

Where is *going to* going to go? A Generative Proposal between Diachrony and Synchrony

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is threefold: first, to examine the diachronic development of the *be going to* construction in English from a historical point of view, investigating the formation of this construction, as well as its change in function and semantics, through its occurrence in texts of various kinds. Secondly, to provide a motivation for the grammaticalization of this construction, which also implies reanalysis, by proposing a possible diachronic derivation for this complex structure from a generative perspective. In fact, the development of *be going to* follows a grammaticalization path identified for a wide range of future constructions cross-linguistically, including the stages *andative* > *purposive* > *future* (Bybee & Dahl, 1989). In the third place, to formulate guesses on the future development of the construction through a synchronic corpus-oriented observation of its use in PDE. The current paper summarizes the results achieved by the research, with some original discussion to highlight some of the issues involved.

Keywords: Grammaticalization, *Be going to* construction, Diachronic language change, English language, Expression of future.

1. A Diachronic Approach to the *be going to* Construction

1.1 For a Definition of *be going to* + *V*

The *be going to* construction in English has been subject to a number of studies in historical linguistics, in particular by theorists of grammaticalization (e.g. Bybee & Dahl, 1989; Bybee/Pagliuca/Perkins, forthcoming). In fact, its emergence and diachronic development constitute a clear case of grammaticalization continuum as defined in the existing studies on the issue.

Before going into the structural grammaticalization of this structure, it is of fundamental importance to clarify its functional implications in Present Day English (henceforth PDE). The term generally utilized for a punctual description of this structure is ‘prospective aspect’, which, according to Frawley (1992: 322) and as reported by Cinque (1999: 98 ff.), marks ‘a point *just prior* to the beginning of an event’, which will be developed later in this paper for a comparison with other future marking structures. In certain frameworks, the *be going to* construction is conceived as a semantically unmarked future form: Joos (1964: 23), for instance, defines it as ‘the only uncolored future that English has’ and Haynes (1967: 32) identifies in this structure a ‘neutral future signal’. Furthermore, Scheffer (1975: 80 ff.) assumes *be going to* to be a simple verb in the progressive aspect, without drawing a clear distinction between the different uses of the progressive (in the case in point, the specific difference, which we will analyze diachronically in this paper, between bare progressive and future marker).

1.2 ‘Grammaticalizing Movement’: The *A*’s and *B*’s of the Phenomenon

Interestingly enough, according to Bybee/Pagliuca/Perkins (forthcoming), the grammaticalization of the *be going to* construction takes place along a continuum comprising movement > intention > prediction (otherwise conceptualized as allative > purposive > future, e.g. by Traugott/König, 1991), marking a development from a movement-based construction (i.e. from a structure in which the lexical verb only has a semantic value indicating material movement from a place *A* to a goal *B*) to one that refers to the expression of intention, to an eventual one in which it conveys immediate futurity and, following Bybee/Pagliuca/Perkins’ line, also a sense of prediction based on objective evidence. Research on grammaticalization on a cross-linguistic basis has highlighted that the *go* is, among lexical verbs, the most susceptible to grammaticalization into a future marker, basically by virtue of the fact that it is the only one in the English language that is not marked at all for manner of movement (Note 1). That is, it does not imply any restrictions on the type of motion involved, as compared e.g. to *plod*, *stroll*, *wander*, *run* (from Pérez, 1990), which all entail a descriptive or suggestive sense either related to the speed or to the mode of the movement itself. *Go* is indeed absolutely insensitive to any precise indication of how the movement takes place. For this reason, as supported by Bybee/Pagliuca/Perkins, there seem to be no constraints on the type of subject that can perform the activity of going, which thus allows for an extension from space (i.e. from stage I of the continuum) into time. To this analysis we may add that, while

an andative verb that is unmarked for manner of movement may definitely be found in any language (due to its topicality in basic communication), the lexical nuances associated with the single meanings of motion verbs in different languages depend on a number of other factors (e.g. a verb like *plod*, whose statistical frequency in English is not very high would only be translatable through a paraphrase in many languages and is therefore less susceptible).

This process is *prima facie* particularly complex because it comprehends the culmination of four individual elements – that is, of four components with an individual history – into a fixed construction (Note 2): the verb *go*, which bears the main lexical content in the complex structure, the two components forming the progressive aspect (i.e. the suffix *-ing* and the auxiliary verb *be*) and the preposition *to*, followed by an infinitive.

Bybee/Pagliuca/Perkins (1988: 16) argue, based on their cross-linguistic data corpus, that this andative verb, in association with a preposition indicating motion (*to/towards*), represents a prerequisite for the evolution of the structure into a movement-based future. This categorical claim, however, does not seem to be fully convincing in the light of the fact that even in other Indo-European languages such as French this view is not confirmed: the so-called *futur proche* (indicating, similarly to the English construction, the realization of the event expressed by the lexical verb in a near future) makes use of the same elements as the *be going to* construction – although it is not aspectually progressive –, but the motion preposition is not present. This aspect is significant, since the notion of movement to a goal in French is expressed through the verb *aller* ('go') and the generic motion preposition *à* ('to', 'towards'), which is not retained in the relative future construction.

Furthermore, Pérez (1990: 51) adds that also *come* is often grammaticalized as a future marker in many language systems (Note 3), erroneously arguing that the French *futur proche* exemplifies the development of *venir* ('come') into a structure indicating future, but *futur proche*, as already pointed out, only makes use of *aller* ('go'), as in (1):

- (1) *Je vais faire mon exposé de linguistique germanique demain*
I go do my presentation of linguistics Germanic tomorrow
'I'm going to have my Germanic linguistics presentation tomorrow'

In the next paragraphs we will take into account the individual features of the elements composing the *be going to* construction (the verb *go* in [2.2.1.] and the progressive in [2.2.2.]) with a special focus on their position and function in the English language when the structure was formed and as compared with other structures.

1.2.1 The Motion Verb: Old English *gān* vs. *gangan*

As pointed out by Pérez (1990: 52), Old English (henceforth OE) displays two similar verbs of movement deriving from a source with a similar sense of immediacy, *gān* and *gangan*. Although the actual relation between them appears to be uncertain, researchers have advanced hypotheses on their status and on the aspects linking them to PDE *go*.

Gān is, according to most scholars the legitimate ancestor of *go* (Note 4) (with the very general meaning of ‘move along’, ‘walk’) and is normally classified as an ‘anomalous verb’, in the sense that its paradigm, as well as those of other highly frequent verbs such as *dōn* (‘do’) and *willan* (‘will’), significantly differs from the conjugation schemes of all other classes of verbs, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Conjugation of OE *gān*

Indicative	present	preterite
1 p.sg.	<i>gā</i>	<i>ēode</i>
2 p.sg.	<i>g□st</i>	<i>ēodeſt</i>
3 p.sg.	<i>g□p</i>	<i>ēode</i>
plural	<i>gāþ</i>	<i>ēodon</i>
subjunctive	present	preterite
singular	<i>gā</i>	<i>ēode</i>
plural	<i>gān</i>	<i>ēoden</i>
imperative		
singular	<i>gā</i>	<i>gā</i>
plural	<i>gāþ</i>	<i>gāþ</i>
participle	present	past
	<i>gangende</i>	<i>gān,</i> <i>(ge)gangen</i>

Thus, as we may observe, the conjugation of this OE verb was somewhat diverging with respect to its forms throughout the paradigm: the preterite of *gān* (‘*ēode*’) was not related to this root but lay instead in the obsolete imperfect *yede*, *yode* > *ēode* (Note 5).

On the other hand *gangan*, whose semantics does not differ dramatically from that of *gān*, is generally ascribed to a small group of verbs of class VII of strong verbs, also defined as ‘reduplicating verbs’ (also cf. Quirk & Wrenn, 1957: 52-53). Reduplication is a regular strategy of expression of the perfect in Indo-European (Note 6), inherited by Early Germanic to form preterite forms and retained as a systematic preterite marker only in Gothic and very restrictedly in OE (Note 7). In fact, these verbs are characterized by preterite forms which are considerably different from the others belonging to class VII because of the presence of the vowel *ēō*: hence, in the case in point the preterite form of *gangan* is *gēōng/geng* (Note 8). As represented in Table 1.1., *gān*, irrespective of its formal dissimilarity from *gangan*, also displays a form containing *ēō* in its preterite, which may have created a confusion between the two verbs which probably contributed to the development of PDE *go*.

One of the assumptions formulated in the literature is that the relationship between *gān* and *gangan* is mediated by reduplication of the latter form: as proposed by Barney (1985), it may be a lengthened form of *gān* whose emergence is motivated by pragmatic reasons, in particular emphatic effects, a process which is attested in a great number of languages. It seems, however,

more compelling to consider *gān* as a reduced form of *gangan* whose accentual length resumes the loss of the second part of the word. On the other hand, Mańczak (2010: 57), who does not take the ‘resumptive accent’ argument into account, provides a pragmatic motivation and interestingly relates this possibility to irregular reduction of *gangan* due to its frequency in usage, arguing that when ‘a linguistic element [...] becomes too long in relation to its frequency, it must be shortened’. This motivation is convincing, as it presupposes that *gangan* must have been reduced – diachronically – in all Germanic languages, a generalization which actually holds for the other Germanic verbs corresponding to ‘go’: Dutch *gaan*, Danish *gå*, and so forth⁹. As noted by Pérez (1990: 52), such shortening may be analogically related to verbs such as *standan/stand* (that is, *gang-gæ-gai-* as compared to *stand-stæ-stai-*), justifying the analogy with the fact that ‘both verbs express complementary meanings of motion and non-motion’ (cf. Old High German *gēn* and *stēn*, possible variants of *gangan* and *standan*). A third, possibilities-exhausting proposal is the one advanced by the Oxford English Dictionary (and reported by Pérez) that two different etymologies may be hypothesized for *gān* and *gangan* as follows:

(2) **gæ-/gai-> gān*

(3) **gangan > gangan*

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, as we may see in (2)-(3), *gān* has been reconstructed as deriving from a Proto-Germanic stem displaying two possible forms with the rough meaning of ‘go’, whilst the independent root from which *gangan* derives approximately means ‘strive’ (cf. Sanskrit *jānghā* ‘the lower part of the leg’). The fact that the etymological origin of *gangan* is semantically so close to *gān* – in that it indicates movement towards, ambition towards – may have triggered a confusion which eventually led to a merger of the two verbs, a confusion fostered by the casual formal similarity between them, possibly revealing a common Indo-European heritage (PIE **g□□ē-*). There remains, however, great uncertainty in the literature on whether and how *gān* and *gangan* actually relate to each other.

1.1.1 The Origin of the English Progressive

As far as the origins of the English progressive are concerned, basically three hypotheses seem to be possible at present to account for the emergence of the progressive in English.

Firstly, Bybee/Perkins/Pagliuca (1994: 131 ff.), discuss the potential origin of the English progressive as compared to the same structure in Romance, in which it is interpreted as having a locative source that is identifiable e.g. in the Italian/Spanish verb *stare/estar*, utilized to build the progressive, as shown in (4):

(4) *Maria sta cantando una canzone*

(5) *Maria está cantando una canción*

‘Maria is singing a song’

Although PDE does not show any remnant of locativity in its progressive structure (in that the copula given by the verb *be* does not bear any spatially marked meaning), Bybee/Perkins/Pagliuca, based on Jespersen (1949: 168-169), argue that in Middle English – the alleged period of emergence of this construction in its fully developed form – the progressive contained a locative preposition before the gerund, as in (6)-(7) [from Bybee/Perkins/Pagliuca, 1994: 132]:

(6) *He is on hunting*

(7) *He was a-coming home*

OE seems to display instances of this type, as observable in (8) [from Braaten 1967: 173]:

(8) *Ic wæs on huntunge*

‘I was hunting’

This is interesting, since, even though the preposition has been deleted in most dialects, the introduction of this distinction in other Germanic languages previously lacking unambiguously identifiable progressivity such as Dutch and German significantly involves the presence of locative elements (Note 11):

(9) *Ick ben aan het studeren*

(10) *Ich bin am Lernen*

‘I am studying’

What is more, for the expression of a continuous action PDE makes use of a different verb, due to the different function conveyed, but to a clearly locative construction which is possibly ascribable to the same source, as observable in examples like *My mother keeps (on) taking care of me even if I am 40* (Note 12).

Secondly, scholars like Scheffer (1975: 218 ff.) and Mossé (1938: 35-36), among others, argue for a development independent of (and evidently parallel to) that of the gerund: i.e. the progressive may have evolved out of the replacement of the *-ende* forms of the present participle with *-ing*. As hypothesized by Pérez, such process may have consisted of phonological weakening, later reinforced by the *-ing* of the gerundial structure. Scheffer’s view on the evolution of the progressive is apparently encouraged by the fact that the *-ing* form cannot be defined as a (verbal) noun, but rather as a present participle. On the other hand, Bolinger (1971: 47 ff.), an advocate of the locative origin position, shows that even the PDE progressive has remnants of nominality, given its derivation from a *be*+preposition+gerund construction.

The third possibility is to consider the English progressive as a calque of a Celtic construct: cf. e.g. Lockwood’s (1968: 103 ff.) discussion on Celtic *Yr wyfyn myned* ‘I go’ (literally meaning ‘I am in/on going’). This view, related to the locative analysis, is motivated by the claim that the other Germanic languages do not have a real progressive structure (Note 13), which should

allow for an explanation according to which the English progressive emerged in the Insular Celtic languages. Such perspective, also supported by Mittendorf/Poppe (2000: 138 ff.), asserts in principle that there is – or there may be – a relation between the overall presence of a progressive in all Celtic languages (realized by means of location) and the presence of a structurally very similar construct in OE, which has then lost the preposition and augmented its flexibility and possible uses in the syntax of English. Despite the uncertainty as far as the origin of the progressive in Dutch and German is concerned and the fact that this structure does not exist in the other Germanic languages, the categorical claim that the English progressive is the result of early contact with Celtic seems to be misleading, in the first place because no study has yet provided an explanation for the widespread use of the locative progressive in Northrhine-Westphalian dialects and in Dutch and secondly because, from a theoretical point of view, a multi-causal approach appears more economic: we may thus make the educated guess that it is all about an admixture of the above mentioned causes that triggered the emergence of the progressive in English.

2. The Grammaticalization of the *be going to* Construction

2.1 '*Be going to*' in OE

In Old English (approximately 7th century-1100 (Note 14)) copular *bēōn/wesan* + *gangende* is frequently found in association with a number of prepositions other than *to*, but the construct *be going to* is rarely attested. Scheffer (1975: 53 ff.) collected a corpus of OE texts for his study on the English progressive which revealed that the majority of occurrences of *gān/gangan* (54%) are composed of a prefixed preposition followed by the verb, such as *ut-gangan* ('go out'), *in-gangan* ('go in'), etc.. The other instances in the corpus show the verb mainly followed by the prepositions *in* ('in'), *fram* ('from') and *ðiðer* ('thither'), with only two occurrences of *to*, which is of course not endowed with a meaning of intention (Note 15) but merely expresses movement towards, as may be observed in (11):

(11) ...*ðu oferfærest ðone sæ 7 bist gangende to Romesbyrig*

you cross-2sg. the-ACC see-ACC and be-2sg. Going towards Rome

'You will be crossing the sea and going to Rome' (c. 855 GD C, 132.30)

[Scheffer (1975: 85)]

This instance (Scheffer, 1975), conveying a clearly andative function (and displaying the definite article), is generally cited as one of the earliest cases of *be going to*, interpreted in terms of 'Place-complement type' (Tabor, forthcoming: 10). In fact, the spatial implication is intuitively implied in the fact that *be going* is followed by a PP which constitutes the direct complement of the verb and that the nominal complement of the preposition is the proper name of a circumscribed place, which eliminates any doubts as to the semantic interpretation of the construct. The same goes for the following example (with the auxiliary inflected in the past tense), taken from the same text:

(12) *ðā sume dæge wæs he to ðam baðe gangende*

then some day was he to the-DAT bath-DAT going

‘then some day as he was going to the bath’ (c. 855 GD C, 123.18)

[Pérez (1990: 54)]

Interestingly enough, (12) reveals on the one hand that the discussed structure is consistently allative in OE (the complement of the verb is, again, a PP-place complement, the only difference being that in this case it is all about a common noun), on the other hand a number of structural points. Firstly, it demonstrates that the OV- and the VO-order co-exist not only in the same period (Note 16), but also in the same text (Note 17). At the same time, it is interesting to note that, differently from PDE, the preposition *to* is followed by dative case and not by accusative, although the verb indicates movement (Note 18). The same, in fact, is implied by the Modern German preposition *zu*, which governs dative as in *Ich gehe zur Schule* ‘I’m going to school’ (Note 19).

Pérez (1990: 55) shows that a later manuscript translating the same text (according to Timmer [1934: 11], datable to more than one century later), uses the simple present instead of the progressive and the verb *becyman* – bearing a slightly different meaning, also interpretable in resultative terms – *en lieu* of *gangan*:

(13) *witolidce in to Rome ðu becymst ofer sæ ðu færst*

truly in to Rome you come-2sg. over see you go

‘Truly, you will come to Rome. You will cross the sea’ (c. 1050-1100, GD H, p. 132, l. 29)

[Pérez (1990: 55)]

This is obviously a clear indication of the fact that the grammaticalization process has not started and the construct only indicates motion, since this later translation lacks all the structural elements forming the *be going to* construction (the motion verb is lexically different, the aspect is not progressive, the preposition c-commanding the goal theta role differs from bare *to* and the PP-complement is left dislocated (Note 20)).

Hence, as we have seen, the occurrences of *be going to* in OE are extremely limited – as the action of going is mainly expressed through the same motion verb accompanied by (prefixed or suffixed) prepositions other than *to* – and, crucially, the subject is in all instances a volitive one (i.e. an agent). In the next section I will present the most discussed data from Middle English (henceforth ME).

2.2 ‘Be going to’ in ME

The innovation introduced in ME consist in the substitution of the previous ending *-ende* through *-ing/yng*. However, it does not seem clear which of the growing occurrences of *be*

going to should be viewed as the first attestation. Mossé (1938: 290) proposes that (14) may be an early example of change in the semantics and function of the structure, indicating therefore the source or starting point of the grammaticalization path:

(14) *Philip [...] was going too ðe ouer Greece*

‘Philip was going to thrive over Greece’ (early 14th century, Alisaunder of Macedon, l. 901)

[Mossé (1938: 290)]

Mossé, arguing for the verbal status of *ðe*, establishes a link between this item and OE *ðeon* (‘thrive’), which clearly makes it plausible to consider this example as one of the first instances of *be going to* as indicating motion from a place in the present to a pre-conceived goal. It seems compelling, indeed, that the semantics of a verb like ‘thrive’ shifts the informational relevance of the sentence from the action of going to the time-extended action of thriving, i.e. between the two verbs, *ðe* is more crucial than *go* for the general meaning of the sentence.

A number of scholars (cf. Mustanoja [1960: 592] and Pérez [1990: 55]), nevertheless, find this explanation little convincing, in that its validity entirely depends on the interpretation of *ðe* as a form of ‘thrive’, which is dubious. Danchev/Kytö (1994: 61) comes to the conclusion that, since no other examples of this structure have been detected in the same period and the next one is not attested until more than a century later, the *going to*-construct in *King Alisaunder* is probably not endowed with a future meaning.

Although according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the first certain example is the one reported in (16) [see below], Danchev/Kytö hypothesize that (15), traced back to 1438 and found in *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*, is to be taken into consideration as involving a sense of movement and slight intention which, according to the scholars, ‘co-exist in hierarchy that is difficult to determine’:

(15) *And there vppon the seid persones of the ship of Hull goyng to do the*

And there among the said persons of the ship from Hull going to do the

said wrong

said wrong

(1438, *Chancery English*: 174)

[slightly reduced from: Danchev/Kytö (1994: 61)]

This example also conveys a sentient subject (i.e. a [+human] agent) and implies physical movement but, as proposed with respect to (14), the informational focus is on the action of doing rather than on that of going (Note 21). While (14) contains the full form of *be going to*, (15) utilizes *going to* + infinitive in an adjectival function that may be somewhat related to

relativization. Nonetheless, what is crucial here is that the construct also implies a sense of intention and a necessary projection of the act into the near future, since the narration is about a group of people (*'the seid persons'*) who are planning a theft, which by definition requires intention and volition. It is not casual, therefore, that the subject is agentive.

The first almost universally recognized instance of *be going to* is given in (16), which Traugott (1982: 256 ff.) analyzes as already implying an *optional* motion meaning. This hypothesis, claiming that a sense of futurity is definitely present, is certainly plausible, as the subject of the *be going to* construction belongs to a passive clause and may not be sentient by virtue of structural and semantic reasons:

(16) *Thys onhappy sowle [...] was going to be broughte into helle for the synne*

This unhappy soul [...] was going to be brought to hell for the sin

and onleful lustys of her body

and immoral lusts of her body

(1482, *The Revelation of the Monk of Evesham*: 43)

[slightly reduced from: Danchev/Kytö (1994: 61)]

In the first place, the subject *thys onhappy sowle* is a theme (while the agent is not expressed and the PP *into helle* is the goal) whose movement to the subject position is due to the passivization of the sentence. That is, from a structural point of view it constitutes the direct object of *bring* at D-level, thus it cannot be agentive because of the passive voice, making *thys onhappy sowle* a constituent which has no active role in the action of bringing. Secondly, from a semantic point of view *onhappy sowle* is an abstract noun and as a consequence may not be interpreted as an agentive subject unless it is strongly personified. As noted by Danchev/Kytö, the ME text is significantly faithful to the original Latin *Visio Monachi de Eynsham* (1169, by Adam of Eynsham), from which it is assumed to have derived:

(17) *Dum itaque quasi triumphalibus hostium pompis*

Now therefore almost victorious-ABL enemies-GEN magnificence-ABL

infelix ob carnis illecebras agitur

unhappy because-of flesh-GEN vanities-NOM is-led-PASS

in gehennam

in hell-ACC

'Hence the unhappy is led into hell by the victorious magnificence of the enemies because of the lusts of the body'

(1169, *Visio Monachi de Eynsham*: 260)

[slightly reduced from: Danchev/Kytö (1994: 62), glossing is mine]

In principle the Latin text, which utilizes here a historical present (vs. the preterite form of the inflected *be* in ME, followed by *going to*), shows a passivized form of *ago* ('lead') which is synthetic rather than analytical like ME – this is of course due to contingent reasons – but the two texts correspond perfectly to each other in that both verbal forms are passive and contain the element of movement. What dramatically differs, however, is the fact that the passive verb of movement *bring* in the ME text is inscribed into a structure whose interpretation is of futurity because of the presence of *be going to*. This structural and interpretive difference between ME and Latin is significant, as, in fact, the Romance languages have variously grammaticalized or not grammaticalized this particular *go*-construct (cf. Spanish *Vamos a cantar una canción* 'We are going to sing a song', French *On va manger des pommes* 'We are going to eat [some] apples' vs. Italian and Romanian (Note 22)). As we will see, this occurrence reveals that the grammaticalization of *be going to* was initiated relatively early, if we consider that it did not begin to be frequently used until the seventeenth century (Note 23). In ME the progressive form of *go* is widely attested with different functions, e.g. an adjectival (which we may define as an 'implicitly relativized') or nominalized function (whereby the nominalized verb is often preceded by a possessive pronoun), as shown in (18)-(19). As is clear, these examples do not convey any sense of intention or near future but their meaning is rather limited to the expression of motion:

(18) *And I herde goyng , bothe up and doune men, hors, houndes...*

'And I heard men, horses and hounds going up and down'

(c. 1368, *Book of the Duchess*, l. 348 (Note 24))

[Pérez (1990: 56), translation is mine]

(19) *My goinge graunted is by parlement*

'My going is fully decreed by parliament'

(c. 1380, *Troilus and Cryseide*, book IV, l. 1297 (Note 25))

[Pérex (1990: 56), translation is mine (Note 26)]

The presence of such construct without *be*, however, does not entail that the copular verb has to be present to convey the 'grammaticalizing' meaning in point here (cf. [15]), as may be observed in (20) which, just as the example from *The Revelation of the Monk of Evesham*, contains what can be considered, as a first approximation, a non-sentient subject (although I will have more to say on that below). Despite this notable – but somewhat arguable – structural aspect, the meaning of the sentence definitely implies a future interpretation:

(20) *At ðe nyhte from ðe sonne goynge to reste til in ðe morwe at ðe sunne*

rising

‘At night from the sunset until the following day at sunrise’

(c. 1500, MED *The Rewle of Sustris Menouresses Enclosid*, 94/2(Note 27))

[Pérez (1990: 56)]

Pérez (1990: 56) attributes an exclusive semantic value of ‘motion towards’ to this occurrence of *going to*, which does not seem to be completely compelling: there is certainly a sense of motion involved in the poetic expression of the sunset conveyed by this text, but the movement is highly metaphorized here (see 1.2.) and may also indicate a sense of futurity. Pérez assumes that this is a case of *going* + goal-PP because ME *reste* is also a noun, but the *Middle English Dictionary* reports that this may be an alternative infinitival form of *resten* (‘rest’, ‘repose’ (Note 28)) and therefore an adequate candidate for the combination with *going to* expressing future. Again, following this somewhat alternative line, the subject is only apparently non-agentive, in the sense that, differently from (16), the voice here is active (the verb, which is intransitive, would however not allow for the passivization of the sentence) and *rest* normally implies volition. We may hence imagine that the sun is strongly anthropomorphized in this instance and that it may ‘want to’ go to rest. Otherwise, partially following Pérez’s hypothesis (with the crucial difference that we take *rest* as a verb instead of as a noun), (20) can be considered as a very early instance of *going to* + infinitive with a future meaning and a non-volitional subject. This analysis, however, is not convincing, since the other attestations of active sentence with a non-volitional subject and a future expressed through *be going to* occur in Modern English (Note 29). The third option, the one advanced with conviction by Pérez, is that *rest* is a noun and the whole construction in (20) merely indicates movement towards a goal. A case of *going to* + infinitive referring to a certain source of intention and futurity is the one taken from the Helsinki Corpus (Eckardt, 2008: 143) and reported in (21):

(21) I pledge you, sir, quoth she, and going to fil more

(1582, *Madox Diary*: 88)

[Eckardt (2008: 143)]

In this passage, which describes a conversation taking place while a young woman is pouring some beer into a bowl, *going to* clearly implies intention: it may be argued that motion, as generically intended, is still present, but at the same time a sense of future-projected intentionality is involved. The fact that no motion in the classical sense of the term can be hypothesized here is inferable from practical implications: although the action described implies a physical activity, the agentive subject (the woman) does not need to *go and* fill her mug with beer, because the bowl is in front of her, i.e. this is a *go*-based future that does not really identify someone *going* somewhere.

As we will see in the next sections, the *be going to* construction, irrespective of its parallel development into a future marker, has retained the original meaning of an aspect-marked ‘going somewhere’ in PDE, which gives rise to potential double-reading (Note 30), usually

disambiguated by the context. (22) and (23) exemplify such occurrences of *(be) going to* in ME:

(22) *I am now going to prepare for her Ma ties coming to Woborne...*

(1572, *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History*, letter CCIII, l. 1)

[Eckhardt (2008: 146(Note 31))]

(23) *Oure subgettes ... havynge hereafter fre commying and goyng to Gene yay
of Gene desire to have in to oure reaume of England*

‘Our subjects from hereafter have free entry and departure from Gene as
those from Gene wish to have into our realm of England’

(1419, *MED* [p. 222]: *Proc. Privy C.* 2.256)

[Pérez (1990: 56)]

I assume (22) to exemplify the retention of the original meaning of the construction even if Eckhardt (2008: 146) classifies this excerpt as one that contains ‘an implication of imminent future’. Although it is undeniable that the action of preparing implies futurity with respect to the very moment that Francis Russell, 2nd Earl of Bedford (the author of the letter) is writing, a rapid contextualization of the passage through the consultation of the whole letter shows that the author is indirectly telling his epistolary interlocutor that he has to hurry and that he is ‘*now going (to prepare)*’, that is, immediately after writing (and possibly sealing) the letter, he is *physically* going to prepare – i.e. ‘go’ and ‘prepare’ are separate actions – everything for the coming of the nameless lady. This particular grammaticalization path also involves semantic reanalysis(Note 32), an overt process, therefore the interpretation of such passages cannot but be subject to individual or shared judgment by scholars, since ME is the historical period in which the presence of *be going to* as a relatively established structure becomes more relevant and is possibly more ambiguous in some occurrences. As a matter of fact, by the end of the ME period – approximately the late 15th century – the construct was formed but not so widespread among the speakers as to allow for its grammaticalization, which necessitates a certain frequency of occurrence in usage. Recall that, according to Traugott/Dasher (2002: 645), grammaticalization requires that the material which is assigned a [+grammatical] function must be found in ‘highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts’.

2.3 ‘Be going to’ in Early New English

In Early New English (henceforth ENE(Note 33)), the construction starts to appear regularly with the copular verb and the preposition *to*. The original function related to the previous language stages – which is preserved until PDE -, i.e. movement towards, is of course pervasive in texts(Note 34), as shown in the following examples(Note 35):

(24) ...*then I was going prisoner to the tower*

(c. 1591, *Richard III*: iii 2 102(Note 36))

[Pérez (1990: 57)]

(25) ...*and I am going with instruction to him*

(c. 1603, *Measure for Measure*: ii 3 38(Note 37))

[Pérez (1990: 57)]

(26) *There are pilgrims going to Canterbury with rich offerings*

(1597, *Henry IV*, Part I: I 2 140(Note 38))

[Pérez (1990: 57)]

These three instances of *be going to* (the first of which lacking *be*, as in other examples discussed in this paper, i.e. with what we may call a ‘relativizing construct’) clearly indicate movement towards. Pérez observes that in (24) *go* takes ‘a complement phrase to indicate manner/travel: that is, *going as a prisoner*’. Nonetheless, it does not seem compelling that *prisoner* is the direct complement of *go* in this case. We may conclude, instead, that the complement of *go* is the directional PP *to the tower*, whilst *prisoner* is possibly an adjunct. Even if it were the complement of *go*, though, it would rather be the predicate of a resultative construction, comparing this structure, which would no longer be grammatical in PDE, with such constructs as *go sour* or *go 70’s* (in the sense of ‘to become sour’/ ‘not to be edible’ and ‘start acting as if one were in the 70’s’/ ‘get a 70’s attitude’, respectively).

Interestingly enough, in ENE the semantic development of this construction from ‘go to a place’ to ‘go to perform an action’ becomes more relevant, as may be seen in (27), an example taken from Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, previous to those in (24)-(26):

(27) ...*that stays to bear letters to my friends, and I am going to deliver them*

(1590-91, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*: iii 1 54(Note 39))

[Pérez: (1990: 57)]

The semantic implication of going to a place other than that in which one is to perform an action is already purposive *per se*, in that the action expressed by the VP-complement of *to* represents the aim pushing the subject to ‘go to’ perform that particular task. As supported in Bybee/Perkins/Pagliuca (1994: 269):

“When one moves along a path toward a goal in space, one also moves in time [...]. When the speaker announces that s/he is going to do something, s/he is also announcing the intention to do that thing. Thus intention is part of the meaning from the beginning, and the only change necessary is the

generalization to contexts in which an intention is expressed, but the subject is not moving spatially to fulfill that intention”

As is clear, these interesting considerations do not hold as far as PDE is concerned, since the grammaticalization path has reached a level of formalization which allows for the performer of the *be going to* action to be completely non-sentient (cf. e.g. *The ladder is going to fall* and *It's going to rain*, i.e. a non-agentive subject and an expletive pronoun occupying the subject position that, by virtue of its status, cannot be assigned any theta-roles or case). The use of *be going to*, by the way, becomes more and more widespread for the whole ENE period, and the purposive meaning – parallel to the andative one – which constitutes stage II of this path of change (cf. 2.2.) begins to emerge more evidently than in ME in instances of ‘movement for a specific purpose’. (28) and (29) are, in chronological order, two further examples of this use which does not involve movement exclusively:

(28) *Sir, the Germans desire to have three of your horses; the Duke himself will*

be to-morrow at court, and they are going to meet him

(c. 1595, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, act IV, scene I(Note 40))

[Disney (2009: 67)]

(29) *I was going, Sir, to give him welcome*

(1611, *Cymbeline*, act I, scene VI(Note 41))

[Disney (2009: 67)]

An observation to be made here is that while (29), in which *be* is in its preterite form, very clearly expresses immediacy(Note 42), the case presented in (28) is somewhat eccentric, in that the *be going to* construction is utilized to convey a meaning of intention, as well as an action which is definitely to be realized in the future, but *not* in the immediate future, as may be understood from the context. The act of meeting the Duke will take place on the following day, which makes the use of a progressive *go* followed by the preposition *to* rather unusual. This can be seen as a demonstration of the fact that *be going to* already indicates futurity. It is to be noted, indeed, that in PDE this structure is not used for exclusively near futures, but also for actions that are relatively distant in time (cf. *She's going to move to Milan in two months' time* and *I'm going to leave school in 2016*).

An example dated to the period comprised between ENE and Modern English shows that, despite a general sense of futurity and intention associated with a verb of movement (i.e. the combination of a sentient subject and a VP-complement denoting purpose), the grammaticalization of the structure into a future marker is still not complete, as *go* has not lost its motion meaning completely. This implies that by the end of ENE stage II of the grammaticalization path is reached (‘purpose’) but the fact that intention necessarily entails futurity only represents a conjecture for now:

(30) *I blesse God I am now in good health, though 5 or 6 days since, and when
we were going to fight the Dutch I had such a pain in my right arme that
could not use it but very litle*

(c. 1675, *Private Letters, Haddock Correspondence*, 15 (Note 43))

[slightly lengthened/contextualized from Tabor (forthcoming: 10)]

Between ME and ENE the passage from stage I to stage II becomes clear; nonetheless, is in the period following ENE that the major development of this construct take place, as we will see in the next section.

2.4 'Be going to' in Modern English from c. 1650

Elsness (1994: 18) asserts that in the period between 1640 and 1710 (i.e. in the lapse of time covered by the data in the Helsinki Corpus [III]) intention readings of the *be going to* constructions undergo 'a very sharp increase' (Note 44), observable in the following examples:

(31) *(The King) commanded her to lay aside her mantle, and suffer her self to
receive his caresses, or, by his gods he swore, that happy man whom she
was going to name shou'd die*

(c. 1688, *Oroonoko, or, the Royal Slave* (Note 45))

[Disney (2009: 67)]

(32) *Worthy Mr. Ennis [...] is this weeke going to try whither he cannot more
quietly live among ye heathens in America ...*

(1690, *Correspondence of the family of Hatton*, letter 160 (Note 46))

[Disney (2009: 67)]

Despite Elsness' skepticism, the intention nuance leaking out of these excerpts manifests itself by virtue of the type of VP-complement following *be going to*: indeed, it is not possible to argue for a movement interpretation, since the verbs *name* ([31]) and *try* ([32]) are hardly associable with the idea motion, unless the context is very specific (and this is not the case). The fully lexical verb is quite abstract in these two instances, which marks an evident passage from a stage in which motion was no longer the only semantic implication in the structure but abstract verbs (in the general sense of the term) were not particularly attested as a VP-complement of *be going to* to a stage in which the construct frequently contains such semantically marked infinitives. This means that *go* does not bear any full movement semantics, as may also be seen in the following example in (33), taken from the same collection of private letters as (32) but, to my knowledge, never been subject to any analysis:

(33) *Mr. Walker, it is sayd, is going to resign up his headship of University*

(1688, *Correspondence of the Family of Hatton*, letter 98)

This instance constitutes further evidence that the sense implied in the construct *be going to resign up* is evidently one of purpose, also involving a projection of the act of resigning into the future. Another interesting occurrence of *be going to*, pointed out by Danchev/Kytö (1994: 68), shows that this period reveals a significant – and increasing – development in its semantics:

(34) *...so they did not know whether he might not have stepped aside for debt, since at that time all people were calling in their money [...]. The council sat upon it, and were going to order a search of all the houses ...*

(c. 1703, Burnet, *Burnet's History of My Own Time*, p.1, II, 163-164)

[Danchev/Kytö (1994: 68)]

In the literature of the 18th century many instances may be found referring to a purposive use of the structure also conveying a sense of immediate future. For example, the following passages taken from Robinson Crusoe (1719), which only constitute a selected set of cases, show that the grammaticalized construct was already productively used in the first half of the century:

(35) *When I first discovered them, I was going to give over my enterprise, and come back again...*

(1719, Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, chapter IX(Note 47))

(36) *...or to be rescued from thieves just going to murder them*

(1719, Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, chapter IX)

It is clear that this use of *be going to* is no longer related to motion and denotes primarily intention: both (35) and (36) may be well paraphrased as *I was intentioned to gove over my enterprise* and *...thieves intentioned to murder them*. The structure with intentional features is also ubiquitous in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* ([37] exemplifies this use):

(37) *I suppose you're going to say that you do want for something...*

(1838, Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, chapter 17(Note 48))

However, the most striking proof that in this period the structure takes on a meaning that detaches itself from motion definitively(Note 49) and that a literal reading is not possible anymore is that it appears e.g. with *go* and *come* as the verb syntactically governed by *be going to*, a clear indication that the originally dynamic verb in the structure is no longer interpreted as such but needs some sort of redundancy which is not semantic, because *go*(1) and *go*(2) are not at the same level: *go*(1) is taking on a value that is more grammatical than

lexical, whilst *go*(2) is the actual lexical verb, just as any other verb that may occupy that position:

(38) *He [Mr. Peckniff's horse] was full of promise, but of no performance. He*

was always, in a manner, going to go, and never going

(1844, Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, p. 61(Note 50)) [Pérez (1990: 57)]

Predictably enough, in the same work by Dickens a number of other instances of *be going to* + semantically abstract infinitives or passives are present. This set of examples is of course not exhaustive, but effectively illustrates the pervasive use of the construct for the expression of 'intentional future':

(39) *"I more than half believed [...] that you must be going to be married,*

Mark"

(1844, Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, p. 63)

(40) *"Does Mr. Lupin know you are going to leave her?", Mr. Pinch inquired*

(1844, Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, p. 64)

(41) *...but for certain brief reasons which I am going to tell you...*

(1844, Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, p. 87)

As we may see from these examples, the *be going to* construction, whose function of future is established, seems to have reached stage III of its grammaticalization path by the first half of the 19th century.

To sum up, the passage from stage II to stage III of the grammaticalization process seems to have taken place approximately in the second half of the 17th century (cf. examples [31]-[41] so far) and from this period onwards the grammatical formalization of *be going to* manifests itself regularly. An aspect which I insisted on in this work because of its topicality in the methodological process for the recognition of the single phases of the diachronic development of the construction is the lexical nature of its VP-complement. The inherent semantic features of the governed verb, which are of fundamental importance, have been of course mentioned in the literature but somewhat neglected as a decisive factor in this process. Another discriminating element is the type of subject performing the action: from the 18th century the occurrence of [-human] and inanimate – as well as dummy – subjects becomes widespread. In particular, as noted by Pérez, in Fitzgerald's more recent *The Great Gatsby* the intentional meaning has much more statistical incidence (87% among the instances of *be*

going to) than the motion one (only 13%). (42) and (43) are two of the 39 instances of the grammaticalized use:

(42) *It seems that pretty soon the earth's going to fall into the sun*

(1925, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, chapter 7)

(43) *...as if all sorts of fruit were going to fall into your hands*

(1925, F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, chapter 7 (Note 51))

(42) and (43) are emblematic because they illustrate the occurrence of non-volitional subjects: as already argued throughout this paper (e.g. as regards ME and ENE), unless the subject is strongly personified, it seems very risky to hypothesize that it is a sentient one, because it may alter the dating of the phases characterizing the process. In fact, the established loss of semantic restrictions on the subject indicates that the grammaticalization is taking place. To sum up, three main changes occurred in Modern English: an increase in frequency of the grammaticalized form of *be going to*, followed by an infinitive; a loss of constraints on the type of subject occurring in the construction (in particular, non-sentient/inanimate subjects are no longer excluded); a semantic shift from direction to purpose/intention, leading to further abstraction.

1. A Structural Approach to the *be going to* Construction in PDE

3.1 The grammaticalization of *be going to* between Aspect and Tense

While much attention has been focused on the diachronic development of *be going to* in the literature, the structural (generative-oriented) analysis of this process as an instance of reanalysis is an aspect that, to my knowledge, has been almost completely neglected. In fact, as we will see in the next paragraphs, the grammaticalization of this construct is still in progress and it is, therefore, difficult to provide an analysis that is sensitive to the changing status of *be going to*.

In the first place, there is still uncertainty as to the syntactic representation of progressive aspect in English, which is important to reconstruct the structural change occurred with the semantic reanalysis of *be going to* and its development into a future marker. In particular, two hypotheses seem to be more supported in the literature. While Ouhalla (1991: 80 ff.) argues for an Aspect Phrase (AspP) with progressive value hosting the *-ing* element (an analysis that defines, therefore, *-ing* as identified by the feature [+progressive]), Cowper (1992: 107 ff.) characterizes this morpheme as indicating ‘a present tense marker’, in that it practically ‘places the event it governs at the same time as that of the higher verb’ (Note 52). I will assume AspP to host *-ing*, following Ouhalla’s representation of progressive. This analysis implies that *be* is not base-generated in the structure but inserted under TenseP at some point of the derivation (which we may identify with LF). In other words, according to a more general hypothesis on aspect, when a verb in English is marked both by tense and aspect – as is the case in a progressive construct such as the original *be going to* with an exclusive

motion meaning –, the two morphemes that identify the two features may not co-occur in the same verbal form and the verb itself cannot move to pick tense if it has already picked aspect. This analysis makes sense if we consider *be* as a support of the *be going to* construction realizing features other than *go+ing*: according to Ouhalla, in a form like *Mary is going*, *is* realizes *be+Tense+Agreement*, whilst *going* corresponds to the movement of *V° go* to *Asp° -ing*.

Kraaikamp proposes, in an unpublished work, that the syntactic reanalysis of *be going to*, as is often the case in grammaticalization processes, is to be interpreted in terms of syntactic re-bracketing, which I report here in a slightly modified form to illustrate the phases that *be going to* goes through in its diachronic development:

- (44) a. [I am going] [to Rome]
- b. [I am going] [to deliver the letters]
- c. [I am going to] [give a party]
- d. [I am gonna] [give a party]

As is clear, this four-point list retraces the development from OE (with instances like *bist gangende to Romesbyrig*, as in example [11] in this paper) to PDE through ME and Modern English, with the passage from bare movement to a physical place identified by a NP, to a physical place where to perform an action different from going, to the fully grammaticalized use of *be going to* for the expression of a future action. In principle, I consider Kraaikamp's proposal of a syntactic re-bracketing as correct, although the analysis lacks any in-depth investigation of the functional projections and the syntactic movement involved in the reanalysis process. One of the assumptions of the grammaticalization theory is that the path of change can never be said to have come to completion: in fact, the use of *be going to* in PDE seems to be going beyond the simple reanalysis of the construct implying the semantic passage from movement towards to the expression of future with implications of prediction/volition because of the cliticization of the preposition *to* to *go+ing*, which generates forms of the type, *gointa*, *gonna*, etc. (Note 53). The fact that the preposition has been phonologically incorporated by *going* is significant in that it entails the unambiguous certainty that this construction is grammaticalized and is following a path of development which has nothing to do with the parallel structure of progressive *go + PP/infinite* indicating bare motion from a place A to a place B. The litmus test is that *going to* cannot be reduced when it occurs in contexts of movement, as shown in (45):

- (45) a. *Where are you going?*
- b. *I am going to Rome*
- c. *I am going to deliver the letters*
- d. **I am gonna Rome*

e. **I am gonna deliver the letters*

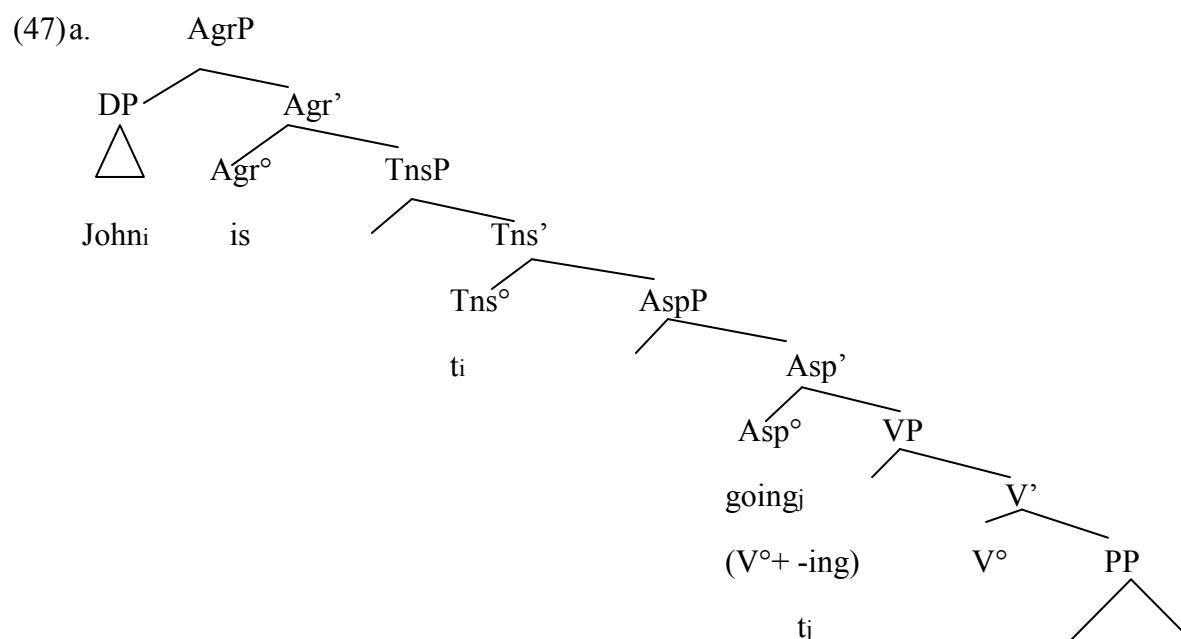
In (45), (d.) and (e.) are of course to be interpreted in the literal sense of the construction, for example as answers to the disambiguating question ‘*Where are you going?*’. This means that in the competence of the speakers the difference between *be going to* [+future] and *be going to* [+movement] is clear cut. Another indication in this sense comes from the empirical observation that, vice versa, a question as ‘*Where are you going?*’ cannot be used in contexts in which the construction bears a sense of futurity:

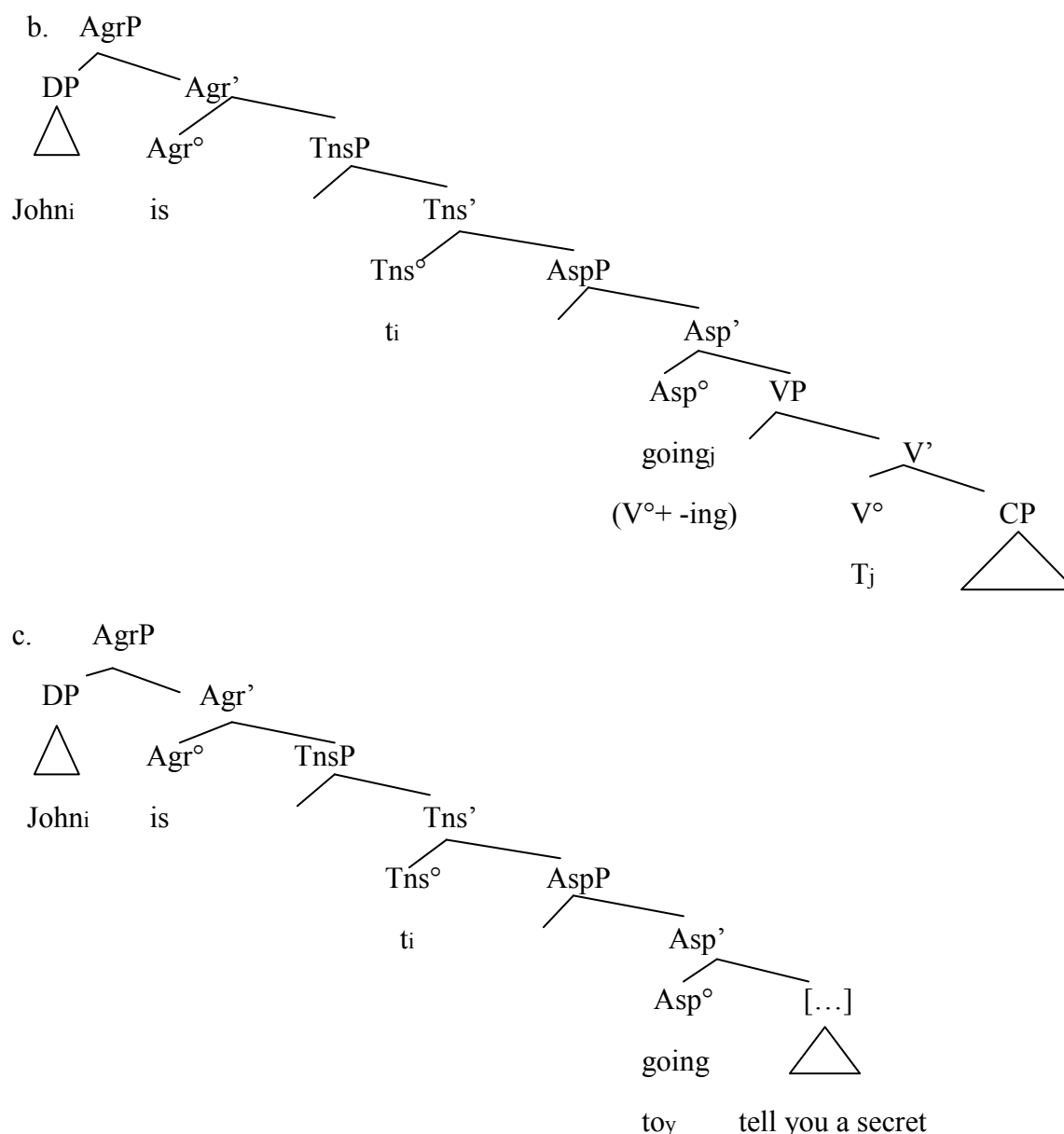
(46) a. *Where are you going?*

b. **I am going to give a party*

c. ***I am gonna give a party*

That is, if (b.) conveys the information that the subject intends to organize a party and is therefore marked by the feature [+future], it is ungrammatical with respect to the context, as the speaker asking the question wants to know where the interlocutor is headed in the very moment that the conversation is taking place. From this perspective, (c.) is an even less accurate answer to the contextualized question. It goes without saying that the use of *gonna* is diaphasically marked, i.e. synchronically its occurrence is mainly related to the spoken language and in particular to slang or to very low-register or intimate written texts. Nevertheless, the fact that normative grammar is reluctant to welcome – and above all to recognize the use of – this form (Note 54) does not mean that it is not productively used by the speakers. What is more, as already mentioned, it is an important indication of the grammaticalization of this structure, which is still following a more or less predictable path of change. On the basis of these premises, I propose – as a first hint and with no pretension of accuracy (see the next paragraphs) – that the semantic reanalysis of *be going to* is characterized by the following three phases:





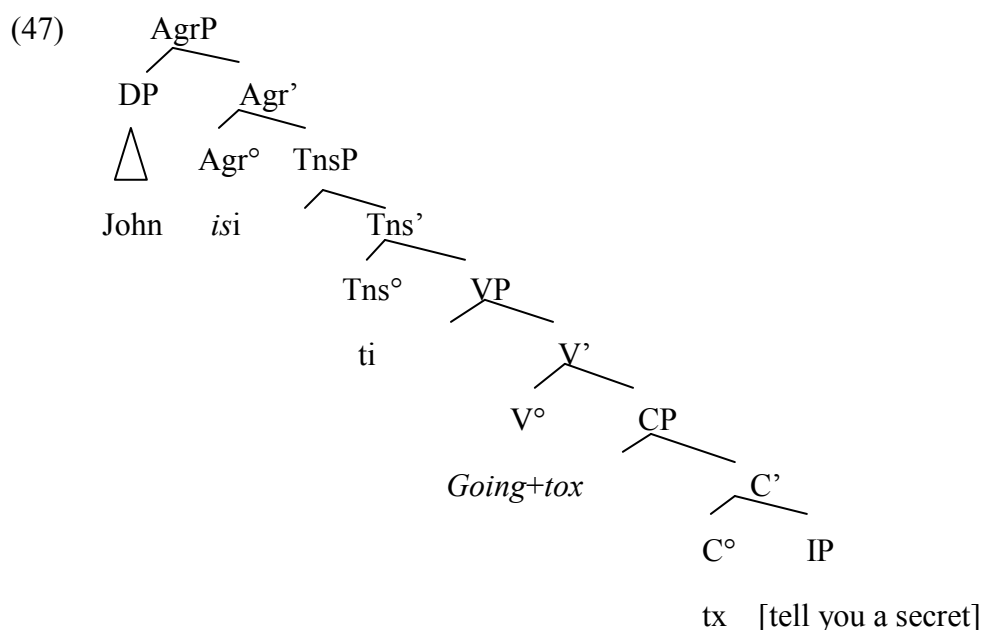
This is, of course, only a first approximation (based on Ouhalla [1991: 81], who only considers progressives and not the grammaticalized form of *be going to*), because, even though the cliticization of *to* in the structure and the consequent occurrence of forms like *gonna* + bare infinitive is a clear signal that *to* has detached itself from the CP, there is still a question which remains unsolved, namely how the preposition can move to Asp°, given that V° is filled by the trace of the verb *go* which has moved to be aspect-marked. Moreover, it does not seem compelling (e.g. for economy reasons) that *go* moves to Asp° to receive aspect, followed by the preposition and the movement of the verb itself appears to be unmotivated, given that *is* does not really need to be aspect-marked to occur in the grammaticalized structure of *be going to*. We are therefore led to argue for a lower position of *going to*, which may be due to two possible explanations:

- a. The grammaticalized *going to* occupies V° and the *-ing* morpheme is base-generated there with the verb, given that in this structure *going* is invariable and always occurs

bearing the very same form. What is more, no AspP is involved in the derivation, as the verb does not need any aspectual features to appear as a future marker. In this case, we may assume that *to* moves up to V°, where it is incorporated by *going*. This solution, assuming a legitimate head-to-head movement, makes sense irrespective of *be*, which is the inflected (and variable: *I am going to eat*, *you are going to eat*, etc.) form of the structure and may be argued to be inserted under Tns° and move then to fill Agr° at LF. Taking this original analysis as valid, we must come to the conclusion that the diachronic development and the reanalysis of the *be going to* construction can be thought of as a loss of the [+asp] feature – and the corresponding functional phrase – and a crystallization of the *going*-form in V° due to the disappearance of the aspectual implication, which pushed the grammaticalized ‘progressive remnant’ to be crystallized with *go* in the form *going*. This analysis effectively solves the question of the trace intervening in V° which makes it impossible for *to* to move up to Asp° to be incorporated by *going*.

- b. The morpheme *-ing* is base-generated in Asp° and is then moved to V°, where it merges with *go*. Subsequently, *to* moves up to V° and is incorporated by *going*. Considering the diachronic attestations of the use of *be going to*, this analysis would account for the fact that in OE *be going* was attested with a number of other prepositions and only sporadically with *to*. Moreover, in PDE the cliticization of *to* has occurred in recent times, after centuries of attestations of *be going to* used as a future marker. This latter analysis, however, seems less convincing than that provided in (a.), since my strong claim in this paper is that the grammaticalization of *be going to* is defined, from a structural point of view, in terms of loss of a [+asp] feature.

The resulting structure illustrating the change occurred diachronically may therefore look as in (48):



Hence, the representation in (48) assumes that in this stage of PDE the structure of *be going to* hangs in the balance between a full *going to* and the phonetically contracted *gonna* (the latter constitutes a more or less regular development in all varieties of English (Note 55)). In fact, even if normative grammar does not seem to accept *gonna*, this form is increasingly produced by the speakers when spontaneously talking. A striking piece of evidence that solidifies the assumption according to which the inflected *be* is part of the grammaticalized structure – and that is overlooked in the literature – is that the *going to* construct seems not to be attested in PDE with what we called an ‘attributive function’ – as stated above for examples like (15). That is, contrary to what may be argued for ME, *going to* + V can no longer be used in the context of *The young woman going to marry is my sister* unless the interpretation is literal. What is more, as claimed by Pérez, *gonna* is never found in association with the full inflected form of *be*, e.g. in examples such as *I am gonna do it*, but only with its reduced form (*I’m gonna do it*). I find this generalization too simplistic, although it may outwardly be seen as a general tendency of the spoken language.

Bearing in mind, as already pointed out, that the occurrence of forms like *gonna* is diaphasically (and, to a certain extent, diamesically) determined, it to be noticed that different levels of phonetic assimilation of *to* are attested with respect to *going*. The most widespread one is definitely *gonna*, which displays a total regressive assimilation and whose diffusion may be motivated by a general principle of economy of pronunciation. The attested variants of *gonna* are *gointa* and *gonta* (representing different levels of assimilation), which are found in informal written texts or in texts that, by virtue of their purpose, expressly reproduce the spoken language, e.g. works of fiction (Note 56). As to the origin of this phonetic contraction, Pérez argues that slightly reduced forms of *going to* in this construction are attested from the 19th century, e.g. in Tennyson:

(48) *An’ whin are ye goin’ to lave me?*

(1885, Alfred Tennyson, *Tiresias and Other Poems*, p. 90 (Note 57))

[Pérez (1990: 62)]

This is, as suggested by Pérez, a consequence of the fact that already in ME confusion arose between the ending *-in* and the ending *-ing*, both in verbs and nouns. This confusion was then generalized to *going/goin’* in the *be going to* construction and remained undercover – but sporadically attested in texts (almost exclusively in direct speech and ‘when the character represents a speaker of a non-standard dialect of English’) – until the 19th century.

The particular form *Gonta* is already found in Scott’s *The Wave* (1929) and Hanks’ *Midnight Deception*, as may be observed in (50) and (51) (Note 58):

(49) *...I’m gonta climb up the window an’ git it open!*

(1929, Evelyn Scott, *The Wave*, p. 406)

(50) *Now, Missy, don't you go tellin' me what you are gonta do 'n' what you
ain't gonta do...*

(1987, Lindsay Hanks, *Midnight Deception*, p. 46)

The same goes for *gointa*, apparently the least attested of the three variants and the most dependent on the single variety. In particular, I have found instances of *gointa* only in written texts of American authors:

(51) *...now my gran's gointa tell me I can't call upon the Lord...*

(2010, Ntozake Shange & Ifa Bayeza, *Some Sing, Some Cry* p. 15(Note 59))

Nonetheless, irrespective of their phonetic realization, these are all instances illustrating the contraction of the *be going to* structure which characterizes its use in PDE and may be related to the development hypothesized in (48). Pérez (1990: 62) assumes that the phonological change occurred may be formalized as a path of the type [go□□η tu] (still existing both with the literal and the future value) > [g□nt□] (as seen in [50]-[52]) > [g□n□].

3.2 'Be going to' vs. 'will' in PDE

The *be going to* construction co-exists with the modal *will*(Note 60) for the expression of future in PDE. The question arises as to what semantic implications differentiate these two strategies in describing the future realization of an event. According to Pérez (1990: 60), the divergence between *will* and *be going to* lies in their capacity to satisfy given conditions. For example, a sentence constructed with *will* is normally analyzed as related to an evident condition provided by the (linguistic) context that enables the proposition to take place or not. An utterance such as *John will die* appears to be lacking a necessary condition of realization, i.e. in isolation this sentence would be perceived as elliptical (Binnick, 1972: 3) or somewhat unfinished. Differently from *will*, the *be going to* construction tends not to inherently need any contextual condition to be informationally exhaustive:

(52) *She will die*

(53) *She is going to die*

In Pérez's terms, therefore, the semantic difference between (53) and (54) would be contextually given: that is, the information conveyed by (53) ought to be completed with a condition of the type '*If she keeps on smoking like that...*', whereas (54) already contains the necessary informational conditions *per se*, i.e. the speaker and the interlocutor are well aware of the conditions characterizing the context. Disney (2009: 63), on the other hand, limits himself to indicate tendencies characterizing the speakers' usage, arguing that in considering two utterances as those in (55) and (56), from a cognitive point of view a speaker is more likely to choose the one or the other to express a different level of certainty about what s/he is maintaining:

(54) *It is going to be a beautiful day tomorrow*

(55) *It will be a beautiful day tomorrow*

(Disney [2009: 63])

The former seems to be bound to an interpretation implying that there is clear evidence for formulating this supposition (e.g. a positive weather forecast or a starry night sky), whilst the latter is more likely to be used when the speaker is not expressing a circumstantial evidence-based judgment but a mere personal opinion. That is to say, (55) would imply a prediction that may not be conveyed by (56). I do not agree completely with this categorical generalization, which seems to adhere to relatively established models of the language imposed by social standards (e.g. the language learnt at school, which is considerably and inevitably different from that spoken in other contexts). The aspect that is interesting from a methodological point of view in this context is that, unless a research is focused on very specific models of the language (Note 61), it is the observable pragmatic dimension of the language that offers the most significant stimuli for linguistic analysis. The semantic status of the two constructs has often been subject of discussion: as a matter of fact, in spontaneous PDE some instances of the two structures are undeniably ambiguous and, as also pointed out by Close (1977: 147), in many cases ‘*will* and *be going to* are free variants and it may be purely a matter of chance which one is chosen by the speaker’ (Note 62). With no pretension of being exhaustive, we may conclude that there are instances of future that are not particularly marked by personal implications of the speaker and in these cases *will* and *be going to* are interchangeable. For example, considering the following examples, the supposition arises that a clear cut distinction may only be applied to certain instances, as also pointed out by Quirk (1985):

(56) *I will stop smoking*

(57) *I am going to stop smoking*

(58) *I will stop smoking in two weeks*

(59) *I am going to stop smoking in two weeks*

(60) ‘*I can’t stand cigarette smoke*’ – ‘*Oh, I will stop smoking*’

(61) ‘*I can’t stand cigarette smoke*’ – *‘*Oh, I am going to stop smoking*’

(57) and (58) would generally be defined as elliptical (i.e. requiring a linguistically realized condition) and non-elliptical, respectively. Nonetheless, from a pragmatic point of view, they equal each other and the speaker would not tend to one or to the other as pushed by particular semantic implications (Note 63). The second set, comprising (59) and (60), is equally undifferentiated. Quirk (1985) maintains that the addition of specific time complements annihilates any tangible difference of semantic nature between the two sentences, generating a ‘colorless neutral fact about the future’. The dialogical context in (61)–(62), instead, makes the use of *be going to* ungrammatical, which may lead us to the conclusion that an

unexpected, immediate decision such as that represented in this pair requires *will* and not *be going to*. In the next section I will briefly focus on the possible development of the grammaticalization of *be going to* in the light of the synchronic, corpus-oriented observation of its use in PDE.

3.3 Where is 'going to' going to go?

An interesting question arising from the observations made in the previous sections of this paper regards the possible development of *be going to* in the future stages of the English language. Aware of the fact that a grammaticalization process can never be said to have come to completion and that instances of even more reduced forms of *be going to* are present in songs and other texts reproducing the spoken language, a simple procedure to verify the current status of the grammaticalization of this construction and formulate guesses on its evolution is typing on Google the string of words '*I gon*', followed by the infinitives of very frequent verbs (*do*, *say*, *give* and *go*) (Note 64). The result is striking, in that all of these forms are attested by several thousands of occurrences on the web, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Google results of the occurrences of four gon'-forms (date of consultation: June, 26th, 2011)

FORMS	RESULTS
I gon' do	134.000
I gon' say	14.000
I gon' give	17.800
I gon' go	17.700

This simple research assumes that *be*, which tends not to be realized when in association with *gonna*, has reached a level of phonetic reduction that may lead to its complete disappearance from the structure. The second element to be observed is that even *gonna*, whose form is the result of phonetic reduction, displays a tendency towards extreme contraction which would conceal its origin in the absence of the awareness of the diachronic development of the *be going to* construction. An assumption that can be made – and better confirmed by further investigation – is that the evolution and (forseeable) diffusion of *gon'* may give rise to a new modal verb with a particular value, related to a sense of prediction and immediacy, perhaps subject to further semantic development. It is difficult and too far-seeing to imagine any ulterior phonetic erosion of *gon'*, unless we hypothesize the complete cliticization of this form on pronouns (similar to *I would* > *I'd*, which is still limited to informal uses). Nevertheless, for now only the evolution of *gonna/gon'* into a modal verb may be predicted with a certain likeliness.

2. Conclusions

In this paper the grammaticalization process of the *be going to* construction was discussed, both diachronically – from its earliest (and much discussed) instances in Old English, to its development in Middle English and its widespread diffusion in Modern English – and synchronically, also providing a description of the evolution of its individual components and of the semantic and structural implications characterizing this structure. The path of change of *be going to* implies a passage from a stage in which the construct only expresses movement towards an identifiable physical place to one in which *be going to* conveys motion but also a sense of purpose or achievement of a goal, to one that corresponds to the expression of a purposive future, related to a sense of immediacy and of realization of the action in the near future. Starting from the assumption that this particular process also involves reanalysis and supporting Ouhalla's hypothesis on the existence of an AspP hosting the progressive ending *-ing*, I proposed that, from a representational point of view, this reanalysis entails the movement of *-ing* to V° in order to directly govern the preposition *to*, which could not reach Asp°, given that V° would be occupied by the trace of *go*. After a brief analysis of the differences between *be going to* and *will* in the expression of future in PDE, I also proposed, on the basis of a simple corpus-oriented research and of informally elicited judgments of native informants, that further grammaticalization of *be going to* may lead to the emergence of a new modal verb ('*gon*', as in *I gon' say it to him*) that is possibly marked by semantic features such as the reference to an action to be purposely realized in the near future. Further research on the synchronic use of *gonna/gon'* in PDE will make it possible to hypothesize with more accuracy on the possible development of this structure.

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Notes

Note 1. Re-phrasing Diessel's (1999: 2) considerations on the grammaticalization of demonstratives into definite articles, may also argue that the likeliness of this verb to develop into a future marker is somewhat linked with its frequency and its basic function in language.

Note 2. Apart from the intuitive concept of 'fixed construction', we will see in the next sections that this definition poses a number of problems in structural terms.

Note 3. This claim is largely confirmed by the data collected for Bantu languages, as well as for a number of American languages (also cf. Botne, 2006: 136 ff.)

Note 4. Also cf. *The Online Etymology Dictionary* (<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=go&searchmode=none>) and *The Oxford English Dictionary* (<http://www.oed.com>). Torre Alonso (2010), on the other hand, presents a list of corpora comprising compound nouns formed out of *gān* and *gangan*, which would, in principle, lead us to the conclusion that these two verbs were in competition in the OE period and that their meanings, for some reason, merged into each other in given occasions. For instance, both *began* and *begangan* are attested in OE texts with the same meaning of 'go over', 'go to', 'cultivate', etc..

Note 5. It is also interesting to notice, however, that PDE *went* developed from OE *wendan*

(PDE *wend* ‘go towards’, Modern German [*sich*] *wenden* ‘turn around’, ‘go towards’), which in the 15th century became a synonym of *go* and was integrated in its structural paradigm.

Note 6. Among IE non-Germanic languages only Ancient Greek forms its preterite tenses via reduplication, as in *leipo* (‘I leave’), *le-loipa* (‘I have left’).

Note 7. Adamczik (2002: 28) confirms in her study on reduplication that ‘vestiges of earlier reduplication’ are limited in OE to a group of strong verbs of class VII and attested only in Anglian and in texts of poetic nature.

Note 8. For a more exhaustive approach to the origin and development of the *ēode* preterite as compared to that of *gēōng*, see Warren (1960: 483), who provides a framework similar to Adamczik’s (2002) on the attestations of this class of verbs.

Note 9. Note that e.g. in Scottish English *gang* is the standard verb for *go*, which may lead us to the conclusion that *gān* and *gangan* have the same origin and in some areas the long form was preserved – of course without the ending indicating the infinitive.

Note 10. According to Nehls (1988: 189), who conceives the verbal form following the locative preposition before 1300 as a ‘deverbal noun’ and after 1300 as a real gerund, in an utterance such as *He was on hunting*, the preposition has been initially reduced to *a-* and eventually got rid of.

Note 11. The status of the preposition *on* (note that Dutch *aan* and German *an*, as in [8][9], correspond to English *on*) in this kind of structures has been very much discussed in the literature: Brinton (1988: 174-175), for instance, maintains that *on* is aspectually marked and makes no *aktionsart* distinction, referring to ‘a situation which may otherwise have stopped as continuing, or it portrays the situation as repeated’.

Note 12. The presence of this iterative construction (as well as of the *go on -ing* structure) seem to represent a confirmation of Brinton’s view on the inherently aspectual status of the preposition *on* (see note (20)).

Note 13. That is, that the progressive construct (on locative basis, as seen in [9]-[10]) is only present in non-standard varieties of German and Dutch. As regards German, the form *Ich bin am/beim Lesen*, known as the *rheinische Verlaufsform* due to its pervasive use in the Rhinish area, is by the way of uncertain origin. Standard German utilizes other means for the expression of an ongoing action, e.g. the use of adverbs or idioms, as in *Ich lese gerade ein Buch* (‘I am reading a book’) or *Ich arbeite zur Zeit an meinem ersten Roman* (‘I am working on my first novel’). In Dutch three structures seem to have become productive: one that resembles the English progressive as in *Het schip is zinkende* (‘The ship is sinking’), another – the most widespread – is the locative one and a last one, structurally very similar to the use of the progressive in Romance, that utilizes a stative verb (e.g. *staan* ‘stand’ or *liggen* ‘lie’), as in *Zij ligt te slapen* (‘She is sleeping’, cf. Italian *Sta dormendo* and Spanish *Está dormiendo*).

Note 14. According to researchers (cf. for example Baugh/Cable, 1993: 41 ff.), the whole period in the history of the English language from 450 to 1150 can be called ‘Old English’, since this language was spoken by the Anglo-Saxons from the 5th century; nevertheless, the first texts in OE, which represent the only legitimate source that philologists examine to investigate the development of the language, appeared in the 7th century.

Note 15. Recall Bybee/Pagliuca/Perkins’ conceptualization of the grammaticalization path of the *be going to* construction: movement > intention > prediction.

Note 16. Traditionally, it is assumed that Old English displayed a consistent OV-order of the constituents, which evolved into VO during the Middle English period. Pintzuk, on the other hand, proposes a so-called ‘double base hypothesis’, arguing for the existence of two word orders that are active in what she calls a ‘grammar competition’ (cf. Pintzuk [1991]). As may be observed, (12) also shows a V2 order.

Note 17. At this point, the question arises as to whether the OE text is a faithful gloss of Gregory’s Latin text, which would perhaps introduce further implications, as far as the word order question is concerned. I checked, therefore, the original Latin text and found out not only that it differs consistently in structural terms from the OE one, but also that these excerpts are both OV in the Latin text. We may thus conclude that Bishop Wærferð of Worcester, who translated it into OE, must have considered both word orders as fully grammatical. Here is e.g. the original passage of (11): “*Et quidem Romam ingressurus es, mare transiturus, novem annis regnas, decimo morieris*” (as reported by Rose [2000: 14] at <http://www.normanrose.de/geschichte/Dialoge.pdf>)

Note 18. In fact, as pointed out, among others, by Barðal (2007: 26): “[Motion verbs] usually select for dative case on their direct objects and not accusative, at least in Old Norse-Icelandic, the Mainland Scandinavian dialects [...], Old English, and several classic Indo-European languages”.

Note 19. For an exhaustive explanation of this phenomenon see Caha (2010: 195 ff.).

Note 20. Cf. for example the ungrammaticality of the PDE *going to* construction **To read a book I am going* vs. *I am going to read a book*.

Note 21. This does certainly not denote, however, that movement is not involved in the action and the motion verb is semantically empty, but that it is slightly losing an exclusive function of lexical item when found in such structures.

Note 22. A number of scholars (cf. e.g. Amenta/Paesano, 2010: 23) argue that what we may define the ‘*go to* construction’ underwent grammaticalization in Italian, as well. I do not support this view in that I reckon there is a clear cut difference between the sense of intention and futurity implied by *be going to* and the use of this structure in Italian *L’argomento che andiamo ad affrontare è ostico*, although a certain semantic reduction of the motion verb and a shift of the informational focus on the action of *affrontare* (‘treat’) may be recognized. For the sake of space, I will not go into these language-specific implications here, leaving the

question open for discussion.

Note 23. Danchev/Kytö proposed (and found then counterevidence to this hypothesis) that the emergence of the *be going to* construction in the English language is motivated by language contact with French and consequent loan from what is currently defined as *futur proche* [i.e. structures of the type *aller faire quelque chose*, cf. 2.2.], a construct that was already productive at that time. As a matter of fact, Danchev/Kytö's hypothesis, though, does not seem to be fully convincing in the light of the fact that, as noted by Eckardt (2008: 144-145), there are dialects of German such as Luxembourg German and Alsacien German which interestingly do not have this structure, although they possess all the necessary elements to form it and a great majority of the speakers are bilingual speakers of German and French.

Note 24. <http://omacl.org/Duchess/>.

Note 25. <http://omacl.org/Troilus/troilus4.html>.

Note 26. A consultation of Chaucer's source text (see note [34]) reveals that the apparently peculiar position of the verb, a consequence of the extraposition of *by parlement*, is motivated by metrical reasons: the rhyme scheme (so-called *rhyme royal*, introduced into English by Chaucer himself), has a structure of the type A-B-A-B-B-C-C. The stanza in which the discussed sentence occurs says: "Now herkneth this, ye han wel understonde / My going graunted is by parlement / So ferforth, that it may not be with-stonde / For al this world, as by my Iugement / And sin ther helpeth noon avysement / to letten it, lat it passé out of minde / And lat us shape a better way to finde".

Note 27.

http://www.archive.org/stream/fifteenthcentury00pooruoft/fifteenthcentury00pooruoft_djvu.txt.

Note 28. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED37145>.

Note 29. Recall that the example in (16), which I hypothesized contains a non-sentient subject, is in the passive voice: this means that the agent of the verb cannot be the subject *onhappy sowle*, which is the theme (and direct object) of the verb *bring*.

Note 30. To contextualize this observation, we may look at one possible answer to the question: '*Where are you going?*', which may be – if followed by an infinitive – '*I am going to buy the groceries*', which, as is clear, does not entail any meaning of prediction/future, differently from *I am going to do my homework after dinner*.

Note 31.

http://www.archive.org/stream/originallettersi02elliuft/originallettersi02elliuft_djvu.txt.

Note 32. As pointed out in notes (3) and (4), Haspelmath (1998) notes that there is not always a relationship between grammaticalization paths and reanalysis. In principle, he maintains that it is all about two basically independent processes whose intersection is casual and not

structurally given.

Note 33. ‘Modern English’ is the definition attributed to the form of the English language spoken since the Great Vowel Shift. In particular, ENE (or ‘Elizabethan English’) is the historical stage of the English language approximately comprised between the latter half of the 15th century and 1650 (see note [44]).

Note 34. This is due, as I insisted on in [2.2.], to the basic function of this verb in language, which is also a prerequisite for grammaticalization.

Note 35. There is a vast literature in historical linguistics, and in particular in grammaticalization studies, on the use of *be going to* in Shakespeare’s works. In this paper, consistently with this line of research (Shakespeare’s works and the King James Bible are the works that are normally ascribed to the period defined as ENE within Modern English), I will adopt this view as representative of the ENE period.

Note 36. <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/act3-script-text-richard-iii.htm>.

Note 37. <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/act2-script-text-measure-for-measure.htm>.

Note 38. http://absoluteshakespeare.com/plays/henry_IV_1/als2.htm.

Note 39. <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/act3-script-text-two-gentlemen-of-verona.htm>.

Note 40. <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/act4-script-text-merry-wives-of-windsor.htm>.

Note 41. <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/act1-script-text-cymbeline.htm>.

Note 42. Cf. the context in which this occurrence of *be going to* appears (TO PISANIO: Beseech you, Sir, desire / My man’s abode where I did leave him: he / Is strange and peevish. PISANIO [TO IACHIMO]: I was going, Sir, to give him welcome).

Note 43.

http://www.archive.org/stream/haddockcorres00thomrich/haddockcorres00thomrich_djvu.tx.

Note 44. This view, however, is criticized by other scholars (cf. e.g. Disney [2009: 67]) on the basis of the assumption that in some of the instances accepted by Elsness as indicating purpose the motion verb still refers to movement. I support Elsness’ hypothesis, given the nature of the VP-complements occurring in the structure.

Note 45. <http://publish.uwo.ca/~shroyer/authors/Behn/texts/oroonoko.html>.

Note 46.

http://www.archive.org/stream/correspondfamily02camduoft/correspondfamily02camduoft_djvu.txt.

Note 47. <http://www.gradesaver.com/robinson-crusoe/e-text/section5/>.

Note 48.

<http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccernew2?id=DicOliv.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=>

/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=17&division=div1.

Note 49. Bearing in mind, of course, as often insisted on in this paper, that progressive *go* + preposition *to* also occurs, parallel to the grammaticalizing *be going to* construction, in contexts in which it merely expresses movement towards (cf. PDE *I am going to the jeweler's*).

Note 50.

http://www.archive.org/stream/lifeandadventure011595mbp/lifeandadventure011595mbp_djvu.txt.

Note 51. http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/f/fitzgerald/f_scott/gatsby/chapter7.html.

Note 52. Other analyses (cf. e.g. Zagona [1988]; Espunya I Prat [1996]) are equally interesting in that they add new semantic implications (an extension of Temporal Argument Structure) and functional projections (a PartipleP) to the analysis, respectively, but, due to their specificity, they are basically irrelevant for our purposes.

Note 53. For an accurate analysis of the underlying processes characterizing the occurrence of the different reduced forms of *going to*, cf. the next sections of this paper.

Note 54. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

(<http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/gonna>) defines *gonna* as belonging to spoken informal English and categorizes it as ‘*a way of saying ‘going to*’. The online Cambridge Dictionary (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/gonna?q=gonna>) confirms this definition, insisting on the informality of its use and on the fact that it is ‘mainly found in U.S. English’.

Note 55. It is all about the very same process to which other ‘*to*-verbs’ are subject: e.g. *wanna* (‘want to’), *gotta* (‘got to’), etc..

Note 56. It is to be noted, however, that neither *gointa* nor *gonta* are recognized in any dictionary of contemporary English.

Note 57.

http://www.archive.org/stream/tiresiasotherpoe00tennrich/tiresiasotherpoe00tennrich_djvu.txt

Note 58. Contemporary works of literature, as well as public speeches, are scattered with examples like these, which I cannot report in this paper for the sake of space. (49) and (50) exemplify two of these instances at a distance of almost 50 years one from the other and with two VP-complements of different semantic types (*climb*, i.e. a verb of physical movement, and *tell*, denoting an action that does not involve any movement).

Note 59. <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/books/excerpt-some-sing-some-cry.pdf>.

Note 60. As noted, among others, by Hopper/Traugott (1993: 92 ff.), the modal auxiliary *will* also evolved out of a fully lexical word (the OE verb *willan* ‘want’, cf. Modern German *wollen* ‘want’) and is thus the result of a grammaticalization process. PDE displays more than

the two mentioned strategies for the expression of future (e.g. present continuous, the *be about to* construction, *be to*, etc., as underlined by Quirk [1985] and Swan [1995]), but the most evident contrast in terms of statistical frequency in usage – and the most discussed in the literature – is that between *will* and *be going to*.

Note 61. For example, an interesting input for further research could be the use of the *be going to* construction in selected written texts of PDE, e.g. the texts of the EU, which offer a very standardized variety of English.

Note 62. On the other hand, this view is not shared by eminent scholars like Haegeman (1989: 291 ff.), who argues for a clear cut differentiation between the two forms, and Wekker (1976: 123), who states that the incorrect use of the strategy for the expression of future in English does not lead to the ungrammaticality of the sentence but rather to a certain ‘un-Englishness’ perceived by native speakers.

Note 63. For these judgments I rest on data collected informally from four native speakers of English.

Note 64. From a methodological point of view, I experimentally chose the 1st person personal pronoun *I* hypothesizing that it may be the most frequently used when writing on the web and the verbs *do*, *say*, *give* and *go* for the same reasons. The inclusion of *go* is particularly interesting because it has a phonetic form that is very similar to that of *gon*. I also decided not to include any nominal or pronominal direct or indirect complement to keep the level of contextualization low and unmarked.

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