



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S13. What Future for the Future Tense in English?

Wednesday 30 August: 9.30-11.30am

Convenor: Christopher Williams (University of Bari)

Email: cjwilliams72@hotmail.com / c.williams@scienzepolitiche.uniba.it

Co-convenor: Ilse Depraetere (Charles De Gaulle Lille III University)

Email: ilse.depraetere@univ-lille3.fr

English has many ways of conveying future situations. Without returning to the old question of whether English has a future tense, we wish to encourage debate on the state of contemporary studies on the future in English; the contribution of corpora in studies on the future in English; the limitations of corpora studies; the *be going to*/*gonna* construction and reasons for its general increase in use; *be going to* + progressive: the construction practically all grammars have ignored; the semantics of the *will* + progressive construction; the future in English in specialized discourse.

A Contrastive Analysis of Grammaticalized Devices for Expressing Future Time in English and Spanish

Marta Carretero (Complutensian University, Madrid)

This paper presents a contrastive analysis, based on both authentic and constructed examples, of the two most conventional ways of referring to future time in English (*will* and *be going to*) and their closest Spanish equivalents (synthetic future and *ir a*). The choice of one form or other is proved to be dependent on a number of factors, the importance of which varies with the language. The English key factor is current orientation (i.e. current evidence or current intention), whereas the Spanish key factor is the degree of immediacy with which the state of affairs is to be carried out.

Remarks on the *will* + *be-ing* Construction

Agnès Celle (University of Paris 7 Denis-Diderot)

This paper argues that the future time reference marked by the *will* + *be-ing* construction results from a twofold operation. On the one hand, the *be-ing* form eliminates the root value of the modal auxiliary *will*, thus allowing 'pure' reference to the future. On the other, *will* also has an effect on the *be-ing* form since this form seems to lose its aspectual meaning when combined with *will*. The reason why this use is on the increase might be that the *will* + *be-ing* construction has acquired a discourse function by which the speaker may act as a reporting speaker.

From Geographical Variety to Textual Type: the use of *BE GOING TO* in the ICE corpora

Roberta Facchinetti (University of Verona)

In order to shed more light on the semi-modal *be going to* + infinitive in Present-day English, I will analyse the written samples of three components of the International Corpus of English: New Zealand (ICE-NZ), Singapore (ICE-SIN), and Great Britain (ICE-GB). Firstly, I will provide an overview of the quantitative distribution and semantic values of the semi-modal in each component; secondly, I will single out the sections concerning journalistic writing, in order to test if the discrepancies recorded in the three corpora are also mirrored in this textual category or, conversely, if the peculiarities of this genre overcome geographical differences.

Patterns of Use of the *to be going to be V-ing* Construction

Sara Gesuato (University of Padova)

This paper examines patterns of use of *going to be V-ing*. The Bank of English shows that this construction is much less frequent than its non-progressive counterpart, mostly occurs in oral texts, and frequently encodes durative events. Also, like *going to V*, it occurs in the present or past, conveys the notions of predictability and/or intentionality and represents events relevant to various semantic fields. Thus, *going to be V-ing* may be considered a structure-preserving variant of *going to V*, characterized by syntactic harmony, which attests to the increasing spread of the progressive in English.

***WILL*: not quite a modal, not quite a tense**

Raf Salkie (University of Brighton)

Linguists have debated whether *WILL* is best analysed as a modal with some time uses, or as a future tense with some modal uses. Neither of these positions is convincing: we need an analysis which acknowledges that *WILL* is idiosyncratic and irregular, and does not fit neatly into a grammatical classification. By recognising that *WILL* has a foot in both the modality camp and the tense camp, we can account for certain aspects of its history, as well as shedding light on its current meaning and use.

***WILL + be -ing*: a quirky progressive?**

Nicholas Smith (University of Lancaster)

This paper investigates the meanings and distribution of *WILL + be -ing* in standard British English. The construction merits attention because of controversy over whether its meaning can truly be called “progressive”, and whether it implies other meanings. Moreover, there is evidence that in British English *WILL + be -ing* has become more common in recent decades. My aims in this presentation are: (a) to test the validity of previous claims about the meaning(s) of *WILL + be -ing* against corpora of British English; (b) examine the extent to which the recent increase in frequency is attributable to an alleged special, or “quirky”, use.

