Competing motivations in Path-coding systems:
A case study from an ancient language

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This paper deals with competing motivations and constraints in Path coding. It adheres to the theoretical framework developed by Talmy (2000)[1]. It relies on the case study of a satellite-framed ancient language: Homeric Greek[2]. It focuses on the underlying motivations for the emergence and decline of a little-described system of Path-preverb multiple affixation.

The Homeric data attest one set of Path elements, used in two competing systems that serve a similar function: the productive coding of complex Paths. They are, as in (1), a stabilized system of combination between a satellite preverb and an adposition which controls the case of the argument (*ARG*); and, as in (2), an emerging system of multiple preverbation. In the latter, PV1 is a *bona fide* satellite preverb just as PV in (1), whereas PV2 functions as an adposition as it is linked to the verb argument and controls its case ("*relational preverb*"[3]):

(1)   Stable system of [satellite preverb + adposition] combinations (Il. 18.231-233)
       autàr Akhaioì aspasío:s Pátroklon… **kát**-thesan   **en** *lekhéessi*
       LNK 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 couch*'

(2)   Emergent system of multiple preverbation [relational preverb + satellite preverb] (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** *the sheath*'

The system in (1) survived for a long time in Greek as a Path-coding system. Conversely, the system in (2) never stabilized and quickly disappeared, through interesting processes of grammaticalization and lexicalization. With the loss of the verb argument as a major triggering context, the relational preverb (PV2) becomes a satellite preverb like PV1, exhibits semantic bleaching and is finally fused with the verb stem or dropped.

Overall, the rapid emergence and disappearance of multiple preverbation could stem from the *functional tension* induced between two underlying motivations: the emergence of multi-preverb systems as part of a preverb-based, "satellite-framed" Path-coding strategy, and on the contrary a process of univerbation in Greek, by which Path preverbs tended to be dropped or lexicalized over time, toward the verb-framed strategy of Modern Greek.

However, the progressive disappearance of multiple preverbation was *asymmetrically* slowed down by constraints of a more semantic nature. A frequency study shows that:

(a) The Path elements that intrinsically express Goal (e.g. "to, into…") are the most frequent as adpositions and relational preverbs (PV2) in the data, while they are proportionally much less frequent as satellite preverbs (PV1).

(b) Strikingly, when PV2 is "Goal-coding", it tends to remain a relational preverb, and its grammaticalization process to the state of satellite preverb is less advanced or does not occur at all. This results in a better conservation in terms of productivity of multi-preverb constructions that involve Goal-coding relational preverbs.

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[1] And his distinction between satellite-framed languages (languages which code Path outside of the verb stem in "satellite" elements, such as preverbs or verb particles) and verb-framed languages (languages which code Path within the verb stem).

[2] Data collected through the complete texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* via the *Perseus* database (Crane, 1997).

[3] Cf. Craig & Hale (1988)

Therefore, among other interests, multiple preverbation in Homeric Greek is a striking example of how competing motivations and constraints may be crucial parameters in the evolution of morphosyntactic systems, at least in the conceptual domain of space.

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