Go-support in the Québec French futures

Like most Romance languages, French has two forms for expressing future reference: a synthetic construction (1a, 2a) and a periphrastic construction formed with aller ‘go’ (1b, 2b).

1. a. Elle **partira**. ‘She will leave.’
   b. Elle **va** **partir**. ‘She is going to leave.’
2. a. Nous **mangerons** à cinq heures. ‘We will eat at five.’
   b. Nous **allons** **manger** à cinq heures. ‘We are going to eat at five.’

The Romance synthetic future descended from a Latin construction of the form infinitive + habere ‘have’, e.g. partire habeo ‘I will leave’. The lexical verb habere ‘to own’ was reanalysed as a modal auxiliary, syntactic affix and then eventually agreement affix on verb stems already inflected for the future.

Some scholars assume that the Romance synthetic future is synchronically composed of a future stem ending in –r and an agreement affix (e.g. Fleischman, 1982; Oltra-Massuet and Arregi, 2005) and derivationally unrelated to the periphrastic construction. However, there are two striking similarities between the synthetic and periphrastic forms in examples (1, 2). They have the same infinitive-like form of the lexical verb (bolded) as well as the same agreement morphology on the inflected verb (underlined).

**Main claims:** I first argue for the isomorphism of the periphrastic future in Québec French (QF) and the English *woll* future as proposed by Abusch (1985), in (3). Assuming the theory of Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz, 1993), I furthermore propose that the synthetic and periphrastic QF futures are different morphological spell-outs of the same modal head (aller) + infinitive construction, given in (4).

3. \[
\text{TP} \quad \text{TP}
\]
   \[
   \text{T} \quad \text{T}
   \]
   \[
   \text{woll} \quad \text{Mod}
   \]
   \[
   \text{InfP} \quad \text{InfP}
   \]
   \[
   \text{Infinitive} \quad \text{Infinitive}
   \]

I propose that both QF futures are composed of a modal head with feature specification [MODALITY], which takes an infinitival complement and is anchored to [PRESENT] Tense. The lexical infinitive can remain low or raise to T to become a future stem. [MODALITY] is spelled out as the modal verb aller in the absence of a moved lexical verb stem, resulting in an aller + infinitive construction. I show that my analysis of the QF future makes interesting predictions for the conditional, interpreted as [MODALITY] anchored to [PAST].

**Periphrastic future:** Markers of so-called future ‘tense’ are not temporal categories. For example, in Greek, past and non-past time reference is realised morphologically on the lexical verb, but the future is periphrastic: particle *tha* + perfective non-past verb. *Tha* is in complementary distribution with subjunctive particle *na* and optative as rather than tense markers, suggesting that *tha* is a marker of modality rather than tense (Giannakidou, 2012). Abusch (1985) assumes the independence of modality and tense in her analysis of will and would in English. The modal projection *woll* is responsible for future reference and other types of irrealis modality, combining with [PRESENT] T to give will, and with [PAST] to produce would. I propose that QF has a direct correlate of English *woll*: aller, the default spell-out of [MODALITY].

**Two forms, one future:** English also has a go-future. Copley (2001) analyses *be going to* as composed of *woll* (spelled out morphologically as go) nested within a “high aspect” progressive structure ProgP (5):

4. \[
\text{TP} \quad \text{T}
\]
   \[
   \text{ProgP} \quad \text{be -ing}
   \]
   \[
   \text{woll} \quad \text{woll}
   \]
   \[
   \text{InfP} \quad \text{Infinitive}
   \]

Copley shows that while the *woll* future is interpreted as perfective, *be going to* patterns with other progressives in English, hence ProgP. However, there is no evidence that the QF futures have an aspectual distinction; they do not differ in ‘volunteering’ contexts, for example, where (6b) in English sounds bossy:
The synthetic future was historically a ‘have’ + infinitive construction, and the periphrastic + infinitive analysis of the QF futures makes the prediction that the canonical ‘synthetic conditional’ aller to that of the synthetic future, but one in which

A unified aller + infinitive structure: My central claim is that the QF synthetic and periphrastic futures are both spell-outs of the [modality] + infinitive construction established for the periphrastic form (4).

1. Infinitive in the synthetic future: Some scholars assume that the –r in future forms is direct exponent of a future morpheme (e.g. Fleischman, 1982; Oltra-Massuet and Arregi, 2005). However, this suggest that the future (7b) and infinitive (7a) suffixes are homophonous and occur in the same syntactic position.

2. Go-support: The synthetic future was historically a ‘have’ + infinitive construction, and the person/number endings found in the synthetic future remain synchronically identical to those of the present indicative of avoir ‘have’. However, these agreement suffixes are phonologically identical to those of aller ‘go’ in the present (Posner, 1978, 241 fn.5). Therefore it can be said that the synthetic future takes aller inflection, exactly like the periphrastic future, as shown in the underlined portions of (1b, 2b).

3. The difference is movement: In the periphrastic future, the infinitive stays low, so [modality] is spelled out by the verb stem of aller in order to host tense and agreement affixes. In the synthetic future, the infinitival lexical verb moves up through the modal head to T, where it receives agreement. We know from Pollock (1989) that French infinitives may move out of the vP domain; I propose that the infinitive may roll up to T if it adjoins to another verb, in this case aller. In the presence of a lexical stem, the aller foot is silent but must still present in order to condition the correct inflectional morphology, schematised in (8):

(8) [TP partir + 0 + T/Agraller [Modp partir + aller [Infp partir ] ] ]

Extension to the conditional: If we assume the present conditional to have a syntactic structure analogous to that of the synthetic future, but one in which [modality] is anchored to [past] instead of [pres], then my aller + infinitive analysis of the QF futures makes the prediction that the canonical ‘synthetic conditional’ (9a) may also have a periphrastic counterpart (9b). This seems correct, at least for non-counterfactuals.

(9) a. Anna avant dit qu’elle partirait le lendemain.

A have-past say-part that-she leave-cond.3sg the next.day

b. Anna avant dit qu’elle allait partir le lendemain.

A have-past say-part that-she go.past-3sg leave-inf the next.day

‘Anna had said she would/was going to leave the next day.’

Conclusion: This analysis proposed a unified structure for the QF future forms, where aller overtly spells out [modality] when the lexical infinitive stays low, but remains silent when the lexical stem moves up.