**Mechanisms of constructional borrowing in complex prepositions: the case of French and its closest Germanic neighbors**

Converging developments within the European linguistic landscape have recently attracted much attention (Van der Horst 2013), but determining the driving forces leading to such convergences is anything but trivial. Some authors, like Hüning (2014), decided to focus on complex prepositions to illustrate the intriguing parallelism between European languages. Among the explaining factors for the introduction and spread of complex prepositions, the genetic linguistic relationship of the languages, (conjectural) correlations between linguistic and cultural developments, the emergence of communicative needs and new text types, but also language contact are put forward (Hüning 2014). The last-mentioned parameter offers an interesting ground for the study of complex prepositions since it has been suggested, for instance, that French had exerted influence on English in the use of the complex forms under scrutiny (Schwenter & Traugott 1995), and the hypothesis was confirmed in a small-scale study within the framework of Grammaticalization (Lebendstedt 2015). It should be noted, however, that new coinages do not always emerge through grammaticalization, be it induced by contact or by internal mechanisms of language change, and loan translation has hardly been explained as a mechanism in this particular case.

It is argued in this paper that language contact is best integrated in a constructionist approach as regards complex prepositions, since any aspect of their form, meaning an/or distribution is worthy of consideration in Construction Grammar, and the effect of language contact in language change is likely to intervene in any of these domains in isolation as well as in interaction with the others. In a contrastive study on English and Dutch, which are known to have been in intimate contact with French, I set out to illustrate the different mechanisms of constructional borrowing which have potentially triggered the emergence and development of complex prepositions in the two West Germanic languages. In the light of a corpus-based descriptive analysis on a small set of constructions representative of the semantic classes of concession, condition, detriment and replacement (Klégr 1997), it will be shown, among other things, that cross-linguistic generalizations occurred sporadically at low levels of schematicity in Dutch and that the productivity of the pattern is likely to be a reflex of pro-diasystematic change (Höder 2012, 2014a, 2014b), whereas the English constructions can be claimed to result from contact-induced constructionalization (Hilpert 2015: 205).

**References**

Hilpert, Martin. 2015. *Constructional change in English: developments in allomorphy, word formation, and syntax*. 1st paperback edition. (Studies in English Language). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Horst, Joop van der. 2013. *Taal op drift: lange-termijnontwikkelingen in taal en samenleving*. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff.

Höder, Steffen. 2012. Multilingual constructions: A diasystematic approach to common structures. In Kurt Braunmüller & Christoph Gabriel (eds.), *Multilingual Individuals and Multilingual Societies* (Hamburg Studies on Multilingualism 13), 241–258. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Höder, Steffen. 2014a. Constructing diasystems: Grammatical organisation in bilingual groups. In Tor A. Åfarli & Brit Maehlum (eds.), *The Sociolinguistics of Grammar* (Studies in Language Companion Series 154), 137–152. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Höder, Steffen. 2014b. Convergence vs. divergence from a diasystematic perspective. In Kurt Braunmüller, Steffen Höder & Karoline Kühl (eds.), *Stability and Divergence in Language Contact: Factors and Mechanisms* (Studies in Language Variation 16), 39–60. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Hüning, Matthias. Over complexe preposities en convergentie. *Patroon en argument. Een dubbelfeestbundel bij het emeritaat van William Van Belle en Joop van der Horst*, 433–445.

Klégr, Aleš. 1997. English complex prepositions of the prepositional phrase type. *Prague Studies in English* 22. 51-78.

Lebenstedt, Anne-Larina. 2015*. The Influence of French on the Formation of English Complex Prepositions: Loan Translation and Grammaticalization by Analogy*. Trier, Germany: University of Trier BA thesis.

Schwenter, Scott A. & Elizabeth Closs Traugott. 1995. The Semantic and Pragmatic Development of Substitutive Complex Prepositions in English. In Andreas H. Jucker (ed.), *Historical Pragmatics: Pragmatic developments in the history of English* (Pragmatics & Beyond New Series 35), 243-273. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.