Semi-auxiliaries in French from a Frames and Constructions diachronic perspective

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. I. Introduction

- S e v e n   F r e n c h   s e m i - a u x i l i a i r e s
- Diachronic data retrieved from Frantext (Base textuelle FRANTEXT (INALF/ATILF-CNRS) from the 12th century (*La Chanson de Roland*, Anonyme, 1100) to nowadays.
- The analysis questions the diachronic evolution of the s e m i - a u x i l i a r i e s   c o n s t r u c t i o n s   a n d   t h e i r   g r a m m a t i c a l i z a t i o n   b y   a n a l o g y .
- This grammatical motivation is combined with a semantic dynamicity of *profiling* in terms of Frames
- (G o l d b e r g   2 0 1 0 ,   G o s s e l i n   2 0 1 2)

II. The question of Auxiliarity

- It has been discussed in French lately at the 17th century.

- semi-auxiliaries appeared earlier in the written text as soon as the 10th century. They spread during the 14th-15th centuries and increased noticeably during the Renaissance period (16th-17th century).

Verbal periphrases : do they belong to the verbal system ?

- ASPECT
  - COMMENCER À (start to)
    - « *Il a commencé à pleuvoir* » ('it has started to rain')
  - FINIR DE (finish')
    - « *Il a fini de pleuvoir* » ('it has stopped raining')
- MOOD
  - *DEVOIR* ('must', 'may', 'have to')
  - *FALLOIR* ('must', 'have to')
  - *VOULOIR* ('want')
  - *POUVOIR* ('may', 'can')

- CAUSATION
  - *FAIRE* ('make')
    - *« Il a fait réparer la voiture »* ('He left the car for repair')

  And less commonly:
  - *DONNER* ('give')
    - *« Il a donné la voiture à réparer »* ('He left the car for repair')
  - *METTRE* ('put')
    - *« Il a mis le rôti à cuire »* ('He put the meat to roast')

- *MOVEMENT VERBS*
  - *C*OURIR *('run')*
    - *« Il a couru annoncer la nouvelle » ('He ran to announce the news').*
  - S'AGENOUILLER ('kneel down')

Complex predicates

- Similary to the mouvement verbs constructions, **[V of movement + (prep) Vinf]**

    (eg. « *courir acheter du pain* » ('run to buy bread'), « *descendre faire les courses*» ('go downstairs for the grocery'), «*s'agenouiller à ramasser des papiers* » ('kneel down to pick up papers'),

- in the **[TAM aux + (prep) Vinf]** constructions (eg. « *commencer à manger* » ('start to eat'), « *finir de travailler* » ('finish working'),

 the <u>Vinf is not an argument neither a circonstant</u> but it does form with the V/Aux a complex predicate (see Lamiroy 1981 : 116).

Vector verbs

- Sometimes called « vector » verbs, but different from light verb
- The question arises about the delimitation of the number of semi-auxiliaries.
- Does the set include verbs like:

  commencer à ('start with'), *cesser de* ('stop'), *partir* ('leave'), *continuer de* ('continue'), *tarder à* ('take time to') all denoting an aspectual phase, once combined with an infinitive ?
- The frontier is therefore vague between Lexicon and Grammar.

Auxiliarity in diachrony

- The limit between the notions of auxiliarity, and semi-auxiliarity is not easy to draw (Lamiroy 1999). Besides the commonly accepted auxiliaries *be* and *have* since early grammars (see Grévisse and Goose 2011, Grammaire de Port Royal 1660), many other semi-auxiliaries have to be considered.

A Grammaticalization process

- *"Grammaticalization is the change whereby in certain linguistic contexts speakers use parts of a construction with a grammatical function. Over time the resulting grammatical item may become more grammatical by acquiring more grammatical functions and expanding its host-classes." (Hopper and Traugott 2003:121)*

Grammaticalization process of semi-auxiliaries

- *The Verb-to-TAM Chain* , Heine 1993, Hopper & Traugott 1993, Kronning 2003

Full Verb   > AUX1 > …. AUXn > (Affixe)

Imbs (1960 :6) :

- « Before having been simple forms, future (*eg. Je chanterai, I will sing*) and conditional in French (eg. *Je chanterais, I would sing*) had been periphrases formed with an infinitive and a semi-auxiliary (*chanter-ai*) ».

- FUTURE

  I. **I. AMABO** (already existing at the classical latin period (-1BC/+1)

  > **II. AMARE HABEO** (appeared at the 3rd C, consolidated at the 6th C)

  > **III. AIMER-AI**

  Phase **II.** *deontic* periphrase = « *j'ai à /je dois aimer* » ('I have to/will love') (see Marcello-Nizia et Picoche, 1989: 250; Celle)

Semi-auxiliarity

- Two reasons are proposed in the litterature explaining the semi-auxiliaries development, in particular the future *aller + inf* ('go to')
  - The increasing of verbal periphrases at the 16th C

  - A metonymic process from full meaning towards extended meaning (Sweetser 1990, Dancygier and Sweetser 2014)

General hypothesis

- A vague frontier beween lexicon and syntax, a continuum, regarding auxiliarity, and the verbal periphrases, but four classes of semi-auxiliaries are semantically distinct: Temporality, Aspect, Mood and Causation

III. Results

- Old French 900-1400
- Middle French 1340-1611
- Classical French XVIIth-XVIIIth and Modern French

- *Être* '(BE') and *Avoir* ('HAVE') auxiliaries are established early in the written texts with systematicity :
  1. *fus fait (Passion de Jésus-Christ ou Passion de Clermont*, 950, anonymous) ('was done')
  2. *fut partiz (Passion de Jésus-Christ ou Passion de Clermont*, 950, anonymous) ('was gone')
  3. *blanc vestiment si l'a vestit* ('dressed him with a white dress')

- whereas semi-auxiliaries expressing mood *devoir, falloir, vouloir*, ('must', 'have to', 'want'), causation *faire('make')*, temporality and aspectuality *aller, venir de* ('go', 'come') are attested lately, increase noticeably **and are moreover favored by certain authors** using many periphrases at certain periods (cf. Christine de Nizan, 1400-1412).

- This phenomena is described in litterature (Grévisse et Goose 1964 *Le Bon Usage*, Liere 2010) and is attested in the present corpus.

Semi-auxiliaries in Frantext

Sample 100	Old French	Middle French	Classical French	Semi-auxiliaries
faire	11% (total 23491)	15% (total over than 50 000 max)	6% (total 40611)	Causation
devoir	**13% (total 9456)**	**49% (total 25137)**	**18% (total 10602)**	**Modality**
falloir	**1% (total 620)**	**12% (total 1419)**	**54% (total 6276)**	**Modality**
vouloir	**54% (total 1070)**	**65% (total 6545)**	**71% (13006 total)**	**Modality**
pouvoir	**13% (total 7037)**	**56% (total 24488)**	**44% (26858 total)**	**Modality**
aller	16% (total 7844)	8% (total 19458)	31%(10480 total)	Temporality/ aspectuality
venir	**3% (total 9516)**	**3% (total 22786)**	**15% (11759 total)**	**Temporality/ aspectuality**

Modal: *Falloir. Devoir.* ('must'/''have to')

- The modal *falloir* ('must') appears as soon as 1327, with low frequency, in the [AUX + V-inf] construction , or [AUX + QUE-P].

- *Devoir* ('have to') has a very low frequence in its full meaning eg. *devoir quelque chose* ('owe something'). In the old French corpus, 4 /100 , results as a semi-auxiliary followed by an infinitive.

Falloir. Devoir ('must'/''have to')

- In old French the verb *falloir* is ambiguous with the noun *faille ('default')* and the idiomatic expressions *sanz/sans faille* or *nulle faille* ('no doubt'). Only one occurrence of the semi-auxiliary is retrieved in 1180 (anonyme, 1180 :90).

- Comparison with French after 1500, Renaissance period, shows a great increase of the construction [FALLOIR + INF], 54/100.

Aspectual *Aller. Venir* ('go', 'come')

- The aspectual *aller* ('go') has a low frequence 8% in our corpus and increases after 1450.

- The aspectual *venir* is attested since the *Chanson de Roland without the preposition (1)* and increases around 1400 followed by an infinitive and a preposition (2). Full lexical spatial meaning is at any period the more frequent.

  1. *Si li vint cuntredire, Anonyme 1125 :38*) ('If he comes to contradict')

  2. *Vient nuanciez* ('come to announce')

   Also attested followed by a QUE-P ('THAT')

Aller ('go')

- The form *aller* ('go') followed by an infinitive is very frequent in the *Chanson de Roland*

  *En Rencesvais **irai** Rollant occire, (Anonyme 1125 : 90*)

  ('In Roncevaux I will go to kill Roland')

  Instances are also found followed by a present participle

Examples, Christine de Pizan 1400-1412

1. Que **ja commençoie a apprendre** roy Charles.

    ('When I started to learn ')

2. **Du mal qui vient de non pugnir** par justice les malfaicteurs.

    ('Bad things coming from not punishing ')

3. si **ala le roy ouir vespres** en la Sainte-Chappelle.

    ('if the king went to listen')

4. Mais, quoyqu' **aucuns veulent mescroire**.

    ('noone wants to believe me')

12 texts, 523 202 words

	Full lexeme	Semi-aux	TOTAL occurences
faire	90,02 %	9,97 %	3098 (0,59%)
devoir	4,57 %	95,42 %	1006 (0,19%)
falloir	58,8 %	39,2 %	153 (0,02%)
vouloir	77,8 %	22,11 %	407 (0,07%)
commencer	88,7 %	26,6 %	165 (0,03%)
finir	**100 %**	**0%**	**10 (0,001%)**
aller	86,37 %	8,17 %	734 (0,19%)
venir	**100 %**	**0 %**	**1027 (0,196%)**

IV. Semi-auxiliaries of causation

- We include in our data the less commonly discussed French verb *donner* ('give') as a semi-auxiliary of causation

- *Donner*:

  Plain verb > grammatical semi-auxiliary or plain verb > lexical bleaching ?

- *Donner* even if it sometimes behaves as a semi-auxiliary of causation is not a semi-auxiliary, nore a full lexeme, more a verbal periphrase.
- It belongs to a small family of semi-auxiliaries of causation , FACTITIVE, and periphrasal verbs by analogy: a.*faire (make), b. laisser (let), c.mettre à (put), d. donner à (give)*.
- C and D in addition of the CAUSE, both express the TRANSFER of location and profile the aspectual BEGINNING of an action. Inchoative.

- This phenomena of plain lexical meaning towards bleaching expresses the great flexibility of the semantic meaning from CENTRAL towards EXTENSIONS.

- The causation frame and the transfer frame are both profiled in the causation verbal periphrases. The inchoative value comes from the whole construction Aux + prep. TO + infinitive

Constructions in Frantext
donner ('give')= periphrasal verb of causation

	Old French	Middle French	> 1598	< 1598
Donner ('give')	0/100 Total 1098	0/100 Total 9401	2/100 Total 9207	4/100 Total 50000

Frames and profiling

- Give is attested as a full lexical verb and appears with more grammaticalized uses after 1400 , increasing during the 15th and 16th C , by analogy with the other verbal periphrases, *aller, venir*, 'go', 'come', (de Mulder 2007).

- The verb in those more grammaticalized expressions behave like a semi-auxiliary of causation and can be replaced by *faire* ('make').

- In those contexts, causation is profiled and transfer is backgrounded
  - *Donner à louer* ('give to rent')

Semantics and syntax of [X donner (Y) à + infinitive ('X give (Y) to be V-ed')]

- *donner* in French includes a causation
- CAUSED MOTION type of event (Goldberg)
- causation in the [X donner (Y) à + infinitive ('X give (Y) to be V-ed')] construction exists as a continuum :
  - a weak factitive meaning, 'cause to'
  - a strong meaning of request

[X donner (Y) à + infinitive ('X give (Y) to be V-ed')] : factitive construction

- *Donner ('give')* behaves like a factitive semi-auxiliary
- In this construction it does completely hides the central concrete GIVING meaning but activates a weak CAUSATION meaning or a strong REQUEST meaning,
- A third frame, an INFORMATION frame , can be present associated with knowledge verbs

polysemy of *[X donner (Y) à + infinitive ('X give (Y) to be V-ed')]*

- Our construction is polysemous and can be divided into four families:
  - A. open construction/ proximity actions
    - *donner à louer* ('give to rent'), donner à réparer ('give smth to repair')
  - B. followed by a knowledge verb
    - *donner à voir (*'see)', *donner matière à penser* or *donner à penser, donner à réfléchir (*'think')
  - C. followed by eating-drinking verbs
    - *donner à boire (*'give something to drink'), *donner à manger(* 'feed')
  - D. Idioms
    - *donner du fil à retordre*, ('give hard time')

[X donner (Y) à + infinitive]
[X donner (Y) de + infinitive]

- (1) *donner à* *('give to ')*
- (2) *donner de ('have the opportunity')*

  The prepositions *à ('to')* and *de ('from')* are opposite in their spatial meaning but are not necessarily linked to past and future in those constructions, contrary to venir de ('come to') expressing the past.

  (1) *Donner sa voiture à réparer. ('*Give one's car to repair')

  (2) *Un livre qu'il nous a été donné de lire. ('*A book that we happened to read')

Aspectual value *donner à/ donner de*

- *donner à (1)* is future-oriented with an inchoative value whereas (2) *donner de* has a resultative aspectual value and is past-oriented.

- A similarity can be found with the construction *venir de* (see Detges, 1999: 44 , De Mulder & Vanderheyden, 2008: 13).

    (3). Il vient de lire un livre. ('He has just read a book')

modal and causal values of *[X donner (Y) à + infinitive ('X give (Y) to be V-ed')]*

- In the third group, the construction is strongly linked to a third/impersonal person as an outside instance of validation.

  La religion peut-elle nous donner à penser ? (Le Monde) ('Can religion make us think?').

Conclusion and perspectives

- A noticeable increase of the verbal periphrases use in diachrony
- The periphrasal uses of those verbs all show bleaching, metonymy from full verb towards extensions
- We need a more fine grained study and sort the corpus in order to extract ten years periods between the 10thC to nowadays.
- This will help to better understand the role of analogy inside each category, which appears clearly for the verb give inside de causation category of semi-auxiliary.
- Statistically, this causation periphrase is not frequent, nor does it increase in diachrony, but it is attested in French and other languages, mostly in written texts.
- Possible reason for increasing of the constructions: eg. " Qu'est ce que tu viens de faire ? », « Qu'est ce que tu vas me faire là ? » evidentiality value. (see Celle and Lansari 2011). Suggestion: In oral corpora and contempory French we will have to enquire if those constructions have increased for pragamatic communication reasons: a need of expressivity, which would add EVIDENTIALITY as an additional value of these semi-auxiliaries.

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