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# The grammar of future time reference in European languages

“I think I go home now.”

Utterance ascribed to Greta Garbo after a row with her Hollywood film director, illustrating differences among European languages in the marking of future time reference

## 1. Introduction

As the title suggests, this chapter is about the ways in which speakers of European languages talk about the future; more specifically, the grammatical devices that are used in doing so. At the centre of the investigation, we will necessarily find the things traditionally called future tenses. Since their theoretical status has been the object of considerable controversy, and since we want to be open for other potentially interesting phenomena, the delimitation of the area of study is kept deliberately vague.

Future time reference (FTR) was the first of the focal areas in the work of the EURO TYP Theme Group on Tense and Aspect. Questionnaire data were collected for about 30 languages, and on the basis of them a number of descriptions on the marking of FTR in different European languages were written and issued as working papers. Much of what will be said below is based on the empirical material in the questionnaires and the working papers.

In this chapter, we shall first look at some major semantic/pragmatic distinctions relevant to the marking of future time reference and at what future grams look like in a typological perspective. Then, we shall see an example of how ongoing grammaticalization processes are reflected in the questionnaire material. Finally, we shall look at the areal distribution of future grams in Europe, with special attention to what will be called the ‘futureless area’ of Northern Europe.

## 2. Predictions, intentions and scheduling

From the epistemological point of view, the future has a rather different status from both the present and the past. We cannot perceive or remember future states of

affairs, and it has been disputed whether statements about the future can be said to have a determinate truth value. Still, we do talk about the future, and there may be different grounds for our doing so. To start with, we may have **intentions** relating the future. This is by definition restricted to things that are under our control (or at least believed to be so) and prototypically shows up in sentences with a human subject (who is also the bearer of the intentions), as in the following example from Lewis Carroll:

- (1) English (Alice in Wonderland)  
 ‘[I know SOMETHING interesting is sure to happen,’ she said to herself,  
 ‘whenever I eat or drink anything;] so *I’ll just* see what this bottle does.

Further, we may, on the basis of more or less well-grounded considerations, make **predictions** about the future. In the typical case, predictions concern courses of events that are not within human control or at least not within the control of the speaker, as in the following example.

- (2) English (Alice in Wonderland)  
 There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again. ‘*Dinah’ll miss me* very much to-night, I should think!’ (Dinah was the cat.)

We may thus distinguish **intention-based** and **prediction-based** future time reference. A straightforward grammatical opposition based on the distinction between intention-based and prediction-based FTR is less common than one would perhaps think in view of the apparent cognitive salience of that distinction. Its importance lies rather in the observation that markers that are originally restricted to intention-based FTR tend to develop into general future markers, which include prediction-based FTR as central cases but can in the normal case still be used for intention-based FTR. In fact, whether FTR is overtly and obligatorily marked in prediction-based sentences can be used as one of the major criteria for whether it is grammaticalized in a language or not. To illustrate the difference, consider the following two excerpts from real-life weather forecasts, the first from a British, the second from a Finnish newspaper:

- (3) English  
 Outbreaks of rain will clear on Monday to leave a mix of sunshine and showers across the country. Longer periods of rain are likely midweek, especially in the west. It will be mostly cool and windy. Cool and unsettled conditions over much of Scandinavia will extend into central and western Europe during Tuesday and Wednesday. Mediterranean coasts will remain sunny and very warm.

## (4) Finnish

Sää kylmenee, mutta keskiviikkona tuulee idästä ja pyryttää lunta. Lämpötila kohoaa tilapäisesti noltaan tai jopa vähän suojan puolelle. Torstain tienoilla voi olla jopa kymmenisen pakkasastetta. Viikonlopulla taas lauhtuu, pilvistyy ja alkaa sataa lunta.

[(Rather literal translation:) 'The weather becomes cooler, but on Wednesday it blows from the east and there is drifting snow. The temperature rises temporarily to zero or even a little higher. By Thursday it can already be around ten degrees below zero. During the weekend it again becomes milder, overcast and begins to snow.']

In the English text, the auxiliary *will* is used systematically throughout the text (except when there is another modal expression in the sentence, such as *are likely*). By contrast, the Finnish text is wholly in the Present tense. There are also no markers of modality (except for one occurrence of the modal *voi* 'may'). The literal translation into English sounds rather deviant if future auxiliaries are not supplied. Arguably, then, future time reference is grammaticalized in English in a way it is not in Finnish. As we shall see later, this criterion divides the European languages into two large groups.

A further notional category that turns out to be important is **scheduling**. It is well known that in a sentence such as (5), English tends to use the Present tense although the time referred to is in the future:

## (5) English (FTRQ: 89)

[According to the timetable] the train leaves at noon.

In fact, in many if not most languages, this kind of sentence is treated in a way that does not mark it grammatically as having non-present time reference. This seems to hold even for languages where future time reference is otherwise highly grammaticalized. However, in addition, we find that the Present tense is used in many European languages in sentences such as the following questionnaire sentence:

## (6) (FTRQ: 37)

[Talking about the speaker's immediate plans:]

I GO to town.

Some examples of translations of this sentence from the questionnaire material using a Present tense are:

## (7) Russian (FTRQ: 37)

Idu v gorod.

go:IPFV:PRS:1SG to town:ACC

- (8) French (FTRQ: 37)  
 Je vais en ville.  
 I go:PRS:1SG to town
- (9) Serbian/Croatian (FTRQ: 37)  
 Idem u grad.  
 go:PRS:1SG to town:ACC

Notice that the verb used in the Russian example is Imperfective. In other words, the form used is one whose typical use is with present time reference, unlike the Perfective Present. However, in English, this is a typical context for a Progressive – the Simple Present is hardly acceptable here (cf. the quotation from Greta Garbo above):

- (10) English (FTRQ: 37)  
 I'm going to town.

It is possible that there is a common prototype for this use of the Present in Russian and French and the Progressive in English that involves a number of different factors. The examples cited in the literature tend to involve movement verbs<sup>1</sup> and refer to relatively close points in the future. What is probably more relevant, though, is the element of planning, in the stronger sense of **preparation**. One can truly say *I'm going to town* when one has started to prepare oneself for the trip. There is a clear analogy between this use of progressives and presents and the one found with achievements in Vendler's sense, that is, when *He is reaching his goal* is used in the sense 'He is close to his goal'.

Given the apparent naturalness of this way of talking, one might think that there would be as little interlinguistic variation here as in the case of sentences like (5). However, it turns out that some languages behave somewhat unexpectedly here. In the Scandinavian languages, marking of future time reference is relatively seldom obligatory. Still, in (TMAQ: 37), none of the five Scandinavian informants, representing at least four different varieties of Swedish and Norwegian, chose a present tense<sup>2</sup>. Even if this fact might be accidental, something seems to be going on here. Consider a prototypical context for a 'preparatory' use of a present or progressive: meeting a friend in a travel agency, I draw the conclusion that he is planning a trip somewhere. The natural things to say in Russian and English, respectively, would then be:

- (11) Russian  
 Kuda edeš'?'  
 whither go:IPFV:PRS:2SG

- (12) English  
Where are you going?

However, in Swedish, the auxiliary *ska(ll)* is the primary choice, the bare Present sounding somehow out of place:

- (13) Swedish  
Vart ska du åka?  
whither shall you:SG go:INF

In other words, ‘preparatory’ contexts do not seem conducive to overt FTR marking in Swedish and Norwegian.

‘Preparatory’ contexts are confusing since they might be seen as a sub-type of intention-based FTR. It is evident, however, that they are treated in special ways in many languages.

### 3. Future grams from a typological point of view

In the cross-linguistic studies reported in Bybee & Dahl (1989) (based on Bybee 1985 and Dahl 1985) and Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994), the traditional notion of a future tense finds its counterpart in the cross-linguistic gram-type future. Future grams develop out of a number of sources, well-known from traditional historical linguistics, such as verbs of movement (*go* and *come*), obligation, and volition, but also, for instance, from markers of progressive aspect. Sometimes, future grams may be “residual grams” in the sense that they develop as the left-over of an earlier imperfective which has yielded its central territory to an expanding progressive. (See Bybee et al. 1994, Chapter 7, for a general account of futures and their paths of developments.)

A central issue in the controversy about the theoretical status of future grams concerns the distribution of labour between temporal, modal, and aspectual elements in their meanings and whether to subsume them under the traditional categories of tense, mood/modality, or aspect. It may be noted here that while the sources of future grams typically have exclusively non-temporal meanings, the temporal elements tend to grow stronger during the course of grammaticalization (“temporalization” in the terms of Fleischman 1983). One reason why future grams tend to exhibit a mixture of different kinds of semantic elements is that many of them retain part of their original meaning, at least in some contexts. For instance, English *will* still may indicate willingness, and *shall* sometimes retains an obligational element (as in legal documents). On the other hand, when a gram has undergone temporalization, new, non-temporal uses may develop (such as inferential uses with non-future time reference).

It may be argued that whereas more or less developed future grams are very common in languages, full grammaticalization is less common. At least, it is noteworthy that some contexts are typically quite late in being reached by an expanding future gram. Cases in point are some types of subordinate clauses, most notably temporal and conditional clauses. As a general tendency, time reference is less systematically marked in these types of clauses, in particular conditionals. Thus, not only forms normally referring to the present (such as the Present tense in English) but also forms that would refer to the past when used in a main clause (such as the Semitic Perfective or the Japanese Past) show up here. (In addition, many languages use non-finite forms in such contexts.) These facts may be related to the non-assertiveness of the clause-types under discussion. But it is also clear that the lack of specificity in time reference plays a role here. Temporal clauses more often refer to specific points in time than do conditional clauses, and they also tend to acquire future marking first. When such marking is optional for a clause type, specificity often plays a role in determining the choice. In the Balkan area, languages at different stages of introducing future marking into temporal and conditional clauses can be found (see Hedin, this volume).

Relevant to the issue of grammaticalization is also the way in which the gram is expressed or marked. The most salient parameter is boundness: in general, bound morphemes as primary markers of grams show up only at late stages of grammaticalization. Both Dahl (1985) and Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins (1994) find that periphrastic (free) and morphological (bound) expression are more or less equally probable for future grams; in this respect this gram-type differs both from, for instance, past tenses (which are predominantly bound) and progressives (which tend to be periphrastic). However, bound and free futures differ from each other. Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins (1991) studied the covariation of form and meaning in the grammaticalization of future grams and found significant relationships between the ways they were expressed and the stage they had reached in their semantic development. As noted in Bybee & Dahl (1989), the future grams in an expanded version of the sample used in Dahl's earlier investigation (Dahl 1985) which were systematically used in both temporal and conditional clauses were all bound. In the expanded sample, the languages in question were the following: Alawa, Bandjalang (Australian), Oneida, Seneca (Algonquian), Hebrew (Semitic), Hindi/Urdu, Kurdish, Latvian (Indo-European), Georgian (Kartvelian). The futures in these languages are also characterized by a number of other indicators of high degree of grammaticalization: close adherence to the generalized cross-linguistic profile of the gram-type, high frequency of use and tendency to obligatory use in central cases (to the extent that all these things can be judged about from the questionnaire data).

We may note a certain concentration to certain language families and areas here. Since Dahl's sample is rather heavily biased areally and genetically, we cannot draw very strong conclusions from this. For the purposes of this chapter, however, the ab-

sence of any languages from Western or Southern Europe, two areas that are rather over-represented in the sample, should be noted. The conclusion is that full grammaticalization of futures is not common in large parts of Europe. This is a point that we shall return to.

#### 4. Grammaticalization of future time reference in progress

It is common for there to be more than one gram moving along the same grammaticalization path. In such situations, the grams will have partly overlapping functions and will compete with each other. Good examples of this are found in the Western Romance languages, where the periphrastic de-andative construction (e.g., French *je vais travailler*) is gradually taking over the territory of the older, inflectional Romance de-obligational future (e.g., French *je travaillerai*). Since we have questionnaires from several speakers of French and Spanish, we are in a position to see how the competition between the two constructions shows up in the ways speakers choose between them in different contexts. As is probably typical of grammaticalization in progress, the choice seems to depend on several factors, which may be both stylistic and semantic. For French, Schlyter & Sandberg (1994) note that the (inflectional) Future tense is used more in formal and written language, and is favored by a combination “prediction + 3rd person + remoteness in time”, whereas the de-andative *aller* construction is characteristic of the spoken language and is favoured by the combination “intention + 1st person + immediateness”. The questionnaire data (from six speakers) that support the semantic generalizations are tabulated in Table 1. What is shown there is, for the respective sets of examples in the FTR Questionnaire, the percentage of responses where a form was chosen as the only alternative (OBL), where it was chosen as an optional alternative (OPT), and the sum of these two (TOT). As we can see, the situation is made more complicated by the existence of a third choice, the present tense (see the discussion of scheduling and preparation above). We may note, however, that there is a very pronounced cline with respect to the remoteness dimension, with the future tense at the remote end and the *aller* construction at the non-remote end of the scale. There is also a relatively clear difference between intention-based and prediction-based FTR, where the latter tends to favor the future tense. What is perhaps most notable with respect to this distinction, however, is the almost total exclusion of the present tense in prediction-based contexts. The significance of the distinction between 1st and 3rd person is less clear-cut. It appears that 1st person contexts favor the choice of the present rather than any of the marked forms. The situation for Spanish, which is tabulated in Table 2 (number of informants: 3), is similar, with even steeper curves for remoteness and the distinction between intention and prediction (see also the discussion in Hermerén, Schlyter & Thelin 1994).

Table 1. The frequency of French FTR devices in different sets of questionnaire examples

		FUTURE TENSE			<i>ALLER</i> CONSTRUCTION			PRESENT TENSE		
		OBL	OPT	TOT	OBL	OPT	TOT	OBL	OPT	TOT
COGNITIVE	1 person intention	22	11	33	39	9	48	21	13	34
BASE	3 person intention	11	8	19	62	11	73	14	2	16
	Prediction	45	5	50	35	5	40	3	2	5
REMOTE- NESS	Immediate	3	5	8	61	10	71	24	5	29
	“This evening”	27	8	35	45	8	53	16	4	20
	“Tomorrow”	41	15	56	18	6	24	10	12	22
	Distant	72	5	77	10	6	16	10	0	10

Table 2. The frequency of Spanish FTR devices in different sets of questionnaire examples

		FUTURE TENSE			<i>IR A</i> CONSTRUCTION			PRESENT TENSE		
		OBL	OPT	TOT	OBL	OPT	TOT	OBL	OPT	TOT
COGNITIVE	1 person intention	53	0	53	35	0	35	11	0	11
BASE	3 person intention	33	0	33	62	0	62	3	0	3
	Prediction	72	2	74	12	2	14	8	0	8
REMOTE- NESS	Immediate	13	0	13	76	0	76	9	0	9
	“This evening”	45	0	45	30	0	30	22	0	22
	“Tomorrow”	79	0	79	0	0	0	4	0	4
	Distant	33	0	33	33	0	33	0	0	0



Summing up, the systems we have described here have several features that seem characteristic of grammaticalization in progress: (i) competition between an older, more grammaticalized and a younger, less grammaticalized construction; (ii) no absolute acceptability judgments; (iii) dependence on several factors, both stylistic and semantic; (iv) differences between written and spoken language. We seem to be rather far from the structuralist ideal of a system with neat oppositions and simple meaning correlates.

## 5. European future gram families

In this section, I shall survey the different future **gram families** that characterize the languages spoken in Europe, or rather Europe excluding the non-Slavic-speaking parts of Russia and some other outlying parts like Malta and Turkey. The motivation for this delimitation is twofold: first, it makes sense from the areal-linguistic point of view; second, the available information above all about the Caucasian languages does not make it possible to map that region in sufficient detail.

‘Gram family’ is a somewhat vague term that I use for grams with related functions and diachronic sources that show up in genetically and/or geographically related groups of languages. To take one example, constructions formed with a verb meaning ‘to go’, with uses sometimes referred to as ‘prospective’, show up in a number of languages in Western Europe, both in the Germanic and the Romance group. Thus, the usefulness of the term ‘gram family’ is based on the tendency for grammaticalization processes to cluster areally and genetically. As we shall see, most of the grammatical devices that are used in a regular fashion to signal future time reference are parts of such clusters. What such a survey demonstrates is the areal nature of grammaticalization processes: in general, the distribution of gram families fits the *Wellentheorie* rather than the *Stammbaumtheorie* of linguistic change. Features that at first glance seem to characterize a whole language family, such as the Romance de-obligative construction, on closer inspection turn out to be explainable only as a spread which started after the break-up of the parent language and which has never reached the whole territory of the language group in question.

One notable fact is the relative independence of different gram families; in general, each of them has a unique distribution, suggesting that the introduction of new grams into a language to a significant extent is independent of what grams that language already has.

In Figure 1, a schematic view of the distribution of the major gram families is presented.

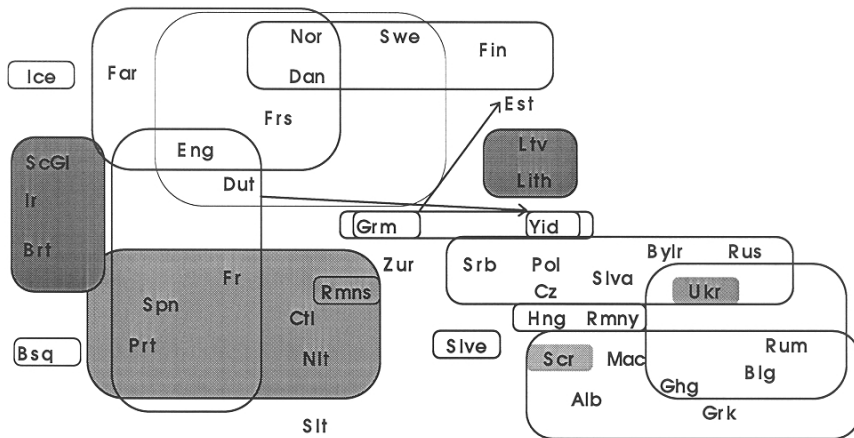


Figure 1. Main gram families with future time reference in Europe. Shaded areas denote inflectionally expressed grams.

## 5.1. Indo-European inflectional futures

Whether earlier stages of Indo-European had an inflectional future is an open question. Admittedly, a number of future forms found in different branches of Indo-European (Greek, Indo-Aryan, Baltic) may be traceable to a common origin (most probably a desiderative suffix), but in several branches there are no future forms at all (as noted above) and other forms do not have a clear etymology.

Among modern Indo-European languages in Europe with inflectional futures going back before the time of the first written sources are Irish in the Celtic branch and the two Baltic languages Latvian and Lithuanian.

## 5.2. Romance inflectional future

The Romance inflectional future, one of the classic examples of the development of an inflectional tense-aspect gram from a periphrastic source – the Latin obligative construction Infinitive + *habere* ‘have’ – has spread over a large part of the Romance-speaking territory. It is thus found in at least the following modern Romance languages: Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Occitan, Catalan, Romansh. It is perhaps less well-known that there are areas where it is not found or where it is used only to a restricted extent. Most importantly, it did not extend to the Romanian area. But also in Italy, it is not found in the vernaculars<sup>3</sup> south of a line Viterbo–

Perugia–Ancona (Rohlf's 1968: 333), a fact that is probably behind the relatively large indeterminacy in the use of the future in Standard Italian.

It should also be mentioned that the inflectional future seems to be significantly less frequent in Latin American Spanish than in the Spanish spoken in Spain.

### 5.3. Ukrainian inflectional imperfective future

This formation, which is restricted to Ukrainian and only occurs with imperfective verbs, is structurally analogous to the more famous Romance inflectional future in that it derives from the merger of the infinitive of the main verb with a postposed auxiliary, which is originally the verb ‘have’ (*imati*), for instance *pisatime* ‘(he) will write’. The form occurs alongside of the copular imperfective future (see below) and there seems to be no difference in meaning (Dahl 1992). (‘Have’ was also used as a future-marking auxiliary in the other East Slavic languages at an earlier stage, but the inflectional variety is not attested.)

### 5.4. West European de-andative construction

The gram family represented in English by the *be going to* construction is found in a number of Germanic and Romance languages located in a contiguous area in Western Europe: English, Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese. The source of the construction, involving a verb with the meaning ‘go’ followed by an infinitive, is still fairly transparent in most cases. Semantically, it tends to be used for intention-based non-remote future time reference, but at least in some languages it is extended to non-intentional cases, especially ‘imminent’ ones such as *It is going to rain*. The construction appears to be gaining ground in many dialects and is undergoing formal changes characteristic of further grammaticalization (such as the reduction in English of *going to* > *gonna*).

In Dahl (1985), the constructions mentioned here were tentatively subsumed under a cross-linguistic gram-type ‘prospective’ (cf. also Comrie 1976 for a similar treatment). The evidence for the existence of a such a gram-type as distinct from early futures in general is somewhat shaky, however.

The de-andative constructions seems to have developed relatively late. In English, it spread in the 17th century.

### 5.5. Germanic de-obligative construction (SHALL)

Cognates of the English auxiliary *shall* (with the original meaning ‘to owe’, henceforth SHALL) are found in most Germanic languages and are or have been used

as future-marking devices over a rather extensive part of the Germanic territory, including earlier stages of High German, where *sollen* was used more frequently than it is today. According to OED, *sceal* was used already in Old English to express prophecies and the like.

There are clear differences in the domain of use between the Germanic languages, however: it is only in English and Dutch (including Afrikaans) that SHALL is used for prediction-based FTR, although it should be added that in English, this use is rather restricted since *shall* is mainly used in the 1st person. In the Scandinavian languages, SHALL is restricted to intention-based FTR and obligational meanings closer to its original sense.

## 5.6. De-venitive constructions

Under these headings, we treat constructions involving verbs with the meaning ‘come’. These include two gram families – one in Scandinavia and one mainly comprising a number of Romansh dialects – which exhibit striking similarities and seem to have arisen roughly at the same time but which still cannot be assumed to be related in view of the geographical distance between them. The evidence suggests that these constructions may be the result of a path of development that has not been properly described in the literature on grammaticalization. This motivates discussing them in somewhat more detail.

### 5.6.1. Scandinavian

This gram family comprises Continental Scandinavian – Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish – and (somewhat marginally) Finnish. Its rise and spread appears to be relatively recent – the first attested examples in Swedish go back to the 17th century. The original form of the construction in Scandinavian (preserved in Norwegian and Danish and attested in older Swedish) is

(14)      kommer    til(l)    at(t)    <full verb>  
               come:INF    to        INFM

In Swedish, the preposition *till* has been dropped, and there is a tendency in the present-day language to also drop the infinitive marker. In Finnish, the verb *tulla* is combined with the Illative case of the so-called 3rd Infinitive (suffix *-maan*). The construction has been looked upon with some suspicion as being a Swedish calque.

## 5.6.2. Swiss

In the Romansh dialects spoken in Switzerland, there exists a construction which is formally and perhaps also semantically very similar to the Scandinavian de-venitive (Ebnetter 1973). The earliest attested examples are from the 16th century. The construction now seems receding but is still preserved in a number of dialects. An example from Surmiran (*surmeirisch*):

- (15) Romansh/Surmiran  
 Tě viñst aṅk a vēkr š i va la ražúŋ.  
 you come:PRS:2SG yet to see:INF that I have DEF right  
 ‘You will yet see that I am right’

In some dialects, this construction appears mainly in examples of the type ‘It’s going to rain’, e.g., Oberengadin:

- (16) Romansh/Oberengadin  
 a veñ a plōver.  
 it come:PRS to rain:INF  
 ‘There is rain on the way / it will rain.’

Analogues to this are also found in Swiss German (Ebnetter 1973: 242, Bickel 1992):

- (17) Züritütsch  
 Es chunt cho rāgen.  
 it come SP rain  
 ‘There is rain on the way / it will rain.’

These de-venitive constructions are somewhat peculiar among future-referring grams in that they are primarily used for prediction-based rather than intention-based FTR. It is therefore of some interest to consider how they have come about, and we shall now look at the source that has been proposed in the literature (see, for example, Ebnetter 1973).

In many Germanic languages, there is a construction which is formally quite similar but whose semantics is distinct, as shown by the following English example:

- (18) I came to hate him.

(18) could perhaps be best paraphrased as ‘By various causes I was led to hate him’. What is notable is thus that it expresses something that it is not under the control of the subject, in other words, a non-volitional process. This suggests that the construction might relatively easily be extended, when used with future time reference, to express predictions in general. Cf. (19) as an example that could serve as an intermediate step towards such an extension.

(19) You will come to hate him.

If this account is correct, it creates a problem for the claim made by Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins (1994: 270) that “all modal and movement future sources begin with human agents and move from the expression of the intentions of that agent to the expression of prediction”.<sup>4</sup> At any rate, there is no evidence to suggest that the Germanic de-venitives ever expressed intention. (In that case, we would have to assume that it has now lost this use, which would also create difficulties for the theory.) Rather, we have to conclude that we are dealing with a separate grammaticalization path, which in the attested cases ends in a gram with a focus in prediction-based FTR. Whether further developments from this point are possible is something that only coming research can decide.

### 5.7. North European de-volitive construction (WILL)

Descendants of the Proto-Germanic *willan* ‘want’, henceforth WILL, are used as FTR markers in a restricted number of Germanic languages, mainly in the North Sea area: English (*will*), Danish and Norwegian Bokmål (*vil*), Faroese (*vil*), Frisian (*wal*) and Yiddish (*vel*). The area may earlier have also included High German.

In English, the use of WILL for both intention-based and prediction-based FTR was well established already in the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) period, and has (in combination with SHALL) become what is probably the most grammaticalized future marker in the Germanic languages. In Scandinavian, WILL is much more marginal – it seems to have spread later and never reached Swedish. Yiddish is a special case in that WILL seems to have fused with *werden* (first person forms such as *ix vel* ‘I will’ are supposedly derived from *willan* while other forms such as *er vet* ‘he will’ seem to come from *werden*, although a general analogy to the regular verb paradigm is not excluded).

### 5.8. Circum-Baltic ‘become’

In Modern High German, the most common FTR device is the construction *werden* + Infinitive. *Werden* is identical to the verb for ‘become’. The details of the origin of this construction are somewhat controversial. In dialects and older stages of the standard language, there is an alternative construction, where the main verb has the form of a Present Participle, and according to a widespread theory, this is the original variety. This hypothesis is rejected in the detailed study by Saltveit (1962), where it is found that both constructions already existed in Old High German, although the one with the Infinitive did not become frequent until the end of the Middle Ages. According to Saltveit, there was a semantic difference between the two constructions,

in that the participial one had an inchoative interpretation and the infinitival one a modal interpretation.

The Infinitive construction has not become rooted in all dialects in the High German area – for instance, it is still felt to be alien in Swiss German (Bickel 1992). In Yiddish, on the other hand, it is one of the sources for the fused future paradigm. The Estonian *saama* construction, which is a slightly marginal FTR device, is regarded as a calque on the German *werden* future.

## 5.9. Slavic perfective present

In the West and East Slavic languages, the non-past forms (Present tense) of perfective verbs are primarily used with present time reference. In general, they cannot be used to refer to events that take place at the moment of speech. For a discussion of the origin of this state-of-affairs, see below.

## 5.10. Balkan de-volitive construction

Most languages in the Balkan area have a construction derived from a verb meaning ‘want’. There are two different types, however: one in which the marker is an uninflected particle, and one where it is an inflected auxiliary. The first type appears in Modern Greek (*tha* + subjunctive), Bulgarian (*šte*), Macedonian (*ké*) and Albanian (*do* + subjunctive). The second is found in Romanian (*voi*) and Serbian/Croatian (*ću, ćeš, će*). This gram family is one of the classical examples of a Sprachbund phenomenon, covering four different branches of Indo-European.

## 5.11. Balkan ‘have’ future

In some Balkan languages – Bulgarian (*ima da*), Ghgeg Albanian (*kam me* + infinitive) and Romanian (*am să*) – there is an alternative future construction based on the verb ‘have’, thus most probably an original obligational construction. Its range of uses in the different languages is not quite clear from the sources. The Bulgarian construction is different from the others syntactically in that *ima* does not agree with the subject.

The Ukrainian inflectional imperfective future may also belong to this gram family, although it has gone further in grammaticalization and also differs aspectually from the others.

### 5.12. Slavic copular constructions

These are combinations of a copula and a participle or the like used as FTR devices. The clearest cases are in Slavic: (i) the imperfective futures formed with the stem *bod-/bud-* and an *l*-participle or infinitive in North (West and East) Slavic, and (ii) the Slovenian future construction *bo-* + *l*-participle.

The North Slavic constructions are relatively late in origin. The infinitive construction seems to have spread from the Czech area at the end of the 13th century, shows up in Polish, Belarusian, and Ukrainian at the end of the 14th century and in Russian in the 15th. Although this rather nice chronology strongly suggests an areal development, Křížková (1960), from whose monograph these dates are taken, seems rather skeptical about all hypotheses implying areal influences with regard to the rise of the North Slavic imperfective futures. She also takes a skeptical stance against linking this construction with the German *werden* future.

### 5.13. ‘Take, seize’

There are at least two cases of FTR markers which are derived from verbs with meanings like ‘seize’ and ‘take’ viz. Hungarian *fog* (<‘seize’) and Romani *le-* ‘take’. Csató (1992) hypothesizes that the original function of Hungarian *fog* was to express inchoativity. *Fog* was earlier used also in the meaning ‘begin’. (Csató notes a similar polysemy in the Turkish *tut-* ‘grasp, hold, begin’.)

### 5.14. ‘Begin’

A relatively frequent way of marking FTR in Estonian is by a construction involving the verb *hakkama* ‘begin’ and the *ma*-infinitive of the main verb (Tommola 1992a). A similar use of the verb *alkaa* ‘begin’ is found in Finnish but appears to be quite marginal. In the Swedish dialects spoken in the Finnish province of Ostrobothnia *böri* ‘begin’ is used fairly extensively as an FTR marker. Areal influence seems likely although the connections are unclear.

### 5.15. Isolated grams

Under this heading we briefly mention a couple of FTR devices that occur in only one language.



### 5.15.1. Icelandic de-obligational *munu*

This is an auxiliary with original obligational meaning whose distribution seems to be restricted to Icelandic. It seems never to have reached a more advanced degree of grammaticalization and may even have been more frequent in Old Icelandic.

### 5.15.2. Basque de-obligative futures

Basque has two de-obligative future constructions: one consisting of the main verb suffixed by *-ko* (normally a genitive marker) and an auxiliary ‘have’ and one involving a verb *bear* ‘need’ (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 259).

### 5.15.3. South Italian de-obligative periphrastic future

In Sardinian and some Italian vernaculars spoken in the southern part of the Italian peninsula and Sicily, there is a future construction which is analogous in its build-up to the more well-known inflectional Romance future (5.2) but in which the (pre-posed) auxiliary *avere* ‘have’ has not fused with the main verb.

## 6. The futureless area

One areal feature of future time reference in European languages can be formulated in negative terms: it tends to be left ungrammaticalized or only partly grammaticalized. Studying this tendency, we may focus on slightly different manifestations of it with somewhat different geographical distributions. One, which is relatively unproblematic to ascertain, is the absence of inflectional futures, which holds for all Germanic and Finno-Ugrian languages and for the majority of the Slavic ones; as well as for some more peripheral parts of Romance and for the non-Slavic languages in the Balkans. Another manifestation of a slightly more elusive kind is the tendency not to distinguish present and future time reference in any systematic way at all, be it inflectionally or periphrastically. In the survey reported in Dahl (1985), Finnish and Estonian came out as somewhat extreme examples of languages with no systematic marking of future time reference (although this does not imply a total absence of devices that show future time reference – cf. Tommola 1992a and 1992b). We saw above an example of the contrast between an English and a Finnish weather forecast showing the difference in predictive contexts, where English normally has obligatory marking and Finnish tends to have none. In fact, English turns out to be relatively isolated in the Germanic area in this respect. The use of present tenses for prediction-based future time reference seems widespread in all other Germanic languages. Taking the obligatory use in (main clause) prediction-based contexts as a main criterion for the grammaticalization, we may therefore claim that there is a

“futureless” area in Northern Europe which includes at least all Finno-Ugrian and Germanic languages except English.

What is interesting from the areal and diachronic point of view is that, going back in history, this area becomes more pronounced in several ways. The auxiliary constructions used in the modern Germanic and (to a lesser extent) Finno-Ugrian languages are all of relatively recent origin. In Germanic, we find the least propensity to mark the future in the oldest documented varieties (such as Gothic) and in some peripheral modern dialects (such as Swiss German and Icelandic). Similarly, there seems to be no evidence of any grammaticalized future marking in Finno-Ugrian. Furthermore, the area may also originally have included Slavic. The different FTR devices found in the Slavic languages (see above) are, like the Germanic and Finno-Ugrian ones, relatively recent, with one exception: the use of the Perfective Present for future time reference, which, according to standard descriptions, goes back to Old Church Slavonic. However, there is good reason to doubt that this was a trait of Common Slavic. It is not in general found in the modern South Slavic languages, and there is some evidence that the link between the Perfective Present and future time reference was at least not fully developed in Old Church Slavonic (Kopečný 1981). See also Dahl, this volume, for a discussion of a related phenomenon with a similar areal distribution, viz. the extended use of verbs of becoming to express future states.

There is thus basically nothing that contradicts the postulation of a relatively large “futureless” area in Northern Europe at the time when the assumed Germanic proto-language was spoken, that is, about two thousand years ago. Going beyond that takes us into the realm of speculation, however. If the Indo-European and Finno-Ugrian languages influenced each other, it is hard to say when and how that took place. There is also considerable confusion concerning the situation in older stages of Indo-European: it is far from clear that there was a common future tense.

## Notes

1. There may be a tendency to avoid combinations of *be going to* construction with movement verbs in English, which favors the use of the progressive with those verbs.
2. Two Norwegian informants translated (TMAQ: 37) as *jeg skal til byen*, literally ‘I shall to the town’, that is, using an auxiliary without a main verb. This is possible and indeed quite common in all Scandinavian languages when an adverbial indicating a goal follows. A corresponding usage is also found in Fering (North Frisian) (Ebert 1994).
3. See Squartini & Bertinetto, this volume, fn. 7, for an explanation of this use of the term ‘vernacular’.
4. Since Danish is one of the languages included in the GRAMCATS database, the Scandinavian de-venitive shows up in the accounts of that, too. In Bybee, Pagliuca & Perkins (1991), future grams are assigned a “future age” (FUTAGE) defined as a stage in the se-

matic development of futures from modalities. The Danish *kommer til at* construction is assigned the highest possible FUTAGE–4, which is given to those grams with future (= prediction) as a use “which also have epistemic uses (other than prediction) or speaker-oriented modalities as uses”. It is not clear what specific use of the Danish construction motivates this assignment, but it certainly is not in harmony with the chronological age of the construction or with its apparent low degree of grammaticalization in other respects.

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