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Path Coding in Old English: Functional Story of a Typological Shift¹

Caroline Imbert, CNRS – University of Lyon 2

1. Introduction

This paper is to be considered through the frame of recent functional linguistics and studies on grammaticalization and consists of a typological perspective on Ælfric’s 10th-century Old English². It examines the coding strategies of Path attested in that language and explores the gradual “typological shift” that occurred from the prevalence of strongly verb-prefixing patterns to the prevalence of verb-particle patterns. For example, when a Modern English speaker wants to express the Path followed by an entity in a spatial situation, he may say something like “*he went out to the garden*”. In early Old English texts, one rather finds sentences such as “*he outwent to the garden*”. However, especially when one looks at late Old English, such as Ælfric’s language, things are far from being so clear-cut. When Ælfric wants to express the same spatial situation, he does not really use a “prevalent” pattern, but uses a typologically puzzling wide range of patterns, such as : *he outwent to the garden, he went out to the garden, he outwent the garden to, he towent the garden out, he tooutwent the garden*.

This paper thus attempts to shed a new light on this “typological shift” from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns. Firstly, it aims at analysing the multiplicity of patterns available for the expression of Path in Ælfric’s language; but also at demonstrating how and above all why this shift from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns only affected at first the domain of spatial relations.

Some preliminary remarks are required here to delimitate the scope and implications of the present paper:

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² The study is based on the full text and an OEC electronic corpus (<http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/o/oec/>) of Ælfric’s *Lives of the Saints* (ÆLS), and to a lesser extent Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies* (ÆCHom).

- All the data in the examples and tables of this paper refer to Ælfric's 10th-century Old English *only*. A larger corpus would be a second step for a larger study.
- As we will see, this paper does not deal with stylistics, metrics and syntactic word order issues. It strictly focuses its scope on the *functional motivations* for the typological shift. However and as rightly underlined by Ogura (2002) and Hiltunen (1983), it is obvious that this shift is a multi-dimensional phenomenon; issues such as metrics and word order are fully part of it and have been extensively studied in the philological literature. The reader is thus referred to these studies for a complete account of the phenomenon under examination.
- For the sake of clarity, the general term *adposition* is used in this paper both for *preposition* and *postposition*, unless only one of the two possibilities is discussed.

Section 2 below is a short overview of the theoretical background used in this paper. Section 3 focuses on the morphosyntactic tools involved in Path coding and in the typological shift from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns in Old English. Section 4 argues in favour of a central role of Path coding in the shift; it shows how and why this shift was functionally motivated and functionally-driven.

2. Theoretical background

This paper consists of a functional-typological linguistic approach. This is a functional approach in that it apprehends language as a system of communication based on experience and analyses the strategies of expression of *functional domains*. In this paper, the functional domain selected is that of space. This approach underlines the interaction between the semantic, syntactic and discursive levels. It is founded on the use that the speakers make of languages. It does not formally distinguish between synchrony and diachrony and incorporates the grammaticalization axis. Linguistic structures and linguistic changes are considered to be functionally motivated and functionally-driven.

This approach is also intrinsically typological, in that it aims at identifying translinguistically the different and recurrent strategies used by various languages to express the selected functional domains, in view of proposing a typology.

More specifically, this paper is founded on Talmy's typology of *Motion event* (Talmy: 1985, 2000). A Motion event is a spatial situation which may imply Movement as well as Localization (e.g. 'the man goes / is out of the house'), and which contains four basic semantic elements³:

- *the Figure*: Moving or localized entity (*the man*);
- *the Ground*: Reference entity with respect to which the Figure is moving or localized (*the house*);
- *Movement / Localization*: Presence of Movement or Localization (*goes / is*);
- *Path*: Path followed or site occupied by the Figure (*out of*)⁴.

Talmy's typology aims at discerning the differences that exist between languages in the way they conceptually organize a Motion event. The typology considers what semantic element associated with the Motion event is coded in what surface element. To build his typology, Talmy focuses on the semantic element of Path, which he considers to be the most fundamental semantic element of a Motion event. He observes for each language where Path is coded and eventually proposes to divide the languages of the world into two main types. *the verb-framed type*, i.e. languages that code Path in the verb stem, and *the satellite-framed type*, i.e. languages that basically do not code Path in the verb stem, but rather in a "satellite" item.

Since Talmy's seminal proposal of such a typology, much research and discussion have taken place, in particular about the need to review his clear-cut bipartite distinction, when one considers serializing and compound-verb languages such as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese (Matsumoto, 2003 ; Ishibashi, 2006; to appear).

³ Beyond these four basic elements, a Motion event can be associated with a *Co-event*, which includes Manner of Motion (e.g. 'he ran') and Cause of Motion (e.g. 'he pushed').

⁴ In this study, only Movement expressions will be examined. The term "Path" will thus only refer to *the Path followed by the Figure*.

Finally, this paper is part of my PhD research and of an international research program of the French “Fédération de Typologie⁵” (CNRS), on the typology of Path in the languages of the world⁶. The results presented in this paper are thus to be referred as part of the Project’s results.

This “Trajectory Project” paper therefore focuses, through Old English, on one type of *satellite-framed* language, and examines how its coding strategies of Path adapted the major typological change that affected it, from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns.

3. Typological change and Path coding: something is going wrong

In Modern English, Path is mostly distributed into particles and prepositions. In contrast, early Old English mostly distributes Path into prefixes and prepositions. In between, Ælfric’s Old English attests a much more diversified morphosyntactic toolbox, including the very productive prepositions (1), prefixes (2), particles (3) and directional adverbs (4); in parallel it also attests the very constrained multiple-prefixes constructions and postpositions – the length of this paper does not leaves space for the latter group to be addressed in this paper.

(1) V + adposition (ÆLS, III : 138-139)

...and feollan to his fotum

‘...and fell at his feet’

and	feollan	to	his fotum
and	fall.INF	to	POSS.3SG foot.DAT.PL
	[VERB]	[ADP]	[OBLIQUE]
	[MNR+MVT]	[PATH]	[GROUND]

⁵ Fédération de Recherche “Typologie et Universaux Linguistiques”; <http://www.typologie.cnrs.fr/index.php>.

⁶ The project is coordinated by Colette Grinevald Craig (DDL CNRS/Lyon2, France), Anetta Kopecka (MPI Nijmegen, Netherlands) and Jean-Michel Fortis (HTL/Paris 7, France). Among its methodological and conceptual tools, the project is building an inventory of the linguistic elements that can code Path in the languages of the world. Each language has its own morphosyntactic toolbox; the project studies the diversity of strategies at work in languages to use this toolbox for the coding of Path. The project aims at providing descriptions of genetically and typologically varied languages and at proposing a typology of the expression of Path.

(2) Prefix + V (± adposition) (ÆLS, II : 55)

hi becoman to ðære cristenra wununge

‘They arrived at the Christian’s abode’

Hi	becoman	to	ðære cristenra wununge
3PL.NOM	arrive.INF	to	ART.DAT Christian.GEN abode.DAT

[SUBJECT]	[PREF]-[VERB]	[ADP]	[OBLIQUE]
[FIGURE]	[PATH]-[MVT]	[PATH]	[GROUND]

(3) V + particle⁷ (± adposition):

fleah siþþan upp . forðrihte to heofonum

‘And afterward flew up straightway to Heaven’

fleah	siþþan	upp .	forðrihte	to	heofonum
fly.PAST.3SG	after	up	straightway	to	heaven.DAT

[VERB]		[PTC]		[ADP]	[OBLIQUE]
[MNR+MVT]		[PATH]		[PATH]	[GROUND]

(4) V + directional adverb (± adposition):

beo þonne se soð god þe asent þæt fyr ufan

‘And let Him be the true God that sendeth fire from above’

se soð god	þe	asent	þæt fyr	ufan
ART.NOM true.NOM God.NOM	REL	send.PRES.3SG	ART.ACC fire.ACC	from.above

[SUBJECT]		[VERB]		[DIR.ADV]
[FIGURE]		[MVT+CAUSE]		[PATH]

⁷ Although the particle is postposed to the verb in (3), it may also be preposed (ÆLS, VI : 165-166).

These static templates do not reflect the dynamics and complexity of the changes at work in Old English syntax at the time, especially the progressive typological change from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns. Again, the latter occurs in the context of a multi-dimensional syntactic transition in the language. It will be shown in this section how and why the functional domain of space is at the core of this transition.

I will treat here, from the perspective of Path coding, three aspects of the transition: the increasing semantic and functional variety in the use of the prefixes, the disappearance of ancient “directional adverbs”, in parallel with the increasing use of verb-particle patterns.

3.1. The Path prefixes have become multi-purpose

Even since early Old English, the language attests prefixes and adpositions that do not have a purely spatial meaning. However, two facts have become particularly salient in Ælfric’s time:

- The inventory of items exclusively or mainly dedicated to the coding of Path decreases;
- The functional boundary between prefixes and adpositions tends to be increasingly blurred.

Table 1 is an inventory of the Path prefixes examined in this study, classified along two features: first, the prevalence of spatial uses when they are used as prefixes; second, the possibility of an adpositional use of these items.

Table 1: Inventory of Path prefixes:
an increasing semantic and functional versatility

Prefixed item	Spatial meaning	Spatial meaning prevalent	Adpositional use
<i>forð-</i>	‘forth’	+	-
<i>in(n)-</i>	‘in’	+	- ⁸
<i>niðer-</i>	‘down’	+	-
<i>up-</i>	‘up’	+	-
<i>ut-</i>	‘out’	+	-
<i>geond-</i>	‘beyond’	+	+
<i>neah/near-</i>	‘near’	+	+
<i>ofer-</i>	‘over’	+	+
<i>þurh-</i>	‘through’	+	+
<i>to-1</i>	‘to’	+	+
<i>æt-</i>	‘at’	-	+
<i>be-</i>	‘by’	-	+
<i>for-</i>	‘in front’	-	+
<i>fore-</i>	‘in front’	-	+
<i>of/af-</i>	‘off’	-	+
<i>on-</i>	‘on’	-	+
<i>under-</i>	‘under’	-	+
<i>wið-</i>	‘away’	-	+
<i>ymb(e)-</i>	‘about’	-	+
<i>to-2</i>	‘away’	-	-

A static reading of *Table 1* reveals some regularities in the system. First, one can observe that only 25% (i.e. 5 prefixes out of 20) of these “Path prefixes” are still dedicated to Path coding and exclusively used as prefixes in Ælfric. Second, a semantic and functional shift clearly appears as one goes down in the table, with

⁸ Cf. Mitchell (1985:503) about how *in* progressively disappeared as an adposition in Old English, to the advantage of *on*. In my corpus, I have only 1 occurrence of *in* used as an adposition (ÆLS, XI : 180) – excluding of course the few occurrences of the compound adposition *into*.

the coincidence of two continuums: from more spatial to less spatial and from ‘strictly prefixal’ to adpositional:

- 25% of the prefixes (5 out of 20) have kept the prevalence of their spatial meaning and attest an adpositional equivalent in the language.
- 45% of the prefixes (9 out of 20) have lost the prevalence of their spatial meaning and attest an adpositional equivalent in the language.⁹

This means that a total of 70% of the prefixes (14 out of 20) attest in Ælfric an adpositional equivalent, and in a large majority of case this adpositional use coincides with the loss of spatial meaning.

Now a more dynamic reading of *Table 1* leads to further observations, developed below in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.

3.1.1. Prefix-verb fusion and decreased dedication to Path coding

At this stage of the language, several degrees of prefix-verb syntactic relation and semantic fusion co-exist in synchrony. Examples (5) to (7) below show how this “fusion gradient¹⁰” relates, first, to the lesser prevalence of spatial meaning among Path prefixes in Ælfric; and second, how it relates to the syntactic transition from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns at work in the language.

Examples (5) to (7) select three prefixed verbs that represent three different degrees of fusion, from less fused to more fused:

- *utgan* ‘go out’,
- *becuman* ‘arrive’,
- *forgan* ‘abstain of’.

⁹ The only case of a reverse situation (loss of spatial meaning with no adpositional equivalent) is the prefix *to-2* ‘away’. Interestingly, *to-2* is also the only Path prefix that did not survive in the language under any form and that was not replaced (as opposed for example to *nīðer* ‘down’, which was replaced by *adune* ‘down’).

¹⁰ The term “gradient” refers here to the fact that the fusion between the prefix and the verb is a continuum over time; the three stages selected here thus do not represent “abrupt” changes in the language.

For these three prefixed verbs, each example mentions the plain verb form (i.e. the form without prefix nor particle), the prefix-verb form and the verb-particle form. The forms marked with a * symbol are not attested in the corpus.

- In (5), the verb *utgan* ‘go out’ can be semantically identified with the plain form *gan* ‘go’ (a). The prefix *ut-* (b) can be detached to be a particle, when the syntax allows it: *ut gan* or *gan ut* (c).
- In (6), the verb *becuman* ‘arrive’ can still be semantically identified as the plain form of *cuman* ‘come’ (a) (even if *becuman* does not literally mean ‘to come by’ any more). However this time, the prefix *be-* (b) cannot be detached to be a particle, in any circumstances (*c).
- In (7), the verb *forgan* ‘abstain of’ is completely fused. The original verb *gan* ‘go’ cannot be semantically identified any more as its plain form¹¹(*a): they have derived into two different lexical verbs. Again here, the prefix *for-* (b) cannot be detached to be a particle, in any circumstances (*c).

(5) Utgan

a. Plain verb	b. Prefix-verb	c. Verb-particle
gan ‘go’	utgan ‘go out’	ut gan / gan ut ‘go out’

(6) Becuman

a. Plain verb	b. Prefix-verb	c. Verb-particle
cuman ‘come’	becuman ‘arrive’	*be cuman / *cuman be

(7) Forgan

a. Plain verb	b. Prefix-verb	c. Verb-particle
***	forgan ‘abstain of’	*for gan / *gan for

¹¹ It ought to be noticed that *forgan* ‘abstain of’ co-exists in synchrony with a less fused version of himself: *foregan* or *förgan* (with a stress on *för-*), which means ‘go before, in front, past’.

This paradigm shows two important correlations:

- a correlation between a higher degree of fusion with the impossibility of verb-particle patterns, as in (6) and (7);
- a correlation between a higher degree of fusion with the loss of spatial meaning – in other words, with a loss of Path-coding capacity, as is most clear in (7).

This case is representative of the phenomenon affecting the whole set of Old English prefixes. Over time and through processes of fusion and grammaticalization, fewer “Path” prefixes are dedicated to the coding of Path, while more attest non-spatial uses.

3.1.2. Decreased dedication of the prefixes to the verb

As mentioned earlier, there are highly constrained occurrences of *postpositions* in Old English¹². What is relevant about this fact to the analysis of the prefixes is that these postpositions sometimes attach to the verb, when the verb directly follows them. This leads to the presence of “adpositional prefixes”, that are morphologically prefixes but also functionally adpositions by introducing the oblique complement¹³. Examples (8) and (9) compare prefixes – which function adverbially, as a preposition is needed to introduce the oblique complement (8b) – with adpositional prefixes, which introduce the oblique complement by themselves:

¹² As mentioned by Mitchell (1985), postpositions in Old English are restricted to occurrences with the place adverbs ‘here’ and ‘there’ (*her – þær*), some relative pronouns, and personal pronouns (i.e. they never appear after full NPs; one can go further and point out that they are restricted to 3rd person pronouns, at least in Mitchell’s examples and in my corpus).

¹³ Equivalent phenomena are typologically attested in a variety of languages; for example in Rama (Chibchan, Nicaragua), postpositions attaching to the verb stem as prefixes are called Relational Preverbs (Grinevald Craig & Hale, 1988); a similar situation gave rise to multiple prefixation of verbs in Homeric Greek (as demonstrated in Imbert, 2007). The latter case may be comparable to the constrained occurrences of multiple prefixation in Old English.

(8) Prefixes

a. (ÆLS, XXXI : 247)

Martinus þa **inn**-eode
 Martin then in-go.PAST.3SG
 ‘Martin then entered’ (*lit.* ‘went **in**’)

b. (ÆLS, VI:278-280)

wæter **ut**-teah . of
 water:ACC out-draw.PAST.3SG from
 heardum stanclude
 hard.DAT stone.cliff.DAT
 ‘...drew **out** water from the hard stone-cliff’

(9) Adpositional prefixes

a. (ÆLS, I : 124-125)

land and burga **geond**-færð
 land and city beyond-fare.PRES.3SG
 ‘...goes **beyond** countries and cities’

b. (Bosworth & Toller; ÆCHom, I:9)

His swurd sceal **þurh**-gan
 3SG.GEN sword.NOM shall through-go.INF
 þine saule
 2SG.GEN soul.DAT
 ‘His sword shall go **through** your soul’

This phenomenon, interestingly, is functionally constrained: it depends on the functions that the involved items can assume in the language:

- If the Path prefix does not have a spatial adpositional equivalent in the language, as *inn-* and *ut-* in (8), then it cannot function as an adpositional prefix, and an adposition is required to introduce the oblique complement (*of* in (8b));
- If the spatial prefix has a spatial adpositional equivalent in the language, as *geond(-)* and *þurh(-)* in (9), then it can function as an adpositional prefix and directly introduce the oblique complement.

Thus in Ælfric, the Path prefixes are not clearly distinguished from adpositions any more.

3.2. Disappearance of the directional adverbs

Meantime, the language is progressively losing a set of ancient “directional adverbs”, also called “adverbs of place” in the reference grammars. They consist of paradigmatic sets inherited from the Germanic system. These adverbs each have one ablative, one locative and one allative form, which allow them to code

different directions by themselves. This tripartite system is already decaying in Ælfric's language.

Table 2 presents an inventory of the directional adverbs attested at this stage of the language and that are relevant to this paper; the = symbol signals forms that are in a process of semantic merge (for example *inne* in (10b): to say 'he is inside', one could use indifferently the locative *inne* or the ablative *innan*).

Table 2: Directional adverbs in Ælfric's

(10a) Ablative		(10b) Locative		(10c) Allative	
<i>heonan</i>	'from here'	<i>her</i>	'here'	<i>hider</i>	'to here'
∅		<i>þær</i>	'there'	<i>þider</i>	'to there'
∅		<i>hwær</i>	'where'	<i>hwider</i>	'to where'
<i>innan</i>	'from in'	<i>inne</i> = <i>innan</i>	'in(side)'	<i>in, inn</i>	'(to) in'
<i>utan</i>	'from out'	<i>ute</i> = <i>utan</i>	'out(side)'	<i>ut</i>	'(to) out'
<i>uppan, ufan</i>	'from up'	<i>uppe</i>	'up'	<i>up, upp</i>	'(to) up'
<i>neoðan</i>	'from down'	∅ = <i>neoðan</i>	'down'	<i>niðer</i>	'(to) down'
<i>foran</i>	'from in front'	<i>fore</i>	'in front'	<i>forþ</i>	'forth'
<i>nean</i>	'from near'	<i>neah</i>	'near'	<i>near</i>	'(to) near'

A quick static reading of Table 2 allows two simple observations:

- The ablative and locative forms are merging and tend to disappear (∅ slots);
- while all the allative forms are preserved unchanged.

A more dynamic reading reveals a much more interesting situation:

- The ablative forms that are formally present in the language (column (10a)) have more and more difficulties to convey an ablative *meaning*. They tend to convey a locative meaning, hence their presence in the locative set (10b). The ablative forms are progressively disappearing from the language, most of them occurring less than 10 times in the whole corpus selected for this study; and

their “attempt” at formal survival in the locative set will not maintain them much longer in the language.

- This attempted ablative-locative merge will be short-lived, since the locative forms themselves are in turn merging with the allative forms. The locative forms have been lost later in the language, but the merge was successful at least *semantically*: today, *in*, *out* or *up* may have an allative or locative meaning, depending on the context and the verbs they associate with (*go out* vs. *be out*) – conversely, since after the disappearance of the ablative forms, an ablative meaning requires more complex constructions such as ‘*from inside*, *from outside*, *from above*’.

In a word, the ablative forms have disappeared over time, and all that is left today is a locative-allative set.

These changes in the sets of directional adverbs are relevant here in two ways. First, they are part of the progressive decay of the strategies traditionally dedicated to the coding of Path in Old English, as observed above with the prefixes. Second, the surviving allative forms happen to match the inventory of “emergent” particles at the time – except for *near*, as will be discussed at the end of this paper:

Table 3: The emergent set of particles in Ælfric

<i>forð</i>	‘forward’
<i>in(n)</i>	‘in(to)’
<i>niðer</i>	‘down’
<i>up(p)</i>	‘up’
<i>ut</i>	‘out’

3.3. The spread of the verb-particle pattern

As mentioned earlier, the particles in Old English could be preposed or postposed. The preposed construction appears more frequently in older texts and is sometimes analysed as a “detached prefix” or “half-prefix half-particle” construction.

In terms of frequency, this preposed construction seems to be overtaken by the postposed construction in Ælfric – namely the verb-particle patterns. Two interesting remarks about that fact can be briefly mentioned here, from the perspective of Path coding and in relation to the phenomena previously examined in this paper:

- Overtime, the more the sets of directional adverbs decay and merge into single allative forms, the more the postposed construction takes over the preposed construction;
- Simultaneously, the more the Path prefixes fuse with the verb stem and develop adpositional uses, the more the postposed construction takes over the preposed construction.

Therefore, it seems that both the changes affecting the Path prefixes and the directional adverbs work in a way that promotes the spread of verb-particle patterns. The latter finally takes over in terms of Path coding and gives birth to the phrasal verb constructions that we know of Middle and Modern English.

4. Solving the puzzle: Function as key

This section proposes a functional insight to this complex situation, in order to clarify the dynamics and motivation of the typological shift that occurs in Old English. *Table 5* below presents a list of items that are involved¹⁴ in the typological shift from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns, each with their spatial translation. The table shows their repartition in the language into the different functions of prefix, adposition, directional adverb, and particle. The “directional adverb” column, for the sake of relevance, only contains the surviving allative forms (cf. *Table 2* for a more complete account). Finally, in the “prefix” column, the * symbol is used in the *translation* when the non-spatial uses of the prefix have become clearly prevalent (as examined in *Table 1*).

A static reading of the table works as a clear reminder of what has been observed throughout this paper:

¹⁴ The list thus excludes compound adpositions such as *beforan* and *into*.

- The prefixes have become multi-purpose. They can code Path, but also non-spatial meanings (10 out of 20 Path prefixes);
- Most of them (14 out of 20) can also function as spatial adpositions.
- The whole “emerging” particle set corresponds to the allative set of directional adverbs, except for *near* plus two later compound adverbs (*adune, aweg*).

Reading through the dynamics of *Table 5* leads these observations further. It appears that the items present in the particle set are the product of a careful selection. This selection actually obeys three parameters, two of which can be developed in this section:

- It excludes all the items that attest an adpositional use (e.g. *neah, burh, fore*). Thus, as if to make the emergent particles distinct from the prefixes that have become multi-purpose and unspecific, the language seems to operate a functional “sharpening” on the particles: the items that can function adpositionally (i.e. that do not have an exclusive relation with the verb) are dismissed.
- It excludes all the items that attest at least one non-spatial meaning (e.g. *on, æt, to-2*). The new set of particles, at that time, consists of items that are fully dedicated to Path coding. Thus, the typological shift has only affected the functional domain of space. This means that the typological shift was functionally-driven and not *only* syntactically-driven: indeed, the prefix system did not disappear when it was overtaken by the particle system; English actually kept a productive set of prefixes (*undertake, outlive, overdo...*) until today. But the *Path-coding function* has been fully transferred to the particles, as it still is the case today. The particles have in turn known further changes, as is addressed in the concluding section.

Table 4: Functional distribution of the spatial items involved in the Old English typological shift

PREFIX		ADPOSITION		DIRECTIONAL ADVERB (surviving allatives)		PARTICLE (locative/allative meaning)	
						<i>adune</i>	‘down’
						<i>aweg</i>	‘away’
<i>forð</i>	‘forth’	-	-	<i>forð</i>	‘forth’	<i>forð</i>	‘forth’
<i>in(n)</i>	‘in’ ¹⁵	-	-	<i>in(n)</i>	‘in’	<i>in(n)</i>	‘in’
<i>niðer</i>	‘down’	-	-	<i>niðer</i>	‘down’	<i>niðer</i>	‘down’
<i>up</i>	‘up’	-	-	<i>up(p)</i>	‘up’	<i>up(p)</i>	‘up’
<i>ut</i>	‘out’	-	-	<i>ut</i>	‘out’	<i>ut</i>	‘out’
<i>neah/near</i>	‘near’	<i>neah/near</i>	‘near’	<i>near</i>	‘near’	-	-
<i>geond</i>	‘beyond’	<i>geond</i>	‘beyond’	-	-	-	-
<i>ofer</i>	‘over’	<i>ofer</i>	‘over’	-	-	-	-
<i>þurh</i>	‘through’	<i>þurh</i>	‘through’	-	-	-	-
<i>to-1</i>	‘to’	<i>to1</i>	‘to’	-	-	-	-
<i>æt</i>	* ‘at’	<i>æt</i>	‘at’	-	-	-	-
<i>be</i>	* ‘by’	<i>be</i>	‘by’	-	-	-	-
<i>for</i>	* ‘in front’	<i>for</i>	‘in front’	-	-	-	-
<i>fore</i>	* ‘in front’	<i>fore</i>	‘in front’	-	-	-	-
<i>of/af</i>	* ‘off’	<i>of</i>	‘from’	-	-	-	-
<i>on</i>	* ‘on’	<i>on</i>	‘at, in’	-	-	-	-
<i>under</i>	* ‘under’	<i>under</i>	‘under’	-	-	-	-
<i>wið</i>	* ‘away’	<i>wið</i>	‘toward’	-	-	-	-
<i>ymb</i>	* ‘around’	<i>ymb(e)</i>	‘around’	-	-	-	-
<i>to-2</i>	* ‘away’	-	-	-	-	-	-

5. Conclusion: an intriguing question of Source vs. Goal asymmetry

Therefore, this paper argued that the typological shift from prefix-verb to verb-particle patterns that occurred in Old English has been strongly functionally-driven, through the progressive losses and changes in the coding strategies of Path

¹⁵ Cf. *Table 1* and the footnote on *in*.

available in the language. It was demonstrated that the emerging set of particles was carefully selected. It excluded all the items that had lost their Path-coding capacity and verb-related specificities, namely the items that could function as adpositions and the items that were not strictly dedicated to the coding of Path.

There might be a third parameter to this selection, that there is not time to present in this paper, but that is worth mentioning as an open conclusion, since it confirms the analysis presented here of a functional motivation for the typological shift that affected Old English. It happens that the selection operated by the language makes further distinctions *within* the functional domain of space. One can observe that only items coding Orientation of the Figure (*in, out, up, down, forth*) and Source (*away*¹⁶) have been selected, while the items coding Goal-related notions (*to, at, allative near*) have all been dismissed.

Two possible fields for further research lies in what became of this careful selection of particles.

First, from the point of view of English itself, one notices that the particles have in turn become multi-purpose over time; the situation of Path coding in Modern English is as puzzling as the situation that Old English had to face with its prefixes over ten centuries ago. For instance, in ‘the climate change turned out to be the real threat’, what has become of the Path-coding function of the particle *out*? In ‘I will see to it’ or ‘he aimed at the deer’, are the Goal items *to* and *at* merely adpositional items or actual *Goal* items that were finally accepted as particles? And in ‘he looked after the kids’, is *after* a particle or an adposition, or both?

Second, the third parameter mentioned above – the one that seems to distinguish between Goal and the other notions – can be ground for further research, since it links the data to a phenomenon of Source **vs.** Goal asymmetry recurrently attested in language typology (Bourdin, 1996; Ikegami, 1987; Stefanowitch & Rohde, 2004). One could revisit this phenomenon in the light of the new typological and diachronic data of ancient languages (Imbert, 2007). Old English clearly shows a Source **vs.** Goal asymmetry in its selection of particles, and Modern English – despite the recent evolutions that were just mentioned – still does not attest Goal particles. As opposed to *out, off, away* or even *on, in,*

¹⁶ Later reinforced by the appearance of the form *off*.

through, the items like *to*, *at*, *toward*, *for*, *after* are either exclusively adpositions or at most adpositional particles, but they could not become actual verbal particles. It is clear that these semantic constraints deserve full attention in further typological and diachronic studies.

In a broader perspective, this study demonstrates how Old English can add interesting data to a modern linguistic description of space and to current issues in typology, when revisited in the perspective of a functional-typological approach.

Abbreviations and glosses

1	1st person	MVT	movement
2	2nd person	MNR	manner of motion
3	3rd person	MID	middle
ADP	adposition	NOM	nominative
ALL	allative	PART	participle
AOR	aorist	PASS	passive
ART	article	PAST	past
DAT	dative	PRES	present
DEM	demonstrative	PL	plural
FEM	feminine	POSS	possessive
GEN	genitive	PRES	present
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
LOC	locative	V	verb

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