

# Greek and Roman Grammarians on Motion Verbs and Place Adverbials

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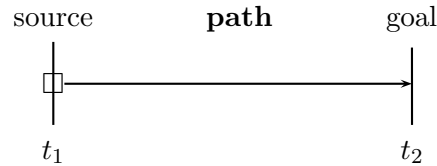
## 1 Introduction

My aim in this paper is to survey what Greek and Roman grammarians had to say about the syntax and semantics of **motion complexes** — that is, syntagmatic units comprising a motion verb and a spatial adverbial. This topic involves a number of research areas that are much studied today, such as the linguistic representation of the structure of events, and the so-called “syntax-semantics interface.” I’ll discuss both the strengths and the limitations of the ancient approach, and I’ll also go into some of the motivations for the development of this approach (in terms of both language-internal and external factors).

First, though, I’d like to situate the relevant phenomena in the context of a bit of modern theory. In the generic analysis of a motion event, we pick out four components: a dynamic **figure** moves along a **path** against a static **ground** in a particular **manner**. Languages differ in how they encode these various components. In a **verb-framed** language such as Latin, **path** is characteristically packaged in the verb: for instance, the verb *pergo* means ‘move forward towards a destination’. In English, by way of contrast, it is common for the verb to encode **manner**, and **path** is coded by a satellite: a child *toddles down* the street, a messenger *rushes up* to the king, and so forth.<sup>21, 14, 8, 12</sup>

Motion events have an internal structure: the **figure** proceeds from a **source** at some time  $t_1$  to a **goal** at  $t_2$ ; during the interval  $t_2 - t_1$ , the figure

moves through any number of points along a **path** from source to goal:



The motion complexes with which we are concerned comprise an intransitive verb that denotes a change of place and a spatial adverbial — a prepositional phrase or adverb — that provides further spatial specification. The adverbial may indicate the source or goal of the motion. Alternatively, the adverbial may indicate the ground as a whole; we call this **located motion**.

A sentence such as:

- (1) The boat floated under the bridge

is ambiguous, since the PP *under the bridge* may indicate either the goal (*the boat moved so that it ended up under the bridge*) or the location (*the boat floated around, remaining meanwhile under the bridge*).<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the morphosyntax of a language will uniquely specify one of these alternatives. Thus German distinguishes between (2) and (3):<sup>3, 122-3</sup>

- (2) Er fährt hinter das Präsidentenauto  
He drives behind the presidential car  
(GOAL OF MOTION; *hinter* + ACCUSATIVE)
- (3) Er fährt hinter dem Präsidentenauto  
He drives behind the presidential car  
(LOCATED MOTION; *hinter* + DATIVE)

Source and goal adverbials can occur only with motion verbs, whereas location adverbials may occur also with state verbs. Semantics restricts the combinations that are allowed:<sup>2</sup>

- (4) Elizabeth is standing in the dining room (LOCATION)  
\*Elizabeth is standing into the dining room (GOAL)
- (5) The Mississippi flows into the Gulf of Mexico (GOAL)  
\*The Mississippi flows in the Gulf of Mexico (LOCATION)

## 2 Apollonius Dyscolus: *skheseis topikai*

Now we turn to Apollonius Dyscolus’s work on adverbs. Apollonius observes that local adverbs (*topika epirrhēmata*) fall into three classes:

ta topika tōn epirrhēmatōn treis ekhei diastaseis, tēn en topōi,  
tēn eis topon, tēn ek topou. (*Adv.* 201.1–2)

The local adverbs exhibit three distinctions: place-in-which, place-to-which, place-from-which.

He calls these three distinctions *topikai skheseis*, that is, ‘local relations’, ‘relations having to do with place’. They correspond to what we call location, goal, and source. Sometimes Greek has separate forms for each of the three *skheseis*: *oikoi* ‘at home’ (LOCATION), *oikade* ‘toward home’ (GOAL), and *oikothen* ‘from home’ (SOURCE). Often, however, a single form will do double duty. Thus *anō* means ‘above’ (*skhesis en topō*); after a motion verb, however, it means ‘upwards’ (*skhesis eis topon*). (A separate form, *anōthen*, has the meaning ‘from above’.) Apollonius uses the term *sumpatheia* to describe the phenomenon whereby different semantic categories are represented by the same linguistic form. He compares nouns: the neuter nominative and accusative always have the same form; likewise, in the dual number, the genitive and dative have the same form.<sup>20, 48–9</sup>

Semantic criteria determine the selection of local adverbs. Apollonius discusses the question of whether *eisō* ‘inside’ (GOAL) may also be used for LOCATION (normally *endon* serves this function):

to de eisō, ekhōn to endon antiparakeimenon, edokei alogōs tith-  
esthai sēmainon tēn tou endon skhesin. (*Adv.* 205.10–12)

And *eisō*, which corresponds to *endon*, apparently was used illogically to mean the relationship of *endon*.

We might expect here a discussion of which verbs license adverbs with a particular *skhesis topika*. But, as Ineke Sluiter has shown, “nowhere is the relationship between the (lexical) meaning of the verb and the acceptability of an adverb discussed by Apollonius himself.”<sup>20, 98</sup> It is precisely this sort of relationship that we find, however, in the rules of Roman grammarians.

## 3 Roman grammar: solecisms *per adverbialia localia*

In the Roman grammarians we find the same classification of local adverbs (*adverbialia localia*):

adverbia localia vel *in loco* sunt vel *de loco* vel *ad locum*. (Donatus *Min.* 596.21)

Local adverbs are ‘place-in-which’, ‘place-from-which’, or ‘place-to-which’.

Servius expresses the rule that *in loco* adverbs occur with state verbs, while *ad locum* adverbs occur with motion verbs:

quotiens fuerint adverbia *in loco*, iungamus verba quae habent significationem *in loco*, ut puta, ‘ibi sum’, ‘illic sedeo’, ‘intus sto’ et similia; quotiens sunt autem adverbia quae significant *ad locum*, iungamus ea his verbis similiter quae habent significationem *euntis*, ut ‘pergo illuc’, ‘vado illo’, ‘proficiscor intro’, et similia. (*GL* 4.415.18–22)

When adverbs are ‘place-in-which’, we join them to verbs that have the meaning ‘place-in-which’, e. g., ‘I am there’, ‘I am sitting in that place’, ‘I am standing inside’, and so on. When adverbs signify ‘place-to-which’, however, we join them in the same fashion to verbs that have the meaning ‘going’, e. g., ‘I proceed to that place’, ‘I advance there’, ‘I start moving inside’, etc.

In Servius’s first group of examples, state verbs are accompanied by locative adverbs (*sum*, *sedeo*, *sto*). The second group consists of complexes formed from a motion verb and a directional adverb that expresses GOAL OF MOTION. Note that the verbs are characteristic for Latin in that their semantics includes a “built-in” path (Table 1); they are verbs of inherently directed motion. With the addition of the adverbial, the motion verbs refer to bounded events (accomplishments) and are **telic**.<sup>1</sup>

Given Servius’s distributional claim, we should expect the mismatching of adverbs and verbs to result in ungrammatical strings. Diomedes makes just that assertion:

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Table 1: Verbs in Latin motion complexes (Servius)

pergo	‘make one’s way forward to a destination’
vado	‘proceed in a given direction’
proficiscor	‘start on a journey, proceed from a certain point’

nonus modus [sc. soloecismi] fit per adverbia localia, ut si dicamus ‘intus eo’ aut ‘intro sum’, cum debeat dici ‘intro eo’, ‘intus sum’; et ‘eamus illic’ pro ‘illuc’. ‘illic’ enim *in loco* est, ‘illuc’ *in locum*. (*GL* 1.454.33–455.1)

The ninth kind of solecism occurs via local adverbs, if, for instance, we say ‘I am going (on the) inside’ or ‘I am (to the) inside’, when what ought to be said is ‘I am going (to the) inside’, ‘I am (on the) inside’. And also ‘Let’s go in that place’ rather than ‘to that place’. For ‘in that place’ is ‘place-in-which’, and ‘to that place’ is ‘place-to-which’.

Grammarians apply the term *solecism* to strings that are deviant at the morphosyntactic level. Focal cases of solecism involve the violation of agreement rules: for instance, an adjective that doesn’t agree in gender with its noun head, or a verb that doesn’t agree in number with its subject. Here it would seem that the grammarians conceive of the ungrammaticality as consisting in the violation of a kind of agreement between verb and adverb.

The same categories and the same analysis are proposed in the case of prepositional phrases. From this parallel, we can conclude that the grammarians possessed a functional notion of the **adverbial**. A frequent distinction in the ancient literature is between *apud*, which is similar to French *chez* and occurs with state verbs; and *ad*, which is supposedly restricted to use with motion verbs.

The examples and analysis recur over the course of many centuries. Already we find them in Lucilius’s satire on grammar (1st c. B. C. E.):<sup>16, 303</sup>

nam veluti ‘intro’ aliud longe esse atque ‘intus’ videmus,  
sic item ‘apud te’ aliud longe est, neque idem valet ‘ad te’:  
‘intro’ nos vocat ad sese, tenet ‘in(tus) apud se’ (1238–40)

For just as we see that *intro* (GOAL) and *intus* (LOCATION) are very different, / so likewise *apud te* (LOCATION) is very different from *ad te* (GOAL) and doesn’t mean the same thing: / he calls us inside (*intro*) to his presence, but he keeps us inside (*intus*) in his presence.

Table 2 illustrates the pairs of adverbs and prepositions that we find in Roman and Greek grammars.

Table 2: Pairs of adverbs/prepositions (Quintilian, Sacerdos, Donatus (*Min., Mai.*), Charisius, Servius, Diomedes, Ps.-Herodian<sup>15</sup>)

GROUND/LOCATIVE	GOAL/DIRECTIONAL
illic ‘at that place’	illuc ‘to that place’
foris ‘on the outside’	foras ‘to the outside’
intus ‘on the inside’	intro ‘to the inside’
apud ‘at’	ad ‘to’
endon ‘on the inside’	eisō ‘to the inside’ <small>(GREEK)</small>
en ‘in’	eis ‘into’ <small>(GREEK)</small>

## 4 The grammarians’ motivations

The orientation of ancient grammar is overwhelmingly didactic. Grammarians were schoolteachers, and one of their principal aims was the elimination of linguistic features that might be considered nonstandard or substandard. They perceived the correct or normative use of Latin or Greek (*latinitas, hellēnismos*) as being constantly imperiled by degenerative influences, many of which originated with non-native speakers. Isidore of Seville decried how in the imperial age “new customs and peoples came into the Roman state, corrupting the proper nature of words with solecisms and barbarisms” (*Orig.* 9.1.7). The grammarians’ concern with local adverbials suggests that they were aware that some (or many) speakers “misused” certain adverbs and prepositions.

The earliest evidence for such misuse of which I am aware is found in the speech of a Phrygian captive in Timotheus’s *Persae* (ca. 419–416 B. C. E.). Among the many linguistically interesting features of this speech is a confusion between locative and directional adverbials:

keise para Sardi para Sousa / Agbatana naiōn (*PMG* 791.158–9)

Thither by Sardis, by Sousa, inhabiting Agbatana.

The accusatives after *para* (twice) would normally be compatible only with the expression of a GOAL, and *-se* in *(e)keise* is a directional morpheme. Standard classical Greek would have e. g.:<sup>23, 25</sup>

ekei para Sardesin para Sousois, Agbatana oikōn

We should not regard the language here as merely a literary curiosity. Wilamowitz astutely observed that the speech contains a great many features

that are characteristic of later *Vulgärgriechisch*.<sup>23, 42-3</sup> Indeed, a grammarian of the imperial age identified this use of adverbials as frequent in everyday speech:

kai hōs hamartanousi peri tēn koinēn homilian polloi: ‘pou estin ho patēr?’ ‘eis baitan.’ anti tou ‘en baitēi.’ homoion gar esti touto, ean tis puthomenōi tini poi poreuetai, apokrithēi ‘en baitēi.’ (Ps.-Herodian 307.9–12 Nauck)

Many people make this mistake too in day-to-day conversation: ‘Where’s your father?’ ‘Into the hall.’ Instead of: ‘In the hall.’ It is similar if someone gives the answer ‘In the hall’ to the question ‘Where are you going?’

We turn now to Latin. The language of the freedmen in Petronius’s *Cena Trimalchionis* generally provides reliable evidence for popular Latin;<sup>6</sup> there we find *foras* several times instead of *foris* (cf. Table 2), e. g.:

nunc populus est domi leones, foras vulpes (47.5)

Now the people are lions at home (LOCATIVE), but foxes out of doors (DIRECTIONAL)

In Christian Latin inscriptions, locative and directional prepositions occur in nearly free variation; thus we see e. g. *ivit in caelis*, where classical Latin would demand *in* + accusative to express GOAL.<sup>10</sup>

What we are witnessing is a fundamental linguistic change in Latin and Greek. There ceases to be a real distinction between e. g. *in* + accusative (GOAL) and *in* + ablative (LOCATION). Prepositions, in Romance, as well as in Modern Greek, are followed by an undifferentiated objective case argument. In Italian, all simple prepositions are basically locative (i. e., they may occur as the complement of a state verb). Yet for at least some motion verbs, PPs may indicate GOAL OF MOTION:<sup>7</sup>

- (6) La palla è rimbalzata *dietro il tavolo*  
The ball bounced behind the table

Given the discrepancy in the behavior of place adverbials between the evolving popular language and the classical literary language that they wished to preserve, the grammarians found it necessary to develop a concise and teachable description of the latter.

## 5 The grammarians' analysis: an assessment

Three fundamental components may be identified in the grammarians' analysis of place adverbials:

1. Recognition of three semantic classes of adverbials, corresponding to LOCATION, SOURCE, and GOAL
2. An assignment of adverbs and prepositions (followed by a particular case) to an appropriate semantic class
3. A rule that GOAL adverbials are only compatible with motion verbs, and LOCATION adverbials are only compatible with state verbs

This analysis is notably elegant and involves some rather sophisticated linguistic insights. In several regards, however, it falls short of descriptive adequacy.

First, the assignment of prepositions and adverbs to semantic classes is often excessively restrictive and fails to take into account some frequent usages in classical authors. Thus Charisius, for instance, states:

item *ad* et *apud* hoc differunt: *ad* enim ad locum refertur, quasi 'ad illum eo', *apud* in loco, quasi 'apud illum sum'. (304.12–4 Barwick)

Likewise, *ad* and *apud* differ in this respect: *ad* is 'place-to-which', e. g. 'I am going to that man's house'; but *apud* is 'place-in-which', e. g. 'I am at that man's house'.

But locative *ad* is quite frequent, even in those authors deemed to be the paragons of Latinity. Witness Cicero:

fuit ad me sane diu (*Att.* 10.4.8)

He was at my place for a really long time

Conversely, directional *apud*, while rather more marginal, is not unknown in literary Latin. One and the same word may be used both directionally and locatively (cf. English *in*, *under*, *behind*), and the school grammar penchant for pigeonholing fails to fit the data.

Secondly, the restriction of locational adverbials to the modification of state verbs is misguided. Directional PPs and adverbs are arguments of motion verbs, and the grammarians are correct in stating their incompatibility with state verbs. Locational adverbials, however, lack argument status, and



are adjuncts. (In syntactic terms, the directional adverbial is a sister of V, whereas the locational adverbial is a sister of  $\bar{V}$ .<sup>12</sup>) It is thus not surprising that their distribution is wider, and that they may occur with motion verbs to express located motion:

quia foris ambulatis (Plautus *Mos.* 451)

Because you walk out-of-doors (LOCATION)

Such adverbials are not restricted to manner-of-motion verbs (e. g. *ambulare* ‘walk’); they can occur also with verbs of directed motion:

ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras (Virgil *A.* 6.268)

They went in darkness under the lonely night sky (LOCATION),  
through the shadows (PATH)

## 6 The grammarians’ work in context

The grammarians, however, were not unaware of the descriptive limitations of their statements. They chose to keep the theory simple for the textbooks, and to handle the exceptions in another way. Here is Servius on *ad*:

*ad* vero secundum artem semper ad locum, ut ‘ad amicum vado.’  
quamquam et secundum auctoritatem invenitur in loco, ut ‘ad  
Marcum Laecam te habitare’. (*GL* 4.442.12–4)

According to *ars*, the preposition *ad* is always ‘place-to-which’; e. g.: ‘I’m going to my friend’s house.’ Yet it is also found, by virtue of authority, in the ‘place-in-which’ role; e. g. ‘that you lived in the house of Marcus Lepidus’. [Servius’s second example is a quotation from Cicero *Catil.* 1.19.]

Servius refers to the grammarians’ “theory” as *ars*, which means, at one level, ‘science’ (that is, a rational account of how language works) and, at another level, “textbook” (that is, any one of various books called *artes grammaticae*, which contained definitions, rules, etc.). While *ars* does not sanction locative *ad*, Servius says, *auctoritas* — that is, the usage of canonical authors — does.<sup>22, 236</sup> Both *ars* and *auctoritas* are among the grammarians’ *Kriterien der Sprachrichtigkeit* — the core principles by which any piece of language was judged acceptable or unacceptable, correct or incorrect.<sup>19</sup> And at the end of the day, the grammarians’ systematic explanations did not have to be watertight: for where theory left off, there remained the possibility of an appeal to authority.

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