

## Romance verb particles through time and space: A new contribution from Old French

Michelle Troberg

University of Toronto Mississauga

Historical and synchronic evidence from a broad range of Romance varieties demonstrates that verb particles were a feature of Proto-Romance; Iacobini & Masini (2006) provide evidence of directional verb particles as early as Late Latin. Varieties vary with respect to the vitality of the particle systems, with some Italian dialects showing the richest systems.<sup>1</sup> The 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 appears to be most diminished in French. Particles in contemporary French are phrasal (none of the Old French simple forms remain), few in number, and have very limited use.

	Old French	Italian	Sicilian	Romanian	Catalan	Spanish	French
‘up’	<i>sus, amont, contremont</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>susu</i>	<i>sus</i>	<i>amunt</i>	<i>arriba</i>	<i>en haut</i>
‘down’	<i>jus, aval, contreval</i>	<i>giù</i>	<i>iusu</i>	<i>jos</i>	<i>avall</i>	<i>abajo</i>	<i>en bas</i>
‘out’	<i>fors</i>	<i>fuori</i>	<i>fora</i>	<i>afară</i>	<i>fora</i>	<i>fuera</i>	---
‘forward’	<i>avant</i>	<i>avanti</i>	<i>avanti</i>	<i>înainte</i>	<i>endavant</i>	<i>adelante</i>	<i>en avant</i>

Iacobini & Masini (2006) speculate that the reduction of particle use in Standard Italian is due to the influence of a literary standard whereby verb particle constructions were marginalized to spoken varieties. The assumption is that Northern Italian dialects, still rich in particle use, have preserved (and possibly innovated on) the Proto-Romance system. The authors seem to suggest the same for other Romance varieties, and such a suggestion is echoed again in Iacobini (2015). Formal treatments of Romance particles present a similar assumption; despite differing theoretical approaches, the basic properties of particles attested in Old French, Old Catalan, and in Dante’s Italian are presented as identical those of contemporary Romance particles (Iacobini & Masini 2006, Mateu & Rigau 2010). Meanwhile, Acedo-Matellán & Mateu (2013) point out that Old French has at least one case of the Latin satellite-framed aspectual particles: *parler avant* ‘to speak forth’ from Latin *porro loquor*. Such occurrences are presented as residual, exceptional, and as having gradually disappeared along with the Latin Path prefix system, as Romance became a verb-framed language family.

**Aims:** Through a new examination of Old French particles, the present work aims to contribute to the recent literature on Romance verb particles, questioning whether there is evidence to support an essentially unified analysis of Old and contemporary Romance particles and whether a new quantitative and qualitative study might shed light on when and how the French particle system contracted so dramatically and if the French facts can fruitfully extend to other varieties.<sup>2</sup>

**Findings:** (i) The OF particle system is much richer than previously described. Namely, particles are attested with a remarkable range of verbs. Most Old French particles combine with verbs of directed and ballistic motion very broadly construed (1) and some occur with a diverse array of non-directional transitive verbs, but the latter always denote accomplishments or achievements (2). These uses extend previous inventories and show that verb particle constructions in Northern Italian dialects that have been considered innovations are actually conservative. In addition, two particles in Old French can occur with intransitive verbs and carry a distinct aspectual value (3). The productivity of these aspectual

<sup>1</sup> Rhaeto-Romance presents a rich system of particles as well. These are not discussed in the present study.

<sup>2</sup> We interrogated *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.

prefixes does not appear to be a moribund vestige of Latin, but rather a thriving part of the system. (ii) Four particles (*hors/fors* ‘out’, *jus* ‘down’, *avant* ‘forward’, *arriere* ‘back’) fall out of use at the same time and in the same way. The actuation of change is estimated to occur no later than the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is clearly complete by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (iii) The replacement of the simple particles *arriere* and *avant* by their phrasal equivalents *en arriere* and *en avant* in directional and aspectual contexts is tracked through time. This improves on a previous study and is able to show more clearly that the replacement patterns as an underlying grammatical change.

- (1) a. *Mais toutesvoies m'en irai jus a ti* (Moniage Guillaume, p.329; TFA)  
 ‘But, in any case, I will go down to you’  
 b. *Fort se teneit a la pere Que nel rosast le unde arriere* (St. Brandan, v.1125; TFA)  
 ‘He held fast to the rock so that the waves wouldn’t wash him over’  
 c. *Cil apelet Brandan avant* (St. Brandan, v.1484; TFA)  
 ‘The aforementioned called Brandan forward’  
 (2) a. *si le but toute hors* (Beaudoin de Sebourc, TFA)  
 ‘and he drank it [the wine] all up’  
 b. *Le sanc jus de ses plaies tert* (Charette, p.89; TFA )  
 ‘He wipes the blood off of his wounds’  
 (3) a. *ne jeo n'en sai avant cunter* (Lais (Lanval), p.112; TFA)  
 ‘and I don’t know how to go on telling about it’  
 b. *si garda avant devant lui* (Gaal, p.372c.2989; TFA)  
 ‘and [he] looked on ahead of him’  
 c. *et puis leissie refroidir et arriere bouillir* (Livre de chasse, p.117; FMF)  
 ‘then let it cool and then boil again’  
 d. *Et serons chi arriere dedens un mois* (Froissart, Chron. L., III, 99; FMF)  
 ‘and we will be back here within a month’

**Implications:** (i) The grammar of Romance particles is not uniform; Old French particles have different distributional properties than contemporary Romance particles. This supports an analysis whereby all Old French particles - and Proto-Romance - depend on a grammar that generates the satellite-framed preverb constructions inherited from Latin (Troberg & Burnett 2017; Troberg 2018) while contemporary Romance particles are all produced within a verb-framed grammar (Mateu & Rigau 2010). (ii) The distribution OF particles did not contract due to normative pressures or low-level lexical changes; the change occurred early, and it was systematic and selective. Non-idiomatic uses of particles only occur with a predictable and reduced set of Path verbs like that in (1a) while other uses are lost. Particle use in Northern Italian dialects is exceptional, allowing verb particle constructions like those in (2). These systems are nevertheless not the same as Old French; crucially, they do not allow satellite-framed uses such those in (3). (iii) Reanalysis of the particles as elements of a verb-framed grammar initially occurred along the traditional east/west divide; Eastern Romance varieties retain the original simple forms while Western Romance languages recruit full PP equivalents (Sp. *a-riba*, *a-bajo*, OF *en-avant*, *en-arriere*, etc.) to replace the function of some particles. Reanalysis did not thus happen in Proto-Romance, but independently, accounting for the variation in inventories.

**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. 2015. Particle verbs in Romance. In *Word Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*, P. O. Müller, I. Ohnheiser, S. Olsen, and F. Rainer (eds.), 627-659. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 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. TROBERG, M. 2018. Diachronic reanalysis and the satellite versus verb-framed distinction. Paper given at LSRL 48, April 25, York University, Toronto.