

# ***Be going to* and *gaan*: A contrastive study of *go*-futures in English and Dutch**

Naoaki Wada  
University of Tsukuba, wada.naoaki.gb@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

**Keywords:** *be going to*, *gaan*, temporal structure, grammaticalization, C-gravitation

English and Dutch have their respective *go*-futures, i.e., *be going to* (BGT) and *gaan*, as in (1) and (2). There have been mainly three types of studies on their comparison: (i) an analysis where BGT and *gaan* both represent a future situation with present orientation (Beheydt 2005); (ii) a distinctive collexeme analysis (Hilpert 2008); and (iii) an analysis based on grammaticalization and/or subjectification (van Olmen and Mortelmans 2009).

- (1) I'm going to have a baby. (Haegeman 1983: 155)
- (2) Ik ga morgen werken. (Haegeman 1983: 156)  
'I'm going to work tomorrow'

These studies have some problems, however. Analysis (i) cannot explain why *gaan* occurs much less than BGT and other forms (e.g., *zullen* 'shall' or *moeten* 'must') often correspond to BGT, as in (3) and (4), and why the degree of grammaticalization of *gaan* is lower than that of BGT, as implied by (5), where BGT, unlike *gaan*, co-occurs with stative verbs. Although analysis (ii) revealed some differences between the two *go*-futures by statistically clarifying what kinds of predicates they tend to collocate with, it attributes the differences to the different collocation patterns (i.e., constructions) and does not explain why the two *go*-futures should behave the way they do, not the way around. While analysis (iii) showed the differences in the degree of grammaticalization and/or subjectification between BGT and *gaan*, it does not consider the tense and grammatical systems of English and Dutch to explain how such differences have arisen and what promotes them.

- (3) a. "The Barzinis and Tattaglias are going to move in on us real hard, Mike..."  
(M. Puzo, *The Godfather*, p.411)  
b. "De Barzini's en de Tattaglia's zullen hard toeslaan, Mike..."  
'(Lit.) The Barzinis and Tattaglias shall hit out, Mike...' (*De Peetvader*, p.439)
- (4) a. "And now you are going to cry!" said the little prince. (*The Little Prince*, p.71)  
b. --En nu moet je huilen, zei de kleine prins. (*De Kleine Prins*, p.73)  
'(Lit.) "And now you must cry," said the little prince.'
- (5) I'm going to be forty in a few years. (S. Sheldon, *Master of the Game*, p.204)

This study aims to systematically explain the aforementioned differences as well as solving the problems mentioned above in a temporal structure analysis based on the comprehensive model of tense interpretation proposed by Wada (2013, 2019, 2022), which places emphasis of the meanings of constituents of tense forms, so lack of the progressive form and infinitival marker in *gaan*-futures motivates temporal phenomena different from those of BGT-futures. A temporal structure consists of information about relations between speech time, the time of orientation and event time(s), and the "cognitive schema" reflecting the schematized temporal information related to elements constituting the tense form involved. The semantic uses indicated by BGT and *gaan* have temporal structures with some parts or others being different, which is caused by such notions as focus (profile) shift, segment profiling (partial foregrounding), and semantic bleaching. I argue that this analysis can explain, depending on the different temporal structures of BGT and *gaan*, how the two *go*-futures have developed different semantic uses and what types of predicates they tend to collocate with.

The proposed analysis can also motivate the lower degree of grammaticalization and/or subjectification of *gaan* than that of BGT with the notion "C-gravitation", the gravitation toward the consciousness of the speaker fixed at speech time (Wada 2018), which brings about grammatical phenomena such that the speech situation (including speech time) is salient and "featured". Since *go*-futures have originated as temporal expressions representing the present-oriented future and hence featuring the speech situation, C-gravitation can be considered as a driving force which triggers the primary grammaticalization of *go*-futures (cf. Nicolle 2012). However, since the degree of C-gravitation is much lower in Dutch than in English (Wada 2018), further grammaticalization is constrained in Dutch, so that the semantic range of *gaan* is more restricted to the uses with present orientation (original uses). In contrast, due to the higher degree of C-gravitation, grammaticalization in English is not constrained and thus reaches the second stage that allows an expansion of uses (through a generalization of grammatical function), so BGT develops less original, less present-oriented uses, including those corresponding to forms other than *gaan*.

## References

- Beheydt, Griet. 2005. Future time reference in English and Dutch. In Nicole Delbecque, Johan van der Auwera & Dirk Geeraerts (eds.), *Perspectives on variation: Sociolinguistic, historical, comparative*, 251-274. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Haegeman, Liliane. 1983. *Be going to*, *gaan*, and *aller*. Some observations on the expression of future time. *IRAL* 21. 155-157.
- Hilpert, Martin. 2008. *Germanic future constructions: A usage-based approach to language change*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Nicolle, Steve. 2012. Diachrony and grammaticalization. In Robert I. Binnick (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect*, 370-397. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Olmen, Daniël & Tanja Mortelmans. 2009. Movement futures in English and Dutch: A contrastive analysis of *be going to* and *gaan*. In Anastasios Tsangalidis & Roberta Facchinetti (eds.), *Studies on English modality: In honour of Frank Palmer*, 357-386. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Wada, Naoaki. 2013. On the so-called future progressive construction. *English Language and Linguistics* 17. 391-414.
- Wada, Naoaki. 2018. C-gravitation and the grammaticalization degree of “present progressives” in English, French, and Dutch. In Sylvie Hancil, Tine Breban & José Vicente Lozano (eds.), *New trends in grammaticalization and language change*, 207-230. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wada, Naoaki. 2019. *The grammar of future expressions in English*. Tokyo: Kaitakusha.
- Wada, Naoaki. 2022. *Be going to* and *aller*: A temporal structure approach. *Tsukuba English Studies* 40. 171-203.