Grammaticalization in the syntax of preposition doubling in Flemish dialects

Lobke Aelbrecht (GIST, Ghent University) & Marcel den Dikken (Graduate Center, CUNY)

Basic data – Certain (Belgian) Dutch dialects display circumpositions with an iden
tical preposition and postposition, cf. (1)a. The interpretation of (1)a is parallel to Standard Dutch (1)b with either a (directional) pre-PP or a post-PP.

Key properties

1. P doubling is restricted to spatial Ps, hence is illicit with the selected PP in (2)b. Moreover, it typically occurs only with directional PP s, not locative ones. A test to tell the two apart is auxiliary choice (Den Dikken 2010): directional PP s cooccur with zijn ‘be’, locative PP s with hebboe ‘have’. As (3) shows, doubling only occurs with the former.

2. The entire PP complex [P1 DP P2] cannot move as a unit. P1 and the object can undergo movement together, however, to the exclusion of P2. P2 on its own can incorporate into the verb cluster, as (4)c illustrates.

3. In P doubling constructions, the indefinite pronoun must surface in situ, to the right of P1, cf. (5)a. The example in (5)b, with so-called R-movement of the indefinite pronoun (spelled out as ergens) to the left of P1, is bad, in striking contrast with the (Standard Dutch) single-P construction in (5)c.

Analysis, part I: A reduced higher P layer – P doubling resembles (Standard Dutch) circumpositions such as ‘now DP been’ ‘around DP’, with non-identical Ps. These, too, are always spatial and typically directional (cf. 1). Circumpositions and P doubling differ with respect to 2 and 3, however. With non-doubling circumpositions, the entire circum-PP can move as a unit whereas for (Standard Dutch) many speakers the pre-PP layer fails to subextract and P2 cannot incorporate, cf. (6) (contrary to property 2; cf. (4)). Furthermore, non-doubling circum-PP s allow both in situ indefinite pronouns ([7]a) and R-pronouns ([7]b, contra 2).

In the structure in (8) for circumPP s (Den Dikken 2010), P2 is base-generated in Ploc, and CP[PSpec], containing P1 in Ploc and the DP object, moves around it, to [Spec,PathP]. The presence of CP[Path] prevents subextraction of CP[PSpec] and incorporation of Ploc, which captures the data in (6) for the speakers who find the %-marked options illicit. Speakers allowing them allow Ploc to forgo an extended projection of its own (i.e. no PathP, DeclP[Path] and CP[Path]).

To capture the differences with P doubling, we argue that Ploc in P doubling systematically fails to project a functional layer, which forces Ploc to incorporate, and makes movement of the lower PP possible and movement of the entire [P, DP P3] impossible. This results in the structure in (9) for P doubling, which captures both the movement and incorporation data (property 2) and the fact that P doubling is directional (property 1).

Analysis, part II: A defective lower P layer – The landing site for R-movement in Standard Dutch is [Spec,CP[PSpec]] (cf. Koopman 1997, Den Dikken 2010). In P doubling this landing site is unavailable (cf. (5)). We capture this by claiming that CP[PSpec] is defective (C*) in this case, lacking EPP. Hence, an indefinite pronoun cannot move to [Spec,CP[PSpec]] to form an R-pronoun and instead, stays in situ (property 3). C*’s defection requires it to amalgamate with a lexical host which is featurally compatible with it, in order to be licensed. C* is itself a member of Ploc’s extended projection and is specified for Ploc’s features. In order to amalgamate with C*, Ploc must be featurally compatible with it, i.e. Ploc must be specified for the features of Ploc (= ap in (10)) too. Thus, Ploc can only amalgamate with C* if it spells out identically to Ploc. A defective C* demands identical Ps and thereby derives doubling.

On the distribution of P doubling – In Flemish varieties of Dutch, more prepositions are subject to reanalysis as complementizers than in Northern Dutch. More particularly, while in Northern Dutch only the locative P om functions as a complementizer, in Flemish two Ps that have directional uses (van ‘of/from’ and voor ‘for/in front of’) can serve as complementizers as well, cf. (11). Unambiguous uses of directional Ps as complementizers may serve as a cue to the language user that amalgamation of C* and Ploc can be taken further toward wholesale grammaticalization of Ploc as C in P doubling constructions. With Ploc initially holding on to its lexical feature [+dir], the reanalyzed P-C hybrid will at first be possible in directional constructions only (cf. 1); subsequent loss of [+dir] will lead to a widening of the range of contexts in which the P-C hybrid can be used, with non-directional P inserted under CP[PSpec].

Speakers for whom this grammaticalization process is in an advanced stage allow for P doubling in purely locative contexts such as the one in (12) as well. Even for these speakers, however, grammaticalization of P to C is not fully complete at the present time: for all speakers, (2)a – in principle ambiguous between a locative and a directional reading – only supports a directional interpretation. P2 continues to be analyzed as a spell-out of Ploc (rather than C) whenever such a parse is possible.

Grammaticalization of P to C – Grammaticalization of Ploc to C is a case of structural simplification oriented toward the functional category, in line with Roberts & Roussou (2003), henceforth R&R: upon completion of the grammaticalization of the P-C hybrid, the structural distinction between PP and CP collapses and only CP remains. The directionality of this process (with a structurally higher P reanalyzed as the C-head of its complement) runs counter to the ‘upward reanalysis’ dictum of R&R’s approach, however: Ploc taking CP as its complement is reanalyzed ‘downward’ as CP’s head.

We claim that grammaticalization toward C is never a case of ‘upward reanalysis’. Alongside the case of grammar
ticalization of P loc to C, the paper reinvestigates the grammaticalization path from Dutch om, Flemish voor and English for to C (cf. Fischer et al. 2000) and especially that of van ‘of/from’. Van qua lexical preposition is a Ploc (cf. (13)a), present in all varieties of Dutch; it never selected a CP complement (unlike Ploc in P doubling over voor in purposive constructions), nor did it ever head a PP dependent of the matrix predicate in the input to C-van (unlike for in (13)b). A complex chain of events starting with the development of van in possessed noun phrases ([14]a) and leading to the use of van as a relator of subjects and predicates ([14]b) resulted in a purely functional incarnation of
ran that made it eligible for use as a complementizer – only in infinitival clauses because finite non-root CPs in West-Germanic always had obligatory fillers of C, making finite C a position that ran could not be reanalyzed as a filler of.

Examples

1. a. dat hij op dem berg is geklommen.  
   that he on the mountain is on climbed
   ‘that he has climbed up on the mountain.’

   b. dat hij <op> de berg <op> is geklommen.  
   that he on the mountain up is climbed
   ‘that he has climbed up on the mountain.’

2. a. Will zou nooit in het water in springen.  
   Will would never in the water in jump
   ‘Will would never jump into the water.’

   b. Will zou nooit in die sprookjes (in) geloven.  
   Will would never in those fairytales (in) believe
   ‘Will would never believe in those fairytales.’

3. a. Hij is in het water (in) gesprongen.  
   he is in the water in jumped
   ‘He has jumped into the water.’

   b. Hij heeft in het water (in) gesprongen.  
   he has in the water in jumped
   ‘He has jumped (up and down) in the water.’

4. a. Op dienen berg <op> klmt hij niet <op>.  
   on that,MASC mountain on climbs be not on
   ‘He’s not climbing up on that mountain.’

   b. Op welken berg <op> is hij <op> geklommen?.  
   on which mountain on is be on climbed
   ‘Up on which mountain has he climbed?’

   c. dat hij op dienen berg <op> niet <op> is <op> geklommen.  
   that be on that,MASC mountain on not on on climbed
   ‘that he hasn’t climbed up on that mountain.’

5. a. op iets op klimmen  
   on something on climb
   all: ‘to climb on something’

6. a. [Om welk huis <heen> is Jan <%heen> gelopen?  
   about which house towards is Jan towards walked
   ‘Around which house did Jan walk?’

   b. … dat Jan om het huis <heen> is <%heen> gelopen.  
   that Jan about the house towards is towards walked
   ‘…that Jan walked around the house.’

7. a. om iets heen  
   around something
   b. ergens om heen  
   somewhere about
   both: ‘around something’


References