0. Abstract

This paper considers some of the patterns of use of the going to be V-ing construction. An examination of data collected from the Bank of English reveals that this future is less frequent than other periphrastic constructions and mainly employed in spoken English. Unlike its non-progressive counterpart, it is frequently associated with verbs denoting durative events (but compatible also with punctual, iterative, telic, and habitual ones) and never preceded by modal expressions. Like the going to V and will be V-ing futures, it can represent events of various types, belonging to a number of semantic fields. Like its non-progressive counterpart, its matrix verb phrase is occasionally rendered in the colloquial be gonna variant, may be encoded in the present or past, and conveys the notions of predictability and intentionality. It is suggested that this is a structure-preserving construction, characterized by syntactic harmony, which prototypically encodes dynamic durative events.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a work in progress on the progressive form of the going to future, that is, the going to be V-ing future. This periphrastic construction has received limited attention in the literature on tense and aspect, and is only occasionally mentioned in grammars of English (but see section 2.). However, English speakers do employ it, and corpus data attests to its lively usage.
I have repeatedly noticed the *going to be V-ing* future used at linguistics conferences, when presenters are being introduced (e.g. *Our next speaker is going to be talking about X*) or when they want to inform the audience of what they are about to do (e.g. *I am not going to be listing all the examples of Y; rather, I am going to be focusing on Y*). A cursory examination of such occurrences of the *going to be V-ing* future, that is, a consideration of their syntactic structure (i.e. a combination of the *going to* and *be V-ing* components) and of the types of events encoded through their verbs, suggests that this future conveys the meaning of “intentionality (about the future)” – typically associated with *be going* – and that of “action in progress” – typically associated with *be V-ing*, which encodes progressive aspect. The former semantic notion can be justified if the events being represented are actions consciously and deliberately performed by human agents. The latter notion can be justified if those actions are characterized by some form of duration. Both conditions indeed hold in the above made-up examples.

However, the above-mentioned interpretive hypothesis is not totally satisfactory, given that the *going to be V-ing* future can also be used with punctual verbs encoding events of no or irrelevant duration (see sections 2. and 5.). A relevant example that I have encountered in my readings comes from a dialogic section of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* by J. K. Rowling (2000: 246):

> "The first task is designed to test your daring," he told Harry, Cedric, Fleur and Krum, so *we are not going to be telling* you what it is. Courage in the face of the unknown is an important quality in a wizard... very important... (my emphasis).

In this excerpt, the verb *tell* means “to inform, to say, to reveal” rather than “to narrate,” and thus refers to an instantaneous event.

In addition, it is possible that the *going to be V-ing* future is also used to convey the notion of “inevitable consequence” (or “predictability”) and not only that “intentionality”, but that I have failed to notice – or not been in a position to be exposed to – occurrences of this type. A relevant example would be an expression such as *Look at those clouds. It's going to be raining soon.*

Only an analysis of corpus data can make it possible to more objectively observe the context(s) of use, and thus to identify the meaning(s), of the *going to be V-ing* future. In this paper, I aim to do so by comparing some of the patterns of use of the *going to be V-ing* future with those of two other periphrastic futures used in English, namely the simple *going to* future (i.e. the *going to V* future) and the progressive *will* future (i.e. the *will be V-ing* future). My aim is to check whether the *going to be V-ing* future is characterized by distinctive patterns of use, which set it apart from the other two periphrastic constructions.

In the following sections, I present a brief review of what scholars have said about the *going to be V-ing* future. Next, I describe the data collected from a general corpus of English, namely the 56,000,000-word *Bank of English* (henceforth BoE) relevant to the three above-mentioned periphrastic English futures. After comparing their global frequencies of occurrence, I examine some of their patterns of use by looking at representative samples of concordances: among other things, I consider the number and types of lexemes they are associated with, their distribution across the spoken and written registers, and the inherent temporal dimension of the events encoded in the verbs used in these constructions. With regard to the *going to* futures only, I also show how frequently they instantiate
the notions of “intentionality” vs. “predictability”, how often their matrix verb phrases are realized in the past and how often in the informal be gonna variant, and whether they are premodified by modal verbs. In the end, I summarize the characteristics that appear to be typical of the going to be V-ing future and offer a possible interpretation of its role in the encoding of future in English.

2. Mini-review of literature

There are several works on the going to V future, as well as on the English future in general, which also discuss the going to V future. These include: Binnick (1971), who compares and contrasts the will and going to futures; Bishop (1973), who deals with the similarities and differences between English and Spanish main expressions of futurity; Wekker (1976), who describes the semantic conditions governing the use of, and compares and contrasts the implications carried by, the will/shall and the going to futures; Haegeman (1983), who discusses the notion of “current relevance” in relation to the going to future (and futures in other languages similarly based on verbs of movement); Haegeman (1989), who analyzes the different context-appropriateness of (i.e. the pragmatic contrasts between) the will and going to futures; Nicolle (1997), who compares and contrasts the meanings and uses of going to V within the framework of relevance theory; Brisard (2001), who describes the semantics of going to V within a cognitive grammar framework. However, only occasional reference is made to the progressive counterpart of the going to V construction.

As far as I know, the earliest reference made to the going to be V-ing future is to be found in Whyte (1944). The author discusses a few of the possible English equivalents of the German (a) Spielen Sie morgen? Werden Sie morgen spielen? and (b) Ich spiele morgen. Ich werde morgen spielen. Among the various English translations of (a) and (b), he includes Are you going to be playing tomorrow? and I am going to be playing tomorrow, respectively. However, he does not comment on them at all. Instead, the author talks about the «implications and subtle nuances» that the English future carries «that are not contained» in the «pure-future German sentences» (p. 334). Also, using corpus data (collected through a questionnaire sent to 139 college professors and students), he comments on the frequency of occurrence and nuances of meaning of various English future forms (but without including the going to be V-ing future among them); he comes to the conclusion that the going to V form is the only unambiguous pure future in English. He does not state, however, whether the going to be V-ing form, like its non-progressive counterpart, is also not characterized by any modal coloring.

Binnick (1971) discusses the semantic differences between the will and going to futures. He does not consider their progressive forms except once, when he compares the following sentences: “He is going to still be working on it at noon” and “He will still be working on it at noon” (p. 46). He says that both are predictions, and thus very similar in meaning. However, he also adds that the former «can also be a kind of command with an implied veiled threat in case of failure to carry it out: he is going to be there at noon, working on it, or else!», which is not, apparently, the preferred reading of the latter. His discussion of these sen-
tences, as well as the two that follow them, shows that the author is interested in examining the different semantic nuances of will vs. going to, not those possibly attributable to the verbs in the V-ing form. Thus, although he exemplifies the going to be V-ing future, he does not, actually discuss it.

Declerck (1991: 158, note 1) briefly comments on the going to be V-ing construction. He observes that its basic meaning is that of «future seen from the point of view of the present» and adds that «the construction cannot express the other meanings which the future continuous can have». Declerck, therefore, appears to suggest that the going to be V-ing form is a variant of going to V, which is grounded in the present, rather than a variant of will be V-ing, which is completely set in and relevant to the future. The three examples given to illustrate this future encode durative events (e.g. “If you don’t stop teasing the children, you’re going to be dealing with me!”).

Nicolle (1997: 363) discusses the variable scope of the operator be going to (i.e. the ways it interacts with mood, tense, and time). He states that be going to is a conceptual information operator that is part of the situation represented in the verb phrase in which it occurs. He observes that, for this reason, it can be preceded by modal or tense operators, as in I will be going to speak to the boss or I am going to speak to the boss, respectively. He adds that, in turn, the operator be going to can have scope over an embedded situation representation which may be marked for aspect, as in I’m going to be speaking to the boss, or for both tense and aspect, as in Mary is going to have been working. Nicolle’s account of be going to thus allows for the fact that verb phrases may occur that are marked for progressive aspect twice, once in the be going to operator, and once in the infinitival complement that follows it. His examples are perfectly compatible with the notion of progressive aspect, as they refer to types of events that are both non-stative and durative.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 172), while commenting on the semantic difference between the simple and progressive form of the will future, also briefly refer to the going to be V-ing future. They write that in its non-aspectual meaning, the will be V-ing future indicates that a given matter «has already been settled rather than being subject to decision now», as in Will you be going to the shops this afternoon? (p. 171). They add that this use «is particularly common with will, but it is also found with, for example, the idiom be going, as in Are you going to be helping them again this year?» (p. 172). However, the authors do not further discuss the going to be V-ing future. They only implicitly suggest that the progressive forms of the will and going to futures are virtually identical in meaning.

In his book on progressive and non-progressive aspect in English, Williams (2002) also analyzes the going to V future and briefly comments on the progressive variant of this future. Williams observes that the going to be V-ing form is a variant of the going to V future, whose progressive form strongly underlines the continuous aspect of the activity in question (p. 201). His relevant example, quoted from Declerck (1991: 158), is “I’m going to be studying all afternoon, so I won’t have time to watch TV”, in which the verb in the progressive form encodes a dynamic, durative event.

However, the author points out that the going to be V-ing future can also be used with non-durative verbs. The examples he gives in this case are “I’m going to be
arriving in India tomorrow afternoon” and “We’re going to be meeting Karen’s parents this weekend” (p. 202). He aptly observes that these sentences refer to «punctual situations» that are «carried out in their entirety at some moment in the future» (p. 202). He does not state, however, what the progressive form would be signaling in this case, that is, he does not explain what the semantic or stylistic difference would be, if any, between a going to V and a going to be V-ing future applied to verbs denoting punctual events. In addition, Williams specifies that the going to be V-ing future is almost identical in meaning to the will be V-ing future. He explains that the only difference between the two is to be attributed to their going to and will components, respectively: the former conveys the notion of “predictability” and/or “intentionality”, and the latter that of «something happening as a matter of course»(p. 202). Finally, Williams observes that the going to be V-ing future may refer to a present situation represented as being in progress (p. 54, note 24; p. 201), in which case it can be replaced by epistemic will. His examples are “They’re going to be watching television at this time” and “He’s going to be having lunch at this time, isn’t he?”. He does not explain, however, whether such expressions are identical in meaning to their epistemic will counterparts.

In their ICAME25 conference presentation on the semantic ambiguities of the going to future, Berglund and Williams (2004) briefly referred to the progressive form of this syntactic structure. The relevant examples appearing in their hand-out (collected from the BNC) were “I mean, you’re not gonna be it’s not as though you’re gonna be having people staying or […]” and “Did you hear Christopher saying that he was going to be getting erm a new Cavalier?”. Of the former they said that it is not clear whether it represents a stylistic (i.e. less formal) variant of its non-progressive counterpart or whether it is semantically different from it. If the former interpretation is chosen, it is worth pointing out that the relative informality of the structure may be ascribed not only to its V-ing component but also to the colloquial gonna; if the latter interpretation is chosen, it is not clear, however, what the difference exactly consists in. Of the latter example, which is a progressive form of a periphrastic past, the presenters said that it does signal a semantic difference in comparison with the non-progressive form, namely that it implies that the decision being referred to had already been taken well before announcing it. However, they did not explain on what basis they were offering this interpretation.

It appears from the above review of previous studies on the English going to future, that only limited information is currently available on the going to be V-ing construction and that this is not sufficient to determine whether and to what extent this periphrastic form differs from others available in English. Plausible, complementary accounts of this future have been offered, but their validity has to be checked against (more systematic) corpus data. In the following sections, I report on the data collected from the BoE for the purpose of identifying possible patterns of use specific to this periphrastic future.
3. Data collection

To examine the usage of *going to be V-ing*, I looked for instances of this future in a general corpus of English, namely the BoE, which consists of 56,000,000 words. At first, I considered all instances of the three futures in the corpus (see section 4.) in order to compare the data about their frequencies of occurrence. Then, however, I examined only 100 randomly selected concordances of the *going to be V-ing* form, and compared them with as many randomly selected instances of the *going to be V* and the *will be V-ing* forms*. In both cases, the purpose was to check what patterns of use, if any, are common to the three periphrastic futures.

4. Preliminary findings

Before considering the possible semantic peculiarities of the *going to be V-ing* future, it is important to determine how well-established the construction is, namely whether it frequently recurs in the language and whether it is employed in both oral and written interaction.

4.1 Frequency

The frequency of occurrence of a given word, word combination or structure in a general corpus is a sign – however imperfect – of how well-established that expression is in the language that that corpus represents*. A word or expression occurring only once or a few times is more likely to reveal an aspect of the idiolect of a given language user than to show a characteristic of the linguistic behavior of a group of people sharing a common language.

In the BoE, I found 500 occurrences of the *going to be V-ing* future, 17,451 of the *going to V* future, and 3,977 of the *will be V-ing* future*. This means that, on average, there are about 8 occurrences of the first one, 311 of the second one, and 70 of the third one, every million words. The data are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>WILL BE V-ING</th>
<th>GOING TO V</th>
<th>GOING TO BE V-ING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total tokens</td>
<td>3,977</td>
<td>17,451</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens per million words</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>311.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Frequency of three periphrastic futures in BoE

The rate of occurrence of the *going to be V-ing* future is not marginal in the BoE. However, it is the least frequent of the three periphrastic futures examined: it is about 8 times less frequent than the *will be V-ing* future, and about 35 times less frequent than the *going to V* future.

The high frequency of occurrence of the *going to V* future may be due to the fact that this future is appropriate in a wide range of circumstances; it is often said not to be colored by modalizing nuances or to be the most neutral type of future (unlike the *will/shall* future; see, e.g., Whyte (1944: 337), Brisard (2001: 254), Wekker (1976: 123); but see also Haegeman (1989) on the contextual constraints of the *going to* future); as a result, it may constitute the default structure for expressing future in English.
The will be V-ing future is appropriate in two main types of situations: when reference is being made to future events in progress (in which case it is compatible with verbs denoting dynamic events characterized by some duration) or when events are being represented that are expected to happen as a matter of course (as a result of previous arrangements). The specific meanings associated with the will be V-ing future necessarily restrict its range of applicability.

However, it is not immediately clear why the going to be V-ing future is quite infrequent. This could be a future form that has appeared in the English language relatively recently (see note 1); if this were the case, one could thus argue that its use is not widespread yet precisely because it is an innovation. Alternatively, it could be a well-established future form, but characterized by a distinctive context of use, whose distribution is limited to only certain registers or genres (see section 4.2).

4.2 Spoken vs. written register

According to Berglund and Williams (2004), the going to be V-ing future may be a stylistic, less formal variant of the going to V form. If this is true, it is then possible that the going to be V-ing future occurs in oral communication more frequently than its non-progressive counterpart. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 211) note that the going to future is itself «characteristic of relatively informal style, whereas will is entirely neutral» (original emphasis). If this is true too, then one can expect to find instances of the will be V-ing future more equally distributed across the spoken and written registers.

The BoE contains two types of oral corpus components: transcripts from British and US radio broadcasts, and transcripts of a variety of British spoken data (e.g. informal conversations, phone calls, service encounters, lectures, radio phone-ins) on a wide range of topics. The former are likely to be scripted, planned, and thus more formal. The latter are likely to be spontaneously produced. At the same time, the BoE also, and mainly, contains written corpus components, which do not contain extemporaneously produced material, but texts resulting from probably careful planning (e.g. (excerpts from) books, newspapers, leaflets). The oral and written components of the BoE thus roughly represent a relatively more informal and a relatively less informal register, respectively. By considering the distribution of the three periphrastic futures examined across the oral and written components of the BoE, it is possible to approximately establish which one, if any, is typical of informal interaction. The data is summarized in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>will be V-ing</th>
<th>going to V</th>
<th>going to be V-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written sources</td>
<td>3,523 = 81.8%</td>
<td>7,523 = 43.1%</td>
<td>151 = 30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken sources</td>
<td>724 = 18.2%</td>
<td>9,928 = 56.9%</td>
<td>349 = 69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,977 = 100%</td>
<td>17,451 = 100%</td>
<td>500 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Distribution of three periphrastic futures in the spoken and written components of BoE

Table 2 shows that the will be V-ing future is much more frequently used in written than oral communication. The going to V future, instead, is fairly equally distributed across the spoken and the written data, although more frequently found in the former than the latter. Finally, the going to be V-ing future appears to be
much more typical of oral than written communication. The will be V-ing future thus appears to stand out because its distribution patterns markedly contrast with those of the other two futures: in over 8 out of 10 cases, it is employed in written texts. The going to V and going to be V-ing futures, instead, display a common preference for the oral register; also, their distribution patterns are fairly similar, in the sense that the percentage values reported differ by about 13 points. At the same time, the going to be V-ing future’s frequency of occurrence in oral texts is higher than that of its non-progressive counterpart.

From the above data, it is possible to conclude that the going to be V-ing future is typically associated with the oral register, in a way that is similar to, but more marked than, that of the going to V future. These similar distributional preferences contrast with those of the will be V-ing future, which, instead, is very often employed in written texts (and more frequently than the going to be V-ing future is used in oral ones). The recurrent association of the going to be V-ing future with oral texts suggests, although it does not definitively prove, that this construction is characteristic of informal contexts of communication.

4.3 The form gonna

A complementary indication of the possible degree of informality of the going to be V-ing form may come from an examination of the distribution of the form gonna in the corpus. Gonna is known to be a contracted, colloquial variant of the going to followed by a verb, which qualifies the expression it is part of as informal. If the going to be V-ing form has an informal gonna variant, as the going to V does, and if the former, progressive future is more informal than the latter, non-progressive one, it is to be expected that gonna expressions will be more frequent a) in spoken than written texts and b) in combination with progressive than non-progressive infinitives.

The BoE contains instances of the form gonna followed by either a progressive or a non-progressive infinitive in both its oral and written corpus components. Examples:

1. “I’m gonna be borrowing thirty-five thousand” (spoken: S 0000000448)
2. “Are you gonna be going?” (spoken: S 0000000467)
3. “I would expect that the Clinton team is gonna be scrutinizing these numbers” (spoken: S 2000930203)
4. “Reverend Gates ain’t gonna be holding up his sermon” (written: B 9000001423)
5. “Only one team is gonna win it now” (written: N 9119980623)
6. “Who am I gonna tell, huh?” (written: B 9000000463)
7. “No one’s gonna rein you in” (spoken: S 2000930526)
8. “I don’t think it’s gonna make any difference at all” (spoken: S 0000000256).

As Table 3 shows, gonna is indeed more frequently represented in the spoken than the written corpus components of the BoE. However, it is much more frequently followed by a non-progressive than a progressive infinitive (i.e. gonna V is about 33 times as frequent as gonna be V-ing). So, while going to be V-ing may be typically used in relatively informal contexts (as can be inferred from the fact that it is more frequently used in oral than written communication), it is not, however, used the most frequently in its more informal variant, i.e. with the matrix expression to be gonna.
4.4 MODALITY

The matrix verb phrase of the \textit{going to (be) V(-ing)} forms contains the verb to be, which, at least in theory, can be encoded in a variety of tenses and modes (see note 11) and thus also be pre-modified by auxiliaries. I checked whether, and how often, the non-progressive and progressive forms of the \textit{going to} construction are qualified by modal expressions when their matrix verb phrases occur in the infinitival form. I found that only the matrix phrase of the \textit{going to V} form can occur in its infinitival form, and that except in three cases, it is modified by some modal expression. The results are summarized in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal expression</th>
<th>may</th>
<th>might</th>
<th>should</th>
<th>supposed</th>
<th>wanna</th>
<th>will, won’t</th>
<th>would, ’d</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>going to V</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to be V-ing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Modal expressions pre-modifying \textit{going to V} and \textit{going to be V-ing} in BoE

Table 4 shows that such infinitives can be preceded by any of seven types of modal expressions, the most frequent one being \textit{will} (or its variants ‘ll and won’t). Examples:

9. “[...] they may be going to find it difficult” (S 9000000779)
10. “[...] and I think that perhaps you have a deeper degree of communication with people around you on an emotional romantic level and perhaps because you yourself’d have a much clearer vision of where your own future might be going to take you” (S 9000001539)
11. “By which time you should really be going to sleep” (S 0000000277)
12. “Oh and we’re supposed to be going to see the Bridges of Madison County” (S 9000001413)
13. “You don’t wanna be going to work on New Year’s Day” (S 0000000340)
14. “He will be going to watch it in Paris” (N 9119980610)
15. “I’ll just be going to say a goodnight to my sister” (B 0000000906)
16. “I won’t be going to see Elton John again” (N 9119980605)
17. “So that’s where she would be going to work” (S 0000000750)
18. “And he said it would be very unwise and it probably would not be too wise from the point of view of the friend I’d be going to see”. (S 0000000812)

The occasional modalization of \textit{going to V} seems to distinguish this construction from its progressive counterpart, which never occurs qualified this way. However, given its low frequency of occurrence (i.e. about 1.5 cases every 1,000 instances of \textit{going to V}), it cannot be considered a typical characteristic of this construction that sets it apart from the \textit{going to be V-ing} form.
5. Analysis of representative samples of data

From a preliminary consideration of general patterns of use of three periphrastic futures, it appears that the only distinctive trait of the going to be V-ing future is its remarkably frequent occurrence in oral texts. However, there may well be other (co-textual) elements that contribute to revealing the usage of this future. For example, specific notions may be conveyed through its matrix verb phrase (i.e. the to be going part) or its infinitival complement (i.e. the to be V-ing part).

In the following sections I consider a few of the semantic properties of the verbs employed in the going to be V-ing future, in particular in its infinitival complement, by examining a sample of 100 randomly selected concordances. To identify possible specificities of this construction, I also examine the same properties in a representative sample of 100 concordances of the going to V construction, and where applicable, also in a comparable set of concordances of the will be V-ing future.

5.1 Types and tokens of verbs

A given syntactic structure may be characterized by its frequent association with a limited range of lexemes (or word forms of given lexemes) or, alternatively, by its co-occurrence with a series of lexemes belonging to a common semantic field. Co-patterning of lexis (or semantics as encoded through lexis) and grammar is not at all unusual (see Hunston and Francis 2000). Thus it is worth investigating whether the going to be V-ing future is characterized by this type of co-patterning.

To this end, one could consider, for example, the noun groups preceding instances of the going to be V-ing future, the prepositional groups or adverbials following them and/or the adverbs possibly modifying the verbs in the futurate constructions. I decided to consider only the verbs employed in the V-ing form, that is the lexical material that is part of the periphrastic construction itself. My goal was to determine whether the going to be V-ing future is in complementary distribution with respect to the other two periphrastic futures, that is, whether it is used with different verbs, or maybe with (some of) the same verbs common to the other two futures, but with a markedly different rate of frequency.

I counted the types of verbs employed in the sample concordance sets of the three futures, and the number of tokens that exemplify them. The data are given in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of tokens exemplifying verb types</th>
<th>Verb types in will be V-ing set</th>
<th>Verb types in going to V set</th>
<th>Verb types in going to be V-ing set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>53 = 73.61%</td>
<td>50 = 76.92%</td>
<td>49 = 81.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>11 = 15.28%</td>
<td>8 = 12.30%</td>
<td>3 = 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>7 = 9.72%</td>
<td>2 = 3.08%</td>
<td>3 = 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>1 = 1.39%</td>
<td>2 = 3.08%</td>
<td>2 = 3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>0 = 0%</td>
<td>1 = 1.54%</td>
<td>1 = 1.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six or more</td>
<td>0 = 0%</td>
<td>2 = 3.08%</td>
<td>2 = 3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total verb types</td>
<td>72 = 100%</td>
<td>65 = 100%</td>
<td>60 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Tokens of verb types in three periphrastic futures in BoE
It appears from Table 5 that all three periphrastic futures are characterized by a high number of verbs, and thus that most verb types are exemplified by a single token. This patterning is more marked in the going to futures, and especially in the progressive one, than the progressive will future. Indeed, while the will be V-ing future has about 73% of the verbs exemplified by 1 token, the going to V future has over 76%, and the going to be V-ing future has over 81%.

In addition, there are only a few verbs that are exemplified in over 5 concordances. The will be V-ing future has none, while the going to futures have 2 each. These are go (10 occurrences) and take (six occurrences) for the simple future, and talk (11 occurrences) and do (12 occurrences) for the progressive one. However, none of these verbs is frequent enough that it can be said to distinctively characterize the usage of the going to futures. Finally, all these verbs are among the most commonly used in the English language, and so they are bound to frequently show up in various types of verb constructions.

In conclusion, an examination of the verb types instantiated in the three concordance sets shows that the going to be V-ing future is very much like the other two periphrastic constructions: it is employed with a high number of verbs, most of which are exemplified just once; from the complementary point of view, there is no single verb that can be identified as a reliable predictor of its occurrence. Both of these characteristics, which hold for the the three concordance sets, are simply more marked in relation to the going to be V-ing construction. Therefore it appears that, when considering the number of verb types instantiated in the concordance sets examined, it is not possible to describe the going to be V-ing future as distinctively different from the other two periphrastic futures.

5.2 Lexemes

As briefly hinted at above, a given syntactic structure may be associated not (only) with a given lexeme or word-form, but (also) with a set of lexemes relevant to a shared semantic field. This means that it may be possible to characterize it on the basis of semantic, rather than lexical, considerations. Put differently, even if a given pattern cannot be said to frequently co-occur with a given word (or with a restricted set of given words), it may still be the case that the pattern is often associated with a given meaning (or a limited set of related meanings).

An examination of the lexemes employed with the going to be V-ing future (i.e. the verbs in the V-ing form; see section 5.1) showed that not a single one co-occurred with the construction so frequently as to contribute to forming a distinctive lexico-grammatical pattern. However, the variable lexical realization of the future forms may obscure an underlying conceptual (i.e. semantic) tie among the lexemes employed. For example, it is possible that the going to be V-ing future forms in the sample considered exemplify verbs not used with the other two periphrastic futures and/or expressing very similar content.

Tables 6 and 7 show the number of lexemes shared by the periphrastic futures. It appears that most lexemes employed with one future do not occur with the others, but also that the number of lexemes that are shared is not marginal, namely around 20%, on average. This is particularly evident in the case of the going to be V-ing future, which shares 25% of its lexemes with the will be V-ing future, and as many with the going to V future. In addition, Table 7 shows that the verb types shared by all three futures make up about 10% of their lexemes, on average.
Collectively, this data is not enough to determine whether the verbs used with the three futures belong to the same general semantic category or not, or whether those that are used with only one or two types of futures share semantic traits. The data is merely compatible with such an interpretation. But it is necessary to look at the lexemes themselves in order to check whether they belong to the same semantic area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb types shared by pairs of periphrastic futures</th>
<th>WILL BE V-ING</th>
<th>GOING TO V</th>
<th>GOING TO BE V-ING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will be V-ing</td>
<td>72/72 = 100%</td>
<td>13 = 18.05%</td>
<td>15 = 20.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to V</td>
<td>13 = 20%</td>
<td>65/65 = 100%</td>
<td>15 = 23.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to be V-ing</td>
<td>15 = 25%</td>
<td>15 = 25%</td>
<td>60/60 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Lexemes common to pairs of periphrastic futures in BoE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexemes shared by three periphrastic futures</th>
<th>WILL BE V-ING</th>
<th>GOING TO V</th>
<th>GOING TO BE V-ING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexemes common to other two periphrastic futures</td>
<td>7/72 = 9.72%</td>
<td>7/65 = 10.76%</td>
<td>7/60 = 11.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Lexemes shared by three periphrastic futures in BoE

The 7 verbs shared by the three futures (i.e. discuss, do, get, go, sit, take and watch) are very common English words encoding very different (and sometimes general) notions. They do not form a semantically homogeneous set. The same is true of the verbs common to the going to V and going to be V-ing futures (i.e. ask, discuss, do, get, give, go, happen, hit, put, shoot, sit, take, talk, watch and work), of those shared by going to V and will be V-ing (i.e. discuss, do, fly, get, go, look at, make, save, sit, take, tell, try and watch), and of those occurring with the going to be V-ing and will be V-ing futures (i.e. deal with, discuss, do, fall, get, go, have, hear, listen, look at, look, sit, study, take and watch). Thus, from a semantic point of view, it appears that no specific unitary concept can be said to characterize the lexemes common to any two of the three periphrastic futures taken into examination, let alone to the three futures taken together. The verbs that are shared encode a variety of notions, not classifiable as belonging to a definite (or limited set of) semantic field(s).

Furthermore, the same is also true of the verbs specific to each future, that is, the verbs that are not shared. Thus, for example, the concordance set relevant to the going to be V-ing future includes verbs of saying (like answer), movement (like come), physical action (like batter), physical sensation (like hurt), and cognitive attitude (like give up). The set relevant to the going to V future includes verbs of physical action (like beat), emotional experience (like feel), relation (like cost), exchange (like hand), cognition (like remember), and movement (like tear round). Finally, the set relevant to the will be V-ing future includes verbs relevant to such notions as movement (like drive, push, swim, step down, tour), saying (like announce, broadcast, write), cognition (like consider, hope, expect), relation (like have, extend), posture (like lie), beginning (like start), perception (like see, hear), fighting (like battle out, compete, challenge), interaction (like invite, negotiate), money (like save, spend), and attempting (like seek, try).
In conclusion, the verbs that are not common to the sets of concordances do not reveal any distinctive semantic pattern associable with any of the futures in question. Each group of verbs exemplifies a variety of general concepts; in addition, several of these notions are shared by the three sets of concordances. In particular, the *going to be V-ing* future does not differ from the other two either positively or negatively: that is, there is no specific (set of) semantic notion(s) that is frequently associated with it and that is much less frequently employed with the other two futures; and conversely, there is no limited set of semantic notions that are relevant to the other two futures and that are untypical of the *going to be V-ing* future.

5.3 Past and present

I have been referring to the three periphrastic structures under examination as futures; however, this is not totally accurate. Indeed, the verb in the matrix phrase of the *going* constructions, namely *be*, may be encoded in the present (i.e. as *are* or *is*) or in the past (i.e. as *were* or *was*); that is, it may be used to signal the projected fulfillment of either a present or a past circumstance (whether a cause or an intention, as in *I was going to do it* and *It was going to happen*, respectively).

The sets of concordances of progressive and non-progressive *going to* forms examined do contain instances of matrix verb phrases encoded in the past (i.e. of *going to* preceded *was* or *were*). Examples:

19. “I was going to ask you something” (S 9000000526)
20. “I knew that he was going to die” (S 9000001437)
21. “We were going to discuss the Traveller” (S 0000001226)
22. “[...] your mother started to decide what she was going to do” (S 9000001341)
23. “I thought for a moment we were going to hit a tree, then a fence” (N 6000940827)
24. “What was I going to say then?” (S 900000534)
25. “[...] it sounded like a conversation that was going to take a little while” (B 9000000909)
26. “[...] he didn’t tell me at the end of last term that this was going to be happening” (S 9000001327)
27. “We weren’t ever going to be doing that again” (N 6000940926)
28. “The big boys were always going to be doing the weekend shows” (N 9119980612)
29. “There is no way he was going to be getting legless on champagne” (N 9119980417)
30. “Now he was going to be giving up a fellow American” (B 9000001447)
31. “And in the vision of John Wimber the dam had to be broken and the water had to go out of the out of the lake out of the pool into the troughs that we were going to be irrigating the seed” (S 9000001352)
32. “We want it clear that he was going to be looking into it” (S 9000001509).

The frequency of occurrence of past forms is almost identical in the two concordance sets. The *going to V* set has 15 (i.e. 15%); while the *going to be V-ing* one has 14 (i.e. 14%). Therefore, the encoding of tense (at least with regard to the distinction between present and past) does not appear to be a useful predictor of the occurrence of the progressive or non-progressive form of the periphrastic *going to* construction. In the sample data considered, both forms are much more frequently used in the present than the past tense.
5.4 Intentionality and predictability

The going to V future is known to encode in its matrix verb phrase the general meaning of “future fulfillment of the present”, which comprises the more specific notions of “future fulfillment of a present intention” and “future fulfillment of a present cause” (Leech 1971: 54). For short, I will refer to the former as intentionality and to the latter as predictability. The notion of “intentionality” is instantiated in clauses whose predicates refer to actions requiring the conscious exercise of the will and whose subjects refer to people, to whom the ability to plan deliberate actions can be ascribed (e.g. Are you going to apply for the job?; We are going to redecorate our house in the summer). The notion of “predictability” is instead compatible with both personal and non-personal subjects; it can be employed with verbs that encode either acts consciously performed by agents or other events, processes or states affecting or characterizing given entities (e.g. It’s going to fall; He’s going to feel sick).

The going to be V-ing construction too contains the be going component, through which the general notion of “future fulfillment of the present” is encoded. It is therefore possible to check whether the going to V and the going to be V-ing constructions differ with regard to how frequently they instantiate the more specific notions of “intentionality” and “predictability”.

The sample sets of concordances of the going to V and going to be V-ing constructions contain expressions which are unambiguously classifiable as instantiations of the notion of “intentionality”. Examples:

33. “We’re going to check the venue” (S 9000001489)
34. “Mother, don’t mind, we’re going to give you a little hypodermic” (B 9000001423)
35. “How were you going to implement it?” (S 9000000801)
36. “And I’m going to be coming around afterward to try and er get an idea of the number of people who might be interested and badgering them to come along” (S 0000000015)
37. “What about relationships? Are you going to be coupling up. [sic]” (S 2000901206)
38. “[...] what was it you’re going to be looking to do with the money?” (S 9000001317)

Similarly, there are others that are clear instantiations of the notion of “predictability”. Examples:

39. “It is going to cost some individuals money” (N 6000950915)
40. “Our result isn’t going to depend on more info on Brazil” (N 91119980424)
41. “So I don’t think I’m going to feel confined or restrained” (S 2000901206)
42. “[...] if you’re three weeks’ pregnant and you mention it at a junket, you’re going to be answering questions about it” (N 5000950205)
43. “er I’ve just got a newborn son who’s going to be breathing dirty air” (S 9000000603)
44. “And when is that going to be taking place?” (S 9000000414)

At the same time there are also cases which are harder to interpret as they are compatible with both the notion of “intentionality” and that of “predictability”. This tends to occur especially – but not only – with third-person and first-person plural subjects. In the former case it is not clear whether the speaker/writer is informing the addressee about the subject’s plans or whether she is signaling what she expects to take place as a result of a current state of affairs. In the latter case, it is not clear whether the speaker/writer is speaking on behalf of a group so as to reveal their shared, current intentions, or whether instead she is revealing her
own plans to an individual or group who is supposed to be involved with her in a future event, but who is not in a position to make decisions. Examples:

45. “Now, Jimmy’s going to make up for my loss” (N 6000920924)
46. “They’re going to vote in a larger police budget” (B 00000000345)
47. “The other one’s going to be coming” (B 9000000447)
48. “We’re going to be going talking about conspiracy theories” (S 0000001660)
49. “The girls you’re going to be working with are going to be like you” (S 9000000524)

Table 8 shows how frequently the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” are instantiated in the concordances of the non-progressive and progressive forms of the *going to* construction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notions conveyed in two periphrastic futures</th>
<th>Intentionality</th>
<th>Predictability</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>going to V</em></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>going to be V-ing</em></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Distribution of the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” in two periphrastic future data sets in BoE

The data in Table 8 show both similarities and differences between the concordance sets of the *going to V* and *going to be V-ing* forms. On the one hand, the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” appear to be represented in both sets; the latter notion is more frequently instantiated in both. In addition, in both sets there are unclear cases, which are interpretable as conveying either the notion of “intentionality” or that of “predictability” or both. On the other hand, the frequencies of occurrence of these semantic categories differ. In the *going to V* group, the notions of “predictability”, “intentionality” and “unclear” occur 54% vs. 38% vs. 16% of the time, respectively; in the *going to be V-ing* set, they occur 41% vs. 25% vs. 34% of the time, respectively. This means that the second most frequently represented notion with the *going to V* construction is “intentionality”, while the most frequent one in the *going to be V-ing* set is “unclear”.

The data thus reveals only partially similar distribution patterns of the semantic notions considered: in the *going to V* concordance set, the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” are much more frequently represented than that of “unclear”. In the *going to be V-ing* group, all three notions are frequently instantiated. At the same time, it appears that neither of the two *going to* forms is typically associated with only one of the notions examined. So it is not possible to conclude that one of these notions distinctively characterizes the semantics of either periphrastic form.

5.5 Types of events: duration

The infinitival complement of the *going to be V-ing* construction is encoded in the progressive form, which represents events as on-going processes, and thus as characterized by (or perceived as being endowed with) some internal duration (constancy or repetitiveness). As a result, one could expect this progressive future to be used with verbs encoding events evolving over or lasting for some time, or occurring several times over a given period of time. On the other hand, the other two periphrastic futures are not restricted by such a requirement: the
infinitival complement of the going to V construction is not encoded in the progressive form, while the will be V-ing future is not only used to represent future events in progress (and thus characterized by some internal duration), but also to signal that a given event (of whatever duration) is conceived of as pre-arranged.

To test whether the going to be V-ing construction is distinctively associated with events characterized by some type of duration, I classified the events encoded in the concordance sets of the three periphrastic constructions according to five temporal dimensions and compared their frequencies of occurrence. The dimensions taken into consideration are: durativity, habituality, iterativity, punctuality, and telicity. They are relevant in part to the notion of aspect (habituality) and in part to that of Aktionsart (durativity, iterativity, punctuality, and telicity), and thus are not taxonomically homogeneous\textsuperscript{16}. However, they are similar in that they all characterize aspects of the duration of events\textsuperscript{17}.

To identify different types of events on the basis of their dimensions of duration, I applied some of the criteria outlined in Frawley (1992: ch. 7) for classifying types of aspect; in addition, where necessary, I took into consideration the context of the verb phrases examined (i.e. typically whole clauses)\textsuperscript{18}.

Durative events happen once and last for some time; that is, they are characterized by duration on a given, single occasion. Of such events one can ask: “For how long?” or “How long did/does/will it last?”. The clauses in which they are represented may include adverbial complements encoded as for-headed prepositional phrases indicating duration. Examples:

50. “Rousset has signed for sunsport and will be writing exclusively for us” (N 9119980523)
51. “And then they’ll stop, and then the lagoon will be laying calm for 10 minutes” (S 2000921207)
52. “If you’re a yob and you are going to watch your team against Manchester” (N 6000950428)
53. “I just wasn’t going to sit there and look at him all miserable and sick and sad! I just wasn’t!” (B 9000001423)
54. “[…] he was going to be working with Disney Studios” (B 9000001237)
55. “I’m going to be reading and studying the entire plane ride home” (N 2000960203).

Telic events are both durative and punctual; they refer to combinations of a process of some duration and the instantaneous result that the event reaches once it has been completely carried out. Of these events, one can ask: “For how long?” (or “How long did/does/will it last?”) and “How long did/does/will it take to complete it?”. Like durative events, they can take adverbials of time signaling duration (e.g. for six hours), but, in addition, they can also be modified by adverbials denoting intervals of time (e.g. in two days). Examples:

56. “Bergkamp will be driving to the World Cup in France” (N 9119980519)
57. “This fall, the city will be conducting a comprehensive study of school commute routes in north Palo Alto” (E 9000000677)
58. “[…] I thought erm if I’m going to write a play about mothers […]” (S 0000000354)
59. “We’re going to fly back to Chicago together” (B 0000001320)
60. “[…] this Doctor is a dolphin expert and he’s going to be giving us a talk on dolphins” (S 0000000025)
61. “[…] you’re going to be doing a top-up degree for yourself” (S 9000000665).

Habitual events are sequences of single events, that is, multiple events; they take
place repeatedly and so are distributed over a period of time (i.e. they are relevant to a set of occasions). Of such events one can thus ask: “How often over a period of time?” or “How many times did/does/will it happen?” Examples:

62. “The Roman Catholics will be using it erm at least occasionally” (S 9000001515)
63. “[...] he’s going to go backwards and forwards into Leeds” (S 9000001463)
64. “The big boys were always going to be doing the weekend shows” (N 9119980612)
65. “I’m going to be hitting 20 or 30 aces every match” (N 5000950630).

Iterative events are single events consisting of multiple, cyclical sub-events. Therefore, they consist of subparts, but unlike habitual events, they occur on single occasions. Of an iterative event one can ask: “How many times (on a single occasion)?”. Iterative events may be so inherently (e.g. vibrating, shaking) or as a result of the aspectual encoding of the verbs that represent them: when appearing in the progressive form, verbs technically denoting punctual events (see below) end up representing iterative events, that is a plurality of events occurring on a single occasion (e.g. to be hitting, to be winking). Examples:

66. “I’m sure Sean’s ex-wife Melanie Hill will be rubbing her hands in glee too” (N 9119980528)
67. “If you were not in a relationship at all and didn’t want to be in a relationship someone’s going to be battering your door quite hard before summer’s end before year’s end” (S 9000001504).

Punctual events are those that are not temporally extended at all, that is, they are instantaneous and thus have no or irrelevant duration. They are conceptualized as occurring on a single occasion and, more importantly, as occupying a single (exact) moment in time. Of these events one can ask: “At what point in time did/will it happen?”. Examples:

68. “We will be finding out whether children are eating sandwiches or cooked dinners or just opting for a packet of crisps in the playground” (N 6000920826)
69. “[... you probably will be leaving very shortly” (S 9000001328)
70. “Mr Sevan will be arriving from the Pakistani capital” (S 1000910801)
71. “Retin-A is available by prescription only. Therefore, at least for the time being, you’re not going to find it in any cosmetic skin care product” (B 9000000434)
72. “I thought for a moment we were going to hit a tree, then a fence” (N 6000940827)
73. “Do you need a silencer if you are going to shoot a mime?” (E 900000020)
74. “Now she realizes she was too optimistic. defabio: I knew I was going to be getting laid off in September, but I never thought that I would be laid off this long” (S 2000901227)
75. “Environmental Information Service. Yeah. Yeah. Which is a computerized information service that we’re going to be launching erm around the middle of this year actually” (S 9000001294).

The above exemplification shows that the verbs in the infinitival complements of the three periphrastic constructions denote events characterized by different types of duration. Table 9 reveals how frequently these notions are instantiated in the data sets. It shows that there are both similarities and differences in the distribution patterns of the notions of duration considered: on the one hand, these notions are fairly similarly distributed across concordance sets, but on the other hand, they are not equally represented within the same concordance set.

First, four notions (i.e. durativity, telicity, habituality, and punctuality) are
instantiated with the three periphrastic constructions under examination. Second, one notion, that of iterativity, is not instantiated at all only with the *going to V* construction; however, its presence is marginal in the concordance sets for the *will be V-ing* and *going to be V-ing* future, making up 1% and 2% of the data, respectively. Third, the two notions most frequently instantiated in the three sets are durativity and punctuality; the former is more prominently represented with the *will be V-ing* and the *going to be V-ing* constructions, and the latter with the *going to V* construction; they represent the two extremes of the continuum of the dimension of duration. Fourth, in each of the three sets, the most frequently represented notion makes up about 50% of the data, while the second most frequent makes up about 20-25% of the data. Fifth, in each concordance set, three notions of duration (i.e. habituality, telicity, and iterativity) are infrequently instantiated, each making up 10% or less of the data. Sixth, the three sets comprise groups of concordances that are not easily classifiable with regard to the notions of duration, and that make up around 13% of the data. Finally, the three concordance sets are characterized by similar rates of occurrence of the various notions of duration: durativity and punctuality are the most frequent notions, followed by habituality, telicity, and iterativity. This can be represented in the form of a frequency hierarchy: durativity|punctuality > habituality > telicity > iterative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will be V-ing</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to V</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to be V-ing</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dur., Tel., Hab., Iter., and Punc. mean, respectively, “durative”, “telic”, “habitual”, “iterative”, and “punctual”.

Table 9: Frequencies of five notions of duration in three periphrastic future data sets in BoE

The above data reveals that the three periphrastic constructions can be employed in the representation of events characterized by different types of duration, but also that they show a preference for the notions of durativity and punctuality, which are the extremes of the continuum of duration. The two periphrastic constructions comprising a progressive (bare) infinitive are fairly frequently associated with the notion of durativity; this is to be expected, given that durativity is compatible with – although not a predictor of – the idea of “action in progress”\(^8\), which in English is typically encoded in the progressive form. Neither future, however, is exclusively associated with the notion of durativity; in the case of the *will be V-ing* future, this can be accounted for when considering that this construction is also employed to refer to events expected to take place as a matter of course (e.g. as a result of a previous plan or arrangement), independently of their duration; in the case of the *going to be V-ing* future, this merely suggests that the progressive infinitive may be prototypically used to represent events as being in progress, but also that its use is extendable to other types of events. The non-progressive construction differs from the other two periphrastic futures in that the notion it is the most frequently associated with is punctuality; on the other
hand, it is comparable to them because it is fairly often associated with the notion of punctuality and because it is not frequently associated with the notions of habituality, telicity or iterativity. I do not know how to account for the going to V future’s preference for punctual events and dislike for habitual, telic, and iterative events, as the notions conveyed by the matrix verb phrase of the construction (i.e. “intentionality” and “predictability”) are compatible with events of various types of duration.

In conclusion, the data reveal that the going to be V-ing future: a) is compatible with five different notions of duration, b) is typically associated with the notion of durativity, c) is also fairly frequently associated with the opposite notion of punctuality, and d) has distribution patterns of the various notions of duration that distinguish it from the going to V future, but that render it similar to the will be V-ing future.

6. Conclusion

The examination of patterns of use of the three periphrastic constructions will be V-ing, going to V and going to be V-ing in (sample) concordance sets from the BoE has shown that there are only a few traits distinguishing going to be V-ing from the other two futures.

First of all, the going to be V-ing construction is less frequent than the other two, the ratios being around 1 to 8 for the will be V-ing future and around 1 to 35 for the going to V future. When considering their gonna variants, the going to V and going to be V-ing constructions display comparable rates of occurrence, the former being about 33 times as frequent as the latter.

Second, the going to be V-ing construction appears to be instantiated mostly (i.e. about 70% of the time) in oral texts, unlike going to V, which is fairly equally distributed between the spoken and the written register (i.e. around 43% and 57% of the time, respectively), and also unlike will be V-ing, which is typically (i.e. about 80% of the time) found in written texts.

Third, going to V may occasionally (i.e. about once every 645 times) have the verb in its matrix verb phrase encoded as an infinitive preceded by modal operators. The going to be V-ing construction, instead, never occurs qualified in this way.

The other patterns examined (i.e. the number and types of lexemes employed in the three periphrastic futures, the notions of duration attributable to the events encoded in the three futures, the rate of occurrence of past forms in the matrix verb phrases of the going to constructions, and the encoding of the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” in the same futures) have not revealed a semantic pattern distinctively characterizing the going to be V-ing future. The only partial exception to this has to do with the notions of duration: the going to be V-ing future differs from its non-progressive counterpart because it is preferably associated with the notion of durativity, rather than punctuality; however, its preference for the notion of durativity as well the distribution patterns of the other notions of duration make it very similar to the will be V-ing future. The data presented here suggests the following tentative conclusions: going to be V-ing is a variant of the going to V future, although it is far less frequently in-
stantiated than its non-progressive counterpart. It is mostly employed in spoken English, which suggests that it is typically employed in informal interactional contexts. Its matrix verb phrase (i.e. *be going*) encodes the same meanings as the matrix verb phrase of its non-progressive counterpart, namely “intentionality” and/or “predictability”, and may occasionally be replaced by the colloquial *be gonna* variant; however, it is not pre-modifiable by modal expressions, unlike its non-progressive counterpart. Its infinitival complement does not appear to convey a specific (range of) notion(s): it can represent events of various types, belonging to a number of semantic fields, as is the case with the *going to* future and *be V-ing* futures. Being encoded in the progressive form, it prototypically represents an on-going, dynamic event characterized by internal temporal expansion. The construction, however, is also compatible with other types of events: durative events that are stative (i.e. not in-progress), as well as habitual, telic, iterative, and punctual events. When the progressive infinitive represents an event that can be viewed as on-going, it can be said to encode the notion of “progressive aspect”. However, it is not clear what other notion the same infinitival complement encodes, when the event being represented is a punctual (or anyway, not an on-going) one. One can speculate that it could signal higher subjectivity (cf. Killie 2004) or underline the notion of pre-arrangement (Berglund and Williams 2004), but this is not directly determinable through an examination of concordances.

To conclude, I would like to put forward a tentative, alternative two-part interpretive hypothesis regarding the progressive form of the *going to* future. First, the use of the *going to be V-ing* future may be one (recent?) manifestation of the increasing spread (and grammaticalization) of the progressive in English, which appears to be subject to weaker and weaker co-textual constraints (Gavis 1998; Hundt 2004); that is, the *going to be V-ing* construction may be an additional type of co-text that the progressive form is being extended to, rather than (merely) an additional syntactic pattern conveying the notion of progressive aspect. Second, as the *going to be V-ing* construction appears to be semantically very similar to its non-progressive counterpart, it is possible that the former constitutes a formal structure-preserving variant of the latter, rather than a combination of two constructions (i.e. *be going* + *to be V-ing*), each contributing its meaning to the construction as a whole. If this were the case, the *going to be V-ing* future could then be said to instantiate a form of syntactic harmony: the infinitival complement might be interpreted as preserving and reproducing the aspectual encoding of the matrix verb phrase, not as adding new meaning to the syntactic pattern.

The analysis of the *going to be V-ing* construction offered here is far from exhaustive. More data needs to be collected and examined so as to check whether the patterns identified so far are accurate. More importantly, additional patterns of use are worth exploring, for example, the association of the three periphrastic futures with different types of subjects (i.e. first-, second-, and third-person ones; nominal vs. pronominal ones), semantic roles in subject position (e.g. agents, experiencers, patients), types of events encoded in verbs (e.g. material, verbal, mental), types of adverbs pre-modifying the verbs; their occurrence in main vs. subordinate vs. embedded clauses; and the frequency with which they are encoded in declarative, interrogative, and imperative types of clauses, both affirmative and negative. In addition, questionnaires can be prepared to submit to native
speakers to ask for their opinions on the understandability and acceptability of various contexts of use of the *going to be V-ing* future. It is likely that the combinations of different research tools will help reveal the specific usage of the *going to be V-ing* future.
I did not try to determine when the going to be V-ing was first recorded, something certainly worth doing. We know from Wekker (1976: 29) that the going to V construction dates back to Middle English.

This is to be intended as the future that refers to an event or situation that is known or expected to happen as a matter of course, not one that is presented as being in progress at some time in the future.

Williams (2002: 201) says the same of the non-progressive form of the going to future.

Not all native speakers would agree with Williams’s claim, though. Five informants I have consulted found only the sentence containing epistemic will acceptable.

Their presentation was not, specifically, on the going to be V-ing form, though.

The reduced size of these samples made the data analysis more manageable.

Of course, given patterns may be over- or under-represented according to what kinds of texts make up the corpus consulted.

The figures reported here and repeated in Table 1 correspond exactly to the counting given by the concordancing program as output of my queries I carried out in 2004. I did not check how accurate the counting was. While selecting the 300 concordances needed for the analysis presented in section 5, (i.e. 100 concordances out of 105 randomly selected ones per each periphrastic future), I noticed that irrelevant examples did turn up (e.g. “Today isn’t going to be gardening weather”; “I’m off to see my Mum for lunch which will be trying I expect”). In addition, the counting of the will be V-ing future is a bit conservative, as I only looked for strings of will be V-ing, not of ’ll be V-ing, won’t be V-ing, Will... be V-ing or Won’t... be V-ing.

As is well known, there is no clear-cut distinction between oral and written communication, let alone a direct correspondence between formality and written communication, on the one hand, and informality and oral communication, on the other. However, most oral communication is dialogic, co-constructed, spontaneous, unplanned and thus likely to be more informal than written communication.

I excluded from the count the infinitival matrix verb phrases of 6 going to V constructions preceded not by modal expressions, but by present tense forms of the verb to be. The co-occurrence of is/are and be in such concordances is probably due to performance errors.

Haegeman (1989: 315) states that the going to V construction is a kind of aspectual marker which «is found with all tense forms» as in the following examples: He is going to leave, He was going to leave, He will be going to leave, He has been going to leave, He had been going to leave. Brisard (2001: 279, footnote 1) points out that it «can be used in combination with will and retain its futurate meaning». Nicolle (1997: 362) observes that be going to is an operator encoding conceptual information that is part of the situation representation encoded in the verb phrase it is part of, and adds that this explains why it can be pre-modified by the modal operator will.

Brisard (2001) distinguishes five categories of uses of going to, namely intention, assumption, inevitability, imminence, conditional-protasis, and conditional-apodosis. Nicolle (1997) considers three, namely prior intention, inevitability and imminence, but she adds that sometimes no such overtones are detectable in utterances containing a going to V future, which suggests that a further possible meaning of going to is that of pure future.

Brisard (2001: 378-283) explains how this notion is likely to have developed.
Berglund and Williams (2004) made a similar observation about the data collected from the BNC-baby. Haegeman (1989: 293-294) observes that when “be going to” can be given «two interpretations, “intention” and “cause”», it is not «“ambiguous” in a truth-conditional sense»; rather, it «is vague between» different interpretations. Brisard (2001: 265) noted that certain going to V expressions may hover «on the borderline between the category of imminence and that of intention».

However, Williams (2002: 202) points out that the going to be V-ing construction is compatible also with punctual events.

Aspect is «the non-temporal, internal contour of an event» (Frawley 1992: 294) as determined by the speaker’s perspective on that event, and as encoded in the grammar of the language (e.g. through verb forms, adverbs, function words). Aktionsart classifies types of events or situations on the basis of their intrinsic characteristics. The former makes grammatical distinctions, the latter identifies semantic distinctions. The two notions provide complementary descriptions of events and situations, and help reveal how the same type of event may be represented from different viewpoints. Thus, for example, “writing a letter” is an inherently telic event, which may be encoded in the progressive aspect (e.g. I was writing a letter) or in the perfective form (e.g. I have written a letter).

I did not take into consideration aspectual distinctions like “(im)perfectivity, (non-)stativity” or “(non-)progressive” because not directly focused on the notion of duration, although revealing of other important facets of the internal contour of events; in addition, the third would be relevant only to two of the periphrastic constructions examined (see also below about iterative events).

It is important to take co-text into consideration, for instance, when the Aktionsart and aspect of a given event do not seem to match. A clause like I write a letter every day depicts a habitual (telic) event, as every day signals the repetitive occurrence of a series of events over a given period of time, while a letter signals the end-point of each of these events.

In fact, in the data examined, durativity is also a characteristic of stative, non-evolving events, which are not characterized by susceptibility to change.

I borrow the expression structure preservation from Kiparsky (1985).

Thus, the infrequent gonna be V-ing form would be less syntactically harmonious than the going to be V-ing one.
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