Change and loss of P-elements: A case study of fors and hors in the history of French
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In the last 30 years, prepositional elements in Medieval French have been the subject of growing synchronic and diachronic interest given their large inventory and diverse functions in the early periods of the language and the dramatic reduction of forms and some functions since. Hors and fors – cognates both meaning ‘out’, ‘outside’, ‘except’ – are particularly interesting since their simple forms present a number of distinct functions in Medieval French, all of which have now disappeared or are obsolete. For instance, they could occur as a spatial preposition (1), preverb (2), adverb (3), subordinating conjunction (4), and verb particle – both directional (5) and aspectual.

(1) **fors la cité** ‘outside the city’

(2) **forjoster** ‘to out joust’ ‘to win at a jousting match’

(3) *Tendiz que le roy hors estoit*
   While that the king out was
   ‘While the king was outside’

(4) **fors que l’artillerie, qui dedens estoit, demoura au roy, (Roye, Chron. Scand., I DMF)***
   out that the-artillery, which inside was, remained to the king
   ‘except that the artillery, which was inside, remained the king’s’

(5) *Tute ma terre ad eissilliee, La gent robee e fors chaciee* (Roman de Brut, TFA)
   all my land has destroyed the people robed and out chased
   ‘[He] has destroyed my land, and robed and chased out my people’

The basic diachronic facts of hors and fors lend themselves well to an examination of how the evolution of these forms and their functions are interconnected (involving a number of competing forms at different times) and how this relates to the question of category. Following recent theories of the extended P-projection (Svenonius 2010, among others), we propose that there are only two categories at issue; fors and hors instantiate the category Dir(ection), associated with a certain kind of verb particle and the category Loc(ation), associated with spatial prepositions. This contrasts with functional approaches such as Marchello-Nizia (2002), for instance, who suggests five or six categories.

Based on a systematic examination of their use in three major databases – Textes de Français Ancien (ARTFL Project); ARTFL-FRANTEXT (ARTFL Project); FRANTEXT Moyen Français (ATILF) –, we find that fors and hors as directional particles follow a clear time course of change whereby, together, their frequency begins to decline in the 14th century (number of tokens and in terms of the variety of verbs they occur with) and disappears by the 16th century. This time course is very similarly to that of the particle jus ‘down’, studied in detail in Troberg & Wyslobocka (2016). On the other hand, the evolution of the other functions are complex and interrelated and differ dramatically from that of the particle, evidence, we propose, that the category Loc(ative) underlies them all.

The present study contributes to the dearth of fine-grained work on prepositional elements in Medieval French, in particular that of the particles and the extent of their syntactic and semantic possibilities and what they can tell us about Medieval French as an intermediate stage between satellite-framed Latin and verb-framed Modern French (see Talmy 1985, 2000; Troberg & Burnett 2017; and Troberg 2017). Our study also demonstrates that hors and fors are lexical doublets (contrary to previous claims), and shows the complex evolution of each in their various functions and questions whether previous claims about their so-called grammaticalisation can really be maintained.
Selected References