

SYSTEMS EMERGENCE AND DECLINE: SOURCE VS. GOAL ASYMMETRY IN OLD ENGLISH POST-VERBAL PARTICLES

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This paper is to be considered through the frame of a functional-typological approach of languages, that incorporates a grammaticalization perspective. It is part of my PhD research about the dynamics of systems emergence and decline and their functional motivations, through the study of systems evolution and typological shifts in the coding strategies of Path.

This paper is a functional-typological contribution to the study of the mechanisms of the *typological shift from preverbs to particles* that affected Old English and that resulted in the verb-particle constructions still observed today in modern English. This paper strictly focuses its scope on the *functional motivations* for the typological shift. It does *not* deal with stylistics, metrics and syntactic word order issues. However and as rightly underlined by Ogura (2002) and Hiltunen (1983), it is obvious that this shift is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and a full analysis of it requires investigation of such issues, as can be found in the specialized literature.

This paper intends to demonstrate that 1) the typological shift in Old English was functionally motivated by a mechanism of *compensation* between declining and emerging systems; 2) this mechanism of compensation only affected the functional domain of *Space*; 3) this mechanism of compensation was partly driven by a cognitive bias of a *Source vs. Goal asymmetry* type.

All the data in the examples and tables of this paper refer to Ælfric’s 10th-century Old English, through an OEC electronic corpus (<http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/o/oec/>) of Ælfric’s *Lives of the Saints (ÆLS)*. *For the sake of readability, ÆLS Old English will be referred to in this paper as Old English or OE for short, but it is of course based on observations of ÆLS Old English only and is by no means a way to generalize the conclusions drawn in this paper.* Further research on the topic thus involves extension of the data under examination.

1. Path coding in Old English: the fuzzy categories of Path morphemes

This section is an illustrated inventory of the constructions involved in Path Coding in OE. It presents the types of Path morphemes available in the OE system and the possibilities of combinations between them.

Path morphemes are items that can code the “Path” (cf. Talmy, 2000) of a moving or localized entity with respect to a reference entity. Crosslinguistically, Path morphemes are often involved in fuzzy morphosyntactic categories, by ways of synchronic and diachronic

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fuzziness (Imbert, tbd). One inventory of Path morphemes in a language may be dispatched in synchrony into several morphosyntactic sets, such as adpositions, preverbs, etc. They may also in diachrony change sets several times and/or even lose their spatial meaning overtime, through semantic bleaching. Examples (1a-b) illustrates Path morphemes in Modern English :

- (1) a. The man is **in** the house
[PATH]
- b. The man runs **in**
[PATH]

In (1a), the Path morpheme *in* functions as an **adposition**, i.e. it introduces the oblique nominal complement. In (1b), the Path morpheme *in* functions as a **satellite**, i.e. “a grammatical category of any constituent other than nominal complement that is in sister relation to the verb root” (Talmy, 1991 : 486). Examples of satellites crosslinguistically are for instance preverbs and verbal particles.

Conceptually, one can distinguish between several types and portions of Path; for instance : **Source** (*out, from...*), **Goal** (*to, at...*), **Orientation** (vertical with *up/down* and horizontal with *forth/back*), etc. That is of course a non exhaustive and highly simplified account, but it is sufficient for a fluent reading of this paper.

Table 1 presents the 20 Path morphemes that will be shown in this paper as being involved in the typological shift from preverbs to particles in OE. Table 1 intends to be a preliminary simple inventory, and as such it does not report semantic bleaching phenomena nor individual morphosyntactic behavior for each morpheme:

Table 1 – An inventory of the 20 Path morphemes involved in the OE typological shift

Path morpheme	Spatial meaning
<i>æt(-)</i>	‘at’
<i>be(-)</i>	‘by’
<i>for(-)</i>	‘in front’
<i>forð(-)</i>	‘forth’
<i>fore(-)</i>	‘in front’
<i>geond(-)</i>	‘beyond’
<i>in(n)(-)</i>	‘in’
<i>near(-)</i>	‘near’
<i>niðer(-)</i>	‘down’
<i>of(-)/af(-)</i>	‘from’
<i>ofer(-)</i>	‘over’
<i>on(-)</i>	‘at, in’
<i>þurh(-)</i>	‘through’
<i>to(-)1</i>	‘to’
<i>to(-)2</i>	‘away’
<i>under(-)</i>	‘under’
<i>up(-)</i>	‘up’
<i>ut(-)</i>	‘out’
<i>wið(-)</i>	‘toward’
<i>ymb(-)</i>	‘around’

1.1. Four morphosyntactic sets of OE Path morphemes

Path morphemes in OE may be involved in Path-coding constructions through 4 main morphosyntactic sets: they may be adpositions² (2), or satellites. As satellites, they may be preverbs (3), “spatial adverbs” (4) or particles (5):

(2) Adpositions (ÆLS, III : 138)

and feollan to his fotum
and fall:INF to POSS:3SG foot:DAT.PL
‘...and fell at his feet’

(3) Preverbs (III : 139)

He ut-eode
3SG:NOM out-go:PAST.3SG
‘He came out’

(4) Spatial adverbs (ÆLS, XVIII : 110)

se soð god þe asent þæt fyr ufan
ART:NOM true:NOM God:NOM REL send:PRES.3SG ART:ACC fire:ACC from_above
‘And let Him be the true God that sendeth fire from above’

(5) Particles (ÆLS, VII:202)

And he arn þærrihthe ut
and 3SG:NOM run:PAST.3SG straightway out
‘And he ran straightway out’

In OE, Path morphemes may combine together and appear in these different sets in one same sentence.

1.2. Combinations between OE Path morphemes

The combination between Path morphemes in OE allows for the expression of complex Paths in one sentence:

(6) Preverb + Adposition (ÆLS, VI:278-279)

wæter ut-teah of heardum stan-clude
water:ACC out-draw:PAST.3SG off hard:DAT stone-cliff:DAT
‘(He [...]) drew out water from the hard stone-cliff’

(7) Spatial adverb + Adposition (ÆLS, II : 260-262)

Ac crist sylf asende swægende fýr ufan of heofonum
but Christ:NOM REFL send:PAST.3SG rush:PART.PRES fire:ACC from_above from heaven:DAT
‘But Christ himself sent a rushing fire from heaven above’

² OE attests prepositions and postpositions. For the sake of brevity and relevance, only prepositions will be illustrated in this paper. As mentioned by Mitchell (1985), postpositions in OE are restricted to the place adverbs ‘here’ and ‘there’ (*her – þær*), some relative pronouns and personal pronouns (they never appear after full NPs). I would like to point out that they even seem to be restricted to 3rd-person pronouns, according to my corpus.

(8) Particle + Adposition (ÆLS, III : 75)

flēah siþþan **upp** forðrihte **to** heofonum
fly:PAST.3SG after up straightway to heaven:DAT
‘And afterward flew up straightway to Heaven’

The corpus compiled for this paper did not yield any occurrence of combinations of [Preverb + Particle] and [Preverb + Spatial Adverb]. This means that in OE one may combine [Satellite + Adposition], but one may not productively combine satellites together: *[Satellite + Satellite].

Table 2 summarizes this first section by classifying the different sets of Path morphemes into two systems: the verbal system (satellites) and the nominal system (adpositions).

Table 2 – Verbal and nominal systems of OE Path morphemes sets

System:	VERBAL SYSTEM	NOMINAL SYSTEM
Sets:	Preverbs Spatial Adverbs Particles	Adpositions

This situation is not “static” in OE. At the time of the typological shift, these different sets are involved into complex dynamics of systems decline and emergence.

2. The decline of the verbal system

At the time of the typological shift, the verbal system is “in crisis”, with the decline of two of its three sets of Path morphemes: the spatial adverbs and the preverbs.

2.1. Loss of spatial adverbs

Table 3 is an inventory of spatial adverbs in OE. The set of spatial adverbs mostly involves the Path morphemes shown in Table 1, and allows for them to be inflected to express their Path in a directive (9a), ablative (9b) or locative sense (9c):

Table 3 – An inventory of spatial adverbs in OE

(9a) Directive		(9b) Ablative		(9c) Locative	
<i>in(n)</i>	‘(to) in’	<i>innan</i>	‘from in’	<i>inne</i>	‘in(side)’
<i>ut</i>	‘(to) out’	<i>utan</i>	‘from out’	<i>ute</i>	‘out(side)’
<i>up(p)</i>	‘(to) up’	<i>ufan</i> ³	‘from up’	<i>uppe</i> ⁴	‘up’
<i>niðer</i>	‘(to) down’	<i>neoðan</i> ⁴	‘from down’	∅	‘down’
<i>forþ</i>	‘forth’	<i>foran</i>	‘from in front’	<i>fore</i>	‘in front’
<i>near</i>	‘(to) near’	<i>nean</i>	‘from near’	<i>neah</i>	‘near’

³ Or *uppan*.

⁴ *Neoðan* and *uppe* do not occur in the ÆLS text specifically.

Table 3 shows that the ablative and locative forms in (9b-c) have missing slots, while the directive forms in (9a) are well-preserved. A more dynamic reading of this situation in fact reveals that the ablative and locative forms attest ongoing semantic *merging*, i.e. equivalent forms progressively tend to convey the same meaning (for example, some ablative forms tend to convey a simple locative meaning). In the end, only the directive forms survived in the language. There are several reasons that could be pointed out for this situation, but two come specifically to mind in this paper:

- a) A morphosyntactic reason would be that the language is progressively losing its inflections at the time. The directive forms are the only forms to be (mostly) uninflected, and may have survived for this reason.
- b) More to the point, there could be a more cognitive reason, which involves the way speakers perceived these forms. Not only are the directive forms the only (mostly) uninflected forms, but they are also formally identical with the forms that are used as preverbs and particles in OE. This could have resulted in the speakers to be akin to those “*uninflected*” forms, while the clearly *inflected* forms (ablative and locative) may have seemed archaic and/or more opaque as to their function and meaning.

Therefore, *the set of spatial adverbs is progressively being lost in OE, through semantic bleaching and formal loss*. Its loss cannot be replaced, as it is *the only one set that allowed for the coding of a complex Path in one single form* (i.e. each form with a choice of directive, ablative or locative inflection and sense).

Another declining set in OE is that of preverbs. The preverbs attest an ongoing process of grammaticalization that is altering their formal integrity and accelerating semantic bleaching (2.2.), but also attest modifications in their functional scope (2.3.).

2.2. The grammaticalization of preverbs

OE attests an advanced degree of grammaticalization of its preverbs set, that is higher for some preverbs than others. Examples (10)-(12) illustrate three verbs of which the preverbs represent three different degrees of fusion into the verb stem: *utgan* ‘go out’, *becuman* ‘arrive’ and *forgan* ‘abstain (of)’.

The *semantic transparency* and *formal autonomy* of the preverb can be respectively evaluated according to 1) the preservation of its spatial meaning and 2) the possibility for the preverb to be replaced with a corresponding Path morpheme from another morphosyntactic set, such as a corresponding particle:

(10) Stage 1: Semantic transparency and formal autonomy:

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

(11) Stage 2: Loss of semantic transparency and hints of formal fusion:

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

(12) Stage 3: Semantic opacity and complete formal fusion:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| a. Plain verb ⁵ | b. Prefix-verb | c. Verb-particle |
| Ø | forgan ‘abstain of’ | *gan for |

Therefore, the grammaticalization of preverbs triggers their progressive fusion into the verb stem, but more crucially here *reduces their dedication to the function of Path coding*.

Therefore, at this point in this paper, two sets of Path morphemes have been pointed out as losing their Path-coding function, through formal loss or fusion and semantic bleaching.

2.3. The fuzzy category of relational preverbs

Finally, a thorough examination of the data reveals that the very functional scope of the preverbs is unclear in OE. The OE data attests *relational preverb constructions*. “RP” have been defined in Craig & Hale (1988) about Amerindian languages, and in Grinevald (a.k.a. Craig) & Imbert (2008) more specifically about Chibchan Rama and Homeric Greek:

“Relational preverbs are characterized by their being linked to an argument of the verb, while exhibiting different degrees of grammaticalization and lexicalization in their relation to this verb. As such, they may be defined as being morphologically prefixal but functionally adpositional.” (Grinevald & Imbert, 2008)

Relational preverbs thus correspond to a fuzzy category, where the item (which may or may not be a Path morpheme) is morphologically a preverb but functionally an adposition. Examples (13)-(14) illustrate relational preverbs in Chibchan Rama and Homeric Greek⁶. The RP appears in **bold** and the nominal oblique complement it introduces appears in *italic*:

(13) Relational preverbs in Chibchan Rama (after Grinevald & Imbert, 2008)

kohki **yu-an-taak-u**
kohki **RP/with**-they-go-PAST
‘They carried Kohki’ (lit. ‘They came with Kohki’)

(14) Relational preverbs in Homeric Greek (after Grinevald & Imbert, 2008)

toi *homòn* *lékhos* **eis-ana-baínoi**
2SG:DAT *same*:ACC *bed*:ACC **RP/to**-PREVERB/up-walk:PRES.OPT.3SG
‘(A woman that) shall go up into thy bed’

Example (15) illustrate a similar phenomenon in OE. This issue is crucial to the point of this paper: this means that *not only do OE preverbs lose their dedication to Path coding, but they also lose their dedication to the verbal system*. In (15a), the preverb is used alone and functions as a satellite. In (15b), the preverb is used in combination with an adposition and still functions as a satellite. However, in (15c), the preverb is a *relational preverb* that functions as an adposition: it is morphologically linked to the verb but introduces the nominal

⁵ It ought to be noticed that *forgan* ‘abstain of’ co-exists in synchrony with a less grammaticalized version of itself: *foregan* or *fórgan* (with a stress on *fór*), which means ‘go before, in front, past’.

⁶ Chibchan Rama is one of the original languages through which the “category” of relational preverbs was uncovered by Craig, while Homeric Greek has been demonstrated to attest such a category by Imbert (tbd.).

oblique complement; for the record, example (15d) shows the same phenomenon in a different text (ÆCHom):

(15) The fuzzy category of relational preverbs in OE

a. “Regular preverb” (ÆLS, XXXI : 247)

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

b. “Regular preverb” in combination with an adposition (ÆLS, VI:278-280)

wæter **ut**-teah of heardum stanclufe
water:ACC **PV/out**-draw:PAST.3SG from hard:DAT stone_cliff:DAT
‘(He) drew out water from the hard stone-cliff’

c. Relational preverb (ÆLS, I : 124-125)

land and burga **geond**-færð
land and city **RP/beyond**-fare:PRES.3SG
‘(He) goes beyond countries and cities’

d. Relational preverb in another text (ÆCHom, I:9)

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

Thus, through these relational preverb constructions, the set of OE preverbs attests morphosyntactic fuzziness and a substantial loss of its dedication to the verbal system.

Therefore, at the time of the typological shift, the spatial adverbs set is being lost and the preverbs set is grammaticalized, semantically bleached and morphosyntactically fuzzy.

3. Adpositions can’t take it all: The balance between the verbal and nominal systems

Section 2 has revealed complex dynamics of systems decline in OE. But more crucially to the point in this paper, it has pointed out *a deep change in the language, that is argued here to have functionally triggered the typological shift from preverbs to particles in OE*:

In OE, *the verbal system is declining as a Path-coding toolbox* that used to be replete with sets of Path morphemes: the language is losing its spatial adverbs, and its preverbs are grammaticalizing, becoming morphosyntactically fuzzy and losing their spatial meaning.

Table 4 summarizes how the verbal system of Path coding is “in crisis”, quite as opposed to a rather stable nominal system of Path coding that relies only on adpositions. It also shows that the only verbal set unaffected by this crisis is the set of particles. Actually, at the time of the typological shift, this system attests accelerated emergence and progressive stabilization:

Table 4 – Verbal and nominal systems of Path morphemes:
compensating a verbal system in crisis

VERBAL SYSTEM !!!	NOMINAL SYSTEM
<p>↘Preverbs</p> <p>↘Spatial Adverbs</p> <p>↗Particles</p>	<p>Adpositions</p>

Section 4 addresses the *mechanism of compensation* that favors the *emergence* of the particles set to fill the actual *functional “vacancy”* left by the two other *declining* sets: *the function of coding Path within the verbal system*, with a set of satellites. Section 4 examines the modalities for this mechanism of compensation.

4. Compensating declining systems: The emergence of particles and the functional motivations for the typological shift

Table 5 on the opposite page presents an inventory of the stable adpositions set and of the declining sets of preverbs and spatial adverbs, and confronts them to the emerging system of particles.

As mentioned before, there is an inventory of 20 Path morphemes in OE (cf. Table 1). This inventory is dispatched into four morphosyntactic sets (adpositions, preverbs, spatial adverbs and particles), and each Path morpheme may belong to several sets at a time. For many of these morphemes in OE, the Path-coding function is lost or not prevalent anymore, through an ongoing process of semantic bleaching. In the “translation” column of Table 5, this loss or non prevalence of Path coding is marked with a † sign.

Table 5 takes stock of what has been shown throughout this paper and aims at demonstrating that the modalities of the typological shift from preverb to particle in OE has **3 underlying motivations**: 1) Maintaining the inventory of Path morphemes forms, 2) Maintaining the Path-coding function of the verbal system, but also 3) Dealing with an underlying phenomenon of Source vs.Goal asymmetry.

4.1. Motivation #1: Maintaining Path morphemes forms

Table 5 shows that all the morphemes that do not appear in the “stable” adpositions set are transferred to the emerging set of particles. In other words, in terms of systems dynamics, *the morphemes that are not “formally maintained” in the language through the adpositions set are more crucially affected by the verbal system decline*, in terms of their very formal existence in OE. Table 5 shows that *these “endangered” morphemes are the only ones to be compensated by the emerging particles set*; they are framed in bold in the table.

4.2. Motivation #2: Maintaining Path-coding function

One exception in Table 5 challenges the assumption made by Motivation #1: the Path morpheme *to-2* ‘†away’ does not appear in the adpositions set and *yet* is not compensated and transferred to the particles set either. *It is argued here that the typological shift from preverb*

to particle in fact only affected morphemes whose function was one of Path coding: and interestingly, *to-2* has already lost its Path-coding function in OE. Thus, in terms of Path-coding function, there is no need to compensate *to-2* in the language – while compensation would be expected after Motivation #1.

Another fact that supports Motivation #2 (Maintaining Path-coding function) is diachronic evidence: although it is widely acknowledged that there *was* a typological shift from preverbs to particles in OE, the preverbs did *not* disappear from the language (e.g. today *overwhelm, outlive, become...*). They only disappeared from it as *Path-coding* morphemes. Therefore, the typological shift was a shift from *Path-coding* preverbs to *Path-coding* particles.

To summarize, Table 5 shows that, at the time of the typological shift, the Path morphemes need 1) to be actually threatened with formal *disappearance* and 2) to be dedicated to Path-coding *exclusively*, to be transferred into the emerging particles set.

Table 5 – The OE typological shift from preverb to particle as function-driven:
Decline, emergence and compensation mechanisms

ADPOSITIONS	PREVERBS	SPATIAL ADVERBS	PARTICLES	Translation
=	↘	↘	↗	
-	-	-	<i>aweg</i>	‘away’
-	-	-	<i>adune</i>	‘down’
-	<i>forð</i>	<i>forð, foran, fore</i>	<i>forð</i>	‘forth’
-	<i>in(n)</i>	<i>in(n), innan, inne</i>	<i>in(n)</i>	‘in’ ⁷
-	<i>nīðer</i>	<i>nīðer, neoðan</i>	<i>nīðer</i>	‘down’
-	<i>up</i>	<i>up(p), ufan, uppe</i>	<i>up(p)</i>	‘up’
-	<i>ut</i>	<i>ut, utan, ute</i>	<i>ut</i>	‘out’
-	<i>to-2</i>	-	-	†‘away’
<i>neah/near</i>	<i>neah-/near-</i>	<i>near, nean, neah</i>	-	‘near’
<i>to1</i>	<i>to-1</i>	-	-	‘to’
<i>geond</i>	<i>geond-</i>	-	-	‘beyond’
<i>ofer</i>	<i>ofer-</i>	-	-	‘over’
<i>þurh</i>	<i>þurh-</i>	-	-	‘through’
<i>wið</i>	<i>wið-</i>	-	-	†‘toward’
<i>æt</i>	<i>æt-</i>	-	-	†‘at’
<i>on</i>	<i>on-</i>	-	-	†‘at, in’
<i>be</i>	<i>be-</i>	-	-	†‘by’
<i>for</i>	<i>for-</i>	-	-	†‘in front’
<i>fore</i>	<i>fore-</i>	-	-	†‘in front’
<i>ymb(e)</i>	<i>ymb-</i>	-	-	†‘around’
<i>under</i>	<i>under-</i>	-	-	†‘under’
<i>of</i>	<i>of-/af-</i>	-	-	†‘from’

⁷ 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).

4.3. Source vs. Goal asymmetry as a driving mechanism for the typological shift?

Different studies (Bourdin 1997 ; Ikegami 1987 ; Stefanivitsch & Rohde 2004 ; Lakusta & Landau, 2005) have shown that, crosslinguistically, Goal expressions are more direct, less complex and semantically more refined than those of Source. This phenomenon has been called “Source vs. Goal Asymmetry” in the literature⁸.

This section takes Source vs. Goal asymmetry in a broader perspective and points out the asymmetric treatment of Source and Goal in the typological shift from preverbs to particles.

The co-occurrence of Motivation #1 (*Maintaining Path morphemes forms*) and Motivation #2 (*Maintaining Path-coding function*) in the typological shift reveals an interesting phenomenon. This co-occurrence does not allow OE to “re-balance” the verbal system as it used to be in terms of Path coding. After the typological shift, some types of Path cannot be coded within the verbal system anymore and have been exclusively maintained into the nominal system through adpositions. An observation of this imbalance, through a more precise reading of Table 5, reveals an interesting phenomenon of Source vs. Goal asymmetry:

- a) The emerging set of particles never codes Goal, while it does code Source and for instance Orientation. Conversely, the stabilized set of adpositions codes Goal, but never codes Source, nor does it code Orientation. Goal adpositions express refined semantic distinctions in the coding of Goal, while particles attest one “monolithic” expression (*aweg*) in the coding of Source. In other words, after the typological shift, the function of Path coding is asymmetrically distributed between the verbal and the nominal systems *in terms of types of Path*. More specifically, adpositions attest a clear Goal-bias.
- b) Interestingly, two “new” Path morphemes enter the particles set at the time of the typological shift: *aweg* ‘away’ and *adune* ‘down’. *Aweg* codes Source and *adune* codes Orientation; no such addition occurred then nor later for the coding of Goal.
- c) Today in Modern English, one observes that particle verbs do involve the coding of many types of Path in their particle, *except for the Goal type* (i.e. there is no particle verb with *to*, *at*, *toward*, *for*, etc. as a particle in Modern English).

Further research should address the conceptual motivations for this phenomenon ; it should for instance examine why crosslinguistic data appears to show a conceptual affinity between the function of adposition and the coding of Goal, in parallel with an affinity between the function of satellite and the coding of Source and Orientation (cf. Imbert, tbd ; Imbert, accepted).

Section 5 shows how a look at Modern English gives interesting “feedback” on these assumptions, through the story of what has become of these “shifting” Path-coding systems overtime.

⁸ Among possible explanations, specialists proposed that Goal has more importance in the non-linguistic representation of a Path (for instance in children), or that there is a pragmatic-psychological bias in favor of Goal; Goal would be more relevant to the hearer in his global conceptualization of Path and thus less costly for the speaker.

5. Some Modern English feedback eleven centuries later

The later evolution of the particles set is strikingly reminiscent of what happened to the preverbs set at the time of the typological shift. Three observations can be made in Modern English:

- After all these complex dynamics of emerging systems compensating declining systems to maintain a balance between verbal and nominal Path coding, the Modern English particles set is *not dedicated to Path-coding anymore*: particles have grammaticalized overtime and have known *semantic bleaching*;
- Moreover, the Modern English particles set is *not even dedicated to the verbal system anymore*: the particles have tended to become morphosyntactically fuzzy. More to the point, English has developed what could be called here “*relational particles*”. For instance, in “look for him” or “look after him”, are *for* and *after* particles (they do relate morpho-semantically to the verb) or adpositions (they do introduce the nominal oblique complement)?
- Finally, this morphosyntactic fuzziness results in these emergent “relational particles” to progressively take into the particles set *Goal-biased* morphemes. For instance, English attests “particle-adpositional” verbs like “look for”, “look after” or “adpositional verbs” like “see to”, “aim at”.

Thus, at the time of the typological shift, the preverbs set was semantically bleached, morphosyntactically fuzzy and could code any type of Path. Today in Modern English, the particles set knows semantic bleaching and morphosyntactic fuzziness. It progressively loses its semantic specificity by accepting *Goal-biased morphemes*, by means of a fuzzy subcategory of “relational particles”, which morpho-semantically behave as particles but syntactically function as *adpositions*.

6. Conclusion

This paper intended to address the typological shift from preverbs to particles in Old English and examine it through a functional-typological perspective, in terms of systems dynamics of emergence and decline. It has shown how such a shift could be function-driven, no matter what other linguistic issues may be at stake in this very multi-dimensional process. Path coding is cognitively central to language and a partial loss in the function of Path coding may give rise to major changes in a language, through complex dynamics of systems emergence, decline and compensation mechanisms.

In a broader perspective, this paper intended to demonstrate the productivity of a functional-typological approach to revisit ancient languages and incorporate their data into recent typological studies. Old English carries a lot of potentially interesting data for a typology of space and Path coding, and such further research on that language should lead to very promising results.

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