Verb particles in Old French: a syntactic account

Historical and synchronic evidence from a broad range of Romance varieties demonstrates that directional verb particles were a feature of Proto-Romance; Iacobini & Masini (2006) and Iacobini (2009) provide evidence of directional verb particles as early as Late Latin. Contemporary varieties vary with respect to the vitality of the particle systems, with some Italian dialects showing the richest systems. Particle inventories are largely cognate, containing reflexes of early Romance simple particles (compare with Old French equivalents). A sample of four common particles across six contemporary Romance languages is shown below. The particle system is most diminished in French.[1]

	Old French	Italian	Sicilian	Romanian	Catalan	Spanish	French
'up'	*sus, amont, contremont*	*su*	*susu*	*sus*	*amunt*	*arriba*	---
'down'	*jus, aval, contreval*	*giù*	*iusu*	*jos*	*avall*	*abajo*	---
'out'	*fors*	*fuori*	*fora*	*afară*	*fora*	*fuera*	---
'forward'	*avant*	*avanti*	*avanti*	*înainte*	*endavent*	*adelante*	---

Romance particles hold particular interest because their robust presence in early texts and subsequent contraction correlates with the well-known typological shift whereby satellite-framed Latin developed into verb-framed Romance (Talmy 2000). Properly understanding their properties can thus shed light on the intermediate grammars that arose as the typological shift played out. There has been debate about the exact properties, but the prevailing assumption has been that Old Romance particles are qualitatively identical to those of contemporary Romance. This assumption has made it difficult to develop a persuasive formal account of the role of particles in the typological shift. Existing sociolinguistic (Iacobini & Masini 2006) and functional (Foulet 1958) explanations fail to account for quantitative studies that track the loss of particles in French (Burnett et al. 2005, 2010, *inter alia*). Particles pattern in the same way; frequencies begin to decline in the 13th century, and particles are obsolete by the 16th. This paper aims to dispel the assumption that Romance particles have not undergone a substantial qualitative change in the last 1000 years. New data reveal an OF particle system that permits a remarkable range of verbs not yet reported in the literature, both for older and contemporary varieties of Romance. Still, certain types of verb-particle combinations such as those involving unselected objects, permitted in the Germanic languages (Mateu & Rigau 2010), are not attested in OF. In light of the data, verb-particle constructions in OF are argued to be verb-framed in that the particles are never Path satellites but rather modifiers of Path and thus only licenced by verbal or contextual meaning involving a transition, broadly construed. It is thus always the verb that instantiates Path in verb-particle constructions (contra Troberg & Burnett 2017). The grammar of OF particles is different, however, from the type of stronger verb-framedness that we find in contemporary Romance.

The formal treatment of OF particles proposed here adopts an extended PP resultative secondary predicate following Svenonius (2010) but is also compatible with a somewhat sparser representation for secondary predicates as proposed in Ramchand (2008). The basic ingredients are shown in Fig.1. The verbal root always instantiates Path^0 and selects its internal argument, the Figure, in Spec PlaceP.
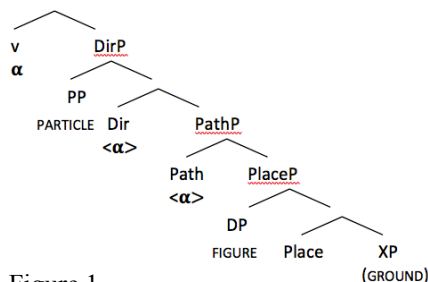

Figure 1

Verbs that involve or cause a change of location or orientation in OF can be straightforwardly accounted for within a verb-framed analysis, as shown in (1c).

(1) a. *Mais toutesvoies m'en <u>irai</u> **jus** a ti* (*Mon.Guillaume*, p.329)
         'But, in any case, I will go down to you'
     b. *tantost les gettent et <u>vomissent</u> **hors**,* (*Purification*, p.59)
         immediately they hurl and vomit them out
     c. [$_{vP}$ *ir-* [$_{DirP}$ *jus* <*ir->* [$_{PathP}$ <*ir->* [$_{PlaceP}$ [$_{DP}$ pro] *a ti*]

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[1] *En haut, en bas,* and *en avant* are sometimes claimed to be verb particles. Since they always refer to contextually defined locations, they are not directional particles of the kind discussed here, which are non-referential.

Likewise, verbs of change of state can also be easily handled within this framework; see (2c).

(2) a. *li ont **jus** la tieste copée*   (Mousquet, *Chronique*)
   'they cut his head down/off'
   b. *et puis leissié refroidir et **arriere** <u>bouillir</u>*   (*Livre de chasse*, p.117)
     'then let it cool and then come to a boil again'
   c. [$_{vP}$ *bouill-* [$_{DirP}$ *arriere* < *bouill-* > [$_{PathP}$ < *bouill-* > [$_{PlaceP}$ [$_{DP}$ pro] < *bouill-* > [$_{AdjP}$< *bouill-* >]]]]]

Unergative verbs of perception and communication (actions that can be oriented) also occur with particles. The analysis requires a derivation along the lines of Hale & Keyser (1993 *et seq*.), where a null Path verb (e.g., 'move') selects a nominal argument in Spec PlaceP, which then incorporates into Path^0 and lexicalizes the verbal projection, as shown in (3c).

(3) a. *ne jeo n'en sai **avant** <u>cunter</u>*   (*Lais (Lanval)*, p.112)
   'and I cannot continue telling about it'
   b. *si <u>garda</u> **avant** devant lui*   (*Graal*, p.372c.2989)
     'and he continued to look/survey ahead of him'
   c. . [$_{vP}$ *gard-* [$_{DirP}$ *avant* <*gard->* [$_{PathP}$ <*gard->* [$_{PlaceP}$ [$_{NP}$ <*gard->*] *devant lui*]

Some of the most surprising examples involve verbs that do not seem to have transition semantics at all, like the process verb *boire* 'drink' and the stative subject-experiencer verb *aimer* 'love'.

(4) a. *si le <u>but</u> toute **hors***   (*Beaudouin de Sebourc*, p.186)
   'and he drank it [the goblet of wine: *le coupe* (FEM)] all up'   Picard: *le = la* (FEM)
   b. *Jo ne la dei <u>amer</u> **avant**, ne haïr ne la dei par tant;*   (*Tristan*, p.25)
     'I mustn't go on loving her, nor must I hate her for as much;'

Within a verb-framed grammar, it is possible to derive both examples as change-of-state events. Example (4b) would be construed as successive iterations of the same event to obtain a continuative reading (see Bybee et al. (1994) for the relationship between iterative and continuative aspect).

(5) [$_{vP}$ *aim-* [$_{DirP}$ *avant* < *aim-* > [$_{PathP}$ < *aim-* > [$_{PlaceP}$ [$_{DP}$ pro] < *aim-* > [$_{AdjP}$< *aim-* >]]]]]

I present the results of a large corpus study[2] revealing a verb-framed grammar that is able to exploit transition meanings that can be entailments of the verb, contextually defined, or that are a presupposition of the particle itself. OF particles contrast with the most productive contemporary Romance varieties for which the outer limits of this kind of verbal elasticity do not appear to be possible either with directional or aspectual interpretations of particles (Cordin 2011, Quaglia 2016). The most important restriction on the OF system, which clearly defines it as different than a satellite-framed language like English, is that the subject of the secondary predicate must be selected by the verb. This follows from the fact that the verb is the head of the Result phrase. Unselected objects such as that found in *They ran me out* are thus predicted to be ungrammatical in OF, but *He danced back to me* should be possible.

The implications for the derivation of Path, Result, and Manner verbs in contemporary Romance are important. I propose that the split vP-PathP-PlaceP of Old Romance collapsed with the result that the heads of the secondary predicate are bundled as either v-Path^0 or v-Path-Place^0, DirP disappearing as a consequence. Remaining contemporary Romance particles with directional meanings were reanalyzed as Ground elements and aspectual particles in Northern Italian as an element of the lower aspectual field (Tortora 2002; Quaglia & Trotzky 2017). Contemporary Romance is thus radically verb-framed; while verbal meaning was syntactically derived in Medieval Romance, it is now lexically specified.

Selected References: ACEDO-MATELLÁN, V & J. MATEU. 2013. From satellite-framed Latin to verb-framed Romance: A syntactic account. Probus 25(2): 227-265. IACOBINI, C. & F. MASINI. 2006. The emergence of verb-particle constructions in Italian: Locative and actional meanings. *Morphology* 16: 155-188. MATEU, J. & G. RIGAU. 2010. Verb-particle constructions in Romance: A lexical-syntactic account. *Probus* 23: 241-269. TROBERG, M. & H. BURNETT. 2017. From Latin to Modern French: A punctuated shift. In E. Mathieu and R. Truswell *From Micro-change to Macro-change*, OUP.

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[2] Corpora interrogated were *Textes du Français Ancien* (TFA : 1100-1450), a subset of the texts found in *Frantext Moyen Français* (FMF : 1300-1549), and ARTFL-FRANTEXT (1500-1699), yielding a total of 216 510 377 words.