COMPUND PREPOSITIONS IN OLD FRENCH:
“Reinforced” synonyms of their non-prefix ed counterparts?

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Certain pairs of prepositions in Old French, such as *lez/delez* ‘near’ and *vers/devers* ‘towards’ have often been considered to have essentially the same meaning (Gorog, 1972; Einhorn, 1974; Kibler, 1984). This study explores whether or not the compound forms of such prepositions are in fact reinforced synonyms of their non-prefix ed counterparts or whether they show distinct semantic and syntactic patterns. Five prepositional pairs (*fors/defors, lez/delez, sor/desor, soz/desoz and vers/devers*) are analyzed using 1000 tokens drawn from the *Nouveau corpus d’Amsterdam*, the *Textes de français ancien* and the *Base de français médiéval*. The data are studied according to specific syntactic and semantic variables, including the type of determiner phrase (DP), whether or not the DP is modified, and whether the DP is animate or inanimate. While the data are characterized by a large amount of variation, there are definite tendencies across the five prepositional pairs, including that simple prepositions are more common before personal pronouns and animate DPs. There also seem to be colligational tendencies that are distinct to particular prepositions. Given the differences in syntactic distribution and the types of DPs selected, it seems that compound prepositions are not perfectly synonymous with their non-prefix ed counterparts.

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been suggested that certain pairs of prepositions in Old French, such as *lez/delez* ‘near’ and *vers/devers* ‘towards’, are “doublets” (Kibler, 1984) or “synonyms” (Gorog, 1972) with “the same or similar meaning” (Einhorn, 1974). This study seeks to ascertain whether the compound forms of such prepositions are simply reinforced synonyms of their non-prefix ed counterparts or whether they show distinct semantic and syntactic patterns. Among other questions, this study seeks to determine whether the prefix *de-* is essentially semantically null or whether certain syntactic and semantic variables seem to influence whether the simple or compound version of the preposition is employed. For example, syntactic and semantic traits of the determiner phrase that the preposition selects are considered. Using 1000 tokens from the *Nouveau corpus d’Amsterdam*, the *Textes de français ancien* and the *Base de français médiéval*, five prepositional pairs are analyzed (*fors/defors, lez/delez, sor/desor, soz/desoz and vers/devers*) to establish whether the prefix *de-* seems to contribute in the same way to each compound form. These data suggest that rather than categorical distinctions, there are instead favoring contexts for each variant. For example, personal pronouns and animate determiner phrases seem to be favoring contexts for the non-prefix ed forms.

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1 I wish to extend profound thanks to Barbara Vance, as well as the students of History of the Language Part 2 and the audience members at the “Old French Panel” of the FRIT GSO Conference in April 2015 for their helpful comments.
II. PREPOSITIONS IN OLD FRENCH

Old French is replete with prepositions, including pairs such as *lez* and *delez*, *sor* and *desor*, and *vers* and *devers*, in which both a simple and compound variant proliferate. Such pairs are often discussed as sharing the same or similar meaning, as in the following citation (Kibler, 1984: 156-157):

“It would be impossible in a grammar such as this to distinguish between such forms as *sus*, *desus* and *dedessus*, all of which mean ‘above, over, on’; or between *lez*, *delez*, *joste*, *dejoste*, *pres* and *emprez*, all of which mean ‘beside, near’.”

Kibler (1984: 156-157) further states that “serious lexicological study” of these kinds of prepositions is “yet to be undertaken.”

Pairs such as *lez* and *delez* are sometimes called “doublets” (Kibler, 1984: 168-169), which suggests that they are interchangeable. Gorog (1972) discusses such pairs as synonymous in his article “The Medieval French prepositions and the question of synonymy” and suggests that the prefixed versions came into existence “for clarity” as final consonants were lost in Old French (363). Buridan & Zink (2000: 386) offer a similar explanation: “existe ainsi en ancien français une double série de prépositions…dont la seconde vient de l’étoffement des premières sujettes à l'usure...”. Finally Einhorn (1974: 105) suggests that the “need for extra stress or greater precision” encouraged compound forms and led to the existence of pairs with the “same or similar meaning”.

Given the extreme proliferation of prepositions in Old French, it is unsurprising that many related topics are extensively discussed in the literature. Fagard (2009) in his article “Prépositions et locutions prépositionnelles: Un sémantisme comparable?” considers the semantics of simple versus complex prepositions, positing that complex prepositions, such as *au devant de*, are polysemous but have fewer senses than the simple correspondents, such as *devant*. Gregory (1984) specifically examines the prepositions *a(h)ier* in Old French, arguing that it is derived from Latin *adersum* based on morphology and semantics despite phonetic difficulties with this etymology, and Langerquist (1993; 1997) provides immensely detailed treatments of the prepositions *chiés* and *entor*, respectively. Amiot (2011) remarks on the localizing senses of *en* in Old French.

As for forms that could be prepositions, adverbs, particles and/or prefixes in Old French, Marchello-Nizia (2002) looked at 4 simple prepositions (*aval, par, tres, en*) that were “pluri-categorie”
from the 11th to 15th centuries. She suggests that “these ‘prepositions’ evolve from multi-categorial to mono-categorial usage” due to a “more general change at the level of the French grammatical macro-system, leading towards an increasing iconicity, where one function is expressed by a single form” (Marchello-Nizia, 2002: 220). 2 Burnett & Tremblay (2012) consider Old French particles in more detail, specifically considering the encoding of directionality in the history of French and suggesting that the “loss of particle verbs should not be attributed to the lexicalization of prefixes” (339). These complex threads of form and function in the diachronic evolution of the French language render prepositions an especially fruitful and interesting topic for further study.

III. Research Questions and Methodology

This study seeks to ascertain whether or not the compound forms of the prepositions are in fact “reinforced” synonyms with “the same or similar meaning” as their non-prefixed counterparts (cf. Gorog, 1972; Einhorn, 1974; Kibler, 1984; Buridant & Zink, 2000) or whether they demonstrate distinct syntactic and/or semantic patterns. Thus, this study seeks to determine whether the prefix de- is essentially semantically null or whether certain syntactic and semantic variables seem to influence whether the simple or compound version of the preposition is employed.

For instances of variation, this study further seeks to establish whether or not one form is unmarked, whether there are absolute and categorical distinctions, or whether there are favoring contexts that seem to account for the variation. Finally, this study considers multiple pairs of simple and compound prepositions with the goal of ascertaining whether or not the prefix de- seems to semantically contribute in the same way to each compound preposition.

The following pairs of prepositions are considered in this study: fors v. defors ‘outside’, lez v. delez ‘beside, near’, sor v. desor ‘on’, soz v. desoz ‘under’ and vers v. devors ‘toward’. A total of 1000 tokens are analyzed, 100 tokens for each preposition, simple and compound. These 100 tokens were generally the first 100 hits from the Nouveau corpus d’Amsterdam (NCA) for the primary spelling.

2 She discusses the other possibilities that have been put forth in the literature, including that the disappearance of particles is linked to the syntactic change from predominantly SOV word order to SVO word order (cf. Buridant, 2000, quoted in Marchello-Nizia, 2002: 215). Another possibility is that the disappearance of prefixes is linked to loss of the pro-drop parameter (cf. Dufresne et al. 2001, quoted in Machello-Nizia, 2002: 215).
variant. These results were supplemented as needed by other spelling variants and results from the Textes de français ancien (TFA) and the Base de français médiéval (BFM).

This study excludes adverbs (or prepositions that do not select a DP), complex prepositions (such as par desoz and hors de), and re-compounded prepositions (such as dedesoz) so as not to confound the variable under consideration. Therefore, this study examines simple and compound prepositions that are transitive, that is, that select a DP (determiner phrase).

As mentioned before, many words in Old French (fors, lez, sus, soz, etc.) were both prepositions and adverbs (Einhorn, 1974: 105; Kibler, 1984: 106; Marchello-Nizia, 2002: 206). In the Nouveau corpus d’Amsterdam (NCA), most instances of desor, desoz, fors, defors and a few others are tagged as adverbs, although some tokens are clearly prepositions, as in (1a) and (1b):

(1a) donés moi les armes celui que enconstrai defors \[ADV\] la porte, et vostre cope d’or emporte (La chevalier du lion, NCA)

give-2Pl to-me the arms/weapons the-one that encounter-PAST-1s outside the door and your cup of
gold carry-PRES-3s

‘Give me the arms of the one that I encountered outside the door and who carries
your golden cup’

(1b) car il sont del fruit saolez e desoz \[ADV\] l’ombre reposez (Le Bestiaire de Guillaume le Clerc, NCA)

because they be-pres-pl of-the fruit gorged/filled-up and under the shade rested

‘because they indulged in the fruit and rested under the shade’

In each of these sentences, the form tagged as an adverb is evidently a transitive preposition in the sense that it is selecting a determiner phrase (DP). Thus, it was important to go through the hits carefully so as to find 100 tokens in which the form is a preposition.

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3 Godefroy (1881-1902); Kibler (1984) and Roget (1887) were consulted to determine possible spelling variants for each preposition. This yielded the following spelling variants: fors (fors, ors, huers/ fors, for, fors, fers, forz, flors, flores, forst, fuer, fuers, fear, hors, orz) v. defors (deffors, defor, debori), lez (lez, le, lez, leis, leiz, let, letz, le, lis, lies) v. delez (deles, dele, delé, déliz, déliz, déliz, déliz), sor v. desor (sor, sour, seur, sur, suer, sure, sure, sure, suet) v. desor (desor, desour, deseur, deser, desur, deson, dessus) and vers (vers, viers, ser, sve) v. devers (devor, devier). I searched for each of these spelling variants in the NCA so as to ascertain which spelling variant was the most common.

4 This was necessary for defors in particular. It should be noted that the NCA contains texts from the beginning of the 11th century to the end of the 14th century, while the TFA includes mostly 12th and 13th century texts supplemented by some 14th and 15th century texts, and the BFM includes texts from the 9th to 16th centuries.

5 The total of 100 tokens for each preposition also excludes duplicate hits (from repeated manuscripts in NCA or between NCA and TFA), and hits where the following word was unrecognizable, marked as “unknown” in the lemmatized version of the NCA and/or not in the Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française (Godefroy, 1881) or the Dictionnaire du Moyen français (DMF, 2015).

6 Marchello-Nizia (2002) suggests that these were “morphismes pluri-catégoriels”. She mentions 51 simple prepositions and contends that 39 of them were also adverbs and/or “particules” (préposées/ postposées) or “préfixes” (lexicalisées/séparables). She goes on to say that “…ce n’est qu’à partir du 17e siècle que les grammairiens insistent sur la distinction à opérer entre préposition (sous, sur, dans, etc.) et adverbe (dessous, dessus, dedans, etc.)” (Marchello-Nizia, 2002: 205).
**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The 1000 tokens in this study were coded for several different semantic and syntactic variables to try and ascertain whether or not differences exist between contexts in which a compound preposition is employed as opposed to its simple counterpart.

**IV. i. Syntactic structure of DP**

The first variable considered was the syntactic structure of the determiner phrase (DP). A distinction is observed between a pronounced NP, as in *vers la royne* ‘towards the queen’, and no NP, in which there is no noun phrase but rather the preposition is followed by a determiner, as in *vers ele* ‘toward her’:

\[
\begin{align*}
(2) & \quad PP \\
   & \quad \downarrow \hspace{1cm} \downarrow \\
   & \quad P \quad DP \\
   & \quad \text{vers} \quad \text{la} \\
   & \quad \text{‘toward’} \quad \text{‘the’} \\
   & \quad \text{DP} \quad \text{NP} \\
   & \quad \text{royne} \quad \text{‘queen’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(3a) & \quad PP \\
   & \quad \downarrow \hspace{1cm} \downarrow \\
   & \quad P \quad DP \\
   & \quad \text{vers} \quad \text{ele} \\
   & \quad \text{‘toward’} \quad \text{‘her’} \\
   & \quad \text{DP} \quad \text{NP} \\
   & \quad \text{∅}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(3b) & \quad PP \\
   & \quad \downarrow \hspace{1cm} \downarrow \\
   & \quad P \quad DP \\
   & \quad \text{vers} \quad \text{D’} \\
   & \quad \text{‘toward’} \quad \text{‘her’} \\
   & \quad \text{DP} \quad \text{NP} \\
   & \quad \text{∅}
\end{align*}
\]

In (2) *vers la royne* ‘toward the queen’, there is a pronounced NP, selected by the determiner (in this instance the definite article. As for (3) *vers ele* ‘toward her’, either the NP is empty, as in (3a) or else the determiner simply does not select an NP, as in (3b). This analysis is based on the DP hypothesis and the assumption that pronouns are heads of DP phrases, as per Adger (2003: 256) and Haegeman (1994: 611).

A pronounced NP always includes a noun, but may be preceded by a definite article, as in (4a), by an indefinite article, as in (4b), or by no article, as in (4c):

\[
(4a) \quad \text{et chevalche tantque il voit un chastel fort et bien seant defors les murs ne voit neant fors mer} \\
   \quad \text{(Le chevalier au lion, NCA)}
\]

\[
\text{and ride-on-horseback-PRES-3SG so-far-that he see-PRES-3SG a castle strong and well sitting outside} \\
\text{the walls NEG see-PRES-3SG nothing outside sea} \\
\text{‘and he rides so far that he sees a strong and well-situated castle; outside the walls he sees nothing except the sea’}
\]
In each of these examples, we see a pronounced NP in the DP selected by the preposition. As for the cases with no NP, these DPs could be a personal pronoun, as in (5a), or a demonstrative pronoun, as in (5b):  

(5a) son cuer avoit torné vers lui mont loiaum s’aiment endui  
(Li romanç d’Athís et Prophilias, NCA)  
her heart has-IMP-3SG turned toward him very loyally refl-love-PRES-3PL both  
‘she had turned her heart toward him; they loved one another very loyally’

(5b) quant il vit que tuit dormoient fors celui qui l’avoit aporté  
(La vie de saint Antoine, NCA)  
when he see-PAST-3SG that all sleep-IMP-3SG outside the one who it-have-IMP-3SG brought  
‘when he saw that all were sleeping except the one who had brought it’

As discussed above, these examples do not have a pronounced NP, either because this position is empty, or because the determiner does not select an NP.

For the 1000 tokens, the results in terms of the syntactic structure of the following DP are given in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>SIMPLE PREPOSITION</th>
<th>COMPOUND PREPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronounced NP</td>
<td>44% (351/794)</td>
<td>56% (443/794)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No NP</td>
<td>72% (149/206)</td>
<td>28% (57/206)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Simple v. compound prepositions in terms of the syntactic context of the following DP: Summary

We see that of the tokens that were followed by a pronounced NP, 44% were with simple prepositions, such as *lez* or *vers*, and 56% were with compound prepositions such as *delez* and *devers*.

This does not seem very remarkable. However, a chi-square test shows that these values are

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7 There were also three cases of relative pronouns, such as (8b) below.
beyond what would be expected by chance (p < 0.05). Furthermore, for DPs with no NP, 72% were with a simple preposition and only 28% with a compound preposition. Thus, it seems that no NP is a favoring context for simple prepositions.8

The results for each prepositional pair are given in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>FORS v. DEFORS</th>
<th>LEZ v. DELEZ</th>
<th>SOR v. DESOR</th>
<th>SOZ v. DESOZ</th>
<th>VERS v. DEVERS</th>
<th>Simple v. Compound preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronounced NP</td>
<td>42% (73/173)</td>
<td>43% (59/137)</td>
<td>45% (74/164)</td>
<td>50% (89/178)</td>
<td>39% (56/142)</td>
<td>44% (351/794)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V. 58% (78/137)</td>
<td>V. 57% (90/164)</td>
<td>V. 55% (89/178)</td>
<td>V. 50% (86/142)</td>
<td>V. 61% (443/794)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No NP</td>
<td>100% (27/27)</td>
<td>65% (41/63)</td>
<td>72% (26/36)</td>
<td>50% (11/22)</td>
<td>76% (44/58)</td>
<td>72% (149/206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V. 0% (0/27)</td>
<td>V. 35% (22/63)</td>
<td>V. 28% (11/22)</td>
<td>V. 50% (14/58)</td>
<td>V. 24% (57/206)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal pronoun</td>
<td>100% (16/16)</td>
<td>66% (40/61)</td>
<td>69% (22/32)</td>
<td>45% (9/20)</td>
<td>74% (40/54)</td>
<td>70% (127/183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V. 0% (0/16)</td>
<td>V. 34% (21/61)</td>
<td>V. 31% (10/32)</td>
<td>V. 55% (11/22)</td>
<td>V. 26% (14/54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstr. pronoun</td>
<td>100% (11/11)</td>
<td>50% (1/2)</td>
<td>100% (1/1)</td>
<td>100% (2/2)</td>
<td>100% (4/4)</td>
<td>95% (19/20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V. 0% (0/11)</td>
<td>V. 50% (0/1)</td>
<td>V. 0% (0/2)</td>
<td>V. 5% (0/4)</td>
<td>V. (1/20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Simple v. compound prepositions in terms of the syntactic context of the following DP: In more detail

While we see some variation in the percentages for the prepositional pairs, the overall tendencies between simple and compound prepositions in the far right column seem to generally reflect the patterns of each pair. For example, in the second row we see that for these tokens sor appeared before no NP 72% of the time and that vers appeared before no NP 76% of the time. These patterns are reflected in the broader tendency, discussed above, for a simple preposition to precede no NP.

Considering the category “no NP” in more detail, we see that most of these tokens involve a preposition preceding either a personal pronoun or a demonstrative pronoun. The percentages for demonstrative pronouns appear quite important at first glance, but since there are

8 It is important to note that this table (and all following tables) show percentages and not probabilities: these do not reflect the statistical likelihood of finding one variant rather than another in a given context, but rather the raw results from the data in this study, the 1000 tokens collected primarily from the NCA.
often only one or two tokens per preposition, it is difficult to make any sweeping generalizations.

For personal pronouns, however, there were 183 tokens; thus, the fact that 70% of them were preceded by a simple preposition seems substantial. Therefore, a following personal pronoun seems to act as a favoring context for simple prepositions. The simple and compound variants of the prepositions appear to have different syntactic distributions.

IV. ii. Modification of DP

Given these preliminary results pertaining to the syntactic distribution, another variable to consider is whether or not the DP is modified or non-modified. For a DP that is modified, this modification could involve an adjective, as in (6a), or a relative clause, as in (6b):

(6a) **delez une bele fontaine ki n’ert pas del chemin lontaine**

*beside* a beautiful fountain that **NEG-be-IMP-3SG NEG of-the path/way far**

‘**beside** a beautiful fountain that was not far from the path’

(6b) **nus ne me puet de ce garir fors uns mire que je bien sai cil me garra ou j’en morrai**

*none** **NEG me can-PRES-3SG of this to-cure** **outside** a doctor that I know well this-one me
cure-FUT-3SG or **I-of-it die-FUT-1SG**

‘No one can cure me of this, *except* a doctor that I know well. This one will cure me or I will die of it.’

In each of these cases, the DP involves modification: either an AdjP is adjoined, as in (6a), or else a CP is selected by the noun as a complement, as in (6b). A non-modified DP can consist of either a simple pronoun, as in (7a), or else an article plus a noun, as in (7b):

(7a) **mes se vos descendez lez moi, jel vos pardon.**

*but if you come-down-2pt. beside me, I-it to-you pardon/forgive-1SG*

‘but if you come down *beside* me, I will forgive you for it’

(7b) **et une pucelle ancontra seant soz un alemandier**

*and a girl find-PAST-3SG sitting under an almond-tree*

‘and he found a girl sitting under an almond tree’

The results for the data in terms of modification of the following DP are given in Table 3:
In Table 4, we see some slightly elevated percentages for *vers* and *desoz* before a modified DP, but these percentages level out when considering all five simple prepositions. As for non-modified DPs, we see very similar percentages for all the prepositional pairs, both the simple and the compound variants occur about 50% of the time. Thus, the modification of the DP does not seem to have an effect on which variant is selected.

**IV. iii. Animacy of DP**

In order to consider a more semantic variable, the animacy of the DP was examined. An animate DP could be a person, as in (8a), or an animal, as in (8b):

9 It should be noted that body parts have been counted as animate, due to examples such as this:

\[
\text{tote ceste contrevre de voste malice retournerit sor vostre chief}\quad \text{(Predigten des H. Bernhard, NCA)}
\]

all this unknown word of your malice return-COND-3SG on your head

‘all this (? of your malice would return on your head’

In this example, *vostre chief* ‘your head’ stands for *vos* ‘you’. Many of the examples with body parts involve such a metonymical relationship, generally synecdoche.
(8a) que vous avés vers moy hayne que vous aviiés vers moy ire

that you have-PRES-2PL toward me hate that you have-IMP-2PL toward me anger
‘that you feel hate toward me, that you felt anger toward me’

(8b) li moine avoient ensemble eus amené un chamel sor qui il portoient lor aigue et lor pain

the monks had-IMP-3PL together them brought a camel on whom they carry-IMP-3PL their water and their bread
‘The monks had brought with them a camel on which they carried their water and their bread’

An inanimate DP could be a physical object, as in (9a), or a more abstract referent, like a direction, as in (9b):

(9a) j’ai en ma chambre lez mon lit yy sous de deniers

I-have-PRES-1SG in my bedroom beside my bed two sous(money) of deniers(pieces-of-silver)
‘I have in my bedroom beside my bed two silver coins’

(9b) et si m’avoit dounee celee partie devers occident.

and thus to-me-have-IMP-3SG given that part toward west
‘and thus he had given to me that part toward the west’

These are of course just two of the possibilities for inanimate DPs. The results for animacy of the DP are presented in Table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>SIMPLE PREPOSITION</th>
<th>COMPOUND PREPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animate DP</td>
<td>67% (266/396)</td>
<td>33% (130/396)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inanimate DP</td>
<td>39% (234/604)</td>
<td>61% (370/604)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Simple v. compound prepositions in terms of the animacy of the following DP: Summary

We see that when the context is an animate DP, a simple preposition precedes 67% of the time and a compound preposition precedes only 33% of the time. Thus, it appears that animacy of the DP is important. More detailed results for this variable are provided in Table 6:
In more detail, we see with an animate DP, *fors* and *vers* are even more common than their prefixed counterparts, whereas *soz* is not much more common than *desoz*. Nevertheless, overall we see that 67% of simple prepositions precede an animate DP, which seems to be representative of all five prepositional pairs. As for a following inanimate DP, we find similar elevated percentages for *defors* and *devers*, while *desoz* is hardly more frequent than *soz*. In general, however, the fact that 61% of inanimate DPs are preceded by simple prepositions seems important.

**IV. iv. Syntax-semantic interface**

It behooves us to consider animacy and personal pronouns together, since we see similar percentages: simple prepositions are more common than their compound counterparts when the following DP is animate or is a personal pronoun. These results are provided in Table 7:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>FORS v. DEFORS</th>
<th>LEZ v. DELEZ</th>
<th>SOR v. DESOR</th>
<th>SOZ v. DESOZ</th>
<th>VERS v. DEVERS</th>
<th>SIMPLE v. COMPOUND PREPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animate DP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>88% (60/68)</td>
<td>63% (59/93)</td>
<td>60% (55/92)</td>
<td>53% (28/53)</td>
<td>71% (64/90)</td>
<td>67% (266/396)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>12% (8/68)</td>
<td>37% (34/93)</td>
<td>40% (37/92)</td>
<td>47% (25/53)</td>
<td>29% (26/90)</td>
<td>33% (130/396)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inanimate DP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>30% (40/132)</td>
<td>38% (41/107)</td>
<td>42% (45/108)</td>
<td>49% (72/147)</td>
<td>33% (36/110)</td>
<td>39% (234/604)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>70% (92/132)</td>
<td>62% (66/107)</td>
<td>58% (63/108)</td>
<td>51% (75/147)</td>
<td>67% (74/110)</td>
<td>61% (370/604)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal pronoun</th>
<th>FORS v. DEFORS</th>
<th>LEZ v. DELEZ</th>
<th>SOR v. DESOR</th>
<th>SOZ v. DESOZ</th>
<th>VERS v. DEVERS</th>
<th>SIMPLE v. COMPOUND PREPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>100% (16/16)</td>
<td>66% (40/61)</td>
<td>69% (22/32)</td>
<td>45% (9/20)</td>
<td>74% (40/54)</td>
<td>70% (127/183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>0% (0/16)</td>
<td>34% (21/61)</td>
<td>31% (10/32)</td>
<td>55% (11/20)</td>
<td>26% (14/54)</td>
<td>30% (56/183)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Simple v. compound prepositions in terms of the animacy of the following DP v. personal pronouns

These results encourage us to consider the syntactic, semantic interface: for these tokens, is the simple preposition more commonly employed than the compound version because the DP is a...
personal pronoun, or because personal pronouns are animate? To resolve this question, data with a pronoun such as the indefinite *ce*, or else a personal pronoun such as *lui* which does not refer to a person, would be helpful. However, there were no such examples in the 1000 tokens of this study (or the other examples that were briefly considered in order to obtain 1000 relevant tokens).

**IV. v. Colligational tendencies**

Finally some important colligational tendencies emerged in these results. A collocation can be defined as “the general relation between elements in a construction, as opposed to a collocation relation between individual words” according to The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics, 3rd edition (Matthews, 2007). For example, it seems that *lez* often collocates with a noun referring to a source of water, as in (10a), (10b) and (10c) below:

(10a) *sor une roche lez la mer lors comenca floz a monter*  
*La vie de saint Jehan Bouche d’Or*, NCA  
‘on a rock beside the sea when the wave began to rise’

(10b) *lors chevauche lez la riviere*  
*The continuations Perceval*, NCA  
‘when he rides his horse beside the river’

(10c) *lez la fontainne troverras un perron*  
*Le chevalier au lion*, NCA  
‘beside the fountain you will find a large stone’

For the original 100 tokens gathered for *lez* and *delez*, there were 15 tokens in which the referent was a source of water and 13 of these (87%) were with *lez*, as shown in Table 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>LEZ v. DELEZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;source of water&gt;</td>
<td>87% (13/15) v. 13% (2/15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: *lez* v. *delez* with a source of water  
The original tokens (100 for each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>LEZ v. DELEZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;source of water&gt;</td>
<td>70% (16/23) v. 30% (7/23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: *lez* v. *delez* with a source of water  
The entire NCA
Looking at all the tokens for the prepositions *lez* and *delez* in the NCA, given in Table 9, we find that this tendency is more or less borne out, even though the percentage isn’t quite as high.\footnote{It’s important to note that *lez* is not simply more common than *delez* in fact, in the NCA it’s just the opposite. There are 268 tokens of *lez* tagged as a preposition and 315 tokens of *delez* tagged as a preposition in the NCA.}

As for *soz* and *desoz*, it seems with the DP *ciel* (or its spelling variants *cel* or *chiel*), *soz* is more common, as in the examples below in (11a) and (11b):

(11a) *soz ciel n aouit plus bele*  
(Le Lai de Guigemar, NCA)  
under sky/heaven NEG have-IMP-3SG more beautiful  
‘under the heaven, there was none more beautiful’

(11b) *il n a soz ciel bone si fier fors moi*  
(La mule sans frein, NCA)  
under sky/heaven NEG have-IMP-3SG man so proud outside me  
‘there is no man under the heaven so proud besides me’

In these examples, we note that the preposition immediately precedes the noun: there is no article, which suggests that this is an expression. For the original 100 tokens gathered for *soz* and *desoz*, there were 20 tokens in which the referent was *ciel* and all 20 of these were with *soz* as shown in Table 10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>SOZ v. DESOZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ciel</em></td>
<td>100% (20/20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0% (0/20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: *Soz v. Desoz* with *ciel/cel/chiel*  
The original tokens (100 for each)

Looking at all the tokens for the prepositions *soz* and *desoz* in the NCA, we do find some examples with *desoz* as in (12):

(12) *je n’u ferioie por tot l’or desoz ciel*  
(Le charroi de Nimes, NCA)  
I NEG it do-COND-1SG for all the gold under sky/heaven  
‘I would not do it for all the gold under the heaven’

However, we see in Table 11 (above) that *soz* is still far more common (39 out of 42 hits). Thus, this is an expression that seems to prefer *soz*. Although this is most likely an expression figée or
“fixed expression” (particularly given the lack of an article), it is interesting to note that there are instances in which the compound preposition is employed instead of the simple variant. Therefore, it is perhaps not as figée or “fixed” as the term might suggest.

As for *fors* and *defors*, we find that when the DP is *dieu* ‘God’, *fors* seems to be preferred, as in (13):

(13) je te dirai tel chose que nus hom, *fors* dieu et moi, ne te porroit dire.  
(Merlin de Robert de Boron, NCA)

‘I will tell you such a thing that none, *except* God and I, could tell you’

The preference for *fors* is shown for the original 100 tokens in Table 12 and for the entire NCA in Table 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>FORS V. DEFORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Dieu</em></td>
<td>100% (5/5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>0% (0/5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: *Fors* v. *Defors* with *dieu*, *diez*, *deu*  
The original tokens (100 for each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>FORS V. DEFORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>dieu</em></td>
<td>100% (16/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>0% (0/16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: *Fors* v. *Defors* with *dieu*, *diez*, *deu*  
The entire NCA

We see that the preference for *fors Dieu* persists over the whole NCA corpus. Thus, this seems to be a very fixed expression. However, it also seems likely that this tendency is related to animacy. We find a similar high percentage for *fors* when the context is a following animate DP, as can be seen by comparing Table 14 (below) with Table 12 (above).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>FORS V. DEFORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Animate DP</em></td>
<td>88% (60/68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>12% (8/68)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: *Fors* v. *Defors* in terms of animacy of the DP  
The original tokens (100 for each)

The high prevalence of *fors dieu* is also possibly linked to a distinction between concrete and abstract DPs. We recall examples such as *defors les murs* ‘outside the walls’ (4a) in which a compound preposition is employed with a concrete DP. Such examples contrast with tokens such as *fors dieu* ‘except God’ (13), in which a simple preposition is employed with an abstract DP. This
variable would need to be examined over a larger sample of tokens, but it seems unlikely that
animacy is correlated with simple prepositions for all of the pairs in this study, since we saw that
le vers (the simple preposition) was more common before a source of water (a concrete DP).

Finally, for vers and devers, it seems that when the following DP is le ciel, vers is more
common, as in the examples in (14a) and (14b):

(14a) il regarderent vers le ciel, et firent le signe de la croix sur eux en lor front
(L’évangile de Nicodème, NCA)
they look-PAST-3PL toward the sky and make-PAST-3PL the sign of the cross on them on their chest
‘they looked toward the sky, and made the sign of the cross on their chests’

(14b) margerite a quelque paine vers le ciel amont regarda a damedeu se commanda
(La vie de Sainte Marguerite de Wace, NCA)
Margerite have-PRES-3SG some pain toward the sky above look-PAST-3SG to God REFL.
command-PAST-3SG
‘Margerite has some grief. She looked toward the sky above; she
commended herself to God.

From examples like these, it seems that ‘toward the sky’ may be more metonymical in that the sky
is representing the heavens and the realm of God. However, we also find examples in which there
is no such connotation, as in (14c), an example which refers to birds ascending toward the sky:

(14c) a une fenestre s’apoe voit el pre l’erbe qui verdoie voit le tens bel et le jor cler si ot les aloes chanter
qui vers le ciel montent chantant
(Durmart le Galaï, NCA)
to a window REFL lean-PRES-3S see-PRES-3S the meadow the grass that turn-green the weather
beautiful and the day clear so hear-PRES-3S the lark to-sing that toward the sky/heaven
ascend-PRES-3PL singing
‘He leans out a window, sees the meadow, the grass that is turning green, the
beautiful weather and the clear day; thus he hears the larks sing that ascend
toward the sky singing.’

The results for vers and devers when the following DP is le ciel (or an orthographic variant of this
DP) are given for the original 100 tokens in Table 15 and for the whole NCA in Table 16:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Vers v. Devers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le ciel</td>
<td>62% (10/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38% (6/16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Vers v. Devers with le ciel, lo ciel, le cel, lo cel, le chiel, lo chiel
The original tokens (100 for each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Vers v. Devers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>le ciel</td>
<td>86% (56/65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14% (9/65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Vers v. Devers with le ciel, lo ciel, le cel, lo cel, le chiel, lo chiel
The entire NCA
Looking at the whole NCA, we find even more examples than in the original data in which *vers* is employed before *le ciel*. Thus, it seems that *le ciel* is more often preceded by the simple variant of the preposition than the compound version *devers*. Again, this might be linked to animacy, if the heavens are representative of God.

Finally, the original intention of this study was to consider exclusively prose since any selections made in poetry may have been for metrical considerations: a certain number of syllables may have been desired, and this may have influenced the choice of a prefixed or non-prefixed preposition. However, there were not nearly enough tokens in the NCA nor in the TFA to make any meaningful conclusions. For example, between both of these corpora there were only seven tokens for *leg* in prose. However, the pair *vers* and *devers* was the one pair which had enough tokens to look at the prose section of the NCA only. Table 17 shows the results for the first 100 tokens in the NCA (the original data for this study) v. the first 100 *prose* tokens in the NCA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Pronounced NP</th>
<th>No NP</th>
<th>Personal pronoun</th>
<th>Animate DP</th>
<th>Inanimate DP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VERS v. DEVERS</strong></td>
<td>39% (56/142)</td>
<td>76% (44/58)</td>
<td>74% (40/54)</td>
<td>71% (64/90)</td>
<td>33% (36/110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1st 100 tokens in NCA)</td>
<td>v. 61% (86/142)</td>
<td>v. 24% (14/58)</td>
<td>v. 26% (14/54)</td>
<td>v. 29% (26/90)</td>
<td>v. 67% (74/110)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VERS v. DEVERS</strong></td>
<td>47% (78/165)</td>
<td>63% (22/35)</td>
<td>62% (21/34)</td>
<td>58% (52/89)</td>
<td>43% (48/111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1st 100 <em>prose</em> tokens in NCA)</td>
<td>v. 53% (87/165)</td>
<td>v. 37% (13/35)</td>
<td>v. 38% (13/34)</td>
<td>v. 42% (37/89)</td>
<td>v. 57% (63/111)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: *Vers v. Devers*: 1st 100 tokens in NCA (prose and poetry) v. 1st 100 tokens in *prose* section of NCA

Looking at personal pronouns and animate DPs, we see the same overall tendencies, but the differences are less pronounced in prose only. Thus, it seems that the distinction between prose and poetry might be an important variable to consider in future work.
V. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that there are syntactic and semantic variables which seem to be favoring contexts for either simple or compound prepositions. Further research could consider other variables including the concrete or abstract nature of the referent and the static or dynamic nature of the verb. Contextual variables could include whether or not the simple or compound variants of the prepositions occur in dialogue or narration, as well as in main or embedded clauses. A survey of other such prepositional pairs as well as a diachronic perspective could also be enlightening.

In this study, specific syntactic and semantic variables, including whether or not the selected DP is a personal pronoun and whether or not the DP is animate, appear to be favoring contexts for either the simple or compound variant of a particular preposition. Finding favoring contexts rather than categorical distinctions is not surprising, given the immense variation elsewhere in Old French. There are definite tendencies across the five prepositional pairs, including that simple prepositions are more common before personal pronouns and animate determiner phrases. There also seem to be colligational tendencies that are distinct to particular prepositions. Given these differences in syntactic distribution and the types of DPs that are selected, it seems that compound prepositions are not perfectly synonymous with their non-prefixied counterparts.

VI. REFERENCES


