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Of *travels* and *travails*: The role of semantic typology, argument structure constructions, and language contact in semantic change

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Abstract: This paper is an investigation into the role of argument structure constructions as catalysts or blockers of lexical semantic change. It presents a case study of the divergent semantic development of French *travailler* ‘work’ and English *travel* ‘journey’ from their shared earlier meaning ‘labour, toil’. This divergence is shown to not be random: It can be explained as a product of the different intransitive motion constructions (IMCs) and different communicative habits in these two languages. Consequently, the development of *travailler* ‘journey’ in the Anglo-Norman dialect of French can be understood as the result of contact influence of Middle English. By pointing to similar instances in which verbs meaning ‘labour, toil’ have acquired a polysemous ‘motion’ sense in languages with an IMC that can coerce non-motion verbs into contextual motion readings, the paper argues that this is most probably a regular semantic trajectory in satellite-framing, manner-conflating languages.

Keywords: construction grammar, motion typology, borrowing, semantic change, Anglo-Norman, Middle English

1 Setting out: A pair of false friends – F *travailler* and E *travel*

French *travailler* ‘work’ and English *travel* have been so-called false friends for a very long time. *Travel* has been in English at least from c. 1275 (cf. MED s.v. *travailen*), as one of the earlier loan verbs from French borrowed during the diglossic situation with Anglo-Norman (the variety of French in England) that followed the Norman Conquest. Its current meaning ‘journey’ also developed

rather early on, leading to the divergence from its continental counterpart. When I was a student and spent half a year in France as an assistant teacher, I used to trip over this pair of false friends whenever I met English speakers asking what I was doing there: I thought ‘ben, je travaille ici’ – and what came out was *Well, I’m travelling here for half a year*. Tracing the development of this pair of false friends is one aim of this paper. The other is to show how semantic typology, construction grammar, and language contact all can be harnessed to explain semantic change, and, as argued in the final section, to identify regularities in lexical semantic change outside the realm of grammaticalization.

Lexical semantic change is certainly often “messy” and unpredictable. In the case of *travailler/travel*, however, this paper demonstrates that it is possible to tease apart the different factors involved, and to show that the change from ‘labour, toil’ (the earlier meaning of *travailler/travel*) to ‘journey’ is indeed, if not downright predictable, then at least highly probable in English and highly improbable in French. I will show that the language-external, experiential basis for this change would have been present in French as well (Section 3), but that language-internal factors – argument structure constructions and speakers’ communicative habits – blocked it, while in English, they were conducive to this change (Section 4.1–2). Based on this and on research in language contact and L1-L2 transfer, I argue, furthermore, that the ‘journey’ meaning that we find for *travailler* in Anglo-Norman French (AN) is not an independent development which would later have been borrowed into Middle English (ME), but that it is rather an effect of contact with Middle English itself (Section 4.3). To start, however, we need to look into the semantic history of *travailler/travel* in the three varieties involved: Continental French, Anglo-Norman, and English.

2 Semantic development

Importantly, the early attestations of *travailler* all relate to the idea of ‘suffering, pain, hardship’.¹ This occurs in transitive use, as in (1a) ‘to torment, harass’ from

1 As the verb does not yet occur in Latin, the ultimate etymological origin of *travailler* is highly contested. Possible candidates include Latin **trepaliare/tripaliare* ‘suffer, torture’ (e.g. FEW s.v. *tripaliare*, OED s.v. *travail*, v.) and **trabicolare*, derived from *trabacula*, itself from *trabs* ‘beam, bar’ and designating a structure used to immobilize animals and hence implying distress for them (DHLF s.v. *travailler*, cf. also Diez 1861 s.v. *travaglio*). For an overview of possible etymologies, see e.g. Delport (1984: 100–101). The reflex of this unattested Latin verb also occurs in the other Romance languages: from the late 11th century as Old Occitan *trebalhar*, *treballar*, from the 12th century as Catalan *treballar*, from the 13th as Spanish *trabajar* and Portuguese *trabalhar*, and as Italian *travagliare* from the early 14th century (OED s.v. *travail*, v.).

the *Chanson de Roland* (c. 1100), which is the first attestation of *travailler* according to the *Dictionnaire Étymologique de l'Ancien Français* (DEAFpré). Early intransitive uses can be translated with 'to suffer, struggle, take pains, toil' (e.g. (1b) from the early 12th century), or as the specific sense 'be in labour' (1c). Finally, the verb is also used reflexively, equally in the meaning 'to pain oneself, struggle', see (1d) from the mid 12th century.

- (1) a. *Mult grant mal funt e cil duc e cil cunte / A lur seignur, ki tel conseil li dunent: Lui et altrui **travaillent** e cunfundent* (RolB 380, c. 1100, DEAFpré / TL s.v.)²
 'These dukes and these counts do great harm to their lord, who give him such advice: They torment and ruin him and others.'
- b. *Ja femme ne **travillera** De sun ventre qui ceste avra* (LapidALS 1453, 1st third of the 12th century, DEAFpré / AND s.v.)
 'A woman who will have this [stone] will never suffer from bellyache [lit. from her stomach].'
- c. *Et quant ele se resveilla, Ses termes vint, si **traveilla*** (GuillAnglF², late 12th century, TL s.v.)
 'And when she awoke, her time came, and she went into labour.'
- d. *Garda aval en un larriz, / et vit un olliver fuilli. / Tant **se travaille** qu'il i vint; / sor la fresche herbe s'est asis* (GormB 657, 1st half of the 12th century, DEAFpré / Bayot 1931: 42)
 '[The dying Isembart] looked down on a hillside and saw a leafy olive tree / he struggles so long until he got there and sat down on the fresh grass.'

Beside the verb, also the noun *travail* is attested from the early 12th century onwards, used in meanings such as 'hardship' as in (2a) – the first attestation according to DEAFpré – or 'labour, toil' in (2b).

- (2) a. *plusurs **travailz** De faim, de seif, de freiz, de calz* (BrendanW, 1st third of the 12th century, DEAFpré / Waters 1974: 62)
 'Several hardships – from hunger, from thirst, from cold, from heat.'
- b. *Altrement perireient, e par **travail** murreient* (PhThCompS 4r 296, 1119, DEAFpré / Wright 1841: 25)
 'Otherwise [i.e. unless they stopped working and went to sleep at night], they would perish and die from labour.'

² The DEAFpré does not give the actual attestation, but only the text in which it occurs. So for the actual attestations, I either went to TL or AND, or to the edition of the respective text, e.g. Bayot 1931 in (1d). Translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

It is well known that apart from very sporadic early “monuments” of French, like the *Strasbourg Sermons* (842), the *Sequence of St Eulalia* (c. 880), or scattered glosses, texts in Old French only start to appear on a larger scale in the 12th century, and the bulk of these texts have been written in England, hence in (early) Anglo-Norman. Therefore, many of the early attestations of *travailler* are from England as well – just like the examples given in (1–2) in fact, of which only (1c–d) are from the continent. At this point, there does not seem to be any dialectal difference in the use of *travailler* yet. The divergent semantic development only begins in the 13th century, as I will sketch in the following sections, focusing on the intransitive and reflexive uses.

2.1 Semantic development in continental French

Very frequently, the specific ‘hardship’ that is referred to by *travailler* is ‘working hard, toiling’. This is the case, for instance, in (3), which is about two types of farmers who will both not bring in any harvest: the idle one who does not sow in the first place, and the hard-working but foolish one who sows on bad soil.

- (3) *L’un est oisos, l’autre **travaille** / mes nient en lieu qui li vaille* (BesantM 2893, 1227, DEAFpré / Martin 1975: 83)
 ‘This one is idle, the other one works hard, but not in a place that is any good to him.’

From *travailler* ‘work hard, toil, struggle’, the verb develops the weakened and more general meaning ‘work’ known from Present-Day French. The origin of this semantic change undoubtedly lies in expressive, hyperbolic usage, based on the metonymy between ‘toiling, taking pains, labouring’ and ‘working’. This is nicely visible, for example, in (4), from the parable of the workers in the vineyard, where those who have been working the entire day complain that the others, who have only joined them for the last hour, will be paid the same amount of money. The preceding text uses the neutral *obrer* ‘work’ (> *ouvrer*, cf. below) to describe what the workers are doing. The phrasing of the complaint, by contrast, has *travailler*, highlighting the ‘toil’ character of the work, and stressing the perceived unfairness.

- (4) *E il alèrent en la vigne **obrer** ob les autres obrers. [...] “Nos **avom** tote jor **travaillé** en ta vigne, e avom soffri la peine e lo fès dau chaut, e tu as fait ceaus engaus à nos.”* (SermMaurPB, mid 13th century, DEAFpré / TL s.v., expanded with Boucherie 1873: 42)
 ‘And they [the ones hired for the last hour] went to the vineyard to work with the other workers. [...] “We have worked hard in your vineyard all day, and have suffered pain and sweltering heat, and you have made those equal to us.”’

While *travailler* in examples (3) and (4) can still be interpreted as ‘working hard’, either literal or hyperbolic, the idea of ‘hardship’ is clearly gone in (5), from a 15th-century poem about the plague, where *travailler* is collocated with the adverbial *gracieusement, non pas asprement* ‘calmly, and not hard’.

- (5) *Maiz aux accoustuméz, sans fable, / Est assez bon et tolérable, / **Travaillier gracieusement** / En ce temps, **nom pas asprement*** (LA HAYE, P. peste, 1426, 84, DMF s.v.)

‘But to those who are used to it, it is indeed rather good and tolerable to work calmly, and not hard, in these times [of the plague].’

Koch (2005) has sketched this development in detail: *Travailler* in the weakened meaning ‘work’ is attested sporadically in the 13th century, more regularly in the 14th; the noun *travail* only appears in the meaning ‘work’ in the 15th century (Koch 2005: 230). Initially, *travailler* in the sense of ‘work’ is a use typical of the language of immediacy (Koch & Oesterreicher 1985, 2012), cf. its occurrence in (fictive) reported speech in (4). It then extends to the language of distance and becomes the usual verb for ‘work’ in the latter half of the 17th century, when *ouvrer* (< L *operari*) is increasingly perceived as archaic (Koch 2005: 233).³

Such semantic development from ‘toil, suffer, struggle’ to ‘work’ seems to be quite widespread: It is also witnessed in other lexemes and languages, such as L *labor* ‘hardship, trouble’ > ‘work’, MHG *arebeit* ‘hardship, effort’ > NHG *Arbeit* ‘work’, perhaps also Romanian *muncă* ‘work’ from Slav. *mąka* ‘suffering’ (see Koch 2005: 236, Haubrichs 2006: 106).

2.2 Semantic development in Anglo-Norman

Just like in continental varieties (3–4), also in Anglo-Norman the intransitive and reflexive use of *travailler* in the sense ‘labour, toil, work hard’ is attested from the late 13th century, see (6).

- (6) a. *homme covient dehors **travalier** e al ostel reposer* (s.xiii^{ex}; MS: s.xiv^{1/4} *Ancren*² 122.23, AND s.v.)

‘People should toil outside and relax in the house.’⁴

³ What may have played a role in the replacement of *ouvrer* is that the latter is an irregular verb, has potential for homonymic clash with *ouvrir* ‘open’, and has less phonological substance than *travailler* (Koch 2005: 234).

⁴ The Middle English version of the same text has *Me mot ute swinken: ed hame me schal resten, ant nis he a cang cniht the secheth reste i the feht ant eise i the place?* ‘People/one must toil

- b. *Ki ke veut sa santé garder Devant mangier estuit **travailler*** (c1270 *Secr1* 1880, ANST)

‘Whoever wants to keep his health, he should work hard/take exercise before eating.’

However, very early on, and different from continental French, AN *travailler* is also attested in the sense of ‘journey’. The earliest instance⁵ given in the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* (AND) is (7), from the story about bishop Redemptus of Ferentino, who, traveling through his diocese, decides to spend the night in a church next to a martyr’s grave. The infinitive *travailler* is used as a noun here, and the fact that it modifies *ahan* ‘hardship, suffering’ may be taken to suggest that *travailler* itself does not any longer only denote ‘hardship, suffering’, but that it also has acquired a sense ‘strenuous journeying, travelling’.

- (7) *Li seinz oem [...] Après l’ahan del **travaillier**, Son lit feseit apparaillier* (1212 *Dial Greg* 107ra, AND s.v.)

‘The holy man [...] had his bed prepared after the hardship of travelling.’

In the second earliest attestation given in the AND, the ‘journey’ reading is more straightforward. It is from an entirely different kind of text, the late 13th-century law treatise *Miroir de Justices*, in which the ‘journey’ use of *travailler* already appears quite conventionalized: The text features the verb seven times, four of which can clearly be translated with ‘to journey laboriously’, either because *travailler* combines with a directional adverbial such as *es plus foreins marchies des conties* ‘to the extreme boundaries of the counties’ as in (8a), or *loinz* ‘far’ (8b), or because of the context of a summons (8c). The other uses are either transitive ‘to

outside, at home one shall rest, and is he not a foolish knight who seeks rest in the battle and ease in the field?’ (*Ancrene Wisse* 6: 130–1, ed. Hasenfratz 2000). *Swinken* is the typical Middle English verb for ‘work hard, toil’, and as we will see in Section 4.2, it also occurs in the intransitive motion construction.

5 Burghardt (1906: 83) points out that this sense might even be detected roughly a century earlier in the *Voyage de St Brendan* – here in the noun, however: St Brendan and his fellow monks travel by boat in search for the Island of Paradise, a voyage that involves stops on various islands and many adventures. One of the stops is on an island called *Paradise of Birds*, where they pause for two months. In this context, verse 587 goes *Puis le travaix estout sujurn* (s.xii^{1/4} *S Brend* 587) ‘After the *travaux*, rest is necessary’. This could be interpreted as indicating a very early ‘laborious journey’ sense of *travail*, since the antonym to which *travail* is opposed in this verse is not a noun such as *plaisir*, *desport*, or *aïse*, which would be antonyms to ‘suffering, toiling’. Here, rather, *travail* is placed in opposition to *sujurn*, which denotes ‘rest’ and ‘being stationary, dwelling’, and hence is an antonym to *travail* primarily in the ‘journey’ sense.

trouble, inconvenience someone (because of making them journey)', or intransitive 'take pains (in journeying)'.

- (8) a. *les justices funt les jurours **travailler es plus foreins marchies des contiez**, ou mieux vaudreit qe justices **travaillassent de hundred en hundred*** (*Mir Just* 178, late 13th century; MS from 1st third of the 14th century, AND s.v.)
 'The justices make the jurors travel to the extreme boundaries of the counties, whereas it would be better if the judges travelled from hundred to hundred.' (transl. Whittaker 1895)
- b. *Car nul franc home ne poet lem enservir de parer en jugement **loinz a travailler a ses propres custages*** (*Mir Just*, late 13th century; MS from 1st third of the 14th century; ed. and transl. Whittaker 1895: 82)
 'For no free man can be compelled to appear in court or to travel far at his own costs'
- c. *Abusion est qe homme **travaille a ces propres custages par nuli somonse personele***. (*Mir Just*, late 13th century; MS from 1st third of the 14th century; ed. and transl. Whittaker 1895: 96)
 'It is an abuse if a man is obliged to journey at his own costs because of any personal summons.'

In (9), from a mid-14th-century letter, *travailler* occurs in the 'journey' sense in the context of a person 'very big with child', and therefore unable to travel any longer. This can be taken as an indication that 'journey' must already have been an entrenched sense of *travailler* at that time: If it had still been a mere invited inference arising through the combination with directional adverbials, it might have been blocked in the context of the 'very pregnant Anne' by another sense of the polysemous *travailler*, namely 'to be in labour' (see (1c) above).

- (9) *Anne est si grosse enzeynte qe ele ne poet en propre persone **travailler en voz partyes*** (Corr Lond 245.529, 1367, AND s.v.)
 'Anne is so very pregnant that she cannot travel to your region herself.'

So according to the attestations in the AND entry, the 'journey' use of AN *travailler* is definitely there by the late, maybe even the early 13th century (cf. (7)). In the literature and in the ANTS though, I also found several earlier attestations of past participles which could be read as instances of the 'journey' sense of *travailler* (10a–d). The past participle of course can be used adjectivally meaning 'exhausted, distressed, weary' (as in *las sui e aukes traveillez* 'I am weary and somewhat exhausted', *Ipom* BFR 8861, AND s.v.) – I give this reading in the first alternative in the translations below. However, in (10a–d) this participle is combined with directional adverbials (*de (si) loiz* 'from (so) far', *de terre en terre* 'from country to country', *ça* 'hither'). This would be an unexpected combination for

an adjective meaning ‘exhausted’,⁶ so instead we could read these as instances of a present perfect of *travailler* in the ‘strenuous journey’ sense. I give this reading in the second alternative in the translations below, where I render it as *travel* or *struggle*. It is interesting that these early attestations all feature *travailler* in a perfect periphrasis with *être* ‘be’. The perfect of course implies resultativeness, a completed action with present relevance. Perhaps it is in this type of context, a kind of blend between adjectival and motion verb use, where the journey is completed and, as a result, the person has changed location and is exhausted, that the verb makes first inroads into the intransitive motion construction, i.e. into combination with directional adverbials.

- (10) a. **De loin nus sumes travaillez** (1175–1200, *Vie de S Catherine* 481, Short 2009: 488)
 ‘From far we are exhausted/have travelled’
- b. **Mult ad erré, mult s’est penez E travaillé de terre en terre** *Pur sucurs, pur aïe quere.* (c.1185 *Protheselaus*, ANST)
 ‘He has wandered greatly, has greatly pained and exhausted himself/pained himself and travelled from country to country to ask for help and support.’
- c. **Puis qu’il est de si loinz travaillez / E tant se fie en vos e en vos amitez, / Pur ceo le loe bien qe vous ly aydez.** (1175–1200 Thomas of Kent, Anglo-Norman ‘Alexander’, ANST)
 ‘Since he is exhausted/has travelled from so far and trusts so much in you and your friendship, therefore I recommend it indeed that you help him.’
- d. **Li rei li dist: Beaus duz amis Grant folie eustes empris, Quant ça vos estes travaillé** *J’aveie orendreit en pensé De vos aler visiter* (early 13th century, *Jos*, in Burghardt 1906: 84)
 ‘The king told him [i.e. Zardan, the prince’s teacher, who pretends to be very ill, and has got out of bed and come to talk to the king]: Gentle friend, you have acted very foolishly in having exhausted yourself hither/having struggled hither; I had presently planned to go and visit you.’

⁶ In fact, in the AND entry for other adjectives meaning ‘exhausted’ (*las*, *lassé*, *mat*, *peiné*), no such use is recorded; and if a person is said to be exhausted from travelling, this is rather expressed with an extra motion verb, as in *Ly sires estoit mout lasé Car mout avoit le jour erré* (*Fabliaux* 10.10, late 13th century, AND s.v. *lasser*) ‘The lord was very exhausted because he had travelled a lot this day’, or *Qui de nager erent penét* (*S Brend* MUP 249, 1st quarter of the 12th century) ‘who were exhausted from rowing’.

These attestations are not listed in the AND entry, but the first three of them, all dating from the late 12th century, would antedate the AND's earliest attestation of *travailler* in the 'strenuous journey' sense.

2.3 Semantic development in English

In English, *travaillen* is first attested from the late 13th century onwards, in the senses of 'labouring, toiling, suffering' (cf. (11a–b)), like in Anglo-Norman and in continental varieties of French. The first attestation, (11a), is actually a translation of example (4) above, from the parable of the vineyard: It occurs in the *Kentish Sermons*, a rather literal Middle English translation of five of Maurice de Sully's Old French sermons (cf. Gatelais & Toupin 2012).

- (11) a. *þos laste on ure habbeþ i **travailed** and þu his makest velaghes to us.* (c1275 Ken.Serm.(LdMisc 471), 220/218, MED s.v.) [= first attestation]
 'These last ones have worked one hour, and you make them our peers.'
 b. *Me clupeþ þulke 'wyke of penaunce and of pyne' [...] oure lord **trauaylede** þulke wyke.* (a1325(c1280) SLeg.Pass.(Pep 2344) 136, MED s.v.)
 'People call this 'the week of pain and woe' [...] Our lord suffered this week.'

Just like in Anglo-Norman, Middle English *travaillen* also occurs in the sense of 'journey', a use that is attested basically from the beginning of this verb in English. In (12a–c), I show the earliest attestations in this sense from the extensive MED entry. In (12a), a different manuscript of the same text has the rather neutral motion verb *wendeþ* 'goes, turns' instead of *trauailieth*, but the context of 'never becoming weary and never having rest' fits well with the 'strenuous travelling' sense of *travaillen*. Note that the other two early attestations (12b–c) occur in perfect periphrases with directional adverbials, i.e. in exactly the same structure as the earliest Anglo-Norman attestations for this sense that we saw in (10).

- (12) a. *[...] þe heiȝe temple..Of sonne and Mone and steorrene al-so, **fram þe este to þe weste** Pat **trauailieth** [Hrl: *Wendeþ*] and neuere werie ne beoth ne neuere ne habbeth reste* (c1300 SLeg.Kath.(LdMisc 108) 24, MED s.v.) [first attestation in this sense]
 'The high temple of sun and moon and also stars, that travels from the east to the west and never is weary and never has rest.'
 b. *For ȝe þus **i-trauaillede beoth fram so ferre londe** [...] Ich eov nelle greui nouȝt.* (c1300 SLeg.Aug.Cant. (LdMisc 108) 61, MED s.v.)
 '[King Æpelbert to Augustine and his missionaries:] Because you have thus travelled from such a far country [...] I do not want to harm you.'

- c. *Feor huy weren i-trauailled and sore, so þat heom luste slepe ech-on* (c1300 SLeg.Kenelm (LdMisc 108) 306, MED s.v.)
 ‘They [the representatives of two different shires (Gloucester, Worcester) that both want to have the body of St. Kenelm] had travelled far and laboriously, so that each of them wanted to sleep.’

After 1300, attestations of *travaillen* in the ‘journey’ sense become plenty in Middle English – the MED entry alone shows more than forty. There is definitely no restriction to the perfect periphrasis any longer, but the verb is freely used with directional adverbials, as in (13a), or intransitively, often without the idea of ‘strenuousness’. The disappearance of the idea of ‘strenuousness’ is evident in (13b) from the *Catholicon Anglicon*, an English-Latin wordlist, which renders *travel* simply with *itinerare*, ‘to go’.

- (13) a. *I rede þe trauaile to grece noþing; Dwelleþ at hoom & mery makeþ.* (a1400(?a1350) Siege Troy(1) (Eg 2862) 37/444, MED s.v.)
 ‘I advise you: Don’t travel to Greece; stay at home and be merry.’
 b. *To Travell: itinerare, vbi to ga.* (?c1475 *Cath.Angl.(Add 15562)129b, MED s.v.)

Today, the formerly polysemous verb is split up into two different lexemes, *travel* and *travail*, so that the ‘journey’ sense is differentiated in spelling and pronunciation from the senses ‘labour, toil, work hard’, ‘suffer (esp. the pains of childbirth)’.

As Sections 2.1–3 have shown, the semantic development from ‘toil’ to ‘journey’ constitutes a “trajectoire spécifiquement insulaire” (Short 2009: 488), a development “on English soil” (Rothwell 1993: 17): In continental varieties of medieval French, *travailler* lacks the ‘journey’ meaning (Rothwell 1993: 34, Huber 2017: 158–160).⁷ In the rest of this paper, I attempt to explain this “insular” semantic change. Section 3 shows that the association of ‘toiling’ and ‘journeying’ is documented in attestations of *travailler/travel* in both medieval French and English, which indicates that – rather unsurprisingly – the experiential basis for this semantic change would have been available for both languages. In Section 4, I argue for language-internal factors that are conducive to this semantic change in Middle English, but which make it unlikely in continental French.

⁷ Although it also occurs in the writings of Froissart, a Picard writer, who, however, had lived at the English court for several years and is known to have retained some Anglo-French expressions (cf. Molencki 2012: 153–155, see also Huber 2017: 159–160).

3 Experiential basis: Metonymy 'journey' – 'hardship'

In Dekeyser (1995: 132), the metonymical development of *travaillen/travailler* to a motion verb 'travel' is explained with the "natural association between 'journey' and the 'toiling' that goes with it" in medieval England. This is certainly correct. What it does not explain, however, is why the semantic change based on this conceptual association only took place in England. After all, it will be safe to assume that in medieval France, the association between 'journey' and 'toiling' was present just as well. Indeed, attestations of *travailler* from dictionaries of medieval French (TL, DMF) show that in continental varieties, *travailler* 'toil' and the corresponding noun *travail* occur in contexts of strenuous travelling, too:

- (14) a. *Atant se mist à droite voie, / Mès ne veil mie conter / Ses journées ne raconter / Ne son **travail** ne met a some / Tant exploita qu'il vint à Rome* (Méon II 435, 279, TL s.v. travail)
'Then he took the straight way. I do not want to tell more, neither retell his days, nor sum up his hardship. He went so long that he came to Rome.'
- b. *son cheval, qui estoit moult blecié et **traveillié** du chemin que fait avoit.* (Reg. crim. Chât., I, 1389–1392, 525, DMF s.v.)
'His horse, which was much hurt and exhausted due to the journey it had made.'
- c. *Le chemin est long a merveille Si crains que trop ne se **traveille*** (GRÉBAN, Pass. J., c.1450, 116, DMF s.v.)
'The way is wondrously long, and I fear that he pains himself too much.'

According to TL, *travailler* is even attested sporadically⁸ in a contextual motion reading in continental French in (15), where *ai esté travaillans* 'I have been toiling' is combined with the prepositional phrase *par tantes terres* 'through so many countries'. Note, however, that this reading is heavily supported by the preceding context, in which the knight Ansëis reports details of his strenuous yearlong

⁸ For this sense, TL has two attestations, the one expanded here as (15) (s.v. *travaillant* pc. prs., subsense 'unstet, mit Mühen reisend'), and *Ma dame, je vous prie Que vous voeliés aler et **soyes travellie** jusques a Moradin, qui tant a seignorie* (Godefr. de Bouillon 33502, (TL s.v. *travailler*, subsense 'reisen')) 'Madame, I beg you that you would like to go and be travelled to Moradin, who has so much authority'. In Godefroy (s.v. *travaillié*, part. passé), by contrast, this latter attestation is given in the sense 'accablé de travail, de fatigue' ('exhausted, tired'), which yields a far more convincing reading of the passage as 'Madame, I beg you that you would like to go— even though you may be tired— to Moradin', i.e. with a concessive *et* and not in a 'journey' meaning.

journey in search for Guillaume. The context also features the same verb *travailler* in the clause *jou ai mon cors travilliée*, literally ‘I have tormented my body’, i.e. ‘I have toiled’.

- (15) *Quis ai Guillaume et arriere et avant / En Lombardie et descì a Melant, / En Romenie, en Espagne le grant, / Et par decha jus’as pors de Wissant. / Jou ai mon cors **travilliée** plus d’un an, / Ainc n’arrestai un jour en trespasant; / Tant ai cerquié castiaus et mandemens, / Bos trespases et grans aighes corans, / **Par tantes terres ai esté travillans**, / Nel savroit dire nus jouglers qui cant* (Moniage Guillaume 5069–5080, ed. Cloetta 1906)

‘I’ve searched for Guillaume everywhere, in Lombardy and as far as Milan, in the province of Rome, in great Spain, and here up to the port of Wissant / I have toiled for more than a year / and never stopped a single day while journeying / I have searched so many castles and buildings / crossed forests and great rivers / Through so many countries I have been toiling / that it could not be told by our minstrel who sings.’

The attestations presented in this section show, first and rather trivially, that the association of journeying and toiling definitely existed for speakers and writers of medieval French as well. What is more, examples (14b–c) show that also the very lexeme *travailler* was used in contexts of journeying in continental French, in one-off uses even with an invited inference of ‘journeying’ (15). Yet crucially, and in contrast to Anglo-Norman and Middle English, this contextual sense of *travailler* never became conventionalized in continental French. In the following section, I attempt to explain this difference with the different motion constructions of French and English.

4 A perspective from motion typology and construction grammar

The argument of this section is that the ways in which motion is typically talked about in (medieval) English enable, or even invite, the semantic change from ‘toil’ to ‘journey’; the ways in which motion is typically talked about in (medieval) French, by contrast, block this semantic change. To flesh out this argument in more detail, I will first present the typical argument structure constructions and the typical kinds of verbs used to talk about motion in both languages (Section 4.1). Second, I will show that particularly verbs referring to ‘toiling, struggling’ are often used in the intransitive motion construction in the history of English,

and that basically the same semantic change that we saw in *travel* had already occurred earlier in the language in the change from Old English *higian* ‘to exert oneself’ to Middle English *hien* ‘to go quickly’ (Section 4.2).

4.1 Talking about motion in English and French

Languages differ in the ways their speakers typically talk about motion. This has been captured in the motion typology (e.g. Talmy 1985, Slobin 2004), which classifies languages a) according to where information about the path of motion is usually encoded in a clause (verb-framed vs. satellite-framed languages), and b) according to which information is typically encoded in the verb (e.g. manner-conflation vs. path-conflation). Both differences can be illustrated with (16): Path information (‘across’) is encoded in the verb in (16a) (*traversa* ‘traversed’, i.e. verb-framing), and outside the verb in (16b) (*across*, i.e. satellite-framing). The information carried by the verb is ‘path’ in (16a), and ‘manner’ (*sail*) in (16b).

- (16) a. *Guillaume traversa la Manche.*
 b. *William sailed across the Channel.*

It is important to note that this typology only focuses on what is typical in a language; of course, these patterns are not exclusive: English, for instance, also has a minor verb-framing, path-conflating pattern, such as in *William crossed the Channel*. Moreover, in many motion descriptions, a highly frequent neutral motion verb like E *go* or F *aller* is used, which encodes neither manner nor path. Yet, as studies such as Slobin (2004) or most recently von Stutterheim et al. (2020) have shown, speakers of languages like English, German, or Russian use significantly more manner-conflating verbs and fewer path-conflating verbs, whereas speakers of French, Spanish, or Tunisian use significantly more path verbs and fewer manner verbs.

This difference can also be described as a difference in argument structure constructions: In English, the intransitive motion construction (see Figure 1) conveys a directional motion reading even if the verb itself is not a motion verb, as in *The bullets whistled past the house*, where ‘whistling’ is the result of the bullets’ motion (Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004: 540).

A major factor in this is that many adverbs and prepositions like *up / into / out of* etc. are clearly directional (though not all, cf. *over*). This was the case even more so in Old English, when nouns were still marked for case: In Old English, similar to German, one and the same preposition can be used with an accusative

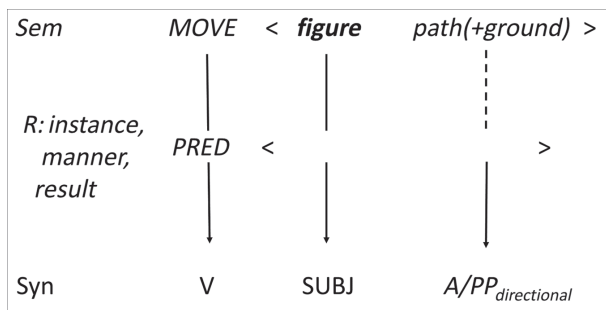


Figure 1: English intransitive motion construction (Huber 2017:21)

for a ‘motion’ reading (17a–b), and with a dative for a ‘location’ reading, as in (18a–b) (cf. e.g. Lass 1994: 228–233).

- (17) a. *ða hy ofer þone hlæw ridan* (MCharm 4 A43.4, DOEC)
 ‘When they rode over the mound(ACC).’
 b. *Sie rennen in den Wald.*
 ‘They run into the forest(ACC).’
- (18) a. *Forðæm hi wuniað nu ofer ðæm tunglum* (Bo B9.3.2 1800, DOEC)
 ‘Because they now live over [i.e. above] the stars(DAT).’
 b. *Sie rennen im Wald.*
 ‘They run in the forest(DAT).’

In French, by contrast, many prepositions are ambiguous, and the context decides whether they are interpreted as directional or locational (cf. *à* or *en* in *aller à Paris/en Banlieue* ‘go to Paris/to the suburbs’ vs *vivre à Paris/en banlieue* ‘live in Paris/in the suburbs’, respectively).

They receive a directional reading only if the idea of ‘directed motion’ is conveyed by the verb (e.g. *aller* ‘go’). If they are combined with a manner-of-motion verb (e.g. *courir* ‘run’), this would not yield an unambiguous directional reading, but rather a locational one, e.g. *courir dans le parc* ‘run in the park (i.e. take a run in the park)’ vs *aller dans le parc* ‘go to the park’. Because of this, the intransitive motion construction in French is more restricted in the types of verbs that can be used in it, since the idea of ‘directed motion’ needs to be present in the verb itself. This restriction was not yet quite as pronounced in earlier stages of French, where path adverbs such as *aval* ‘down’ or *amont* ‘up’ were more frequent (cf. e.g. Huber 2017: 203–204, Schösler 2008), but even then, these did not typically combine with manner verbs.

The difference between Old French and Middle English can be seen in Table 1, which compares motion descriptions from the prose parts of the (continental)

Table 1: Types of verbs in motion descriptions in prose parts of the Old French *Aucassin et Nicolette* (ed. Suchier 1889) and in the Middle English *Knight’s Tale*, *Miller’s Tale*, and *Reeve’s Tale* (ed. Benson 2008).

	manner	path	neutral	non-motion
Old French (<i>Aucassin et Nicolette</i>)	17% (24/140)	33% (46/140)	50% (70/140)	–
Middle English (<i>Knight’s Tale</i> , <i>Miller’s Tale</i> , <i>Reeve’s Tale</i>)	43% (120/278)	4% (11/278)	51% (143/278)	1% (4/278)

Old French *Aucassin et Nicolette*, a 13th-century *chante-fable*, and of three Middle English tales from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (Huber 2017: 186–193, 206–211). While in both languages, neutral motion verbs, particularly OF *aller/venir* and ME *go/come*, account for roughly half of the motion descriptions, there is a considerable difference in the use of manner and path verbs respectively.

What is more, the majority of the manner verbs in the Middle English texts combine with at least one directional adverb or prepositional phrase, while in *Aucassin et Nicolette*, only a minority does (Huber 2017: 207–209, 196–199).

Given these restrictions on the use of manner verbs in French, it is hardly probable that a semantic change from a non-motion verb to a motion verb could happen, because non-motion verbs typically do not occur in constructions that would invite a contextual motion reading in the first place (such as English *The bullets whistled past the house*, for instance). In English, by contrast, this is different, as I will show in the next section.

4.2 A communicative habit

Not only in Present-Day English, but also in earlier stages of English, the intransitive motion construction can be used with verbs that do not convey an idea of motion on their own, but which receive a contextual motion reading through their use in this construction, as an invited inference (Traugott & Dasher 2002), or in terms of Michaelis (2003), by “coercion”. Huber (2017) and Fanego (2017) have shown that, in the past, the English intransitive motion construction was even slightly more flexible with regard to the kinds of verbs that could combine with it, allowing not only verbs that denote the ‘means’ of motion (e.g. ‘fight’ in (19a)), or the ‘result’ of the motion (e.g. ‘rustle’ in (19b)), but also verbs denoting a precondition to the motion (such as ‘preparing’ to go somewhere).

- (19) a. *þæt [...] sume <þurh> ealle þa truman ut afuhten* (Or 5 7.121.27, DOE s.v. *afeohtan*, sense 2: *ut afeohtan* ‘to fight one’s way out’) ‘that [...] some should fight out [i.e. fight their way out] through all the troops.’
- b. *He smote hym so harde uppon the shyld that sir Palomydes and his whyght horse **rosteled to the erthe***. ((a1470) *Malory Wks.* (Win-C) 736/3, Fanego 2017: 54) ‘He struck him so hard upon the shield that Sir Palomides and his white horse rustled to earth.’

Among the verbs denoting the ‘means’ of motion that are attested in the intransitive motion construction, a prominent group are precisely those whose meaning has to do with ‘struggling, labouring, toiling’. These can still be accommodated in the intransitive motion construction today, as in *they toiled up the hill*, or *he struggled/wrestled through the snow*.⁹ Also in Middle English, this use was available, as shown in (20) for *swinken* and *labouren*, both meaning ‘to work hard, toil’.

- (20) a. *Laban fagnede him in frendes wune, **Feren swunken** ysaaces sunen; Iacob tolde him for-quat he **swanc So fer***. (a1325(c1250) *Gen.& Ex.* 1656–7, MED s.v. *swinken*, 2.c) ‘Laban welcomed him like a friend, Isaac’s son who had toiled from afar; Jacob told him why he had toiled [i.e. travelled] so far.’
- b. *Plato þat **laboured þorw egipt**..not aschamed he..schuld be a pilgrime*. (c1450 Capgr. *Rome* (Bod 423) 1, MED s.v. *labouren*, 3.b) ‘Plato, who labored through Egypt, not ashamed that he should be a pilgrim.’

It is important to note that these are not one-off uses: The OED3 entry for *swink*, for instance, gives three attestations in this use (sense 1c), the one for *labour* (sense 7a) even seventeen, three of them from before 1500. So using verbs denoting ‘labour, toil’ in the intransitive motion construction, probably for expressive reasons, seems to be a kind of “communicative habit”, in Middle English as much as today.

What is more, this communicative habit appears to have been long-standing, as suggested by Old English motion uses of *winnan* ‘to labour, toil, work, strive, fight’ (Huber 2017: 108), and also by the semantic development of OE *higian*. *Higian* is related to Dutch *hijgen* ‘to pant, breathe with difficulty’ (OED2, s.v. *hye*, v.), and means ‘to strive, exert oneself’ in Old English (DOE s.v.). The majority of

⁹ This is even the case with the PDE verb *work*, see OED3 s.v.

its Old English attestations are in this meaning, but in a handful of attestations, *higian* also occurs in the intransitive motion construction, as in (21).

- (21) a. & *þa se halga man ferde þider fleonde, hine gemette sum munuc ... se acsode hine **hwider** he **higode*** (cf. GREG.MAG. Dial. 2.1.4 monachus quidam ... hunc euntem repperit, quo tenderet requisivit). (GD 2 (C) 1.98.18, DOE s.v.)
 ‘and when the holy man went fleeing thither, a monk met him [...] he asked him whither he was *hying*.’
 b. *þa **higede** þe abbod to þe munuce & neodlice cwæð...* (ÆCHom I, 23 (B) 370.149, DOE)
 ‘Then the abbot *hyed* to the monk and eagerly said...’

In Middle English, then, this motion use has become the dominant use of the verb, and the MED gives its primary meaning as ‘go quickly, travel rapidly, hurry (to or from a place or person)’. So basically, what we see here looks exactly like the change that has happened to *travailler* a few centuries later: A non-motion verb denoting ‘exertion, toiling’ acquires a motion meaning through repeated use in the intransitive motion construction.

This, by the way, might be a more general Germanic phenomenon. At least in Bavarian varieties of German, *arbeiten* ‘to work’ (from earlier ‘to labour, toil’) used to have an established motion use, as in (22), one of several attestations given in Schmeller (s.v. *arbeiten*).

- (22) *Und die pilgram werdent **arbatten** gein rom.* (1477, Schuelmaister Hueber v. Eggenfelden, Schmeller s.v.)
 ‘And the pilgrims will toil/travel to Rome.’

4.3 AN *travailler* ‘journey’ as transfer from Middle English

The characteristics of motion expression in (Middle) English that we have seen in the preceding two sections strongly suggest, in my view, that the meaning ‘journey’ of Anglo-Norman *travailler* not only represents a “trajectoire spécifiquement insulaire”, but more precisely an effect of language contact with Middle English. Rothwell (1993: 19) puts it like this:

A great many French terms took on new senses in England as a direct result of being written as well as spoken, not by Norman conquerors but by thousands of Englishmen in a professional capacity, generations after the conquerors had been absorbed.

Since most writers and speakers of Anglo-Norman in the centuries after the Norman Conquest will have been bilinguals whose L1 was Middle English, even if

they acquired Anglo-Norman around the early age of five (cf. Ingham 2012), such transfer is highly probable in the light of research on crosslinguistic influence:

If the words we know in different languages are mentally interconnected, then it follows that our *knowledge of words in one language may affect how we learn, process, and use words in another language*. Indeed, the findings of past and current research on lexical transfer overwhelmingly support this hypothesis. (Jarvis & Pavlenko 2008: 74, highlighting JH)

More specifically, three different types of transfer may have been involved here:

- a) semantic transfer: the meaning ‘journey’ may have developed in ME *travaillen* (similar to what happened to OE *higian* before) as a polysemous meaning next to ‘labour, toil, etc.’ and speakers may have transferred this to AN *travailler*;
- b) subcategorization transfer: even before the meaning ‘journey’ had been conventionalized for ME *travaillen*, speakers may have transferred the verb’s use with directional complements to AN *travailler*;
- c) word choice transfer: more generally, the Middle English communicative habit of using manner or means verbs in motion expressions may have been transferred to Anglo-Norman.

Support for word-choice transfer may be found in the fact that such motion uses of verbs meaning ‘labour, toil’ are not restricted to *travailler* in Anglo-Norman, but are also attested for the synonymous AN *laborer* (cf. AND s.v.) as well as for *laborare* in Anglo-Latin, for which the DMLBS has six attestations in the meaning ‘travel’, the first from 1258. Similarly, Schauwecker (2019: 60–61) reports uses of manner verbs (*chevaucher* ‘ride’, *nagier* ‘sail’, *voler* ‘fly’, *cheminer* ‘walk’) with directional complements (with *à* and *sur*) to be more frequent in her 12th- to 14th-century Anglo-Norman material than in continental French.

Various studies on present-day languages have equally shown this kind of L1 word-choice transfer with respect to motion expression. Larrañaga et al. (2012), for instance, report that the combination of *correr* ‘run’ with *en el banco* ‘in(to) the bank’ is used in descriptions of a bank robber running into a bank by English learners of Spanish across three levels of proficiency, a combination not normally used by speakers of L1 Spanish, but typical for English. Similar effects in English learners of French have been found in Harley (1989), Harley & King (1989), and Treffers-Daller & Tidball (2015).

5 Point of arrival / Next destination

In the beginning of this journey through the history of *travailler/travel*, we have seen that the verb’s meaning has developed from ‘suffer, labour, toil’ to the more

specific ‘work (hard)’. This is weakened in continental French to more general ‘work’ via hyperbolic use. In England, by contrast, both in Anglo-Norman and in Middle English, the verb starts to be used in ‘motion’ meanings, first still implying the notion of the ‘hardships of journeying’, then weakened to ‘journeying’ in general – the only meaning of *travel* in English today, after the other ones have been differentiated as *travail*.

My argument of why the change to the ‘journey’ sense happened in English but not in (continental) French is summarized in Figure 2. We have seen that not only the experiential basis that journeying involves toiling is the same for speakers of both languages, but also that the very verb OF *travailler* ‘toil’ is used in contexts of being exhausted through journeying (Section 3). Judging from these language-external factors, also in French, the verb would be all “geared up” to acquire a meaning of ‘journeying laboriously’. However, language-internal factors in French prevent this semantic change from taking place: The typical complements in the intransitive motion construction in French are not unambiguously directional, so that the meaning of directed motion needs to be present in the verb. Furthermore, speakers do not typically use manner or means verbs to talk

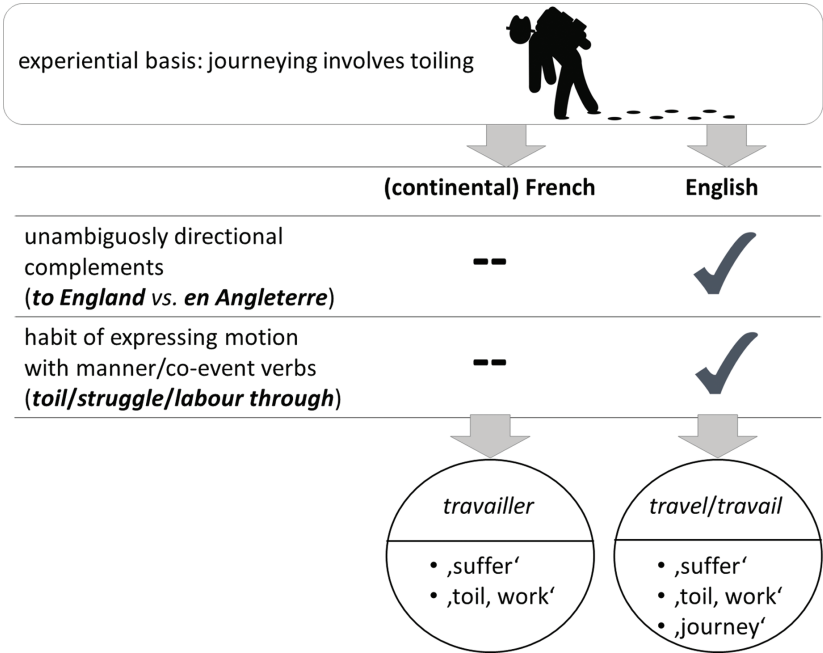


Figure 2: Language external and internal factors in the development of *travailler*/*travel* in French and English.

about motion in French (Section 4.1). English, in contrast, does have clearly directional complements, and speakers often use manner or means verbs in the intransitive motion construction – they even do this with synonyms of ME *travaillen*, i.e. with other verbs that denote ‘toiling, labouring’, such as OE *winnan*, ME *swinken* (Section 4.2). These features of English further foster the use of *travaillen* ‘toil’ in contextual motion meanings, which ultimately become conventionalized. Given these differences between the two languages, it is unlikely that the ‘journey’ sense of *travailler* could have arisen in Anglo-Norman independently from Middle English. It is more plausibly explained as an effect of bilingual speakers who transfer their English habits of expression to Anglo-Norman (Section 4.3).

I hope to have shown in this paper how semantic typology and construction grammar can be productively applied to explaining lexical semantic change. With this approach, I think, it may be possible to identify regularities in semantic change that go beyond the well-known trajectories from, e.g. deontic to epistemic meaning, or from non-subjective to subjective to intersubjective (cf. e.g. Traugott & Dasher 2002), which, in the end, describe grammaticalizing items (such as modal verbs, intensifiers, discourse markers). In studying how specific argument structure constructions of a language and the communicative habits related to them have an impact on the semantic development of verbs, we might find regularities in semantic change that do not involve grammaticalization at all. Even though this paper has focused on the development of ME *travaillen* only, we have seen the parallels this has in OE *higian* and Bavarian *arbeiten*: They all develop a polysemous ‘motion’ sense in languages with an intransitive motion construction that can coerce non-motion verbs into contextual motion readings. Another very likely parallel is to be found in *walk*, on which the OED3’s etymology section says:

It is remarkable that to the end of the Old English period the primary sense of the verb [...] is ‘to roll’, and that from the beginning of the Middle English period it is ‘to move about, travel’. The explanation of this apparently sudden change may perhaps be that the latter sense had, in fact, arisen in Old English as a colloquial usage, and as such was not deemed fitting to be used in writing until the changed literary circumstances of the Middle English period.

It would surely be worth analyzing this in a systematic way for more languages that have a similar kind of intransitive motion construction (or in Talmyan words, which are satellite-framing and manner-conflating). Analyzing the semantic history of motion verbs in these languages will, I think, unearth more trajectories of this kind.

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