Contents

Acknowledgements XI
List of Figures and Tables XIII

1 **Introduction** 1
1 Research Topic 1
2 Goals 3
3 Contextualisation 5
4 Chapter Overview 6

2 **On French and Italian Complex Spatial Expressions** 7
1 Complex Spatial Expressions 7
1.1 *Introduction* 7
1.2 *Diachronie Evolution of (Complex) Prepositions* 9
2 The Scope of this Study 15
2.1 *Languages and Constructions* 15
2.2 *Periods under Study* 16
3 Secondary Sources and Previous Studies 17
3.1 *French* 18
3.2 *Italian* 23
3.3 *Etymology* 28
3.4 *Research on Similar Spatial Expressions in Other Languages* 29

3 **Data Collection and Research Methodology** 30
1 On the Use of Corpora, the Databases Utilised and the Method of Data Collection 30
1.1 *Corpora Use in Historical Linguistics and Semantics* 30
1.2 *French and Italian Corpora* 33
1.3 *Descriptions of the Databases Utilised* 33
1.4 *Data Retrieval and Selection of Random Samples* 37
2 On Functional Notions, Qualitative and Quantitative Methods, and a Cross-linguistic Perspective 41
2.1 *Functional Notions* 41
2.2 *Qualitative and Quantitative Analyses* 44
2.3 *Qualitative Methods Adopted* 45
2.4 *Quantitative Methods Adopted* 46
2.5 *A Cross-linguistic Perspective* 46

4 Interpretative Framework 48
1 Grammatical Information 49
1.1 *Distinction between Prepositional/Adverbial/Adjectival Expressions* 49
1.2 *Grammaticality Level* 49
1.3 *Further Distinctions between Adverbial Expressions* 53
2 Referential Information 55
2.1 *Entities Distinguished* 55
2.2 *Nature of the Figure-Ground Relation* 60
2.3 *Types of Dynamic Uses* 63
2.4 *Trajectory vs. Sweeping Uses* 65
2.5 *Internal or External Trajectory/Position* 67
3 Level of Abstraction 69
3.1 *Concrete and Abstract Configurations* 69
3.2 *Literal vs. Figurative Interpretation* 70
4 Functional Parameters 71
4.1 *Functional Character of the Ground* 71
4.2 *Functional Notions* 73
5 Grammaticalisation Mechanisms 88

5 Results of the French Analysis 91
1 Main Findings 91
1.1 À travers (de) 91
1.2 Au travers (de) 95
1.3 En travers (de) 98
1.4 De travers 102
2 Functional Notions 106
2.1 *Guidance* 106
2.2 *Contrast* 113
2.3 *Deviation* 120
3 Grammaticalisation Mechanisms 122
3.1 *From Concrete to Abstract* 122
3.2 *Coexistence or Layering* 126
3.3 *Extension* 126
3.4 *Semantic Bleaching* 126
3.5 *Erosion or Phonological Attrition* 131
3.6 *Decategorisation* 131
3.7 *Divergence* 134

3.8 *Resistance* 134
3.9 *Unidirectionality* 134
3.10 *Grammaticalisation Degree* 135
4 Conclusion 137

6 Results of the Italian Analysis 138
1 Main Findings 138
1.1 A traverso/at(t)raverso (a, di, per) 138
1.2 Al traverso (di) 141
1.3 In traverso (di) 142
1.4 Di traverso (a) 142
1.5 Traverso (a) 148
2 Functional Notions 151
2.1 *Guidance* 151
2.2 *Contrast* 156
2.3 *Deviation* 162
3 Grammaticalisation Mechanisms 165
3.1 *From Concrete to Abstract* 165
3.2 *Coexistence or Layering* 167
3.3 *Extension* 167
3.4 *Semantic Bleaching* 167
3.5 *Erosion or Phonological Attrition* 171
3.6 *Decategorisation* 171
3.7 *Divergence* 174
3.8 *Resistance* 174
3.9 *Unidirectionality* 174
3.10 *Grammaticalisation Degree* 174
4 Conclusion 175

7 Contrastive Analysis 176
1 Grammatical Categories 176
1.1 *Prepositions, Adverbs and Adjectives* 176
1.2 *Semantic Complements of Adverbs* 178
2 Semantic Features 179
2.1 *Static Configurations* 179
2.2 *Type of Motion* 180
2.3 *Type of Grounds* 184
2.4 *Concrete vs. Abstract* 185

3 Functional Notions 187
3.1 *Unity of the Ground* 188
3.2 *Opposition to Motion* 188
3.3 *Lateral Orientation* 188
3.4 *Focalisation on the Trajectory in the Ground (Change of Position-Motion)* 190
3.5 *Spatial Continuity* 191
3.6 *Minimal Trajectory* 192
3.7 *Resistance to the Usual use of the Ground vs. Resistance to a (Meta-)physical Force* 193
3.8 *Internality* 195
3.9 *Dynamic vs. Static Semantics* 198
4 Grammaticality Level 202
5 Conclusion 203

8 **Conclusion** 205
1 Main Findings 205
1.1 *Diachronic-Semantic Description* 205
1.2 *Functional Concepts* 206
1.3 *Grammaticalisation* 208
1.4 *Contrastive Analysis* 209
2 On Some Theoretical Implications 211
3 Perspectives for Future Research 213

Bibliography 215
Cited Text Index 238
Author Index 240
Subject Index 242