

Peering into the future: The emergence of *going to* in the 18th Century.
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Formation of the Future in Modern English has several variants that developed over the course of the 17th through 20th centuries. Throughout Old English and Middle English, the future was expressed by the present tense with adverbial support (Visser, 1970). During late Middle English, two modal constructions began to be used as markers of the future, *will* and *shall*, as in (1) and (2) respectively, taken from the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English (PPCEME)¹ and a corpus of 25 texts (personal letters and dramas) selected from the Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO-25)² database. The periphrastic *going to* form, as in (3), came into use in Early Modern English.

(1) *and I have a Master Key **will open** it.* (PPCEME/VANBR-E3-P1/68.765)

(2) *At the Restoration there liv'd in London a Merchant of great Wealth, Integrity and Capacity, whom we **shall call** Probus.* (ECCO-25/aa/279)

(3) *for I **am going to present** you with the relation of such particulars, as it is impossible for me recollect without piercing my heart with the most sensible affection.* (ECCO-25/ab/54).

While a number of studies have focused on differences in the use of *will* and *shall* quantitatively (e.g. Fries, 1925; Taglicht, 1970; Pertejo, 1999), none have examined the entire future temporal reference sector. In contrast to the previous studies of either *going to* or *will/shall* variation, this study takes the entire future temporal reference domain as a point of departure and examines the role of each of its variants by systematically considering every reference to future time in the PPCEME and ECCO-25.

Poplack and Tagliamonte (1999) demonstrate that several geographically isolated communities of African American English speakers as well as Mainstream English speakers possess the same conditioning hierarchy in the production of *going to* as a marker of futurity and postulate a common historical source. The data analyzed by Poplack and Tagliamonte provide a comparison with the hierarchy of constraints that exists in the 18th century as *going-to* penetrates the future temporal reference sector. This in turn permits me to test the Constant Rate Effect (CRE) proposed by Kroch (1989) (and interpreted in Cukor-Avila (2003)), which states that while an innovative feature may increase in its overall rates, the same constraint hierarchy should hold across time.

Preliminary results show that *going to* represents 11 % of the observed variants. The strongest factor for the 18th Century in going-to is grammatical person, with 1st Person strongly favoring with a factor weight of .94 while 2nd/3rd Person disfavors with a factor weight of .24. This constraint disappears by the 20th Century in the AAE varieties analyzed by Poplack and Tagliamonte, but reverses itself in the Mainstream variety. The

¹ <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/hist-corpora/>

² <http://www.gale.com/EighteenthCentury/>

role of grammatical person in the AAE varieties may represent an earlier stage of development for *going to* while the Mainstream variety a later stage of grammaticization. As with other syntactic changes involving multiple variants (e.g. the development of the Portuguese future (Poplack and Malvar (2007)), the CRE does not hold, even though *going-to* moves consistently from minority use in the 18th century to the majority variant in the 20th century.

References

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