

On the development of the Czech secondary preposition *kvůli*

This paper reports on preliminary results concerning the development of the Czech secondary preposition *kvůli* ‘because’. From the Old Czech PP *k vůli/vuoli* ‘at will’ denoting benefaction, the expression underwent a series of syntactic and semantic changes, resulting in *kvůli* denoting purpose and cause in Modern Czech, and thus constituting a case of grammaticalization (Heine et al., 1991, Hopper, 1991, Hopper & Traugott, 2003). In analysing the historical data, we adopt the framework of Construction Grammar (CxG; Fillmore, 1988, Fried, 2009) as it offers useful tools for capturing the gradualness, interconnectedness, and interdependence of the observed changes. The data come from the Old and Middle Czech text banks, the Lexical database of humanistic and baroque Czech, the DIAKORP corpus and the Czech reference dictionary.

In Old Czech, the noun *vóle* had the full lexical meaning of ‘will’. Its animate possessor was expressed either as a nominal complement in the genitive or as a possessive adjective following *vóli* (1), or as a nominal argument of the verb in the dative case, preceding *vóli*. Accordingly, the PP would be classified as an oblique argument or as a secondary predicate.

- 1) *Ale boh-óm k vůli nás propusti-l-i, niče-huož*
but god.M-DAT.PL toward will.F-DAT.SG we.ACC release-PF.PTC.ACT-PL.M nothing-GEN
nám zase nevráti-chu
we.DAT back not.give.back-3PL.AOR
“But they released us at the gods’ will, they did not give anything back to us.” (1469; OCTB)

Over time, the nominal possessor of the will started appearing in the dative also in postposition, suggesting either a freer word order of the oblique and the secondary predicate, or an emergence of the complement of *vóli* in the dative. In some contexts, causal interpretation of *k vůli* becomes plausible. Subsequently, *personified inanimate* possessors started occurring in both ante- and postposition, i.e. in “critical contexts” (Diewald, 2009), which could have stimulated additional inanimate occurrences and triggered semantic shifts, causing *vóli* to become semantically less independent, and suggesting purpose interpretation. Later, inanimate oblique nominal arguments in anteposition and inanimate genitive complements in postposition emerged, further pointing at the role of cause or purpose and, with a few additional minor changes, resembling the current form and function of *kvůli* in contemporary Czech.

The analysis shows that certain features were crucial in the development, minimally at the semantic (animacy, possessiveness, semantic argument structure) and syntactic (word order, adpositional structure) levels, and that both have to be taken into account together. The research thus can (i) contribute to the diachronic study of Czech secondary prepositions and (ii) test the usefulness of CxG in applying its notions and tools to the diachronic analysis of Czech material.

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Sources of data

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