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Lexicalization and grammaticalization

The case of the verbo-nominal expressions

be on the/one's way/road

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In this article we show that verbo-nominal expressions *be on the/one's way/road* emerged as lexical composite predicates in Old English. These templates came to be elaborated by directional adjuncts, adjuncts describing states or events, and purpose clauses. In Late Modern English, the structure with a *to*-infinitive was functionally reinterpreted as a secondary auxiliary + lexical head, whose core sense is imminent aspect. On the basis of this case study, we develop a theoretical reflection on the differences between lexicalization and grammaticalization, as they emerge within a functional-constructional approach. On the syntagmatic axis, we adopt Boye & Harder's (2007, 2012) principles for distinguishing lexicalized from grammaticalized uses on the basis of their having primary or secondary status in discourse usage. On the paradigmatic axis, we rethink the neo-Firthian distinction between lexis and grammar in diachronic terms. Individual lexical items are defined by their collocations (Sinclair 1991) and grammatical values by their systemic interdependencies (Halliday 1992). Lexicalization is then characterized by the development of distinctive collocational networks and grammaticalization by the acquisition of the defining interdependencies with values from related grammatical systems.

1. Introduction

Recent studies have recognized the challenge of distinguishing the processes of grammaticalization and lexicalization (e.g. Brinton & Traugott 2005; Diewald & Sirmova 2012; Lehmann 2002; Traugott & Trousdale 2013; Trousdale 2012). The two processes are similar in many respects: both affect syntagms, not just individual items, and both involve some kind of semantic erosion, fusion and fixing of the component elements. The recently increased awareness that it is not so easy to

distinguish grammaticalization from lexicalization seems to have coincided with the ‘constructional’ turn that many studies of language change have taken recently. It has rightly alerted analysts to the fact that both grammaticalization and lexicalization involve the creation of a new conventionalized form-meaning pairing as part of an overarching change in the context in which the new linguistic sign functions (Boye & Harder 2012:35–36).

Construction grammar also strongly emphasizes the point that lexicon and grammar form a gradient where “various types of fully or partially fixed multi-word expressions ... serve as an important link between them” (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003:210). Looked at from a lexical perspective, such multi-word expressions show that lexical patterns may be constituted by collocational relations of varying degrees of fixedness. From the grammatical perspective, it is stressed that grammatical patterns obtain at varying degrees of schematicity (Goldberg 1995), and that there are “significant associations between words and grammatical structure at all levels of abstractness” (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003:210).

Whilst valuing the insight that grammatical structure and lexical patterns interact in many ways, we hold that this interaction is possible precisely because there is “a clear formal and functional distinction between lexical signs on the one hand and grammatical signs on the other” (Diewald 2010:19). Grammatical structures and lexical items also manifest significant associations with words in different ways. Consequently, we will argue in this article that lexicalization and grammaticalization are processes that differ from each other in important ways. In taking this position, we situate ourselves in the semiotically-based tradition of cognitive-functional grammar (e.g. Croft 2000; Halliday 1994; Langacker 1991; McGregor 1997), which is compatible with the historical approaches represented by scholars such as Diewald (2010), Diewald & Smirnova (2012), Boye & Harder (2007, 2012) and Fried (2010).

Grammatical signs are inherently relational, linking one linguistic entity in a schematically meaningful way to another element (Diewald 2010:42). Basic syntagmatic grammatical relations are modification and complementation (Huddleston & Pullum 2002:23–26; Langacker 1987:277–359), which create “layers of grammatical function” (Diewald 2010:42). The meaning of such functional structures is highly abstract and schematic. Furthermore, “syntactic categories, including those commonly labeled with parts of speech, are derivative from the constructions that define them” (Croft 2000:85). The members of grammatical categories are organized into closed-class paradigms that define the value of the members in opposition to each other (Diewald 2010:44).

With a grammatical structure, it is an element within the structure that attracts lexical items. The verbal head of a specific complement-verb structure, for instance, attracts a set of lexical verbs, i.e. a distinct *lexical class* (Halliday 1966). A specific example is the locative construction, which is associated with the lexical

verb class containing *load*, *put*, *spray*, *smear*, etc. (Levin 1993: 51). The members of such sets are attracted to the clausal head in different degrees, which are measured in collostructional analysis (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003). The complements of the verb in a specific clause structure likewise define distinct lexical sets. In locative constructions with content-verbs such as *spray*, *smear*, *spread* and *scatter*, lexical items that realize the Locatum are nouns referring to dispersive substances, such as *water*, *paint*, *cream*, *herbs*, etc. (Laffut & Davidse 2002: 200). The members of lexical classes defined by elements of a grammatical structure are compatible with the meaning of the grammatical construction.

By contrast, a lexical sign is a conventionalized association of a contentful sense with a form at the level of the lexicon. As rightly stressed by Sinclair (1991), lexical meaning does not reside solely in the lexical 'node'. Rather, the semantic structure of a lexical item is determined by its co-selection of specific collocates. The central lexical item, the node, attracts individual collocates with different degrees of strength, irrespective of the various grammatical structures it occurs in. Jones & Sinclair (1973: 39–41) illustrate this point with the noun *time*, whose meaning is reflected in its significant collocates, which include pre-modifying adjectives such as *long*, *short*, quantifiers and determiners such as *all*, *every*, *many*, *some*, a verb like *spend*, and *year*, which occurs in different structures associated with *time*. According to this distributional view of lexical meaning, the collocational environment is diagnostic of the lexical item's meaning. Whether the meaning of one lexical item is similar to that of another, as in the case of near-synonymy, can be determined on the basis of the similarity between the networks, or 'clouds', of collocates associated with these lexical items (De Deyne *et al.* 2009)

Hence, grammaticalization and lexicalization have different outcomes. Lexicalization yields a new association of a form and a specific contentful meaning, which is processed holistically (Lehmann 2002: 13). Grammaticalization creates new (realizations of) structures that have schematic relational meaning (Diewald 2010: 42). To identify the processes of lexicalization and grammaticalization, we follow Boye & Harder's (2007, 2012) approach, which associates primary discourse status with lexicalized uses and secondary discourse status with grammaticalized uses. We will also argue that they involve different types of paradigmatic organization. For this, we take our inspiration from the neo-Firthian tradition (Firth 1951/1957; Halliday 1992; Sinclair 1991). A lexicalizing item can be seen to build up its specific, meaning-defining network of collocates. Grammaticalizing elements come to express general meaning options within grammatical systems.

We will make our case with the distinct uses that developed from *be on* followed by the nouns *way* or *road*. (*Be on the/one's way/road (to)* can currently be used either as a composite predicate designating 'motion' or as an auxiliary whose core sense is 'imminent' aspect. These syntagms have thus acquired both

new lexical and new grammatical uses. In recent discussions aiming at delineating lexicalization more precisely from grammaticalization, ‘composite predicates’ actually figure as one of the moot cases with regard to the question of which of the two processes is involved in them (e.g. Brinton & Traugott 2005; Trousdale 2012). In examining the diachrony and synchrony of the different uses of (*be*) *on the/one’s way/road (to)*, our aim is to identify the different properties of grammaticalization and lexicalization, as instantiated by these periphrastic expressions.

This article is structured as follows. In Section 2, we present the case study. In Section 3, we survey the literature on composite predicates (3.1) and secondary auxiliaries (3.2), and we discuss whether composite predicates are viewed more profitably as resulting from grammaticalization or from lexicalization (3.3). In Section 4, we reconstruct the diachronic development of the different uses, applying mainly *syntagmatic* recognition criteria to distinguish lexicalized from grammaticalized uses. In Section 5, we use a set of synchronic corpus data to investigate the synchronic state that the historical paths have led to. This description aims to illuminate the distinct *paradigmatic* properties of lexicalization and grammaticalization. In Section 6, we offer theoretical reflections and conclusions.

2. The case study: (*be*) *on the/one’s way/road (to)*

In Present-day English, the strings (*be*) *on the/one’s way/road (to)* can be used as a lexical verb, as illustrated by (1–5), or as an auxiliary, e.g. (6–7), as shown by the recognition tests developed by Boye & Harder (2007, 2012).

- (1) MORE than 2,000 Royal Marines will soon *be on the way to the Iraqi hotspot town of Najaf* ... (CB)
- (2) A little after eight the next morning, Tanya Domie and Alan Stevens *are on their way to do yet another talk-radio show* ... (CB)
- (3) But Heinz’s Steve Marinker — *on his way to the hotel in La Baule, Brittany* — said: “Beans are a fantastic source of protein and fibre ...” (CB)
- (4) As I drove I picked up the phone and called Marcus. “I’m *on my way*”. (CB)
- (5) Toddle off back to Victoria ... *On your way, amigo*. (OED, 1974 Yuill *Bornless Keeper*)
- (6) The government is due to run out of money again at midnight tonight, but the White House says that if the conferees *are on their way to agreeing to a budget compromise*, the president will sign another stop-gap spending measure to fund government for a few more days. (CB)

- (7) Now she [Janet Jackson] could *be on her way to becoming the richest Jackson*,
... (CB)

Boye & Harder start from the observation that information given in discourse may be the primary predication, i.e. the most important information of an utterance, or a secondary predication, which serves only to support the primary one.¹ Grammatical elements, they argue, can be recognized by their coded secondariness, while lexical items can be identified by their primariness. The crucial criterion to distinguish lexical from grammatical elements is ‘addressability’, which can be operationalized in linguistic tests such as *really*-queries and tags (Boye & Harder 2007: 581–585). The *really*-query shows that examples (1–5) contain lexical(ized) uses of *be on the way (to)* and examples (6–7) grammatical(ized) uses. Example (2), for instance, can be queried as *Are they really on the way?*, which shows that *be on their way* is part of the primary, lexical material. By contrast, (6) is more naturally queried as *Are they really on their way to agreeing to a budget compromise?* One has to include *agreeing to a budget compromise* because it constitutes the crucial lexical material that the clause is about. The unit *are on their way* is not addressable in its own right, which shows that it is a grammatical modifier, ‘secondary’ to the lexical material.

As to the functions that *be on the way (to)* fulfils *within* the VP, we see that the unit is a semantic head in (1–5) and a modifier in (6–7) (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1210). In (1–5), *be on the way* can be replaced by simple lexical predicates designating motion, e.g. ‘will be travelling’ in (1) or ‘leave’ in (5). We propose that in these examples *be on the/one’s way* is used as a *composite lexical predicate* (Brinton & Akimoto 1999) conveying ‘directed motion’.

The composite predicate may be followed by a complement which indicates the specific spatial direction or goal of the ‘motion’ conveyed by the predicate, e.g. *to the Iraqi hotspot town of Najaf* in (1). We find the same semantically motivated relation between composite predicate and complement (Langacker 1987: 227ff) in (3) between *on his way* and *to the hotel in La Baule*, where *be* is omitted.

The composite predicate may also be followed by a clause indicating the purpose of the directed motion, as in (2), *to do yet another talk-radio show*. The purpose clause in (2) elaborates the ‘directed motion’ meaning of the composite predicate in a similar way as the spatial adjunct, as it indicates an abstract ‘goal’.

In these two constructional patterns, (*be*) *on the/one’s way* has a telic meaning component, that is, it describes a situation with a natural or inherent point of completion (Declerck *et al.* 2006: 62). It also has a dynamic and durative meaning

1. This is why, in functional approaches, grammatical elements are typically conceptualized as modifiers or operators, as in e.g. McGregor (1997) and Hengeveld (1989).

component, designating actions that are “continually subject to a new input of energy” (Comrie 1976: 49). These features characterize the *Aktionsart* or lexical aspect of the predicate or the “abstract situation-template” (Declerck *et al.* 2006: 40), which comprises the lexical verb and its complements but excludes the subject and the grammatical markers of the VP.

Finally, there are also occurrences in which the predicate (*be*) *on one’s way* is used without being elaborated by further elements. In (4), its lexical aspect is telic-durative, as in (1–3), but in (5), where it can be paraphrased as ‘leave and go (now)’, the *Aktionsart* is punctual, i.e. it designates a momentary change (Comrie 1976: 42).

In (6) and (7) the unit (*be*) *on their/her way to* (which, unlike the lexical predicate incorporates *to*) functions as a *secondary auxiliary* in the VP (Halliday 1994: 197ff ; Langacker 1991: 194ff). In contrast with primary auxiliaries such as *must* and *should*, secondary auxiliaries require morphological tense marking, as in (6), or a primary auxiliary, as in (7), to make the VP finite. The secondary auxiliaries in (6–7) express grammatical aspect, i.e. the “internal temporal constituency” (Comrie 1976: 3), of the predicates that follow them, as shown by the possibility of substituting them with more established aspectual auxiliaries. The ones that provide the closest semantic equivalence are imminence markers such as *be on the point of*, *be about to* (e.g. Declerck 1991: 157) e.g. *are about to agree* (6) and *could be on the point of becoming* (7). Imminence markers depict “the temporal phase located close before the initial boundary of the situation” (Heine 1994: 4–5).

To grasp the precise aspectual semantics of (*be*) *on the/one’s way to*, we have to relate it to the lexical aspect of the whole predicate it patterns with. Imminence markers are found particularly in combination with transitional predicates, which describe a sudden transition from one state into another (Declerck *et al.* 2006: 59–60), as in (6) and (7). *Agreeing to a budget compromise* marks an abrupt change from disagreement to agreement, and *becoming the richest Jackson* happens at the specific moment when the capital of Janet Jackson outstrips that of the others. The imminence aspect construed for these situations by (*be*) *on the/one’s way to* designates the “preparatory phase leading up to ... the transition” (Declerck *et al.* 2006: 60). Neither the agreement nor Janet becoming the richest Jackson have happened yet, but the stages focused on are expected to lead to these events.

Given the importance of lexical aspect to this study, we offer an overview here of the typology of *Aktionsart* that we will work with (Van Rompaey 2014). Table 1 sums up the parameters that will be distinguished, viz. dynamicity, durativity, transitionality and telicity. This typology adopts the key notions from the literature on

Table 1. Overview of lexical aspectual properties (based on Declerck et al. 2006: 49–71)

Aspectual feature	Values	Examples abstract situation-template
dynamicity	[+ dynamic] or [– stative]	<i>knock on the door, tell the story</i>
	[– dynamic] or [+ stative]	<i>be sick, be kind</i>
durativity	[+ durative] or [– punctual]	<i>tell the story, save lives</i>
	[– durative] or [+ punctual]	<i>knock on the door, choose</i>
transitionality	[+ transitional]	<i>choose, die</i>
	[– transitional]	<i>tell the story, knock on the door</i>
telicity	[+ telic]	<i>bake a pie, tell the story</i>
	[– telic] (or atelic)	<i>keep secrets, save lives</i>

Aktionsart as conceptualized by Declerck et al. (2006).² Their inventory of binary lexical aspect features is primarily rooted in the work of Brinton (1988), Comrie (1976), Dowty (1979), Smith (1991) and Vendler (1957).

Dynamic situation types such as *tell the story* or *fall down* involve some kind of change, motion or activity, fueled by a source of energy (Comrie 1976: 49). With the exception of punctual dynamic situations, dynamic predicates can usually be decomposed into “successive phases following one another in time” (Vendler 1957: 144), “each of which is considered as being slightly different from the previous stage” (Declerck et al. 2006: 51). Non-dynamic, or stative, situation types such as *be sick* are unchanging and consist of stages that cannot be differentiated. States are not set in motion by a sustaining force or other instigator and are by definition non-agentive.

Durativity is seen as the feature that distinguishes between durative and punctual situation types within the category of dynamic predicates. With Declerck et al. (2006: 70), we will reserve the feature [+ durative] for situation types that are also dynamic, i.e. that consist of distinguishable phases. Punctual situation types designate a momentary (Declerck et al. 2006: 57) situation “that does not last in time” (Comrie 1976: 42). Examples such as *knock on the door* or *choose a president* do refer to a changing situation, but they consist of only one instantaneous phase rather than multiple phases. Strictly speaking, their referents in the world may have a short duration. In language, however, they are conceptualized as having “no duration” (Comrie 1976: 43).

Transitional situations (Declerck et al. 2006: 59–60) constitute a subtype of punctual situations and refer to a sudden transition from one state to another.

2. Three of Declerck et al.’s (2006) notions have not been included because they add finer dimensions to the characterization of situation types, but are not relevant to the basic classification of situation types in this study, viz. homogeneity, evolvment and agentivity.

Examples such as *die* or *win a race* convey transitions that result in a new “consequent” state (Moens & Steedman 1988: 17–18; Verkuyl 2005: 26).

Telic situation types have an “inner limit” (Maslov 1985: 6) or an “inherent point of completion” (Declerck *et al.* 2006: 60). A telic situation type such as *read the book* or *bake a pie* denotes a dynamic situation that tends towards a natural endpoint.

The present analysis of the aspectual use of *(be) on the/one’s road/way to* differs from the one proposed in Petré, Davidse & Van Rompaey (2012). In our earlier analysis we characterized them as ‘telic progressive’. We had assumed too readily that the components of ‘telicity’ and ‘durativity’ from the lexical predicates persisted in the semantics of the auxiliaries. However, on further reflection, the auxiliary uses illustrated in (6) and (7) do not construe the transitional predications as ‘ongoing’. Example (7), for instance does not mean that Janet Jackson is already in the state of ‘being the richest Jackson’ and is going through further stages of gradually increasing the value of ‘the richest in the Jackson clan’, which is what a progressive reading would entail. As we will see in Section 5, in a few cases, auxiliaries *(be) on the/one’s road/way to* do have progressive meaning, but this is not their core sense. There is thus no straightforward ‘semantic persistence’ (Hopper 1991) between the lexical predicate and the aspectual auxiliary. Rather, the diachronic relation between the two is one of semantic reorganization, which we will examine in Section 4.

In addition to a refinement of the aspectual analysis, which entails looking at the lexical aspect types of the predicates following the auxiliary uses, the current article also differs in theoretical focus. In Petré, Davidse & Van Rompaey (2012), attention was drawn to the unexpected retention of nominal properties of the head noun *way/road*, in the constructionist spirit that constructions may be grammatical without complying to the traditional characteristics of grammatical categories (Goldberg 1995). In *on one’s way*, the possessive, instead of being lost, was functionally reinterpreted as reinforcing the association between the subject and its being in motion along a path. The frequent collocations of *on one’s way* and *on the road* with their respective structures were argued to show signs of emergent specialization and paradigmaticization. In the current article, the focus is on distinguishing lexicalization from grammaticalization on the basis of paradigmatic properties. The argument is developed diachronically, whereas the analysis in the earlier article was based on synchronic data only.

3. Composite predicates and secondary auxiliaries: State of the art

3.1 Form and function of composite predicates

All characterizations of composite predicates in the literature have pointed out the ‘light’ or ‘delexical’ semantics of the verb and the nominalized or action noun status of the nominal element (e.g. Brinton & Akimoto 1999; Sinclair 1991). As pointed out by Ronan (2014: 18), the greatest barrier to a uniform delineation lies in the lack of agreement on which verbs and action nominals are members of the composite predicate class. Claridge (2000: 38, 110) is one of the few authors to discuss the template of light verb + preposition phrase, which she illustrates with such expressions as *be/fall in love*, *set/be on fire*, *be at an end*, and which also subsumes *be on the/one’s way/road*.

The derivation of composite predicates is agreed to be idiosyncratic, because it is not clear why some action nouns can occur in them and others not (Sapir 1949: 114–115). A number of authors argue for analyzing the internal structure of composite predicates up to the degree of compositionality that is discernible, while acknowledging that some may have meanings “not predictable from their individual components” (Ronan 2014: 19). ‘Light’ as the meaning of the verb may be, we still view it as more than “an insignificant verb, to which the marks of person and tense are attached” (Jespersen 1956: VI, 117–118). The meaning and valency potential of the light verb typically sanction the phrase types they take. In the hitherto neglected composite predicates with *be*, its meaning of ‘being located at’ (Halliday 1994: 135) sanctions elaboration by preposition phrases, rather than by the object-like NPs elaborating *give*, *take* and *have* (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 753).

The internal structure of the NP or PrepP has also been observed to contribute to the semantics of the composite predicate. An important distinction is whether there is simply a noun or whether the nominalized action is coded with the elements of NP-structure. For instance, while a verb such as *walk* depicts a continuous non-bounded activity, the zero-suffixed nominalization in *take a walk* excerpts a bounded stretch of the activity, and perspectivizes the situation as an accomplishment or an achievement (Brinton 1995: 35). Brinton & Traugott (2005: 130) hold that it was only with the development of the article system in Middle English that composite predicates acquired the ability to express “individuated, countable situations” in contrast with simple predicates. We can note here that quantifiers and numerals also affect the *Aktionsart* of the composite predicate, making it, for instance, durative, as in *take a few breaths*, or telic, as in *take two baths* (Verkuyl 2005).

3.2 Form and function of secondary auxiliaries

As noted by Langacker (1991: 194ff), the specific functional-structural characteristics of secondary auxiliaries have not received much attention because of the tradition in linguistics that contrasts lexical verbs with auxiliaries *per se*. This has deflected attention from the fundamental contrasts between primary, deictic auxiliaries and secondary, non-deictic ones. English primary auxiliaries such as *must*, *should*, *ought* make the clause finite and give it a *reference point* in the here-and-now of the speech event (Halliday 1994: 197ff). Secondary auxiliaries can also occur in non-finite VPs, which may drop the verbs *have* or *be* (Halliday 1994: 204). Semantically, secondary auxiliaries express non-deictic notions such as relative tense, non-grounding modality, or aspect, as in the cases studied here.

As observed by Hopper (1991), periphrastic secondary auxiliaries, many expressing aspect, have increased exponentially in the history of English. Reference grammars tend to include only well-established cases, e.g. *be allowed to*, on an ad hoc basis. Under the heading of imminential aspect, Declerck (1991) includes *be going to*, *be about to/on the point of* while Huddleston & Pullum (2002) discuss *be (just) going to*, *be about to*. However, Navalpotro-Gómez (2000) also identifies *be on the verge/brink of* as markers of imminence, and Van Rompaey (2014) argues that imminence can be expressed too by *be in the process of*. This study adds *be on the/one's road/way* to this list.

3.3 Composite predicates: Lexicalization or grammaticalization?

There is no controversy in the literature about the status of secondary auxiliaries: they code grammatical meaning, and their recruitment from lexical sources constitutes grammaticalization. By contrast, composite predicates figure as one of the moot cases in recent discussions about lexicalization and grammaticalization.

Brinton & Traugott (2005: 130–132) were amongst the first to note that composite predicates come in two different basic types exemplified by *lose sight of* and *give an answer* respectively. If considered as individual units, and taking “lexicalization to be ‘adoption in the lexicon’, then the development of all composite predicates would appear to be a case of lexicalization” (2005: 131). However, they claim, this misses an important distinction between the two basic types, which they correlate with lexical versus grammatical status. The type exemplified by *lose sight of* is non-productive, very fixed, semantically idiomatized and non-compositional. This type can be viewed as lexicalization proper. By contrast, the light verb type illustrated by *give an answer*, *take a look* or *make a promise* is productive in the sense that its template sanctions many lexical types (e.g. *give a response*, *take a walk* or *make a fuss*). In his discussion of composite predicates, Trousdale (2012) assumes

a similar position: he holds that, because of its relatively high productivity, the *give an answer* type constitutes grammaticalization, or grammatical constructionalization, which is characterized as involving an increase in generality, with the constructional schema licensing an increasing number of micro-constructional types, and an increase in productivity in the sense of token frequency (2012: 170).

Another argument in favour of the grammatical status of composite predicates of the *give an answer* type is that they can be thought of as phrasal constructions in which the NP has undergone decategorialization and the verb, which might “conceivably one day come to be a grammatical (derivational) prefix not unlike *be-*”, has taken on “a clearly identifiable grammatical (i.e. aspectual or dynamic/stative) function” (Brinton & Traugott 2005: 131). In *have a walk* or *take a shower*, *have* expresses stative meaning while *give* and *take* express dynamic meaning. Since it “involves the coding of particular kinds of aspectual meaning” (Trousdale 2012: 188), the *have a walk* type is better viewed as grammaticalization, as both Brinton & Traugott (2005) and Trousdale (2012) conclude.

In Traugott & Trousdale (2013: Ch.4), lexicalization, or lexical constructionalization, is rethought as the process leading not only to idiosyncratic units, but also to lexical schemas. They argue that Trousdale’s (2012) criteria for lexicalization, viz. decrease in productivity and decrease in generality, correctly pin down the fossilization process involved in *lexical reduction*, which yields, for instance, the non-productive, phonologically atomic and semantically opaque construction *despicable* (‘ought to be despised’). New constructions, however, can also result from *lexical expansion*, where the outcome is a contentful but schematic and possibly productive entry in the lexicon. The examples par excellence of such contentful schemas are found in productive derivational word-formation, e.g. the development of *workable*, *washable*, *skypable* (meaning ‘can be V-ed’) and so on (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: Ch.4).

While Traugott & Trousdale illustrate lexical expansion mainly with examples involving morphological change, this wider perspective on lexicalization also applies, in our view, to the development of the productive types of composite predicates. The contrast between the non-productive *lose sight of* type and the productive *give an answer* type boils down to the distinction between lexical reduction and lexical expansion as described in Traugott & Trousdale (2013). More specifically, we propose to consider the composite predicates *be on the/one’s way/road*, like *give an answer*, as lexical idioms that keep a certain degree of analyzability. In this light, we would like to address some of the issues raised by the earlier treatment of composite predicates as grammatical units (Brinton & Traugott 2005; Trousdale 2012).

Firstly, the main semantic argument for claiming grammatical status for some types of composite predicates is that they code ‘aspectual’ meanings. However, as noted in Section 3.1, the aspectual meanings put forth in this context have a

long-standing association with *Aktionsart* or lexical aspect in the linguistic tradition (Comrie 1976:41–51; Vendler 1957:97–121), viz. telicity, durativity versus punctuality, dynamicity as opposed to stativity. These features have always been viewed as capturing the semantic properties of the ‘abstract situation-template’ (Declerck *et al.* 2006:40), which, as noted by Moens & Steedman (1988:20), is a “type assigned in the lexicon”. When we considered the aspectual meanings of composite predicates *be on the/one’s way/road*, illustrated in (1–5) in Section 2, we stated them in terms of lexical aspect. Many current uses are telic-durative, but some are punctual, such as the imperative *On your way* (‘go’, ‘leave’) in (5). Its non-durative nature is shown by the impossibility of using it with *stop*: **stop being on your way* (Dik 1989:95). The fact that some meanings of the composite predicate are punctual also thwarts attempts to systematize their aspectual meaning in grammatical terms such as progressive aspect. A progressive alternate with a simple predicate such as *go* is possible for many examples, e.g. (1) *Royal Marines will soon be on the way*: : *be going to ... Najaf*, (4) *I’m on my way*: : *I’m coming*. However, no progressive paraphrase³ is possible for an example such as (5): *On your way*: : **Be going*. This shows that the composite predicate cannot be viewed as a systematic marker of progressive aspect. In view of all the arguments given above, we view *be on the/one’s way/road* as polysemous lexical items, whose different, but related, meanings convey different types of lexical rather than grammatical aspect.

Secondly, a number of observations about the internal structure of these composite predicates point at lexicalization, rather than grammaticalization. The action noun may take descriptive modifiers, as in *take another quick look*, *have a game of cards* (Halliday 1994:146–9), which clearly add to the lexical material of the predication. This suggests that composite predicates are *semi-fixed, variable idioms* that are analysable up to a certain degree, as noted by Langacker (1999:344) and Sinclair (1991). At the same time, various co-selection relations and restrictions obtain between their elements (Sinclair 1991:110–114), e.g. between light verb and NP in *get/take/have a look* but not **make a look*, *make a choice* but not **take a choice* or *take/have a bath* but not **make/get a bath*, between determiner and action noun, e.g. *get some rest* but not **have some play*, and between action noun and descriptive modifiers, e.g. *have a game of cards/tennis* but not **have a play of cards/tennis*. All these collocational relations internal to the variable idioms have to be stored individually by the language user. This puts them in the lexicon rather than in the grammar, and shows, in our view, the processes leading to them to be predominantly lexicalization.

3. With other uses of composite predicate *be on the/one’s way* discussed further on, no progressive alternate is possible either, e.g. (14) *He thought to be well on his way* (‘to have well progressed’).

4. Diachronic development

4.1 Introduction

In this section, we will survey how the verbo-nominal expressions *(be) on the/one's way/road* developed. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) the first attestation of *way* is dated c725 and that of *road* c888. The first attestations of verbo-nominal expressions with these nouns, *beon on wege* and *beon on rade*, also date back to Old English with first attestations around 1000 and 1050 respectively. We will reconstruct the development of their composite predicate and auxiliary uses on the basis of the relevant entries and citations in the OED.

We compiled datasets with the quotations containing *(be) on (the/my/your/his/her/our/their) way*, with the spelling variants *wege*, *weg*, *wei*, *wai*, *wey*, *waye*, *weye* (936 hits) and *(be) on (the/my/your/his/her/our/their)road*, taking into account the spelling variants *rade*, *rode*, *rad*, *rod*, *rood*, *roode* (97 hits). OED entries are reputed for picking up early variants of all the lexicogrammatical patterns associated with a lexical item.

The majority of the OED citations contained lexical uses of *way* and *road* referring to actual paths leading somewhere, as in

- (8) The hillsides *on the road to Bethel* were covered with the most lovely spring flowers (OED, 1867 M.E. Herbert *Cradle Lands*).

However, these did not form the source of the verbo-nominal expressions, which immediately started off with action noun uses of *way* and *road*.

About three centuries after the first attestations of the noun *way* referring to a spatial, concrete entity, *beon on wege* emerged as a composite predicate. The gloss in the relevant OED entry shows that *wege* is an action noun here: 'on, or in the course of, a journey' (OED, *way* III, 36a). If we apply addressability tests to an example such as (9), e.g. *Are you really on the way?*, we see that they give primary lexical information. We therefore view the process that led to this composite predicate as *lexicalization*. It involved conventionalization of the expression *beon* + prepositional phrase *on wege*, which as a whole came to function as the head of the VP. The predicate emerged with durative meaning, as shown by the context of its first attestation (9), an adverbial time clause introduced by *þa hwile þe* ('the while that').

- (9) Beo þu onbugende þinum wiðerwinnan hraðe þa hwile þe ðu *eart on wege* mid him. (OED, c1000 *West Saxon Gospels: Matt.*)
'Be yielding to your adversary while you are under way with him.'

Half a century later, we find a number of parallel examples of *beon on rade*. *Rade* in (10–11) clearly designates an action, viz. that of ‘riding on horseback’ (OED, *road*, I 1a). Its durative meaning is explicitly reflected by the second gloss in the OED, *road*, I 1a, ‘a period of riding’. (The meaning ‘path or way between different places’ (OED III, 4a) of *road* appeared only towards the end of the 16th century.) The internal composition and external function of *beon on rade* are wholly parallel to those of *beon on wege*, which leads us to view the emergence of this composite predicate also as a case of lexicalization.

- (10) ... ðonne hio *on rade wæs*. (OED, 1050 *St. Mildred*)
 ‘... when she was on riding.’
- (11) Þonne he *on rade wæs*, ... (OED, c1175 *Homily: Hist. Holy Rood-tree*)
 ‘When he was on riding, ...’

After these more or less simultaneous beginnings, it was *be on (the/one’s) way* that developed the greatest token frequency and also amplified and diversified its network of structures and meanings most. This is reflected by the fact that it is given a separate entry in the OED, whereas *be on (the/one’s) road* is not.

4.2 *Be on (the/one’s) way*

The pattern of the composite predicate with *way* to be attested next in the OED quotations, c1400, is *to be well on one’s way*, in which the possessive determiner refers to the subject that is in motion. The OED glosses its meaning as ‘to have fairly started, or to have made some progress’. The adverb *well* implies that the subject is already at some more advanced stage, i.e. closer to an implied endpoint, and adds a telic component to the lexical aspect of the predicate.

- (12) He thought *to be wele on hys way* ... (OED, c1400 *Ywaine & Gaw.*)
 ‘He thought to be well on his way...’

In the beginning of the 16th century, *be on the/one’s way* in its telic-durative sense is found with predication adjuncts (Quirk *et al.* 1985: Ch. 8) which explicitly express the endpoint, as in (13) and (14).

- (13) Trusting that the gonners [‘soldiers who operate a gun’] *be well on the waye hiderwards*. (OED, 1523 Surrey in Ellis *Orig. Lett. Eng. Hist.*)
- (14) You should haue *bin well on your way to Yorke*. (OED, 1600 Shakespeare *Henry IV*)

Three centuries later *be on the/one’s way* started patterning with purpose clauses expressing the more abstract endpoint of the subject’s directed motion, which

enabled the grammaticalization into semi-auxiliary *be on one's way*. Directional-purposive sentences with *be on the/one's way* seem to have followed the same path of change as the well-known example *be going to*. The natural inference of intention of future action (Hopper & Traugott 2003:2) in directional-purposive bi-clausal constructions is generally assumed to have led to the reanalysis of lexical *be going + to* (Hopper & Traugott 2003:63–64) into semi-auxiliary *be going to + lexical head*. With directional-purposive sentences containing *be on the/one's way*, we first find ‘untypical’ lexical constructions (Diewald 2002) such as (15–16), in which *(be) on one's way* expresses directed motion followed by a purpose clause, but which also clearly invite the inference of intended future action. The “expansion” (Diewald 2002:116) to such new contexts is the first step in the process of change.

- (15) Along with these was a pedestrian, who ... *was ... on his way to hear and to decide the disputes of his neighbours as a petit juror*. (OED, 1823 Cooper *Pioneers*)
- (16) He ... *was on his way to report himself at head-quarters*, in the hopes of being reinstated in the service. (OED, 1837 Irving *Capt. Bonneville*)

Next came ‘isolating’ contexts (Diewald 2002) such as (17), in which *was on the way* describes only past, and non-realized, future intention. (Note that this particular context with fronted object of the verb *visit* rules out a motion meaning of *be on the way*, as shown by the impossibility of replacing it with a lexical motion verb such as *travel*: **How many of the friends I was travelling to visit are no more seen*.) The earlier bi-clausal structure of directional clause + *to*-infinitive of purpose has been reanalysed as a single clause containing a complex VP and the spatial direction meaning is “excluded” (Diewald 2002:114) or at least highly marked. This VP has *visit* as lexical head, and *was on my way to* has a grammatical modal-temporal meaning, paraphrasable as ‘was going to’. It refers to the future relative to a deictic past.

- (17) How many of the friends I *was on my way to visit* are no more seen! (1860 Warter *Sea-board & Down*)

At around the same time of the first reanalysis, the syntagm *(be) on the way + to*-infinitive, which had been made available by bi-clausal constructions such as (15–16), underwent a second, different, reanalysis illustrated by (18). In this example *(be) on the way + to*-infinitive adds a modification with the meaning ‘almost’ to the following lexical verb. We propose that *(be) on the way* has the value of degree modification in this pattern, because it changes the degree of the predication ascribed to the subject by copular verbs *become* or *be*, and can be glossed as ‘almost

become/be'. For instance, in (18) negative or washed blondes are ascribed the quality of being 'almost albinesses'.⁴

- (18) There are two kinds of poets, just as there are two kinds of blondes. ... Why, there are blondes who are such simply by deficiency of coloring matter — negative or washed blondes, arrested by Nature *on the way to become albinesses*. (OED, 1858 Holmes *Autocrat of Breakfast-table*)

The complex VP pattern in which (*be*) *on the way* modifies the degree of a qualitative predicate then shifted into a VP in which (*be*) *on the way* triggers an interpretation of the following predicate as transitional and conveys that this transition is imminent. A number of attestations like (19) occur, which can be viewed as bridging contexts (Evans & Wilkins 2000): (19) can mean that the jodhpurs are 'almost' world-famous or that they are in the stage preceding the transition to world-fame, because world fame is something that is acquired over time. The pragmatic inference motivating the extension from degree modified predication to imminential aspect is an obvious one: if something almost has a certain quality, it can often be thought of as being in the temporal stage preceding the acquisition of that quality. Adding a temporal dimension to a qualitative difference, as in the imminential reading of (19), implies taking a specific aspectual viewpoint on the "internal ... constituency" (Comrie 1976: 3) or flow of the situation.

- (19) The Jodhpur riding-breeches ... *are on the way to be world-famous*. (OED, 1899 Steevens *In India*)

In the same period, isolating contexts occur in which the imminence reading is the only one. Most of these examples combine with intrinsically transitional predicates, which describe the transition from one state into another, e.g. *cease to be a nation at all* (20), *become a monopoly* (21). Some examples, like (22), have a stative predicate on which the imminential auxiliary imposes a transitional reading: it turns the state into the standard to be reached after the transition (for further discussion, see Section 5).

- (20) A nation with whom sentiment is nothing *is on the way to cease to be a nation at all*. (OED, 1886 Froude *Oceana*)
- (21) ... a manufacture that may *well be on the way to become a monopoly*. (OED, 1903 James *Ambassadors*)

4. This degree modifying use of *be on the way* is also found with nominal predicates, as in *Symbolism that is far on the way towards Expressionism*. (OED, 1923 MacGowan & Jones *Stagecraft*), which means 'Symbolism that is almost Expressionism'.

- (22) ... you were well on the way to being a big executive ... (OED, 1953 Gordimer *Lying Days*)

Example (22) has the gerund, rather than the infinitive, which has become the more common coding of the lexical verb with imminent *be on the/one's way to* in Present-day English. We did not find any clear factors in the data explaining this formal shift, but would like to venture that partial analogy (De Smet 2009) with a semantically similar construction with nominal complement may have played a role. In the late 19th century data, the construction emerges in which *(be) on the/one's way to* is complemented by a noun designating a state or an event. This lexical metaphorical pattern can express a telic-durative process, as in (23), which describes multiple phases, each different from the previous one, leading to the final phase, *the return unto the self*. Other instances share even more clearly meaning features with imminence, e.g. (24), in which Communism is represented as not yet 'having' *world-power*. Because of the partial formal and semantic similarities, the nominal coding of the complements in examples such as (23–24) may have been a factor in the imminent auxiliary taking the more nominal gerund form.

- (23) The successive stages ... *on the way through self-diremption to the return unto self*. (OED, 1876 *Contemp.Rev.*)
- (24) Communism is well on the way to *world-power*, ... (OED, 1931 Porter *Let. Feb.* 11)

Table 2. Lexicalized and grammaticalized construction types of *(be) on the/one's way (to)*: diachrony (based on OED data)

	composite predicate	composite predicate + directional adjunct	composite predicate + <i>to</i> -infinitive of purpose	composite predicate + <i>to</i> + state/ event noun	secondary auxiliary + <i>to</i> -infinitive	secondary auxiliary + <i>to</i> + gerund
750–1150	n = 5 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1150–1500	n = 4 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1500–1710	n = 24 80%	n = 6 20%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1710–1920	n = 56 24.24%	n = 149 64.50%	n = 10 4.33%	n = 8 3.46%	n = 5 2.16%	n = 3 1.29%
1920- present	n = 70 21.28%	n = 204 62.01%	n = 16 4.86%	n = 23 6.99%	n = 2 0.61%	n = 14 4.26%

By way of conclusion, the absolute numbers in Table 2 visualize the emergence of composite predicates with directional adjuncts in Early Modern English, and with *to*-infinitives of purpose and state/event nouns in Late Modern English. This is also when we find the first instances of the grammaticalized patterns with *to*-infinitive and *to* + gerund in our dataset, with the latter becoming more frequent in Present-day English.

4.3 *Be on (the/one's) road*

After the early attestations of *beon on rade* (10–11) in the 11th century, the action noun use of *road* is found mainly as a cognate object of *to ride*, e.g. (25) (OED, *road* I, 1a), or as the noun in the composite predicate *make road*, e.g. (26) (OED, *road* I, 1b).

(25) wan he *hadde riden þat rode* (OED, c1300 *Body & Soul*)

(26) Borderers, whan they *make rodes* into Scotlande. (OED, 1523 Berners tr. Froissart *Cronycles*)

The composite predicate *be on the road* with durative meaning as in (27) resurfaces in the middle of the 17th century. This development was facilitated by the emergence and increasing use of the noun *road* with concrete, spatial sense ‘a path or way ... leading to some place’ (OED, *road* III, 4b). It lent *road* in the composite predicate a more spatial flavour than the action noun sense in the earlier uses.

(27) In this same land as I *was on the rode*, A nimble traveller me overtook. (OED, 1642 More *Ψυχωδία Platonica*)

A century later, *be on the/one's road* with telic-durative *Aktionsart* is attested complemented by an adjunct, e.g. (28). Not much later it also appears followed by an infinitive of purpose, as in (29).

(28) He *was*, at that instant, actually *on his road to London*. (OED, 1749 Cleland *Mem. Woman of Pleasure*)

(29) ... within two days march, the Outawas, and some remoter nations, *are on the road to join us*. (OED, 1777 Anburey *Let. 17 July Trav. Amer.*)

At around the same time, the telic-durative composite predicate started occurring with nominal complements describing states, e.g. *infidelity*, *immortality*, *austerity* or punctual events, e.g. *discovery* or *recovery* (30). The frequent collocation (*be*) *on the road to recovery* probably helped entrench this pattern.

- (30) After remaining speechless four hours, V — J — revived, and *is now on the road of recovery*. (OED, 1788 Familiar Lett.)

Thus, *be on the/one's road* occurred from the late 18th century on in a pattern (+ *to*-infinitive) that formally lent itself to reanalysis and in another pattern (+ event/state noun) that was semantically analogous to an aspectual construction. Yet, and even though these potential precursors predated those of *be on the/one's way*, they did not, in contrast with the latter, grammaticalize quickly into aspectual auxiliaries. The lower token frequency of *be on the road* may have been a factor in this.

The first OED attestation in which *be on the/one's road* is implemented in a VP expressing imminent aspect occurs in the second half of the 20th century (31). Its emergence was probably the result of analogization with the by then well entrenched imminence auxiliary *be on the/one's way* + gerund. That is, it did not itself engage “in gradual grammaticalization processes” but “grammaticalized by analogy with a frequent model that did grammaticalize gradually, the grammaticalized behaviour of which [it] ‘copied’” (Brems 2007:317; see also Hoffmann 2004; Noël 2007).

- (31) *Intelsat is already on the road to becoming a profit-making venture by 1970*. (OED, 1966 *Aviation Week*)

Table 3 represents the absolute figures with which the constructional patterns with *road* are instantiated in the dataset.

Table 3. Lexicalized and grammaticalized construction types of *(be) on the/one's road (to)*: diachrony (based on OED data)

	composite predicate	composite predicate + directional adjunct	composite predicate + <i>to</i> -infinitive of purpose	composite predicate + <i>to</i> + state/ event noun	secondary auxiliary + <i>to</i> -infinitive	secondary auxiliary + <i>to</i> + gerund
750–1150	n = 1 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1150–1500	n = 2 100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1500–1710	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1710–1920	0%	n = 8 50%	n = 2 12.50%	n = 6 37.50%	0%	0%
1920- present	0%	n = 5 55.55%	0%	n = 3 33.33%	0%	n = 1 11.11%

5. Synchronic state

In this section we will outline the synchronic organization of the composite predicate and auxiliary uses of *(be) on the way/road (to)* that the paths of change discussed in the previous section have led to. The description is based on a dataset compiled from the 56,000,000-word subcorpus (*CoBuild Corpus*) of the *Collins Wordbanks Online English* (CB).⁵ From this corpus, all strings were extracted that consisted of *on* followed by *way/road to*, with zero to four words intervening between *on* and the noun. This resulted in 1,190 instances of the constructional layers this study focuses on, distributed over *way* and *road* as visualized in Table 4.⁶

Table 4. Lexicalized and grammaticalized construction types of *(be) on the/one's way/road (to)*: synchrony (based on CB data)

	composite predicate + directional adjunct	composite predicate + <i>to</i> -infinitive of purpose	composite predicate + <i>to</i> + state/event noun	secondary auxiliary + <i>to</i> -infinitive	secondary auxiliary + gerund
<i>way</i>	n = 686 62.42%	n = 75 6.82%	n = 206 18.75%	n = 123 11.20%	n = 9 0.81%
<i>road</i>	n = 19 20.65%	0%	n = 67 72.83%	n = 5 5.42%	n = 1 1.1%

The relative frequencies of composite predicate versus auxiliary uses in the CB dataset clearly continue the diachronic trends observed in the previous section. *(Be) on the way (to)* is by far the more common string. Its lexical composite predicate uses predominate by 87.9%, of which 81.17% have prepositional phrases introduced by *to*, the majority adjuncts of spatial direction. 12.1% are auxiliaries, of which a fraction still have *to*-infinitives but the majority have gerunds. The auxiliary uses of *be on the road* total only 6.52%. Within the composite predicate uses of *(be) on the road*, the majority is formed by metaphorical expressions complemented by a noun describing a state or event such as *recovery*, *triumph* or *peace*.

This database allows us to pinpoint the fundamentally different nature of the paradigmatic relations for the lexical strings and the grammatical elements.

We propose that the composite predicate uses behave essentially as lexical items in that they impose collocational constraints on the lexical items they co-occur with. As is typical of (partly) synonymous lexical items, they share many

5. The *CoBuild* Corpus was the only subcorpus of *Wordbanks* that was publicly available until 2010. Our synchronic dataset was extracted from it.

6. Uses in which *way* and *road* designate a path leading to a goal were classified, but otherwise left out of consideration. For *on the way to*, these totalled 152, and for *on the road to* 186 tokens.

general collocational restrictions, viz. the (optional) co-selection of spatial goals or of states/events that lie (potentially) ahead. However, they also display distinct preferences in attracting individual collocates.

(Be) on the/one's road strongly favours event/state collocates (67 tokens, 81%) to spatial goals (19 tokens). This implies that its most common sense is the metaphorical one of depicting subjects 'progressing to' and 'approaching' certain states and events. The historically most common collocation (*be on the road to recovery*) is still the most entrenched one (17 tokens), followed by (*be on the road to nowhere*) (5 tokens). Other recurrent state collocates are *fame* (3), *success* (2), *glory* (2). Within the spatial collocates it is striking that 58% are names of towns, e.g. *Mandelay*, *Basra*, *Glasgow*. This last tendency can be explained by the fact that the concrete spatial sense of 'path or way between different places' and 'urban way' (OED III, 4a) which the noun *road* acquired in the 16th century has impacted on the spatial use of the composite predicate.

Unlike *(be) on the/one's road*, lexical *(be) on the/one's way* (686 tokens) prefers spatial goals (534 tokens, 77.8%), making directed motion its core sense. Its spatial goals display a great variety of semantic types: they may be towns, e.g. *Moscow*, *Athens*, *Bangkok*, countries or continents, e.g. *Zambia*, *Britain*, *China*, *Asia*, landmarks such as *the airport*, *the coast*, unique venues, e.g. *Robbie's West London pad*, *the library in Bievres*, *Parliament*, or landmarks specific to the speech situation, e.g. *the kitchen*, *the door*, *his telephone*. The goals headed for are in a small quarter of cases designated by event nouns such as *lunch*, *a party*, *a conference*, *work*, which pattern as spatial goals with *be on the/one's way* in its directed motion sense. This more diversified distribution of spatial collocates seems to be motivated by the more abstract action noun meaning which *way* retained in the composite predicate. In the 22.2% of its non-spatial, metaphorical uses, *be on the/one's way* is followed by state/event nouns that describe the state of affairs the subject is headed for, such as *victory* (10), *a win* (7), *recovery* (7), *the top* (5), *democracy* (3), *the title* (2), *defeat* (2).

We can conclude that progressive lexicalization processes, such as the ones that *be on the/one's way* and *(be) on the/one's road* have undergone, result in the establishment of distinctive collocate networks that represent the evolving phraseologies and semantic profiles of those lexical items.

Grammaticalization, by contrast, involves what one might call increased systemicness. Systemicness is related, in the first place, to the traditional notion of paradigmaticization (Lehmann 2002 [1982]). Diewald (2010) has argued for a broader understanding of paradigmaticization as including the creation of systemic oppositions between members of the paradigm and the establishing of marked and unmarked members. The new grammatical sign becomes increasingly associated with the more abstract grammatical meaning serving as common denominator

of the whole paradigm. These paradigmatic oppositions and general features integrate the constructions into a closely interrelated network of constructions. Diewald & Smirnova (2012) argue that only paradigmaticization thus conceived allows one to distinguish grammaticalization from lexicalization.

Can we say that *be on the/one's way to* and *be on the/one's road* manifest paradigmaticization as understood by Diewald (2010), taking into account that *be on the/one's way to* was clearly the model to which *be on the/one's road to* was attracted by analogization?

The 'going to' use that emerged for *be on the/one's way to* in the middle of the 19th century is still found only with *to*-infinitive complements (4.3%). Besides their first sense of expressing the future realization of an intention (32), these auxiliary uses can now also predict a future situation based on present evidence (33) (Declerck 1991: 112).

- (32) Thank you very much indeed and we will give you the number. I don't have it here but ere r [sic] at this particular moment some of our android helpers *are on their way to find it*. (CB)
- (33) A: Er so therefore now the Post Office have ... have got expensive — B. But you think ... you think it's *on the road to stay*? — A: Oh I'm most definitely [sic]. (CB)

Within the aspectual paradigm, the majority of uses of *be on the/one's way to*, 89.2%, express imminence, as in (34). They all have gerunds, except for two infinitive examples. Of the small set of auxiliary uses of *be on the/one's road to*, 4 are imminent, e.g. (35).

- (34) Peter Gesner said the museum *was well on the way to finishing the task of collecting the contents of the wreck*. (CB)
- (35) Only when we can answer questions of this kind *will we be on the road to understanding teenage suicide*. (CB)

The synchronic dataset shows that the two auxiliary forms extended to a second aspectual meaning, viz. progressive aspect, which is expressed by 9 examples (6.5%) with *be on the/one's way to* and 1 with *be on the/one's road to*.

- (36) Just two of 101 nifty activities/experiments for kids to do *on the way to learning about chemistry*. (CB)
- (37) If the audit faculty took on leadership in a coherent strategy to prevent and detect fraud, then we *would really be back on the road to eliminating the expectation gap*. (CB)

In (36) *on the way to learning about chemistry* is a background action represented as in progress (Comrie 1976:30, 51) while the kids do nifty experiments, and in (37) the expectation gap is represented as increasingly closing up (Declerck 1991:157).

How do the two aspectual values, viz. progressivity and imminence, relate to each other in terms of markedness? Following Jakobson (1971 [1939]), we assume that marked terms are more restricted in the range of contexts in which they occur, and are semantically the more specific ones. From this perspective, the progressive has the wider range of distribution and expresses more general meanings subsuming subsenses of continuousness, habituality (temporary habit) and iterativity (Van Rompaey 2014). While progressive aspect zooms in on the ‘medial’ phases of a situation, conceptualized either as progressive-continuous, progressive-habitual or progressive-iterative, and backgrounding the beginning and end, imminential aspect focuses on the preparatory phases leading up to a new state. Imminence has a more restricted range of contexts and was long even not clearly distinguished from the ingressive — progressive — egressive continuum, but recent studies have argued in favour of viewing it as a separate category (e.g. König 1993:85). Within the system of English aspect, progressivity is the unmarked and imminence the marked term.

From a diachronic perspective, we can relate the marked status of imminence within the aspectual paradigm to the observation that it rarely is, or remains, the only meaning of a grammaticalized expression. If imminence is the first aspectual meaning that is acquired, as in the case of *be on the/one’s way/road to*, other aspectual values such as progressivity will typically also develop. This involves a reorganization of the perspective, by which the speaker as conceptualizer positions him- or herself not within the preparatory phases leading to the situation profiled by the lexical verb, but within the component phases of the situation itself. If imminence is a later development, it is preceded by, and continues to co-exist with, other values. Thus, *be in the process of* and *be in the middle/midst of* first developed progressive auxiliary uses focusing on the medial phases of the situation (Van Rompaey & Davidse 2014). Some of their auxiliary uses, particularly of *be in the process of*, have also come to construe imminence, focusing on the stage just before the situation (Van Rompaey 2014), as in (37), where Erik Menendez ‘was about to answer’.

- (37) ERIK MENENDEZ: Me telling Lyle that — Ms. ABRAMSON: You telling Lyle what? Was it you telling Lyle about something that was happening? ...
 ERIK MENENDEZ: My dad — Ms. ABRAMSON: Wait one second, Mr. Menendez, let me ask for a recess JUDGE No, no, he *was in the process of answering*, so there’s no need to ask (COCA, Van Rompaey 2014)

While subscribing to Diewald's views on paradigmaticization as an essential component of grammaticalization, we want to add a further dimension, indebted to Halliday's (1961, 1992) thought about the paradigmatic organization of the grammar. Halliday views the oppositions within a grammatical paradigm not so much as obtaining between its members, but, at a more abstract level, as obtaining between *features* associated with the members. By conceiving of systemic oppositions as features, it is possible to capture the interactions and interdependencies between features from different systems. Davidse & De Wolf (2012) argued that grammaticalization not only involves an expression acquiring one particular value within its own system, but also the defining interrelations with values from other systems. This is the second dimension of the increasing systemicness which, we claim, characterizes grammaticalization processes: newly grammaticalized expressions have really entered the grammatical system if the options available for them approximate the possible combinations of semantic features coded by established grammatical expressions. In Davidse & De Wolf (2012), this was illustrated with the interdependencies between distinct values from the systems of modality and polarity acquired by the grammaticalizing expression *there's no question*. *There's no question* has acquired all possible combinations that auxiliaries such as *must* and *will* can express, viz. both epistemic and dynamic/deontic meanings and positive and negative polarity, and within the latter, internal and external negation. This is a sign of its advanced grammaticalization because specific *interdependencies* between semantic values from related grammatical systems are constitutive of grammar at large (Halliday 1992).

In the case of grammatical aspect markers, such defining interrelations obtain between the grammatical aspect and the *Aktionsart* values of the predicates. It is generally accepted that a specific grammatical aspect will "concord" (Michaelis 2004: 28) with certain *Aktionsart* values, and will "override" (Declerck *et al.* 2006: 81) others. In Michaelis's (2004) terms, grammatical aspect constructions can be either 'type-sensitive' (concording) or 'type-shifting' (overriding). A type-sensitive construction "denotes the same kind of entity or event as the lexical expressions with which it is combined" (Michaelis 2004: 28). For instance, type-sensitive progressive constructions combine with predicates whose *Aktionsart* is inherently dynamic, durative and preferably atelic, as these are the features that are fully compatible with the meaning of the progressive (Van Rompaey 2014), e.g. *the placebo effect has been improving over time*. Type-shifting or overriding progressive constructions, by contrast, impose a progressive reading on lexical predicates whose *Aktionsart* is as such incompatible with them, e.g. stative or punctual predicates. The conflict created by this is resolved by the semantics of the whole grammatical construction 'shifting' the type of, the predicate into a compatible type (Michaelis 2004: 29), a process often referred to as 'coercion' (Moens & Steedman

1988). A prime example is the ‘stative progressive’, e.g. *She is being kind*, in which the as such [+stative] predicate *be kind* is converted into a [+durative] predicate, viz. ‘she is acting kindly’. If *be on the/one’s way/road to* have acquired the status of an aspectual auxiliary, they can be expected to figure in both concurring and coercing constructions.

In its core use, auxiliary *be on the/one’s way to*, construes imminence, i.e. it focuses on the phases leading up to abrupt change to a new state. In 66.2% (82 tokens) of the total, the *Aktionsart* of the predicates concurs with the imminent aspectual meaning: they are all transitional predicates. The single most common verb is *become*. In the majority of examples with *become*, 25 tokens, the VPs express a blend (Aarts 2007:192ff) of imminent aspect viz-à-viz *become* and degree modification of the state described by the predicate nominal, as in (38), where Pinchot can be thought of as both developing to being a progressive, and as already being one up to a certain extent. However, the remaining 9 examples with *become* are purely imminent, such as (39), which refers only to the stage preceding Maresa getting her man.

- (38) He [Pinchot] also came to see that the only organization strong enough to make business socially responsible was the federal government. With this perspective, Pinchot *was well on his way to becoming a progressive*; (CB)
- (39) And the only person with any determination was clearly Maresa, ... who ... *may be on her way to getting her man at last*. (CB)

In the remaining 33.8% of cases, the imminent construction occurs with predicates whose intrinsic *Aktionsart* does not describe an abrupt change, viz. stative (13 tokens) and durative predicates (19 tokens). Stative predicates describe unchanging situations, consisting of stages that cannot be differentiated from each other, such as ‘being’ (40), ‘having’ (41), and mental states and dispositions (42). Durative predicates depict successive stages, such as *doing better experiments that might in fact lead to a vaccine* in (43).

- (40) It sounds as if she’s *on the way to being completely gaga*, ... (CB)
- (41) ... Mr. Jaap Marais, said he left the meeting still convinced that South Africa *was on the way to having a Communist government*. (CB)
- (42) *we are already well on the way to being able to manufacture 60mph cars*. (CB)
- (43) If we could find a more closely related animal model, then ... *we would be well on our way to doing better experiments that might in fact lead to a vaccine*. (CB)

We see that in these cases, the mismatch is resolved by the coercion effect, which triggers reinterpretation of the incompatible filler-types. In examples (40–43) the imminential construction shifts the *Aktionsart* of the predicates into semantically compatible fillers. Predicates such as *be completely gaga* (40) and *have a Communist government* (41) as such have stative lexical aspect. However, they are converted into predicates with a dynamic *Aktionsart* by their use in the imminential VPs so that *being* in (40) comes to mean ‘becoming completely gaga’, *having* in (41) ‘getting a Communist government’ and *being able* in (42) ‘acquiring the ability to manufacture 60mphcars’. More specifically, the imminential auxiliary imposes a reading on the lexical predicates in which they include a critical threshold to be crossed in the transition, e.g. the stage at which she has become ‘completely gaga’ in (40). This threshold is preceded by preparatory phases leading up to it, and it is on these preparatory stages that the imminential VP focuses. Durative predicates are also reinterpreted as consisting of preparatory stages distinct from the stage to be transitioned to, such as ‘doing better experiments’ and ‘doing the experiment that will lead to a vaccine’ in (43). This reinterpretation is a semantic prerequisite for the imminential meaning of the *be on the/one’s way to* operator. The function of *be on the/one’s way to* is to assert the ongoingness of the phases prior to a transition: this requires that the situation expressed by the lexical predicate is understood as transitional, i.e. as consisting precisely of such preparatory phases leading up to a transition phase. We can conclude that the imminential semantics of *be on the/one’s way to* are so well established that they are not only type-sensitive but also type-shifting. This shows that imminential *be on the/one’s way to* has fully entered the aspectual grammatical system in terms of its interaction with the *Aktionsart* of the predicates.

Progressive uses of *be on the/one’s way to*, which account for only 7.2%, display type-sensitivity, taking only durative predicates, but no type-shifting. Durative predicates are semantically fully in concord with progressive aspect. The successive stages of which they consist allow the progressive aspect marker to focus on the medial stages, as in (36) above, which represents the kids’ learning as a progressing background activity, and (44), in which the developing countries are already like us, and becoming increasingly so.

- (44) Modernization theorists tended to perceive the Third World from an evolutionary position of presumed advantage and superiority: ‘they the backward or transitional societies [sic] — *were on their way to becoming more like ‘us’*. (CB)

The progressive use of *be on the/one’s way to* is not yet found with stative predicates that are incompatible with progressive aspect. That is, at this stage, the progressive use of *be on the/one’s way to* has not yet acquired all the interactions with the lexical

aspect types found with established progressive constructions such as *be V-ing*, which do type-shift stative predicates into durative ones. Grammaticalization of progressive *be on the/one's way to* is thus only in its incipient stage.

Finally, *be on the/one's road to* is a typical example of a low-frequency grammaticalizing item, which acquired its grammatical value by analogization with the entrenched model *be on the/one's way to* (cf. Brems 2007; Hoffmann 2004; Noël 2007). Interestingly, the distribution of its imminent and progressive uses, and their interaction with the *Aktionsart* of the predicate is fully parallel with those of its model. The imminent uses are found with both concurring transitional predicates, as in (45), and with incompatible predicates that are shifted into compatible ones, such as stative (46) *understand*, which is reinterpreted as 'coming to understand'. The one progressive use of *be on the/one's road to*, example (45) below, also has a concurring durative predicate.

- (45) She could *be on the road to becoming the world's most sought after face* — the new Audrey Hepburn. (CB)
- (46) Only when we can answer questions of this kind will we *be on the road to understanding teenage suicide*. (CB)

6. Concluding discussion

In diachronic construction grammar studies, the question has been raised whether certain types of composite predicates that convey general 'aspectual' meanings should be viewed as cases of grammaticalization. Such a case has been made for the type *give/take/have + a + deverbal noun* in view of the bounded, telic and static/dynamic meaning the pattern conveys (Brinton & Traugott 2005; Trousdale 2012). In this article, we studied the case of *be on the/one's way/road (to)*, which along these lines could be viewed as conveying general aspectual meanings — such as durativity or progressivity — and hence as a case of wholesale grammaticalization. We have argued for a different approach, reconstructing their diachronic development "from composite predicates to verbal periphrases" (Garachana *et al.* 2013). We characterized the emergence of the composite predicate uses as lexicalization, or, more precisely, as lexical expansion (Traugott & Trousdale 2013), and that of the secondary auxiliary uses as grammaticalization on the basis of distinct syntagmatic and paradigmatic patterning.

On the syntagmatic axis, we followed Boye & Harder's (2007) recognition criteria for distinguishing lexical(ized) from grammatical(ized) uses on the basis of their having primary or secondary status in discourse usage. This approach does not focus uniquely on changes in the internal structure of the string, such

as semantic erosion or decreasing compositionality, which characterize both lexicalization and grammaticalization (Trousdale 2012). Rather, the focus is on the interplay between the internal reorganization of the unit and the reparsing of its external function in the larger verbal and clausal structure. The primary discourse status of the composite predicate uses is suggestive of their lexical status, and the different aspectual meanings of their various situation-templates were captured in terms of categories of lexical aspect such as durativity, telicity and punctuality. A grammatical status was only ascribed to uses of the strings with secondary discourse status, where *be on the/one's way/road to* is ancillary to a lexical predicate. They were found to have recognizably general grammatical meanings such as relative future ('be going to'), imminence ('be about to'), and progressivity ('be V-ing').

We further argued that the paradigmatic axis is a hitherto neglected dimension of the difference between lexicalization and grammaticalization. We proposed that lexicalizing items develop distinct collocational networks revealing semantic differences. The primary meaning of *be on the/one's way to* is directed motion, as shown by the preponderance of spatial goal collocates. By contrast, the most common sense of *be on the/one's road* is the metaphorical one of 'progressing to', as reflected in the predominance of state and event collocates. Grammaticalizing elements enter a grammatical paradigm with marked and unmarked values, and start interacting with values from related paradigms. As aspectual markers, both *be on the road/way to* acquired first imminent and then progressive meaning, but it is as yet only in their imminent uses that they have type-shifting effects on the *Aktionsart* of the following predicates. In other words, grammaticalization does not just involve the acquisition of a single, isolated grammatical function. Rather, grammaticalizing elements progressively acquire values from interdependent grammatical systems, because such interdependencies are constitutive of grammar itself (Halliday 1992).

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