

Pathways to applicatives

The diachrony of preverbs in Dutch

Ann-Sophie Vrielynck (FNRS – University of Liège/Antwerp)

Dirk Pijpops (University of Antwerp)

An Van linden (University of Liège)

Introduction

What are applicatives?

= morphological marker on the predicate that promotes a non-Actor participant from an oblique to a core argument of the clause. (Peterson 2007: 1; Zúñiga & Creissels 2024: 4)

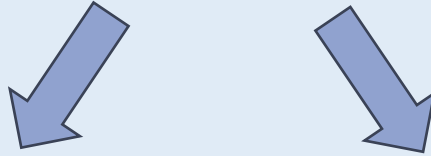
e.g., *Hij ging [**naar** vele medische tests]* ‘He went [**to** many medical tests]’

→ *Hij **onder**-ging [vele medische tests]* ‘He **under**-went [many medical tests]’

- Importance of preverbs in Indo-European languages (Zúñiga et al. 2024)

Dutch complex predicates

- Preverb + base verb
 - e.g., *onder-gaan* ('go down; undergo'), *over-lopen* ('overflow; go through')



Separable complex verbs

e.g., *Ze **loopt** naar de vijand **over**.*

(‘She defects to the enemy’)

- Separated in certain constructions
- Stress on preverb

Inseparable complex verbs

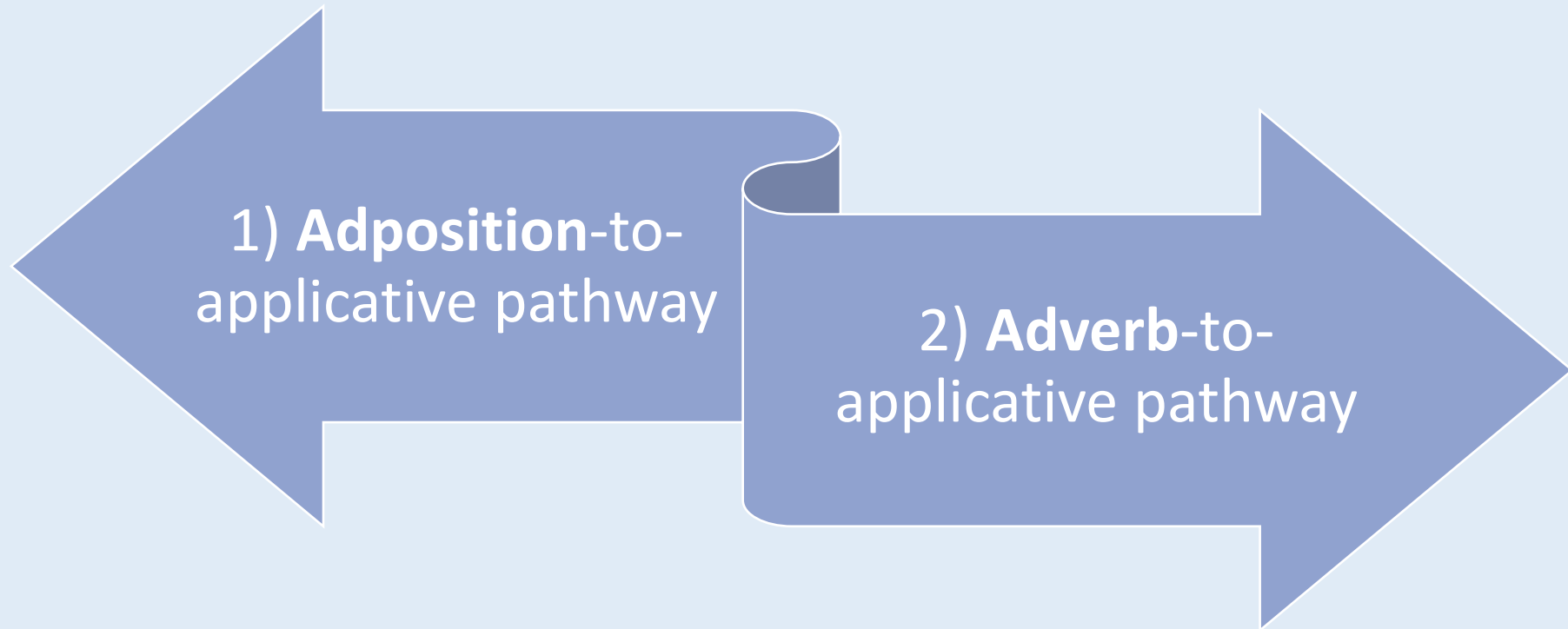
e.g., *Ze **overloopt** de cursus.*

(‘She goes over the course’)

- Never separated
- Stress on base verb

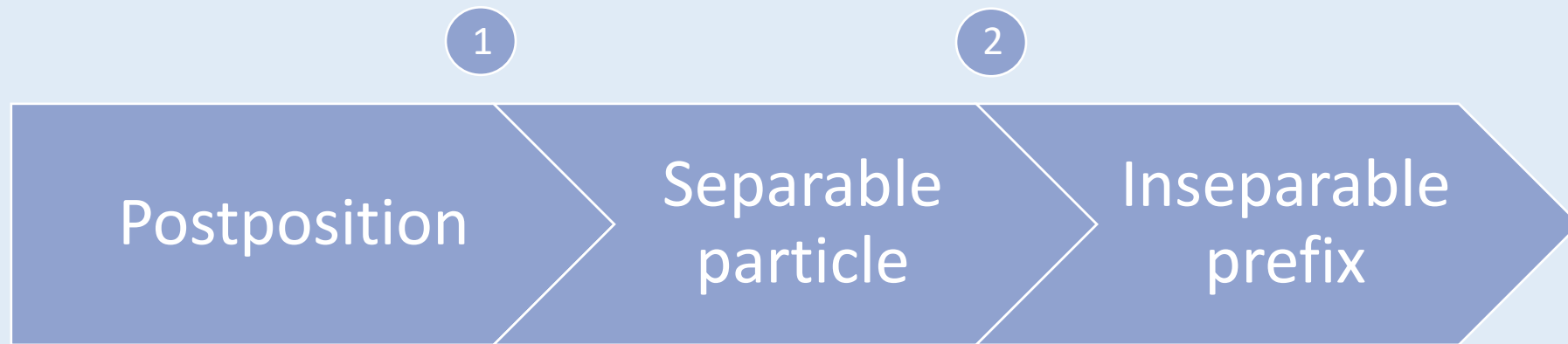
Diachrony of complex predicates

2 diachronic hypotheses



1) Adposition-to-applicative pathway

- Cf. Booij (2002) and Blom (2004, 2005)



Booij (2002):

spatial → non-spatial meaning
vs.

Blom (2004, 2005):

resultative → non-resultative

However...

- Only partially supported by historical corpus data
 - Separable to inseparable (Blom & Booij 2003): historical evidence, but preverb-based rather than complex-lexeme based approach
 - Postposition to separable: self-constructed examples of postpositional constructions with NP complement (Blom 2004: 54)

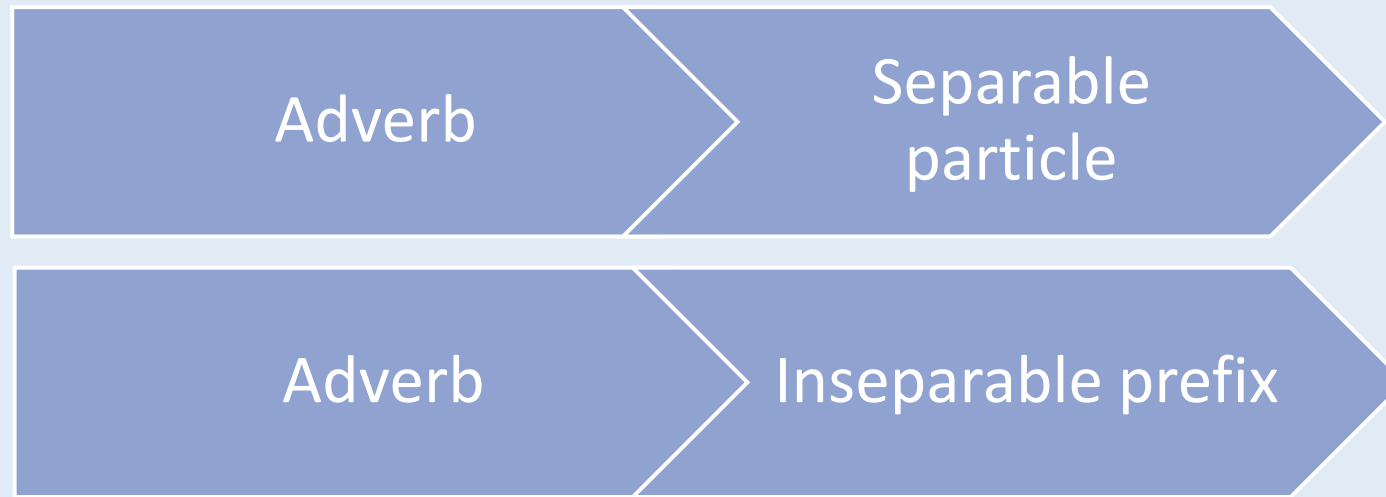
e.g.,

*dat si [al den nacht **dore**]_{pp} **beeden*** → *dat si al den nacht [**dore beeden**]_{scv}*

‘that they [all the night **through**]_{pp} **prayed**’ → ‘that they all the night [**through-prayed**]_{scv}’

2) Adverb-to-applicative pathway

- Cf. Van der Horst (2008)



- No systematic diachronic corpus study yet
- However, aligns with *communis opinio* that Indo-European preverbs (& adpositions) originate in locative adverbs (Lehmann 2015: 97-111)

Case study

Goal of the study

- Contribute to the debate regarding the diachrony of Dutch preverbs
 - Investigate two rivalling hypotheses and the role – if any – of postpositions
- **diachronic corpus study** (seven centuries of written record)
 - Lexeme-focused approach on two complex predicates
 - *ondergaan* ('go down; undergo')
 - *overlopen* ('overflow; go through')

Methods: data extraction

- Two corpora (1300-2000)
 1. Corpus Middle Dutch (1300-1500) (cf. Dutch Language Institute 2022)
 2. Digital Library of Dutch Literature (16th-20th century) (cf. Van Olmen 2019; De Smet 2021: 78)
- Data extraction
 1. *onder/over* followed by the initial letter(s) of the verb
 2. *onder/over* within a five-word window before/after the base verb

Methods: data extraction (2)

→ instances of *over/onder* and verb in same clause

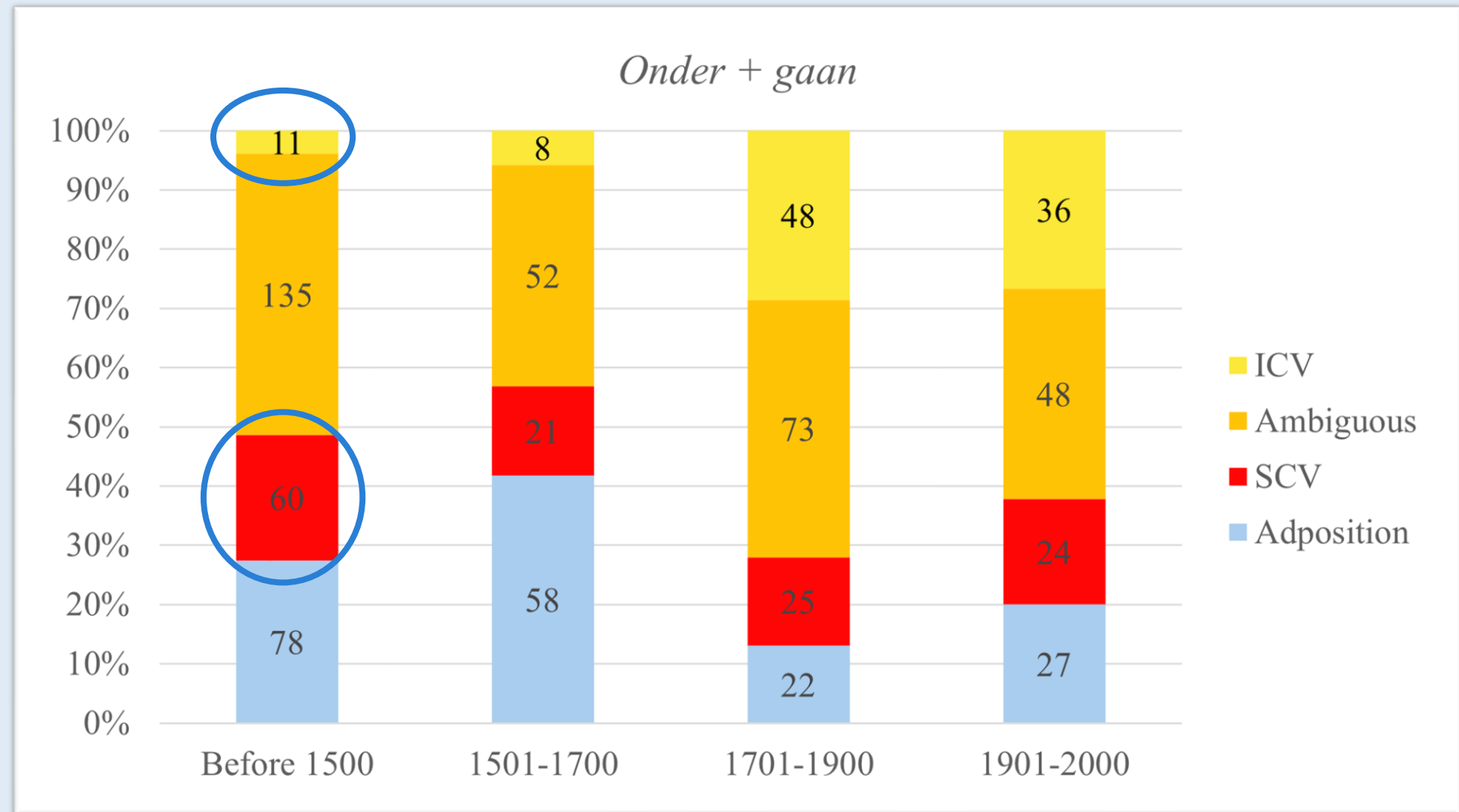
→ *onder/over* functions as (part of) the verb or as argument/modifier of the verb

Period	<i>Ondergaan</i>	<i>Overlopen</i>	Total
Before 1500	284 (70.82%)	117 (29.18%)	401 (100%)
1501-1700	139 (61.78%)	86 (38.22%)	225 (100%)
1701-1900	168 (67.74%)	80 (32.36%)	248 (100%)
1901-2000	135 (52.53%)	122 (47.47%)	257 (100%)
Total	726 (64.19%)	405 (35.81%)	1,131 (100%)

Methods: data annotation

1. **Word class** of *over/onder*: preverb, pre-/postposition
2. **Verb form**: finite, infinitive, present/past participle
3. **Position** of verb and of *over/onder*
4. → **Pattern**: adposition, separable, inseparable, ambiguous
5. **Transitivity**: presence of patient
6. **Semantics**
 - Preverb: spatial or non-spatial
 - Base verb: literal or figurative
 - Overall meaning of complex predicate: cf. historical dictionaries
7. **Metadata**: genre (prose, rhyme, theatre) and period

Results *ondergaan*: distribution



Results *ondergaan*: semantics

	MD	EModD	LModD	PDD	
'perish'	—————→				SCV
'setting of celestial bodies'	—————→				SCV
'go down'	—————→			—————→	SCV
'go to bed'	—————→				SCV
'be overwhelmed'				—————→	SCV
'avoid'		-----→			ICV
'prevent'	-----→				ICV
'experience'	—————→			-----→	SCV/ICV

Applicativizing potential of *onder*

	Transitive	Intransitive	Total
Separable	3 (2.31%)	127 (97.69%)	130 (100%)
Inseparable	102 (99.03%)	1 (0.97%)	103 (100%)
Total	105 (45.06%)	128 (54.94%)	233 (100%)

Exception (intransitive ICV)

*Herbert ziet en **onder-gaat**, voelt de scherpe koude van het water*

‘Herbert sees and **under-goes**, feels the sharp cold of the water’ (dbnl, Dekker 1932.txt, 1932)

➤ case of indefinite object deletion (Næss 2007: 124–128)

Interim conclusion *ondergaan*

1. No formal transition from SCV to ICV (distinctions in meaning/transitivity)
 2. Reanalysis from **postposition to separable particle?**
- 14 cases of immediate adjacency of adposition and verb (2 in Middle Dutch period)
 - No postpositions with NP complement
 - All **postpositions with pronominal adverbs** (*daar/er* ‘there’)

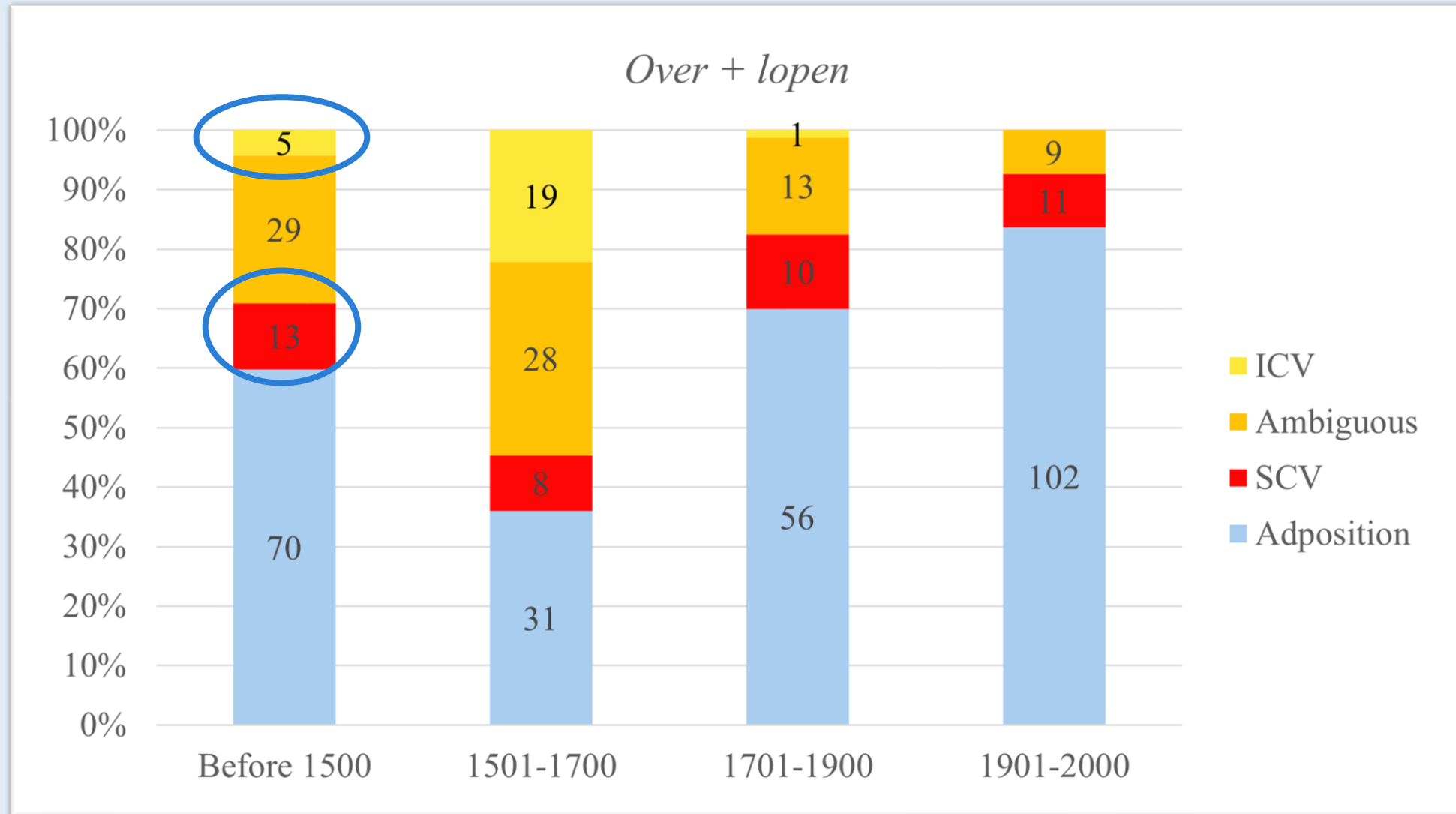
e.g.: ... *Diltheit* *moet-er* ***onder gaen***

... Wickedness must-there **under go** (‘wickedness must go underneath’
(CMNL, der_minnen_loep.xml, 1480))

Interim conclusion *ondergaan*

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 - No postpositions with NP complement
 - All **postpositions with pronominal adverbs** (*daar/er* 'there')
 - *onder* in SCV as non-applicative (reanalysis as locative adjunct)
 - *onder* in SCV with spatial meanings only

Results *overlopen*: distribution



Results *overlopen*: semantics

	MD	EModD	LModD	PDD	
'go/walk to another side'	—————→				SCV
'walk back and forth'			—————→		SCV
'overrun'	————→				SCV
'make sth. overflow'		-----→			ICV
'attack'		-----→			ICV
'run too fast'			-----→		ICV
'bring to another side'		-----→			ICV
'cover'		-----→			ICV
'treat'	————→	-----→			SCV/ICV
'consider, oversee'	————→	-----→			SCV/ICV
'go/walk over sth.'	————→	-----→			SCV/ICV
'be too full'	————→	-----→			SCV/ICV

Applicativizing potential of *over*

	Transitive	Intransitive	Total
Separable	5 (11.90%)	37 (88.10%)	42 (100%)
Inseparable	23 (92%)	2 (8%)	25 (100%)
Total	28 (41.79%)	39 (58.21%)	67 (100%)

- All exceptions: Middle Dutch period
 - Meanings were either transitive or intransitive, with some variation in separability during Middle Dutch period

Interim conclusion *overlopen*

1. No clear formal transition from SCV to ICV (distinctions in meaning/transitivity)
2. Reanalysis from **postposition to separable particle**?
 - 14 cases of immediate adjacency of adposition and verb (5 in Middle Dutch period)
 - No postpositions with NP complement
 - All **postpositions with pronominal adverbs** (*daar/er* 'there')

e.g.: *Die brugghe die daer **over** liep ...*

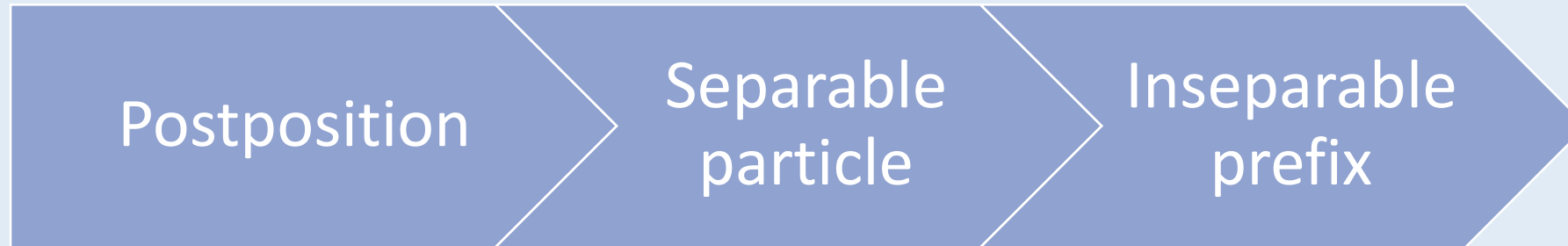
The bridge that there **over runs** ... 'The bridge that runs over it ...'
(CMNL, parthonopeus_van_bloys_frag_br.xml, 1375)

Interim conclusion *overlopen*

1. No clear formal transition from SCV to ICV (distinctions in meaning/transitivity)
2. Reanalysis from **postposition to separable particle?**
 - 14 cases of immediate adjacency of adposition and verb (5 in Middle Dutch period)
 - No postpositions with NP complement
 - All **postpositions with pronominal adverbs** (*daar/er* 'there')
 - *over* in SCV as non-applicative (reanalysis as locative adjunct)
 - (non-)spatial meanings of *over* → more semantic variation

Discussion

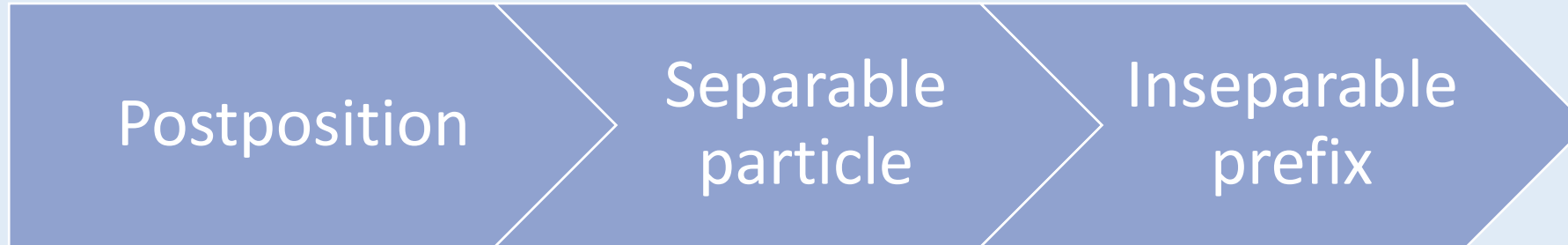
2 ?



- **No evidence of the formal transition SCV → ICV**
- Clear distinctions in meaning/transitivity: already in Middle Dutch
- ~~Adposition-to-applicative pathway~~
- Historical support for **adverb-to-applicative pathway**

Discussion

1 ?



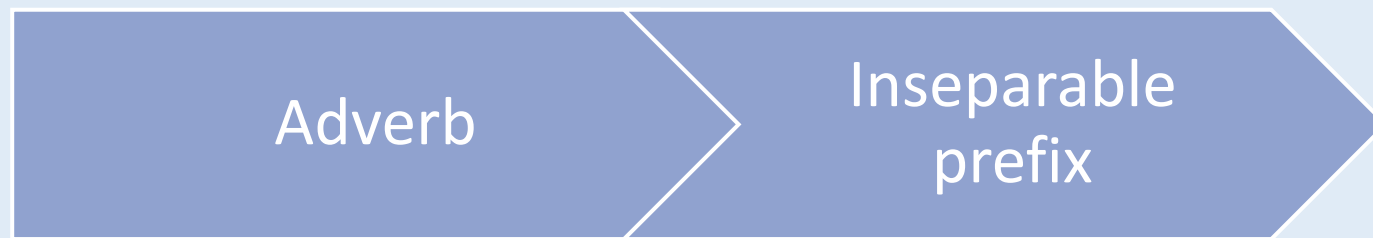
Postpositions with NPs as bridging contexts? (Blom 2004)

- not found in data
- rather: **pronominal adverb constructions**
 - role in evolution of non-applicative preverbs with locative adjuncts

Discussion

Evolution of applicativizing preverbs (ICVs)?

→ *over-* and *onder-* have Proto-Indo-European etymons in spatial prepositions and adverbs (*Etymologisch Woordenboek van het Nederlands*), which originate in locative adverbs (Lehmann 2015: 97-111)
! However, too early for dataset to test



Discussion

Evolution of intransitive SCVs without locative adjuncts?

(e.g., *De zon gaat onder*. 'The sun sets')

→ directly from **adverbs**

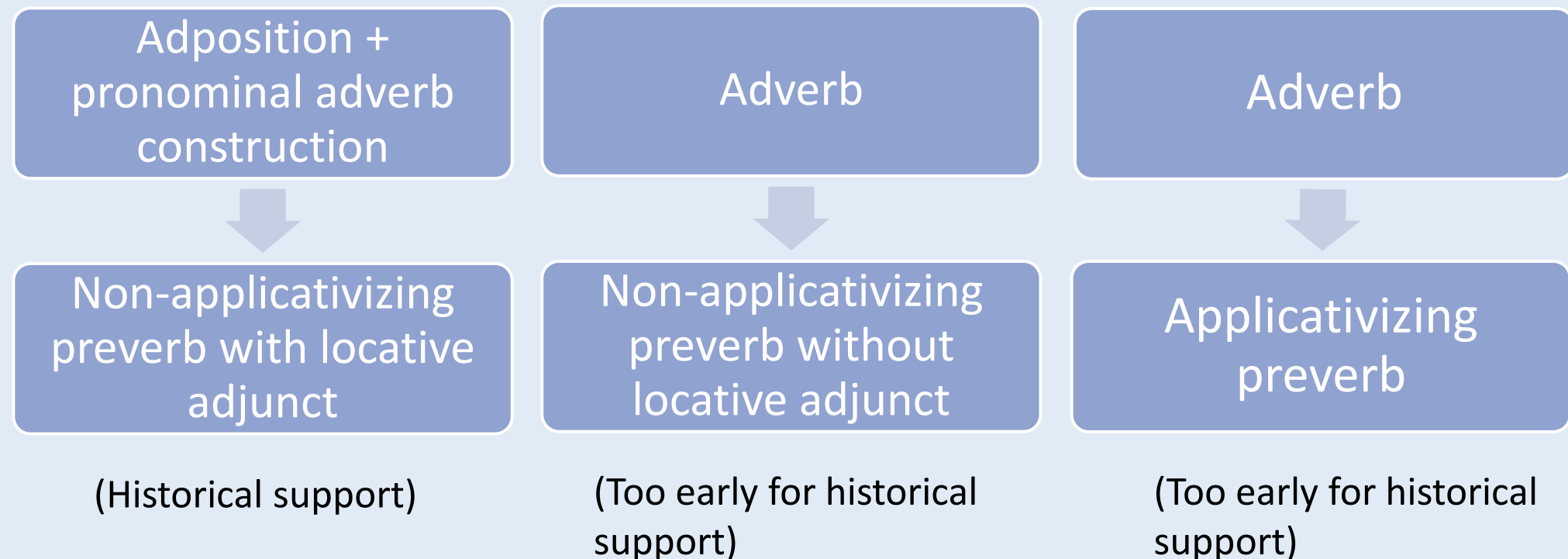
→ around 800-1000 AD: establishment of word order phenomena (V2 and two-pole organization of verbal elements) (Van der Horst 2008: 39-40)

! However, too early for dataset to test



Conclusion

- Preverbs derive from **multiple source constructions**, each contributing to the emergence of specific meanings of the complex predicate (cf. Van De Velde, De Smet & Ghesquière 2013).



Thank you!

Questions?

ann-sophie.vrielynck@uliege.be

dirk.pijpops@uantwerpen.be

an.vanlinden@uliege.be

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