in press, Schøsler 2008), while Modern French (ModF) is among the most typically VF of Romance languages.

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The question I address in this paper is precisely *how* this shift was brought about. More specifically, I focus on dynamic spatial adverbs, which have been shown to function like particles in Medieval French (Buridant 2000: 544 ff., Burnett and Tremblay 2012)², with an aim to understand exactly when and how they disappeared. My main question in this regard is whether, when and to what extent French really has gotten rid of these particles. In order to do this, I first show that there has indeed been a *very clear* drop in the use of these particles, with a waning paradigm of grams (see Svorou 1994) which are less and less used as such. This is shown on the basis of a large diachronic corpus study of over 25 particles, which allows me to establish the rate and extent of this drop, from OF to ModF. In Section 2, I describe the results of previous research on the subject, from SF features in Latin to particles in OF. In Section 3, I present my methodology and corpus. Section 4 is devoted to the results of the study, which are further discussed in Section 5, before my conclusion in Section 6.

2. State of the art: Motion event descriptions in Latin and Medieval French

In Classical Latin, the use of satellites is similar to that found in Modern Germanic languages, especially in the case of motion event descriptions (Iacobini and Corona 2016). The diachronic shift from SF Latin (and OF) to VF ModF entails a series of changes in the expression of motion events, including of course a shift in the description of the path component, from verb prefix and/or particle to verb and adpositional phrase, as illustrated by examples (1a–b).

(1)

(Latin)

a. *Auximo Caesar progressus omnem agrum Picenum **percurrit**.* (Caesar, *De Bello Civili*, 1.15, Renucci du Pontet (ed), Perseus database)

‘Caesar, having moved forward from Auximum, traversed [lit. *across-ran*] the whole country of Picenum’. (*The Works of Julius Caesar*, translated by W.A. McDevitte and W.S. Bohn, 1869)

(French)

b. *César a avancé à **travers** la campagne de Picenum* (my translation – one possible translation among others)

‘Caesar has moved forward across the country around Picenum’

The Path component could also be separated from the verb, with (2a) or without (2b) coexpression in the verb prefix; adpositional phrases could also contain Path-related information, as illustrated by *de arbore* ‘down from the tree’ in (2b).

(2)

(Latin)

a. *eorum sectam sequuntur multi mortales / multi alii e Troia strenui viri / ubi **foras** cum auro illic **exibant***

² Particles are polyfunctional grams, with uses as adverb, particle and adposition, which act as what Talmy (1991: 486) calls *satellites*, i.e. elements which are “in a sister relation to the verb root”. Interestingly, the existence of such particles in French has been spotted only recently, cf. Marchello-Nizia (to appear). We will come back to this.

‘Many people followed their band out of Troy, many other stalwart men, as they were going away from (lit. *out.going outside*) from there with gold’ (Virgil, *Aeneid*, II, vv. 795–797) (transl.: J. D. Reed, 2007, *Virgil's Gaze: Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid*. Princeton University Press: Princeton & Oxford, p. 97).

b. *ubi ille abiit, ego me deorsum duco de arbore, ecfodio aulam auri plenam.*

‘as he goes away [lit. *went away*; i.e. after hiding his treasure], I climb down [lit. *lead myself down*] the tree, and dig up the pot, full of gold’ (Plautus, *Aulularia*, 3rd c. B.C., vv. 708–709)

Most Modern Romance languages display verb-particle constructions³ similar to those found in Latin, such as *me deorsum duco* in (2b), in which the meaning of the verb phrase can be compositional or opaque. Various patterns are found, a few of which I illustrate in (3) for different Romance languages (see for instance Masini 2006, Iacobini and Masini 2007 for Italian, Mateu and Rigau 2010 for Catalan).

(3)

(Italian)

venire giù ‘come down’, *saltare giù* ‘jump down’, *portare via* ‘take away’, *mettere sotto* ‘put under’

(Catalan)

anar avall ‘go down’, *tirar fora* ‘pull out’, *tirar amunt* ‘pull up’, *tornar enrere* ‘go back (lit. ‘go.back back’)’

(Spanish)

ir abajo ‘go down’, *echar fuera* ‘throw out’, *echar arriba* ‘throw down’, *volver atrás* ‘go back (lit. ‘go.back back’)’

(Portuguese)

ir abaixo ‘go down’, *deitar fora* ‘throw out’, *voltar atrás* ‘go back (lit. ‘go.back back’)’

(Romanian)

a veni jos ‘go down’, *a sări jos* ‘jump down’, *a se întoarce (înapoi)* ‘go back (lit. ‘go.back back’)’

From this point of view, French is an exception⁴: not only because verb-particle constructions are virtually absent, but also because they are replaced in context by other devices. As illustrated in (4a), when telling a child to come down a slide, for instance, an Italian-speaking parent would typically use a verb-particle construction, while a French-speaking one wouldn’t (4b).

(4)

(Modern Italian)

a. *Salta giù! Andiamo via!*

‘Jump **down**! We’re going (lit. away)’

(ModF)

³ Following Goldberg (1995) and others, I understand a construction as an abstract linguistic pattern with a specific, non-predictable form and/or function, which “imposes a meaning, and under the right implicit circumstances ‘coerces’ interpretations” (Traugott 2008: 223).

⁴ The “French exception” in Romance is not restricted to this typology; French is indeed known to stand out among Romance languages, for instance from the point of view of analyticity, or of grammaticalization. Indeed, similar accounts can be given for a series of features (see e.g. Lamiroy 1999, 2011, Carlier 2007, De Mulder & Lamiroy 2012, Fagard et al. 2016).

b. *Descend de là! On y va!*

‘Get down (lit. **from** there)! We’re leaving! (lit. *there going*)’⁵

The same cannot be said of Medieval French (i.e. OF – 9th-13th centuries –, and Middle French (MF) – 14th and 15th centuries), which still displays typical features of SF languages: besides prepositional phrases (5a) still found in MF, it also uses verb prefixes (5b) and particles such as *avant* ‘forward’, *aval* ‘down(hill)’ and *fors* ‘outside’ (cf. Marchello-Nizia 2002: 214, Buridant 2000: 544) (5c):

(5)

(OF)

- a. *Vait s’en Brandan vers le grant mer* (*Le Voyage de Saint Brendan*, 1112, v. 157)
‘Brendan goes away **towards** the high sea’
- b. *si s’entrecomecierent a resgarder mout honteusement* (*Queste del saint Graal*, 1225–1230, p. 211)
‘so they started looking at each other (lit. *through-looking each other*) full of shame’
- c. *sanz faille nos istrons demain fors et leur corrons sus* (*La mort le roi Artu*, 1230)
‘without failing we will go out tomorrow (lit. *exit out*) and assail them (lit. *run them up*)’

This leaves us with a series of questions as to how this process was brought about, including the links to more global language changes in the shift from Latin to Romance.

3. Theoretical framework and methodology

My approach is bottom-up, corpus-based, and relies both on grammaticalization theory (Meillet 1912, Kuryłowicz 1965, Hopper and Traugott 2003) and construction grammar (Goldberg 1995), specifically following Traugott’s (2008: 236) proposal. In sections (3.1.–3.4.), I describe my corpus (3.1.), the individual spatial grams I focus on (3.2.), how I dealt with noise identification (3.3.) and how I coded the data (3.4.).

3.1. Corpus

The corpus is made up of two databases, the BFM database and Frantext (see the Reference section). It covers the whole period for which there are available texts in French, i.e. from the 10th c. to the 21st c. Following general practice in studies on the diachrony of French, I cut up this vast time span of nearly 12 centuries into different periods: OF, MF, Classical French (CF) and ModF. Following Combettes and Marchello-Nizia (2010), I also distinguished Preclassical French (PF), as shown in Table 1.

⁵ It could be contended that *y aller* ‘go there’ is a satellite construction. However, the tendency of French-speaking children to analyze it as a simple verb – as illustrated by the formation of the past tense, e.g. *on est yallés* ‘we are there.gone’ instead of *on y est allés* – seems to go against this hypothesis. The same applies to *s’en aller* ‘go away (lit. go oneself from here)’, with occurrences such as *on s’est pas enallés* ‘we haven’t gone away’ for *on s’en est pas allés*.

Table 1. The corpus, with texts from the BFM and Frantext databases

Period	Dates	Texts	Word count
OF	900–1350	196	7,070,087
MF	1351–1550	349	11,624,693
PF	1551–1650	337	13,224,564
CF	1651–1800	564	22,742,599
ModF	1801–2013	3,618	196,808,083
Total	900–2013	5,064	244,399,939

As is generally the case in diachronic corpora, the corpus is hardly well-balanced, with a much larger corpus for later periods. However, this does not seem problematic, since the phenomenon under study is actually more frequent in earlier texts: Buridant (2000: 546), for instance, links their disappearance to the shift in word order (see e.g. Combettes 1988, Marchello-Nizia 1995). He notes that the decline starts in the 15th c. and steepens during the 16th c., leaving only residual, literary and/or dialectal uses from the 17th c. onwards. This scenario seems confirmed by the data presented in Burnett et al. (2010).

In this respect, the evolution of grammatical descriptions of French is telling (Marchello-Nizia, to appear). The absence of particles as a functioning and productive paradigm as early as the 16th c. is shown by their complete absence in the first grammars of French (Palsgrave 1530). This also explains why it took grammarians so long to acknowledge their existence – they are still absent from descriptions of the diachrony of French in the early 20th c. (for instance Brunot 1905 or Sneyders de Vogel 1919), and are described first in Wagner (1946) and Buridant (1987a, 1987b, 1995).

Even modern grammars of PF and CF (Gougenheim 1984, Fournier 1998) mention verb-particle constructions either hardly or not at all; at best, they merely list a few examples, which are given more as lexical oddities, see for instance Gougenheim (*ibid.*: 188), thereby providing an indirect confirmation that the construction is no longer productive:

Sus, an adverb meaning ‘on’, is used most of all to build verb phrases: *Car quel profit en sent-il, si neantmoins il donne à son ennemy moyen de se remettre sus* ‘For where is his profit, if he lets his ennemy pull himself back together? (lit. *put himself up*)’ (Montaigne, *Essais*, I, 47; t. I, 2, p. 102; my translation)

For that reason, I limited my investigations to a subset of particles for later periods.

An important part of my study was to distinguish, first, particle uses from noise. This turned out to be a trickier process than expected, both because of the enormous amount of occurrences and because of the ambiguous status of quite a few examples. This issue is addressed in detail in Section 3.3.

3.2. Particles

In order to study the evolution of the verb-particle construction from OF to ModF, I extracted from the corpus all occurrences of a series of particles which could partake of this construction. The choice of these particles was based on lists found in both modern (Buridant 2000; Marchello-Nizia 1979) and ancient grammars (*Manière de langage* 1415), and papers devoted to the question of particles in Medieval French (Burnett et al. 2010, Burnett and

Tremblay, op. cit., Marchello-Nizia 2002). That these particles were perceived as being part of the same paradigm by (at least some) speakers is shown by the list found in the 1415 *Manière de langage*:

Sus, jus; avant, arriere; en costé, au bort; en hault, en bas; ciens, liens; dedens, dehors; deça, de illeques, de la; loing, pres; ycy, illeques; la, ça ; par ça, par la, par cy; sus, soubz; desus, desoubz; par desus, par desoubz; oultre, parmy; jusques, auques; autour, tout environ, ailleurs (Manière de langage, 1415, p. 52)

The few papers on the subject concentrate on a small series of particles. For instance, Burnett et al. (2010) address the same issue in a similar spirit, with interesting findings; however, they analyze only a pair of adverbs, namely *avant* ‘forward’ and *arrière* ‘back’; as we have seen, this constitutes only a small subset of the constructions found in French at that time. For my part, I included almost all particles mentioned by the *Manière de langage*. It is true that the most studied ones may have a special status, given that (by my count) the nine most frequent ones (*sus* ‘up’, *hors* ‘out’, *jus* ‘down’, *ens* ‘in’, *avant* ‘forward’, *devant* ‘forward, in front’, *dedans* ‘inside’, *encontre* ‘against’, *aval* ‘down(hill)’) make up for more than two thirds of the occurrences I retrieved in OF; the six most frequent ones in MF (*sus* ‘up’, *hors* ‘out’, *dedans* ‘in’, *en haut* ‘up’, *jus* ‘down’, *ensemble* ‘together’). However, including the others made it possible to show that there is a global decline and that it would probably be more accurate to describe the system as a series of constructions than as a single one, or, more specifically, a series of microconstructions underlying the verb-particle mesoconstruction.

In this paper, without trying to be exhaustive, I therefore tried to gather data on a larger paradigm of particles. I thus retrieved from the corpus all instances of the following list of particles, including possible graphic variations (in all cases for which a first qualitative survey showed that the verb-particle construction was represented)⁶:

Table 2. Grams included in the corpus study

Particle and gloss	Variants found in the corpus
<i>amont</i> ‘up(hill)’	<i>amont, amunt, amúnt</i>
<i>arrière</i> ‘back’	<i>arriere, arrière, arrieres, detriés⁷</i>
<i>aval</i> ‘down(hill)’	<i>aval</i>
<i>avant</i> ‘forward’	<i>avant, devant</i>
<i>avec</i> ‘with’	<i>avec, avecques, aveuc, avoec, ovoc, ovoec, ovoeqes</i>
<i>bas</i> ‘down’	<i>bas</i>
<i>contre</i> ‘against’	<i>contre, cuntre, encontre, encuntre</i>
<i>contremont</i> ‘up(hill)’	<i>contremont, contremunt, cuntremunt, encontremont, encontremunt, encuntremunt</i>
<i>contreval</i> ‘down(hill)’	<i>contreval, cuntreval</i>
<i>ensemble</i> ‘together’	<i>ensemble, ansamble, ansamble, ensamble, ensamble, ensanle, ensemble</i>
<i>entor</i> ‘around’	<i>entor, entour, entur, antor</i>

⁶ In some cases, particularly in the later periods, the satellite construction seems either nonexistent or so marginal it did not seem relevant to extract the data for that particular cell. Those cells are indicated with an asterisk preceding the number of occurrences; it means only a limited number of occurrences were considered.

⁷ The form *detriés*, unlike the others, is etymologically attached to Latin *trans* “beyond”, though its meaning has drifted, as in Ibero-Romance, to “behind” (e.g. Portuguese *atrás* “behind”).

<i>environ</i> ‘nearby’	<i>environ, environs, environ, environ</i>
<i>ens</i> ‘in’	<i>ens, enz, anz, ceans</i> <i>céans, dedans, dedanz, dedens, dedenz</i>
<i>fors</i> ‘out’	<i>fors, hors, forz, horz</i>
<i>haut</i> ‘up’	<i>hault, haut</i>
<i>jus</i> ‘down’	<i>jus, juz</i>
<i>loin</i> ‘far’	<i>loign, loin, loing, luign, luin</i>
<i>parmi</i> ‘through, among’	<i>parmi, parmy</i>
<i>près</i> ‘near’	<i>pres, prés, près, prez, préz</i>
<i>sur</i> ‘on’	<i>sur, seure, sor, sore, deseur, deseure, desor,</i> <i>desore, desseure, dessor, desur</i>
<i>sus</i> ‘up’	<i>sus, suz, dessus, dessusz, desus, desuz, ensus,</i> <i>laissus, laisus, lassus, lasus, leissus, lessus</i>

These variants are not necessarily of equal status, as shown in Rainsford (to appear): for instance, I did not expect *enz*, *ceanz* and *dedenz* to have the same distributional or semantic properties. The list is not exhaustive, as I included *ceans* ‘herein’ and *lassus* ‘up there (lit. there.up)’ but not *laienz* ‘therein’; I tried to cover as many combinations as possible, but remaining gaps will have to be filled in future studies. This search yielded the working corpus detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Occurrences of the particles under study in the corpus

Particle	OF	MF	CF	ModF	Total
<i>amont</i>	578	250	41	552	1,421
<i>arriere</i>	907	871	699	18,899	21,376
<i>aval</i>	568	344	57	511	1,480
<i>avant</i>	11,142	19,090	19,791	246,041	296,064
<i>avec</i>	3,605	15,160	68,977	760,633	848,375
<i>bas</i>	408	1,621	5,767	66,793	74,589
<i>contre</i>	4,677	10,105	21,198	131,196	167,176
<i>contremont</i>	163	93	69	6	331
<i>contreval</i>	182	50	0	3	235
<i>ensemble</i>	2,378	4,362	6,764	49,315	62,819
<i>entor</i>	1,352	958	777	635	3,722
<i>environ</i>	730	5,217	1,804	16,693	24,444
<i>ens</i>	5,617	8,623	7,496	6,880	28,616
<i>fors</i>	6,176	10,127	561	23,943	40,807
<i>hault</i>	1,930	3,577	6,395	55,385	67,287
<i>jus</i>	1,003	750	448	2,244	4,445
<i>loin</i>	798	303	6,092	79,245	86,438
<i>parmi</i>	1,208	1,422	6,635	43,682	52,947
<i>pres</i>	2,588	4,956	6,634	88,229	102,407
<i>sur</i>	9,018	21,857	63,701	925,285	1,019,861
<i>sus</i>	1,785	15,604	12,298	64,903	94,590
			0 (+ 1,994	0 (+ 28,574	
<i>defors</i>	347	221	<i>dehors)</i>	<i>dehors)</i>	568
Total	57,160	125,561	236,204	2,581,073	2,999,998

3.3. Noise

Of course, on account of both homonymy and polyfunctionality, not all occurrences were particle uses of the particles under study – far from it. After gathering all occurrences of the graphic forms indicated in Table 2, I sorted them out – all occurrences for OF and MF, and a subset only for CF and ModF.

I thus excluded first all cases of homonymy, such as *prez* ‘field(s)’ or *jus* ‘juice’ (6a–b), which should obviously be counted as noise.

(6)

(OF)

- a. *Par tuz les prez or se dorment li Franc.* (*La Chanson de Roland*, c. 1125, p. 188, v. 2521)
‘Throughout the **fields** the Franks are now sleeping’

(MF)

- b. *Et puis y metez du jus de la fueille dou peschier, meslé avec chaus vive, jusques atant qu’il soit gari.* (Gaston Phébus, *Livre de chasse*, 1387, p. 123)
‘And put on it [the wound] some **juice** from the leaf of a peach tree, mixed with quicklime, until it has healed’

I then did the same with all prepositional uses: despite their close connection to the corresponding adverbs, and e.g. Pottier’s (1962: 195–197) contention that adverbial and prepositional (as well as conjunctive) uses actually belong to the same morpheme, it is quite clear that they appear in different constructions, and with only partly overlapping semantics. The syntactic difference is quite obvious in the following examples: in (a), the preposition *sus* ‘on’ governs a noun phrase, *le planchier*, and the resulting prepositional phrase is a complement of the verb *cheoir* ‘fall’. In (b), the noun phrase *le blasme* is a complement of the verb phrase *met sus* ‘blame (lit. ‘put on’)’. Thus, despite a surface similarity with the same form *sus* followed by a noun phrase, the function of *sus* in (7a) and (7b) is quite different, and its semantics as well.

(7)

(OF)

- a. *pasmee chiet sus le planchier* (*Roman de Thèbes*, 1150, p. 185)
‘fainting, she drops down to the floor’
- b. *La mer ancorpe et si la blasme, / Mes a tort li met sus le blasme, / Car la mers n’i a rien forfet.* (Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, 1176, p. 56b)
‘she accuses and blames the sea, but wrongly does she throw the blame [she puts on it_{DATIVE}], for the sea has not done any wrong’

I also excluded all static locative uses of the grams, i.e. contexts in which the gram indicates the situation of an element or anything else than the end-point of its path. I analyze as such both cases in which the verb is static, for instance (8a), and occurrences with a dynamic verb but in which the gram seems to indicate the position of a static element, as in (8b): in this case, for instance, *en haut* ‘up(stairs)’ is more likely to be relevant for the noun phrase *une*

sale than for the verb *monter* ‘climb (up)’. In some cases, even with a dynamic spatial meaning and a relative syntactic proximity between verb and gram, the syntax is clearly different, and I excluded occurrences as in (8c) in which the gram is the complement of a preposition: *meu [vers [en haut]]*.

(8)

(MF)

- a. *se sui encore cy et il est ens* (*Ysaÿe le Triste*, 1400, p. 73)
‘if I am still here and he be **inside**’
- b. *si le menerent en une sale en haut ou il trova la dame de laienz qui estoit bele et juene...* (*Queste del saint Graal*, 1225–1230, p.200)
‘they led him to a room upstairs in which he found the lady of the castle, who was young and beautiful’
- c. *aussi comme le feu est meu vers en haut* (Nicole Oresme, *Le Livre du ciel et du monde*, 14th c.)
‘just as fire moves up (lit. *towards the top*)’

However, I analyzed differently cases in which the preposition is *en* ‘in’, considering that this constitutes a new form of the particle, because the meaning of *en* is clearly bleached. In (9a), for instance, I believe that *en bas* ‘down’ (lit. ‘in low’) should be analyzed as a complex particle [*en bas*], rather than as a prepositional phrase [*en [bas]*], because it alternates with the simple adverb with no discernible semantic difference (9b).

(9)

(MF)

- a. *ne le feu ne se puet acoustumer a descendre en bas, ne quelconque autre chose ne se puet acoustumer au contraire de ce que elle a de sa nature.* (Nicole Oresme, *Le Livre de Ethiques d’Aristote*, 1370, p. 146)
‘nor can fire **move down** (lit. *descend down*), or anything else get accustomed to what is the opposite of its nature’
- b. *l’un va bas et l’autre haut.* (Nicole Oresme, *Le Livre du ciel et du monde*, 1377, p. 548)
‘one goes down and the other up’

Finally, as one could expect, quite a few cases remain ambiguous, namely occurrences in which the gram seems to function both as a particle and as a preposition, as in (10a–e).

(10)

(OF)

- a. *Elle les maine amont la tor / enz el palais empereor.* (*Le roman d’Eneas*, 12th c.)
‘she leads them up the tower into the imperial palace’
- b. *luy donne parmy le chief grandismes cops de l’espee, si qu’il li fait le sang rayer aval la face* (*La suite du Roman de Merlin*, 13th c.)
‘he hits him on the head with great swings of the sword, so hard it makes the blood run down his face’
- c. *Gaidons li preus fist forment a proisier, Sa cloche sone si saut hors del mostier* (*Moniage Guillaume*, 12th c.)
‘The valiant Gaidons was a great knight, he sounds his trumpet and jumps out of the church’
- d. *Li quens Guillaumes saut jus del palefroi* (*Moniage Guillaume*, 12th c.)
‘Count William jumps down from the palfrey’

(MF)

e. *Lors fit li Maures sonner la trompette et se mist a monter sus au chastel ou toute sa gent.* (*Chronique de Morée*, 1322, p. 369–370)

‘Then the Moor sounded his trumpet and started climbing up to the castel with all his people’

These examples are not unlike English verb-particle constructions such as *go up the ladder*⁸. For instance, in (11a), a syntactic analysis could be (i) [*mist ju*] [*del mulet*] or (ii) [*mist*] [*ju del mulet*]. For a modern language, one can ask a native speaker to judge the acceptability of alternate phrasings such as (11b) and (11c) in order to decide which is the best syntactic analysis: the possibility of uttering (11b) would point to analysis (i), and (11c) to analysis (ii).

(11)

a. *et la mist ju del mullet*

b. [?]*et del mullet la mist jus*

c. [?]*et jus del mullet la mist*

‘and (s)he put her down from the mule’

Real particle uses could also be checked with the help of various tests (taken from Iacobini 2015: 631), for instance the impossibility of repeating the particle in coordination (12a), while adpositions must be repeated (12b):

(12)

(Italian)

(particle uses)

a. *Irene porta su il tavolo e Anita (*su) le sedie*

‘Irene brings up the table and Anita (*up) the chairs’

*John drinks up his soup and Peter (*up) his whiskey*

(non-particle uses)

b. *Irene mangia sul tavolo tondo e Anita *(su) quello quadrato*

‘Irene eats on the round table and Anita on the square one’

*John goes up the stairs and Peter *(up) the ladder*

However, for a language with no native speakers, it is harder to find a definitive answer; as Buridant (2000: 540–541) observes, it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between adverbial, adpositional and particle use of a given gram: the distinction cannot be a radical one, and there are ambiguous cases (ibid.). I can only rely on the observations made in the corpus, which contains examples close to both (11b) and (11c).

In sentences (10a-e), the noun phrase or prepositional phrase following *amont* ‘up(hill)’, *aval* ‘down(hill)’, etc. could probably be omitted, since these items – *amont* ‘up(hill)’, *aval* ‘down(hill)’, *hors* ‘out’, *jus* ‘down’ – can function as particles. They could, therefore, be analyzed as such in those contexts, too. However, the possibility to omit the gram itself is harder to assess: sequences such as [?]*mener la tor* ‘lead [up] the tower’ or [?]*raier la face* ‘glide [down] (someone’s) face’ are not to be found in the corpus, and *sauter de* ‘jump from’ isn’t expected either, though it crops up occasionally, as in (13):

(13)

(OF)

Governal saut de sen agait (Beroul, *Tristan*, v. 1708, 12th c.)

‘Governal jumps out from his hiding-place’

⁸ For a different analysis of this type of problem, see e.g. Svenonius (2010).

Another element tends to confirm that these uses are not exactly adpositional, i.e. that the PP in *de* ‘from’ is not governed by *jus* ‘down’ or *hors* ‘out’: in quite a few occurrences, the PP appears in front of the gram, as in (14a), or is separated from it by another element, as in (14b).

(14)

(OF)

a. *La lance baisse, et fiert le conte / Que du cheval jus le desmonte* (Renaut, *Galeran de Bretagne*, v. 6031, 13th c.)

‘he lowers his spear and hits the count [so hard] he throws him down from the horse’

b. *Et quant il andui furent sus leueit del somme, si raconterent a soi entrechaniablement ce ke il auoient ueut* (*Vie de saint Benoit*, p. 88, 12th c.)

‘and when they had both gotten up from sleeping, each one told the other what he had seen’

For this study, I decided to exclude unclear cases such as (14a-b), although they could be considered as instances of the verb-particle construction, in order to keep only those cases which are unambiguous. This naturally left a significantly lower number of (potentially) particle uses of the grams, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Particle (or particle-like) uses of grams in the corpus (‘ø’ stands for an empty cell, i.e. no occurrences were found, while ‘*’ stands for non-analyzed cases, i.e. cells for which I knew in advance, given my pilot study, that I would probably find no particle-like uses).

Particle	OF	MF	PF-CF	ModF	Total
<i>sus, dessus, lassus</i>	863	923	1,484	*	3,270
<i>ens, dedens, çaiens</i>	501	807	753	*	2,061
<i>avant, devant</i>	607	469	44	612	1,732
<i>hors</i>	568	647	159	23	1,397
<i>jus</i>	431	318	16	ø	765
<i>amont, contremont</i>	313	130	43	23	509
<i>haut</i>	11	355	88	41	495
<i>contre, encontre</i>	305	106	*	*	411
<i>ensemble</i>	107	298	*	*	405
<i>aval, contreval</i>	249	111	10	18	388
<i>arrière, derrière</i>	90	26	7	110	253
<i>loin</i>	114	46	*	*	160
<i>sor, dessor</i>	102	48	*	*	150
<i>bas</i>	ø	29	51	58	138
<i>entor</i>	115	12	*	*	127
<i>après</i>	119	7	*	*	126
<i>environ</i>	92	11	*	*	103
<i>parmi</i>	42	18	*	*	60
<i>près</i>	55	4	*	*	59
<i>avec</i>	46	5	*	*	51
<i>tres</i>	2	ø	*	*	2
<i>dessous</i>	1	ø	ø	*	1
<i>en</i>	1	*	*	*	1
Total	4,734	4,370	2,655	905	12,664

3.4. Semantics and morpho-syntax

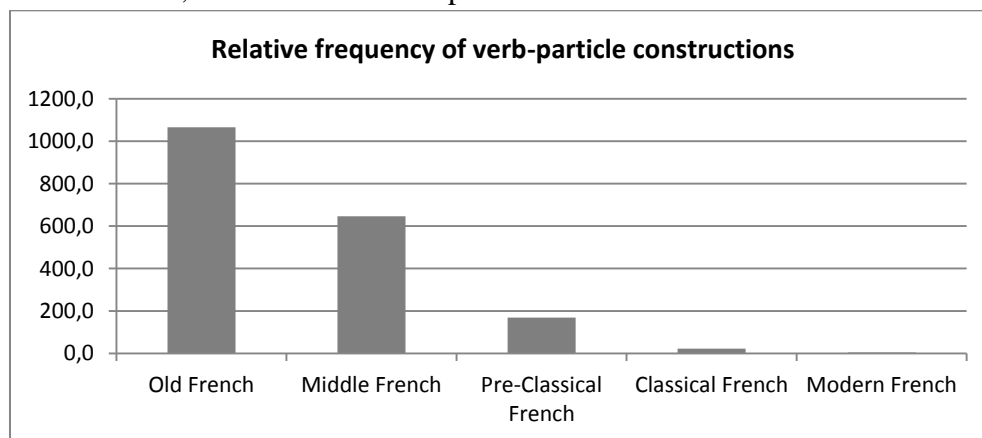
Once I had identified a subset of particle-like occurrences of grams, I systematically coded a series of lexical, semantic and morpho-syntactic features. These included mainly the type of gram, the meaning of the verb, that of the particle and of the resulting construction, the type of construction and the distance between verb and particle (see Appendix).

Following Traugott (2008), I distinguished between macro-, meso- and microconstructions, with an additional layer of constructs for “empirically attested tokens, which are the locus of change”. I analyzed verb-particle constructions as a mesoconstruction, i.e. “[a set] of similarly-behaving specific constructions”, and identified 5 subtypes, which I call microconstructions, i.e. “individual construction-types” (ibid.): these microconstructions involve CAUSED MOTION (e.g. *bouter fors* ‘shove out’), PATH (e.g. *issir fors* ‘exit out’), MANNER (e.g. *courir fors* ‘run out’), DEIXIS (e.g. *aler fors* ‘go out’) and SATELLITE (e.g. *or sus!* ‘let’s go! (lit. now on!)’); I describe them in Section 4.3.

4. Results

4.1. Global evolution

The results of my study are quite clear. As expected, there is a striking decrease of particle constructions, as illustrated in Graph 1.



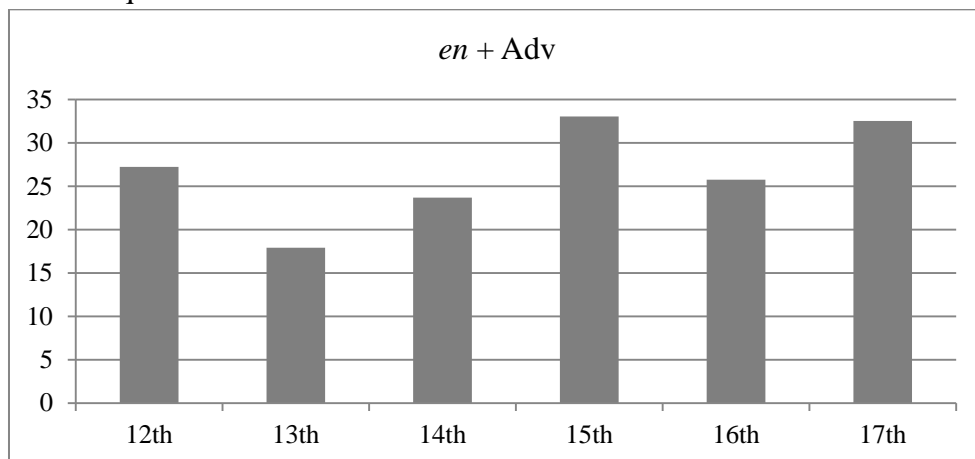
Graph 1. Relative frequency of verb-particle constructions in the corpus, in number of occurrences per million words (pmw), for the following historical periods: OF (900–1350), MF (1351–1550), PF (1551–1650), CF (1651–1800), ModF (1801–2013)

The tendency is obvious, with a very high relative frequency in the first texts of the corpus: more than 3,000 occurrences pmw in the 10th–11th c. (but relative frequency should be handled with caution for the older periods, for which I have very small corpora), still around 1,000 in the 12th c., but almost down to zero in the last period (20th–21st centuries). This confirms Buridant’s (2000) claim that verb-particle constructions have more or less disappeared by the end of the 16th c..

It also fits in nicely with Burnett et al.’s (2010: 127) hypothesis that these constructions disappeared one after the other, rather than all at once: observing a lag between

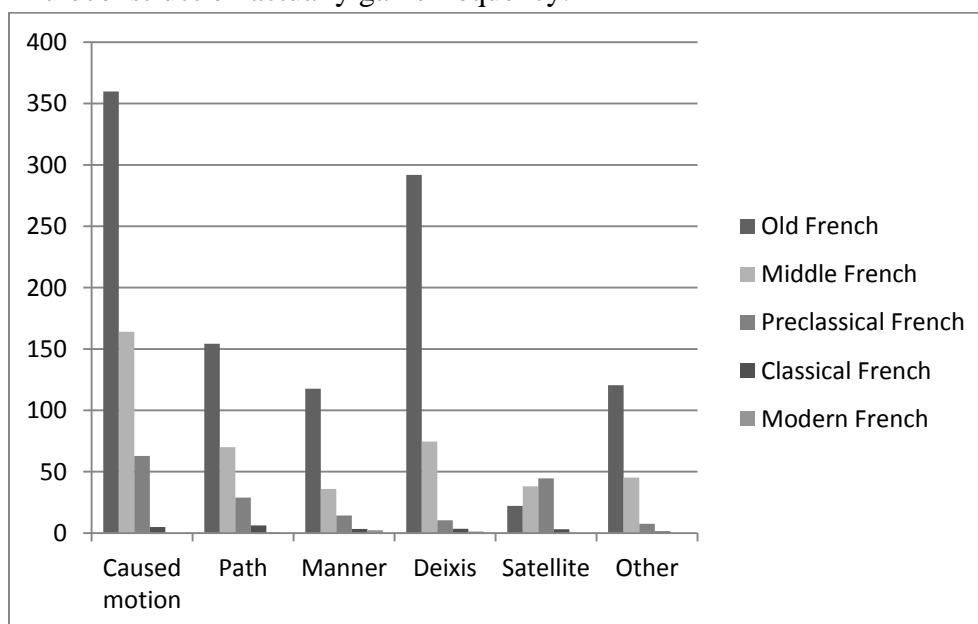
the decline of *avant* ‘forward’ (15th–16th c.) and that of *arrière* ‘back’ (already in the 14th c.), these authors argue that the disappearance of particles “results from the diffusion of a lexical change, affecting verb-particle constructions one after the other” (my translation).

If we take a closer look, indeed, the global tendency becomes blurred: there are variations along the way, with minute reversals of the tendency at various periods for specific subtypes, for instance an increase in frequency of constructions with *en* ‘in’ from the 13th to the 15th c. and again in the 17th c. (Graph 2). Still, it seems clear that these do not constitute a full-blown renewal of the particle constructions, as this reversal is very limited: it does not extend to other subtypes, does not go beyond a few centuries, and the relative frequency remains quite low.



Graph 2. Relative frequency of [*en* ‘in’ + Adverb] in verb-particle constructions, per century, in the corpus (occ. pmw).

Furthermore, the rate of the decline is not the same for the different microconstructions identified in Section 3.4., as illustrated in Graph 3; for instance, the SATELLITE microconstruction actually gains frequency.



Graph 3. Relative frequency of different verb-particle microconstructions in the corpus (occ. pmw)
The main evolution we can reconstruct on the basis of the corpus study is thus that from a full-fledged construction, quite frequent, with many possible realizations and some evidence

of entrenchment (e.g. semantic bleaching), to something which is similar on the surface, but can no longer be analyzed as a construction: it is limited to a few possible realizations, and does not display the same morpho-syntactic or semantic features.

Though this evolution is partly gradual, it can be broken up roughly in three main steps. The first one covers Medieval French (950–1550). In OF (950–1350), step 1a, there is a full-fledged, productive and high-frequency system of particles. In MF (1351–1550), step 1b, the system is still productive and frequent, but there is a steady decline of most subtypes, with the near-disappearance of a series of particles. In PF (1551–1650), step 2a, the construction is still present, but much less frequent, with only a few remaining subtypes; in CF, the frequency is still lower. Finally, in ModF (1801–2013), there are only few lexicalized remains of the construction, which no longer exists as such. Syntactic sequences which could seem at first glance analyzable as a similar construction can easily be shown to be something quite different, from both semantic and functional points of view. Table 5 shows the main steps of this evolution, concentrating on the first three (OF to CF), since the last one would only show a series of negatives.

Table 5. Main steps in the evolution of Particle-like grams in the diachrony of French

Features of verb-particle constructions	step 1		step 2		step 3
	OF	MF	PF	CF	ModF
Overall frequency (pmw)	> 1000	> 600	≈ 150	≈ 20	< 5
particles	31	27	14	10	7
verbs	241	231	112	61	35
frequent particles (> 20 <i>occ. per million</i>)	21	8	3	0	0
frequent verbs (> 10 <i>occ. per million</i>)	19	9	1	0	0

In the next subsection, I describe these three steps in greater detail, include the specificities of the verb-particle construction in each time period.

4.2. Step by step: From OF to ModF

4.2.1. OF (950–1350)

In OF, some thirty particles and a few hundred verbs can appear in verb-particle constructions. Their overall relative frequency, i.e. that of the mesoconstruction, is high (more than 1,000 *occ. per million*, by my count). The semantics of verbs and particles both are quite varied, with all microconstructions well-represented (except for the SATELLITE microconstruction), including lexicalized subtypes which are semantically opaque, such as

mettre sus ‘accuse [lit. *put on*]’ – see e.g. (7b), and Section 5.3. for a discussion of semantic bleaching.

Among the microconstructions I identified in Section 3.4., CAUSED MOTION is the most frequent one in this part of the corpus, with verbs expressing caused motion such as *throw*, *send* and particles describing path, with or without boundary crossing, as in *jeter fors* ‘throw out’, *bouter aval* ‘shove down’, *mander arriere* ‘send back’, etc. The second most frequent one is DEIXIS, in which all particles combine with the verbs *aler* ‘go’ and *venir* ‘come’, as in *venir avant* ‘come forward’, *venir aval* ‘come down’, *venir ça* ‘come hither’.

Another frequent microconstruction for this time period is PATH, in which both the verb and the particle describe the path, with either semantic redundancy (cf. Buridant, 2000: 543) as in *issir fors* ‘exit out’, or complementarity as in *issir arriere* ‘exit back’. The MANNER microconstruction is not very frequent, even in the OF section of the corpus; however, there are a few occurrences (slightly under a hundred) of Manner verbs such as *courir sus* ‘run over/upon’, *courir avant* ‘run forward’, *courir fors* ‘run out’, etc.

Beyond microconstructions, there are a few extremely frequent constructs, i.e. combinations of a given verb and particle, for instance *issir fors* ‘exit out’ (103 occ.), *aller avant* ‘go forward’ (98 occ.), *venir avant* ‘come forward’ (62 occ.), and *venir ça* ‘come hither’ (50 occ.). But more generally, there is a very large combinability of verbs and particles: quite a few particles can combine with many verbs, and quite a few verbs can combine with many particles, as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Main verb-particle constructions in Medieval French

most frequent verbs	<i>aller</i> (<i>avant, encontre, fors, arriere</i>) <i>mettre</i> (<i>fors, avant, ens, sus, arriere</i>) <i>traire</i> (<i>fors, arriere, avant, sus</i>) <i>venir</i> (<i>avant, ça, arriere, sus, ens, amont, encontre</i>)
most frequent particles	(<i>aller, issir, jeter, mettre, traire</i>) <i>fors</i> (<i>aller, mettre, passer, traire</i>) <i>avant</i> (<i>aller, mettre, torner, traire, venir</i>) <i>arriere</i> (<i>aller, venir</i>) <i>encontre</i> (<i>amener, envoyer, venir</i>) <i>ça</i> (<i>lever, mettre, monter, saillir, sauter, traire, venir</i>) <i>sus</i> (<i>mettre, venir</i>) <i>ens</i>
other particles	<i>amont</i> (25 verbs) <i>aval</i> (26 verbs) <i>desoz</i> (10 verbs)

4.2.2. MF (1351–1550)

In MF, as shown in Table 5, only about half as many particles are frequently found in this construction. Some have been steadily declining, such as *amont* and *aval* ‘up(hill)’ and ‘down(hill)’; they are partly replaced by (almost completely) new ones such as *en haut* and *en bas* ‘up’ and ‘down’. A new subtype of the construction seems to be on the rise, [Verb + [*en* +

Adv]] (see Graph 2). Though it does not make up for the decline of the old one, it could account for Burnett et al.'s (2010) comment on the surprising rise in frequency of *avant* 'forward' in the 14th c.

Despite its global decline, the construction is still quite frequent (c. 600 occ. per million) and the number of verbs remains high. Most microconstructions are still found in MF, with less disparities in frequency than in OF; CAUSED MOTION is still the most frequent one (approx. 150 occ. per million), followed by DEIXIS and PATH (about half as frequent), and finally SATELLITE and MANNER (again about half as frequent). The verbs and particles found in the MF section are globally the same, with some renewal, which shows the vivacity of the mesoconstruction. For instance, in the CAUSED MOTION microconstruction, though *mettre* 'put' is still the most frequent, *bouter* 'shove' and *jeter* 'throw' gain frequency, and *ruer* 'throw with force', almost absent from the OF section of the corpus, has become one of the most frequent verbs. The microconstruction thus seems to be shifting semantically towards a more marked type of caused motion. The same can be said of particles, for all verb-particle constructions alike: *amont* 'up(hill)', *aval* 'down(hill)', *contremont* 'up(hill)' and *contreval* 'down(hill)' which tend to disappear, while *en haut* 'up' and *en bas* 'down' have become proportionally much more frequent. Similarly, in the PATH microconstruction, some verbs are gradually replaced by others: *avalier* 'go down(hill)' and *devaler* 'go down(hill)' by *descendre* 'go down', *choir* 'fall' by *tomber* 'fall', and, in the MANNER microconstruction, *poindre* 'rush, hurry' by *se ruer* 'rush, hurl oneself', etc. This replacement takes place over a few centuries, and is only partly completed in MF; by PF, however, the older forms have almost completely disappeared.

Overall, for both OF and MF, we have a complex paradigm of particles, some of which have a high relative frequency and appear with a variety of verbs. Their frequency is highly uneven, with a few very frequent items (*hors* 'out', *avant* 'forward', *jus* 'down', *sus* 'up', *arrière* 'back': over 50 occ. per million), a mid-frequency group (*ça* 'hither', *haut* 'up', *enz* 'in': 30 occ. pmw in average), a low-frequency group (*amont* 'up(hill)', *aval* 'down(hill)', *bas* 'down', *dessus* 'up, above', *encontre* 'against': between 10 and 20 occ. per million) and two items with very low frequency (*desoz* 'down, beneath', *tres* 'through': less than 10 occ. per million). At this period, only a few constructions can combine with *en* 'in(to)': mostly *haut* 'up' and *bas* 'down', but also *avant* 'forward', *sus* 'up', *ça* 'hither'.

4.2.3. PF and CF (1551–1800)

In PF and CF, the situation is intriguing: the construction seems still present, with a wide variety of verb-particle constructions, or at least of syntactic [Verb+Adverb] combinations, but its frequency plummets to less than 200 occ. pmw in PF, and around 20 occurrences pmw in CF – c. fifty times less than in OF. By the end of the 17th c., quite a few particles have either completely or virtually disappeared, for instance *amont* 'up(hill)' and *aval* 'down(hill)', but also *loin* 'far, away', *entor* 'around', *arrière* 'back'; some of them have altogether disappeared from the language, for instance *ens* 'inside'. Only one microconstruction remains fairly frequent: the SATELLITE microconstruction, i.e. the use of a particle alone, without a verb, with some 30 occ. pmw. Other microconstructions have virtually disappeared, and are found only with their most typical instances. For instance, the MANNER microconstruction is

found frequently (i.e. over ten occurrences) only with two verbs, *marcher* ‘walk’ and *courir* ‘run’.

Despite this evolution – which clearly shows a loss of productivity of the construction – , even late in the diachrony of French, there seems to be a semantic equivalence between verb-particle constructions and simple verbs, as illustrated in example (14):

(14)

(CF)

Semblables on peut voir les deux fortes armées / De desirs ennemis à la charge animées, / Tantost aller avant et tantost reculer (Antoine de Montchrestien, *Hector*, 17th c.)

‘Similar can be seen two strong armies [= two similar armies] driven to the attack by enemy desires, one moment going forward and the next going back’

4.2.4. ModF (1801–2013)

In Contemporary and Modern French, there are of course many possible combinations of verbs and adverbs, which seem quite similar to the medieval construction. However, they are both much less frequent (less than 10 occ. pmw) and functionally quite different, with little or no evidence of semantic opacity, for instance; besides, the combinations are much more restricted, with much less semantic complementarity: generally, in ModF, the verb and adverb appearing in such constructions have similar semantics, as in *monter en haut* ‘ascend up [or upstairs]’, *descendre en bas* ‘descend down [or downstairs]’, *sortir dehors* ‘exit out [or outside]’ and the like. Thus, only a subset of the initial constructions have remained – and they should no longer be analyzed as a construction, or at least, not as a verb-particle construction. In these contexts, *en bas*, *en haut* and *dehors* seem to be locatives, rather than particles, as shown by (15):

(15) *il est sorti dehors / il est monté en haut et il y est toujours*

‘he went outside / he went upstairs and he’s still there’⁹

Another element which goes to show that the construction is no longer used productively is the fact that, for instance, in the CAUSED MOTION subtype, the verb *bouter* ‘throw’ is the most frequent one, always with the particle *hors* ‘out’ – though *bouter* is much less frequent in ModF, and no longer seems to be productively used (around 15 occ. pmw at this period, in Frantext, vs. a relative frequency of some 150 occ. pmw in OF and MF). This is thus clearly an instance of archaism, in which the construction *bouter hors* ‘expel’ (or its equivalent *bouter fors*) is taken as a whole. Another clue to its lexicalized status is the fact that the corpus contains a few occurrences in which the construction has been reanalyzed as a noun, as in (16).

(16) *Les voiles, frappées de côté par le vent, fazèèrent alors si brusquement, qu’il vint à masquer en grand ; les boute-hors se rompirent, et il fut complètement démané.*

‘the sails, with the wind hitting them from the side, started flapping so abruptly that the wind took them from the front; the *boute-hors* [fire-booms] broke down and it [the boat] stopped completely’ (Honoré de Balzac, *La Femme de trente ans*, 1842, p. 1183)

In fact, the verb-particle construction left behind a series of lexicalized remains of this type: *boute-feu* or *boutefeue* ‘lighting stick for cannons’, *boute-en-train* ‘a funny and animated person’, etc.

⁹ My thanks to Tom Rainsford (p.c.) for pointing this out.

4.3. Microconstructions

Among the many verb-particle constructs, the relative importance of some microconstructions thus varies over time. This is not really the case for the most frequent microconstruction, CAUSED MOTION, however. Over the whole period, it involves roughly the same caused motion verbs: mainly *mettre* ‘put’, *jeter*, *bouter* ‘shove’, *traire*, *traîner* ‘pull’, and *lever* ‘raise’ (c. 80% of all occurrences of the construction), generally in combination with *hors* ‘out’, *(de(s))sus* ‘up’, *(ded)ens* ‘in’, *jus* ‘down’ (c. 75% of all occurrences of the construction). Though both verbs and particles partaking of this construction evolved over time, some becoming more frequent and others disappearing, and the construction underwent a slight semantic change, it remains the most frequent until CF – i.e. as long as the verb-particle construction exists as such.

The SATELLITE microconstruction is the only one to gain frequency from OF to MF and on to PF; it more than doubles, from 22 to 45 occ. pmw. However, as we will see in Section 5.1., this could be interpreted as part of the decline of the verb-particle construction.

For all other microconstructions, there is a quick and important decline. They lose in relative frequency, though they do not change much save for the already mentioned lexical replacements: frequent PATH subtypes all over the corpus are *issir/sortir hors* ‘exit out’, *entrer ens* ‘enter in’, *passer parmi* ‘pass through’, *monter sus* ‘ascend up’, *avalier/descendre jus* ‘descend down’, with few verbal variants but a series of equivalents for the pair of particles *sus / jus*: *(en) haut*, *amont*, *contremont* / *(en) bas*, *aval*, *contreval*. Similarly, frequent MANNER subtypes involve generally the same manner of motion verbs, mainly *courir* ‘run’, *saillir* ‘jump’, *sauter* ‘jump’, *marcher* ‘walk’, *voler* ‘fly’ (almost 95% of all occurrences), often in combination with *sus* ‘up’ or *avant* ‘forth’ (more than 60% of all occurrences).

Table 7 sums up the main features of the microconstructions I identified in the corpus.

Table 7. Verb-particle microconstructions in the corpus

Microconstruction	most frequent verbs / particles
CAUSED MOTION	<i>mettre</i> ‘put’, <i>jeter</i> ‘throw’, <i>bouter</i> ‘shove’, <i>traire</i> , <i>traîner</i> ‘pull’, <i>lever</i> ‘raise’ <i>hors</i> ‘out’, <i>(de(s))sus</i> ‘up’, <i>(ded)ens</i> ‘in’, <i>jus</i> ‘down’
PATH	<i>issir/sortir hors</i> ‘exit out’, <i>entrer ens</i> ‘enter in’, <i>passer parmi</i> ‘pass through’, <i>monter sus</i> ‘ascend up’, <i>avalier/descendre jus</i> ‘descend down’
MANNER	<i>courir</i> ‘run’, <i>saillir</i> , <i>sauter</i> ‘jump’, <i>marcher</i> ‘walk’, <i>voler</i> ‘fly’ <i>sus</i> ‘up’, <i>avant</i> ‘forth’
DEIXIS	<i>aller</i> ‘go’, <i>venir</i> ‘come’ <i>avant</i> , <i>devant</i> ‘forth’
SATELLITE	\emptyset <i>sus</i> ‘up’

5. Discussion: A global replacement of spatial grams?

My results provide an illustration of the shift from SF to VF in Medieval French in line with previous findings. One important (if provisional) result of my study is that it confirms and

further details Burnett et al.'s (2010) hypothesis of a gradual decline: as could be expected, the verb-particle construction does not disappear all at once, but gradually thins out, one subtype after the other. One of them even gains frequency – the SATELLITE microconstruction –, but it should probably not be put in the same category at all periods. I discuss this issue in Section 5.1. Another important issue is how lexicalized subtypes should be analyzed: there is a growing divide between semantically opaque, lexicalized constructions and semantically transparent ones; I discuss this point in Section 5.2., devoted to their analysis as the result of a grammaticalization process, and in Section 5.3., which addresses more specifically the issue of lexicalization and productivity.

5.1. *The SATELLITE microconstruction*

In OF, on the one hand, the SATELLITE microconstruction is very marginal, amounting to roughly 2% of all verb-particle constructions, with various realizations including not only the absence of a verb but also modal verbs such as *pooir* ‘be able to’, and various particles (*sus* ‘up’, *hors* ‘out’, *contreval* ‘down’, *jus* ‘down’, etc.). In PF, on the other hand, it amounts to more than one fourth of all occurrences, and is almost completely restricted to the adverb *sus* (over 96% of all occurrences) occurring without a verb. It would have been better, perhaps, to exclude this microconstruction from the corpus; however, as always, it is quite impossible to pinpoint the exact spot in the corpus in which *sus* without a verb ceases to function as a verb-particle construction. Another way to analyze this evolution would be that the particle gradually becomes autonomous, or rather regains its syntactic autonomy. *Sus* in (17), for instance, is no longer part of a verb-particle construction, and should rather be analyzed as a discourse marker: this is indicated by its repetition, a typical feature of discourse markers, which tend to cluster together (see e.g. Schiffrin 1987: 323, 328).

- (17) **Sus, sus, sus**, enfans, diligentement. (François Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, 1552, p. 1009)
 ‘go on, go on, go on [lit. *up, up, up*], children, promptly’

5.2. *Semantic bleaching and grammaticalization*

The issue of lexicalized subtypes is crucial in the evolution of the construction as a whole. For one thing, despite the global decline of the verb-particle construction, the lexicalized subtype *metre sus* ‘blame [lit. *put on*]’ (see (7b)) is almost stable from OF to PF, with a relative frequency of between 10 and 15 occ. pmw; it thus mechanically comes to constitute an ever larger part of the verb-particle constructions present in the corpus, from 1.5% (in OF) to more than 6% (in PF) of all occurrences. The same can be said of other lexicalized subtypes: for instance, *corir sus* ‘attack [lit. *run up*]’ (18) goes up from 1.9% to 4.4% of all occurrences in the same period.

- (18) *Lors li corent li autre sus de parole et dient...*
 “then the others shout at her [lit. *run at her with words*] and say...” (*La mort le roi Artu*, 1230, p. 174; quoted in Burnett and Tremblay 2012: 222, my translation)

Rather than a clear divide between opaque and compositional subtypes, there is a gradient of opacity, with some constructions more opaque than others. There are quite a number of examples in the corpus which seem to be intermediate as far as semantic bleaching is

concerned, e.g. (19a–c) which should be understood metaphorically, but are not completely opaque:

(19)

(OF)

a. Ne plourez plus, **mettez aval** Ce dueil, biau sire. (*Miracle de saint Guillaume du desert*, 1347)

‘stop crying, and put an end to your mourning [lit. *put down this mourning*], dear sire’

b. Et au retour que il fist, si vint par Malevesie ; et **print la cité aval** par force d’armes (*Chronique de Morée*, 1322)

‘And as he came back, he came through Malevesie; and he overtook the city [lit. *took the city down*] with his military power’

c. David Qui les armes **mist jus** jadis (G. de Digulleville, *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, 1330)

‘David, who had laid down his weapons long ago’

Other examples may not seem opaque at all on the face of their English translation, but that is only because for instance *go back* and *talk forth* follow the same (opaque) pattern. Others yet are obviously opaque even for English speakers: examples in (20) show that the interpretation of the adverb is sometimes lexicalized and unpredictable, as *fors* ‘out’ corresponds in these cases to English *up*:

(20) **boire fors, manger fors, paier fors** (Buridant 2000: 544)

‘drink up, eat up, pay up [lit. *drink out, eat out, pay out*]

In such examples, the particles take on an aspectual meaning. Burnett and Tremblay (2010: 223), after Burnett et al. (2005), claim that the development of an aspectual meaning for some particles cannot be explained as a result of a grammaticalization phenomenon, because the spatial meaning of particles appears exclusively with verbs taking a locative argument, including motion verbs, whereas their aspectual meaning appears only with other types of verbs. However, by definition, grammaticalization phenomena entail an increase in contexts of use: as it grammaticalizes, an item comes to be used in contexts in which it could not have appeared before. Thus, verb particles undergo partial semantic bleaching with motion verbs (18), and the aspectual meaning they take on with non-spatial verbs (19) constitutes the end-point of their grammaticalization process; or rather, as pointed out in most grammaticalization studies, it constitutes *one step* in this process – the development of discourse marker uses, for instance, being a further step in their grammaticalization.

5.3. Lexicalization and productivity

Another important issue is the relative frequency of these lexicalized subtypes among verb-particle constructions in general. In OF, most instances of the verb-particle construction are not semantically opaque (Burnett et al., 2010: 126), and seem to be productively formed in syntax. But in PF, the relative weight of these lexical subtypes is much more important: for *metre sus* and *corir sus* alone, the share goes up from 3.4% to more than 10%; if we count out SATELLITE microconstructions, this change becomes yet more obvious, from 3.5% to 14.6% of all occurrences.

This means that, in PF, verb-particle constructions not only have become less productive (as shown by the fact that the number of verbs and particles with possible

combinations has gone down) but also seem quite fossilized, with almost 15% of occurrences devoted to just two subtypes.

6. Conclusion

Verb-particle constructions gradually evolve, in the diachrony of French, from a frequent and productive construction in OF and MF to a few lexicalized remains in CF and ModF. The data I present confirm that this construction has disappeared by the end of the 16th c. (Buridant 2000), and that the decline of the construction is very gradual (Burnett and Tremblay 2010). Indeed, by taking into account an important paradigm of particles, I show that the evolution of the construction is actually quite complex. It involves lexical renewal of both verbs and particles (e.g. from *issir* to *sortir* ‘exit’, from *choir* to *tomber* ‘fall’, from *aval* to *en bas* ‘down’). But I have shown that there is also internal semantic evolution of subtypes or “microconstructions” (e.g. the CAUSED MOTION microconstruction, which evolves towards more clearly marked manner). Finally, there is a clear but gradual fossilization of a few lexicalized subtypes, which in the end have left only individual lexical entries such as *boute-en-train* ‘joker, clown’.

A question I have left for further research is the reason for this decline. Though some possible factors have been identified, such as the change in word order (Buridant, op.cit.) or a semantic shift in the lexicalization of Path (Dufresne et al. 2004, Tremblay et al. 2004, Burnett and Tremblay 2009), none of them seems completely satisfactory, and it would certainly be interesting to have a more definite answer.

7. References

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Appendix: Coding scheme

type of gram	simple gram (e.g. <i>enz</i> , <i>fors</i>)
	<u>deictic gram</u> + <u>dynamic gram</u> (e.g. <i>ça enz</i> , <i>là sus</i>)
	<u>adposition</u> + <u>gram</u> (e.g. <i>en bas</i> , <i>en haut</i>)
	other constructions (e.g. <i>en amont de</i>)
meaning of the verb	manner of motion (e.g. <i>courir</i> ‘run’)
	caused motion (e.g. <i>bouter</i> ‘shove’, <i>mettre</i> ‘put’)
	path (e.g. <i>issir</i> ‘exit’, <i>entrer</i> ‘enter’)
	geocentric motion (e.g. <i>avalier</i> ‘descend’, <i>monter</i> ‘ascend’)
	other (<i>joindre</i> ‘join’)
meaning of the gram	geocentric (up/down)
	longitudinal (forward/backward)
	other
semantic bleaching	semantically opaque
	semantically transparent
	no verb
construction analysis	mesoconstruction (i.e. verb-particle construction: yes/no)
	microconstruction (CAUSED MOTION, PATH, DEIXIS, MANNER, SATELLITE, other, see sections 3.4. and 4.3.)
	construct (e.g. <i>bouter lassus</i> ‘shove there.on’)
distance between verb and particle	contiguous
	separated by clitics only
	separated by only one NP or PP
	separated by more than one NP or PP