

**What adpositions do that satellites cannot.
Semantic and conceptual constraints on Path-coding categories**

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This paper is based on my doctoral research on two similar “preverb-based” satellite-framed ancient languages, Homeric Greek and Old English¹.

Talmy (2000) operates a distinction between satellites and adpositions in his definition of “satellites”. In support of this statement but also as ground for further research, I intend to show how in Homeric Greek and Old English the categories of satellites and adpositions are opposed in terms of a semantic and conceptual bias that is still virtually unexplored in the literature: that of a [-Goal] vs. [+Goal] bias. Namely, their inventories of satellites tend rather to consist of non Goal-coding “Path morphemes” (e.g. *off*, *up*), while their inventories of adpositions tend to consist of *intrinsically Goal-coding* Path morphemes (e.g. *to*, *into*, etc).

Homeric Greek possesses one inventory of “Path” morphemes all of which may function as “preverb” satellites or as adpositions. The language exhibits two competing strategies of Path coding, as illustrated in examples (1) and (2). Example (1) shows a stable system of “preverb” satellites (PV) combined with adpositions (ADP) to code complex Paths. Example (2) shows an emergent system of multiple preverbatation [PV2-PV1-V] that codes complex Path by itself. In such constructions, PV1 is a *bona fide* satellite, whereas PV2 functions as an adposition by being linked to the verb argument (ARG, in *italic*) and by controlling its case (“relational preverb”; Craig & Hale, 1988; Grinevald & Imbert, 2008):

- (1) [Preverb + adposition] combination (Il. 18.231-233)
Akhaioì aspasíō:s Pátroklon [...] **kát**-thesan **en** *lekhéessi*
Achaean:NOM.PL gladly Patroclus:ACC **PV/down**-lay:AOR.3PL **ADP/in** *ARG/couch*:DAT.PL
‘But the Achaeans with gladness [...] laid Patroclus **down on** a bier’
- (2) Multiple preverbatation (Od. 11.98)
xíphos arguróe:lon *kouleô:i* **en-kat-épe:x**[’]
sword:ACC silver-studded:ACC *ARG/sheath*:DAT **PV2/in-PV1/down**-thrust:AOR.1SG
‘I thrust my silver-studded sword **down into** its sheath’

A semantic and frequency analysis on such examples reveals two interesting facts about the Homeric categories of satellites and adpositions:

- (a) First, Path morphemes that intrinsically code Goal ([+Goal]) are the most frequent as adpositions, while they are proportionally much less frequent as satellites, namely preverbs.
- (b) Second, in multiple preverbatation constructions, the “adpositional” PV2 element tends to be [+Goal]. More crucially, such constructions in Homeric Greek attest a lexicalization process, in which PV2 shifts from adposition to satellite when loss of the verb argument occurs; however, when PV2 is a [+Goal] morpheme, the lexicalization process tends strongly to be less advanced or even null; the verb argument tends to be maintained and PV2 remains adpositional.

¹ Data collected through the complete texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* via the *Perseus* database and through the complete texts of *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints* (10th-century).

Just as Homeric Greek, Old English possesses one inventory of “Path” morphemes that all may function as “preverb” satellites or as adpositions. However, Old English “preverb” satellites are known for being involved in a major typological shift that led the English language from a “preverb-based” satellite-framed strategy to a “particle-based” satellite-framed strategy. 10th century Old English came to exhibit two competing systems of satellites: its old and declining system of preverbs and an emerging system of particles. It also possessed a stable system of adpositions.

I have shown in previous works how this “supposed” typological shift from preverbs to particles in fact only affected the function of Path coding: the preverbs did not disappear from the language and were maintained as non Path-coding elements (such as today in *overcome*, *outlive*), while their Path-coding function was transferred to particles (Old English *utgan* ‘out-go’ > today *go out*). However, this function was asymmetrically redistributed: [-Goal] Path morphemes were redistributed from the inventory of preverbs to that of particles, while [+Goal] Path morphemes disappeared altogether from Old English inventories of satellites and were only maintained in the language as adpositions.

Therefore, this paper intends to show how such a conceptual opposition between satellites as [-Goal] and adpositions as [+Goal] may be crucial for further research on “satellite” elements across languages. It is also a striking example of how cognitive biases may be mirrored in the structure and evolution of morphosyntactic systems.

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