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The diachrony of complex predicates in Dutch: the formation of particles and prefixes

In Dutch, as well as in other Germanic languages, two types of complex predicates with a preposition-like preverb exist: separable complex verbs (SCVs) and inseparable complex verbs (ICVs). These two types are illustrated in (1)-(2), the basic OV word orders given first, followed by the main clauses that are formed by Verb Second movement (V2).

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| (1) | Jan de informatie <u>opzoekt</u>
John the information up-search
both meaning ‘John looks up the information’ | Jan <u>zoekt</u> de informatie <u>op</u>
John search the information up |
| (2) | Jan Marie <u>aanbidt</u>
John Mary at-prays
both meaning ‘John adores Mary’ | Jan <u>aanbidt</u> Marie
John at-prays Mary |

It has been assumed that these two types of complex predicates both originate from syntactic constructions with secondary predicates, representing different stages in the grammaticalization into bound morphemes, where ICVs are grammaticalized further than SCVs. The formal change of becoming inseparable is assumed to be triggered by semantic changes, such as semantic bleaching (Booij 2002).

Recent investigation of both Middle and Modern Dutch data, however, reveals that not all SCVs and ICVs reflect stages of one and the same historical development. This appears from the fact that a lot of ICV preverbs seem to have a more lexical meaning than SCV preverbs, as illustrated in (3). Clearly, this is problematic for the development sketched above that assumes bleaching to be the trigger of the change from SCV into ICV. Moreover, contrary to many SCV preverbs, most ICV preverbs are not predicative, as is illustrated in (4).

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| (3) | a. de informatie <u>opzoeken</u>
the information up-search
‘look up the information’ | de schoenen <u>inlopen</u>
the shoes in-walk
‘wear in the shoes’ | (SCVs) |
| | b. de tuin <u>omsluiten</u>
the garden around-close
‘enclose the garden’ | de tuin <u>overstromen</u>
the garden over-stream,
‘flood the garden’ | (ICVs) |
| (4) | a. de informatie <u>opzoeken</u> | de informatie COMES <u>op</u> (<i>op</i> : ‘visible, active’) | |
| | b. de tuin <u>omsluiten</u> | *de tuin GOES <u>om</u> | |

On the basis of this and other evidence, I would like to claim that, instead of one historical cline, two separate clines are involved: one of predicative and one of non-predicative elements. Predicative words may develop into (predicative) SCV preverbs, but these preverbs hardly ever develop further into ICV preverbs. Non-predicative words, however, such as adverbs and postpositions, easily develop into ICV preverbs, and this probably happens via the intermediate stage of the SCV-system. Therefore, among the SCVs, both predicative and non-predicative preverbs are found, whereas ICV-preverbs are generally non-predicative.

I will present both synchronic and diachronic data from Dutch that support this claim and show how the SCV system and the ICV system both cover their own part in the field of complex predicates in Dutch.