GOING TO V vs GOING TO BE V-ing: Two equivalent patterns?

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1 Introduction

The English catenative construction *be going to V* is a lexico-grammatical resource for encoding the temporal notion of 'projected or later realization of an event' with respect to a given reference point in time. The general meaning ascribed to it is '*future* as outcome of *present* circumstances' (Close 1977: 148; Palmer 1988 [1965]: 146; Leech 2004 [1971]: 58), the circumstance being either an intention or a cause (e.g. Quirk *et al*. 1985; Leech 2004 [1971]: 58; Berglund and Williams 2007).[2]

Studies on *be going to V* have examined the range of meaning distinctions conveyed by the construction, such as 'prior intention', 'inevitability,' 'imminence,' 'assumption,' 'current relevance' and 'pure, neutral futurity' (Haegeman 1983; Nicolle 1997; Brisard 2001), and compared them with the semantic overtones of other types of futures, notably *will V* and *will be V-ing* (e.g. Binnick 1971; Close 1988; Haegeman 1989; Mair 1997; Nicolle 1998; Szmrecsanyi 2003). In addition to studies discussing the origin and emergence of the construction (Bybee and Pagliuca 1987; Krug 2000; Hopper and Traugott 2003 [1993]), there are publications describing its use in different times (e.g. Danchev *et al*. 1965; Danchev and Kytö 1994) or across time (e.g. Hundt 1997; Mair 1997; Belladelli 2009), while other studies have analyzed its distribution across types of texts (Berglund 2005) and geographical varieties of English (Facchinetti 1998; Poplack and Tagliamonte 1999; Leech 2003), or its co-occurrence with speech-related linguistic features (Belladelli 2009).

These studies, however, have left two questions largely unaddressed. One is what the possible variant realizations of the construction are, and under what conditions they may occur. The other is on what grounds it is possible to assign semantic labels for the uses of *be going to V.*

First, *be going to V* combines three verbs, each of which can contribute to the variant realization of the construction. The verb *be* can show up in a finite

form (present – both full and contracted – or past), or it may co-occur with tense or modal auxiliaries (e.g. *would be going to V*, *has been going to V*; Lewis 2002 [1986]: 75, 77, 83–84, 174). Moreover, *going* can merge with *to*, thus producing the contracted form *gonna*. Finally, the main verb, occurring after the *to*, can be realized as an active or passive, and a non-progressive or progressive non-finite form (e.g. *I am going to kiss / to be kissed / to be kissing / to be being kissed*).[3] Little is known about the frequency of occurrence and attested combinatorial options of these various verb forms.

Second, despite their descriptive appeal, labels such as 'intentionality' and 'inevitability' are not self-explanatory, because their assignment criteria have not been spelt out. For instance, it is not clear whether 'intentionality' refers to the speaker's or the subject's will (cf. *I'm going to divorce him and that's that vs You're going to divorce him and that's that*) or whether it always requires or implies 'prior intention' (cf. *You don't need to constantly remind me. I AM going to talk to the manager vs If you don't change your attitude, I'm going to talk to the manager* or *You know what? I'm sick and tired of this. I am going to talk to the manager*). Also, such labels neatly classify prototypical instances of given types of events, like planned, deliberate actions (e.g. *I am going to call him back tomorrow morning*), predictable consequences (e.g. *The vase is going to fall*) or imminent events (e.g. *We are going to leave in five minutes*), but there are also more ambiguous cases, when more than one label could apply (e.g. *They are going to study until late*; *How long are you going to work here?*: 'intention and/or inevitable consequence') or when it is dubious whether a given label should apply at all (e.g. *We are going to move out of this flat next month*: 'imminence'?). More generally, if the meanings of 'intentionality' and 'predictability' are assumed to characterize the grammatical construction *per se* (*be going to*), it is not clear what determines the activation of one or the other meaning, since the construction does not change across its many instantiations.

Our study aims to tackle the above two issues through an examination of a set of *be going to V* and *be going to be V-ing* concordances from a large corpus of general English reflecting present-day usage. One goal is to determine whether *be going to V* and *be going to be V-ing* should be considered variants of the same construction on the basis of a comparison of some of their morpho-syntactic patterns of use. The general motivation for this goal is that syntactic constructions are rarely in free variation (Kennedy 1998: 154). The other goal is to propose a set of criteria for the assignment of the interpretative semantic labels 'intentionality' and 'predictability' to instances of *be going to V* and *be going to be V-ing* by considering semantic-syntactic features of their immediate co-text, the reason being that co-text varies across instantiations of the construc-

tions, and is therefore likely to contain clues helpful in the classification of events as deliberate acts (e.g. *Are you going to divorce him?*) or as unintentional experiences (e.g. *We're going to get sick*.)

2 Data

For our study we looked at data collected from the British National Corpus (BNC), a 100-million word corpus of general, late 20th century English. This corpus contains 501 instances of *be going to/gonna be V-ing* (hence *going/gonna V-ing*) and nearly 40,000 of *be going to/gonna V* (hence *going/gonna V*), that is, on average, five *vs* 389 occurrences per million words, respectively. Put differently, the corpus contains one occurrence of *going/gonna V-ing* for every 80 occurrences of *going/gonna V.* About 30 per cent of the *going/gonna V* instances are realized as the contracted form *gonna*. As illustrated in Table 1, the proportion of *gonna* is somewhat higher in the *going/gonna V-ing* sample:

Table 1: Instances of *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* in the BNC

Form of main verb	***Going***	***Gonna***	***Going + Gonna***	***% Gonna***
V	26,905	11,406	38,311	30%
V-ing	311	190	501	38%
V/V-ing	27,216	11,596	38,812	30%
% V-ing	1%	2%	1%	

In order to work with a manageable set of data while at the same time being able to examine enough instances of the potential variants, we decided to study all instances of *going/gonna V-ing* and a random sample of equal size drawn from the remaining instances of *going/gonna V*.[4] The data were identified on the basis of the part-of-speech tagging by using the Xaira program, version 1.23. The *going/gonna V-ing* instances were identified as all cases where the sequences *going to be* or *gonna be* were followed by any of the four tags used for the *-ing* form of a verb. The *going/gonna V* instances were retrieved by searching for *going to* or *gonna* followed by the base form of a verb (i.e. non-progressive, non-finite), unless this was *be* followed by a *V-ing* form; e.g.:

(1) "She's examining what she's going to eat" (KBW:1241; *going V*)

(2) "Well, what's gonna happen to him?" (AC2:293; *gonna V*)

(3) "Does he know I'm going to be babysitting him when he gets to New York?" (EF1:962; *going V-ing*)

(4) "Well we're not gonna be doing anything!" (KCE:2139; *gonna V-ing*)

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the instances examined in the study. The *going/gonna V-ing* sample is the complete set of occurrences of the construction in the corpus. The *going/gonna V* sample is a sub-set of the nearly 40,000 instances in the BNC. The proportion of the contracted form *gonna* in this data set is comparable to that found in the BNC (33 *vs* 30%), which suggests that the randomized data collection procedure was successful in retrieving a balanced sample, representative of the corpus data. The category called 'other' refers to concordances in which the sequences *going*/*gonna V* or *going/gonna V-ing* do not instantiate the *verbal* constructions targeted with the sampling procedure adopted.[5] The 'noise' concordances account for about 2 per cent of the sample.

Table 2: Distribution of forms in the sample analyzed

Forms	**Instances**	**Percentage**
Going V	345	35%
Gonna V	149	15%
Going V-ing	304	30%
Gonna V-ing	183	18%
Other	21	2%
Total	1,002	100%

Only 18 concordances (i.e. less than 2% of the data) exemplify passive infinitives, that is, sequences of a linking verb (e.g. *be, get*) followed by a past participle that is *not* also an adjective (e.g. *hurt*, **married*). All have *be* as an auxiliary; e.g.:

(5) "I'm gonna ask David" (HUP:12; active)

(6) "She was going to get walloped" (FPX:256; passive)

(7) "My business is going to be split between the two areas" (G00: 327; passive)

(8) "we're going to get confused" (CSE:259; other)

3 Analysis

We analyzed our 981 revised concordances for a number of features relating to their immediate co-textual environment, as further described below. We also looked at the meaning of the constructions: whether it could be defined as 'prediction', 'intention' or something in between.[6] The results of the analyses were then cross-tabulated to see what patterns, if any, could be identified.[7]

3.1 Co-text of use

Back in the 1980s and 1990s, Biber (1988, 1995) developed what is now called 'multidimensional/factor analysis', whereby he identified a set of linguistic features which are likely to be discriminators for each variety or textual type; by carrying out a quantitative analysis of such features in different text samples, he highlighted the linguistic features that tend to co-occur in texts so as to form 'dimensions'; each dimension was then interpreted in order to identify the corresponding communicative functions linked up to each dimension.

Biber's multi-factor analysis can also be applied to single words or phrases, in the sense that the identification and description of their immediate co-text are key elements to their qualification. Bearing this in mind, we intended to compare the lexical, semantic and grammatical co-text of the *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* concordances. For this comparison, we considered the following features:

(a) frequency of occurrence across the spoken and written media, and distribution across text types

(b) formal encoding of the subjects and finite verbs in the matrix clauses

(c) tenses and polarity in the matrix clauses

(d) co-occurrence with adverbs

(e) variety of the lexical verbs in the infinitival complements

(f) semantic role and animacy of the subjects of the clauses

(g) syntactic type of the clauses.

Features (a) would allow us to ascertain whether *going/gonna V* and/or *going/gonna V-ing* have similar or different textual/generic preferences. As Stubbs points out, "[d]ifferent text types have different patterns of expectation" (2001: 20),[8] "collocations may differ quite sharply in different text-types" (2001: 29),

and different forms of the same lemma can have different collocation patterns" (2001: 27–28). *Going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing*, which include different morphological variants of the same part of speech (i.e. the verb), can potentially display complementary distribution in this respect.

Features (b) were meant to reveal any possible co-association of *going/gonna V* and/or *going/gonna V-ing* with an informal register. As Biber's (1995) work has revealed, different sets of linguistic features cluster together in different types of texts, thus marking the peculiar character of various styles. Features that can be examined in the *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* concordances and that are typical of conversations and, more generally, of an involved style (cf. Chafe and Danielewicz 1987: 94) are presence of personal pronouns (esp. second person ones) and contractions.

Features (c, d, e) would point out possible grammatical and lexical collocation patterns of the constructions. Previous corpus linguistic studies have revealed colligation patterns, and semantic preferences or prosodies for other constructions (e.g. Francis *et al*. [1996: 58–59] found that *get* passives are more often associated with negative situations than *be* passives; Mair [1990] found that infinitival object clauses with subject-to-object raising in the active voice co-occur with a limited set of deontic-type verbs; and Gesuato [2009] found that non-progressive *go* typically expresses goal-directed motion in association with the verb *see*).[9] The two syntactic variables analyzable in the clauses containing *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* that may reveal colligation patterns are choice of tense and polarity, while the content words likely to reveal lexical/semantic preferences are adverbs, if present, and the verbs in the complement clauses.

Finally, features (f, g) were supposed to identify the preferential associations of *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing*, if any, with the representation of given types of events and the encoding of syntactic functions at the level of the clause. We considered these features important in revealing possible associations between the *grammatical* meanings typically attributed to the constructions (see section 3.2) and the *content* conveyed in the text segments instantiating those constructions.

Altogether, the above features were meant to highlight possible, extended semantic-grammatical schemas, as instantiated in recurring lexico-syntactic realizations. These various features, except the first ones, required manual coding, as specified below.

3.1.1 Spoken and written media

The concordances examined favour the oral medium (see Table 3): in the *going/gonna V* data set, this applies to just over half of the concordances;[10] but in the *going/gonna V-ing* set, the preference for the oral medium is much more marked: on average, three out of four instances are from the spoken part of the BNC (74%). The figures are even more striking when considering that the spoken part of the BNC is only about 10 per cent of the total corpus.

Table 3: Distribution of *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* forms across media

Data set	**Spoken**	**Written**	**Global**
Going/gonna V	257 (52%)	237 (48%)	494 (100%)
Going/gonna V-ing	360 (74%)	127 (26%)	487 (100%)
Total	618 (63%)	363 (37%)	981 (100%)

3.1.2 Text types

The *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* concordances are heterogeneously distributed across different types of texts, although similar patterns characterize both the whole BNC and our sample (see Table 4). The *going/gonna V* forms have similar frequencies of occurrence in the two oral text types represented, namely 'Conversation' (26% in the BNC, 30% in the sample) and 'Other spoken' (26% in the BNC, 23% in the sample); also, they favour the same written text type, namely 'Fiction and verse' (25% in the BNC, 27% in the sample), while disfavouring 'Academic prose' (2% in the BNC and the sample).[11] The *going/gonna V-ing* data set displays a marked preference for the oral text type 'Conversation' (48%), and slightly less for 'Other spoken': their frequency of occurrence here is comparable to that of the *going/gonna V* forms. Finally, these concordances, too, favour only the 'Fiction and verse' text type among the written text types, but less than the *going/gonna V* forms (11%), while they are not found at all in the 'Academic prose' sub-corpus.

Table 4: Distribution of concordances across text types[12]

Medium	**Text type**	***Going/gonna V* in the BNC**	***Going/gonna V* in our sample**	***Going/gonna V-ing* (BNC = sample)**
Oral	Conversation	26%	30%	48%
	Other spoken	26%	23%	25%
Written	Unpublished	2%	1%	2%
	Other published	7%	7%	6%
	Newspapers	5%	4%	3%
	Non-academic/non-fiction	7%	7%	4%
	Fiction and verse	25%	27%	11%
	Academic prose	2%	2%	0%

3.1.3 Formal encoding of the subjects

We classified the subjects according to the following options:

(a) personal pronoun (sub-types: *I, you, it, she, he, we, they*)

(b) third person non-personal pronoun (sub-types: singular and plural; e.g. relative *who*, interrogative *who*, *everybody*, *there*, *these*)

(c) other noun phrase (sub-types: singular and plural)

(d) other (sub-types: mixed, unclear or missing); e.g.:

(9) "they're gonna be summarizing them" (FTF:262; personal pronoun: *they*)

(10) "when she first starts she's gonna be getting through seven or eight pairs a day" (KBG: 3251; personal pronoun: *she*)

(11) "So who's gonna be doing those?" (KLV:954; third person non-personal pronoun: interrogative *who*)

(12) "So I think her mother's gonna be in for a bit of a shock" (KCA:274; other noun phrase: singular)

(13) "cos loads of us are gonna be getting back" (KP5:4020; other: mixed: quantifier + object pronoun)

Table 5: Distribution of subject types

Data set	**Personal pronouns**	**Third person non-personal pronouns**	**Other noun phrase**	**Other**	**Total**
Going V	23%	4%	7%	1%	35%
Gonna V	14%	1%	0%	0%	15%
Going V-ing	20%	4%	6%	0%	30%
Gonna V-ing	17%	1%	1%	1%	20%
Total	74%	10%	14%	2%	100%

Table 5 shows the distribution of these main subject types across the components of the sample considered. About 74 per cent of the subjects are realized as personal pronouns (mostly *I* and *you*), each accounting for about 18 per cent of the data. Third person non-personal pronouns and other noun phrases account, respectively, for 10 per cent and 14 per cent of the data; both types mostly occur in singular variants, that is, 9 per cent and 10 per cent of the time, respectively. About 2 per cent of the data realize alternative subject forms or even lack an explicit subject.

3.1.4 Formal encoding of the verb be

The finite verbs in the matrix clauses can show up in their full forms (i.e. *am, are, is, was, were*) or their contracted variants (i.e. *'m, 're, 's*); in addition, they may combine with the contracted form of the negation *not* (i.e. *aren't, isn't, wasn't, weren't*); the contracted negative form *ain't* is also attested; occasionally, the verb *be* is missing; e.g.:

(14) "it was not going to be their day" (KS7:62; full form)

(15) "So essentially, what we're going to be doing are going through er the lessons" (F8J:4; non-negated contracted form)

(16) "and it's obvious the person isn't going to stop" (K1U:713; negated contracted form)

(17) "Yeah but he, he ain't gonna be wearing jeans out there is he?" (KBF:10622; negated contracted form)

(18) "her field is hardly ever used and we gonna be getting a lot of trees for that" (HVB:185; missing finite verb)

Table 6 shows that, overall, there is a higher presence of contracted forms (60%), rather than full forms (38%), of the finite verbs, with about 2 per cent of the data lacking a finite verb. The preference for the contracted forms is slightly stronger in the *going/gonna V-ing* set (33%) than in the *going/gonna V* set (27%). This is in line with Römer's (2005: 66–68) finding about the higher frequency of contracted forms of *be* with progressives in general.

Table 6: Distribution of forms of finite verbs

Data set	Full forms	Non-negated contracted forms	Negated contracted forms	Other	Total
Going V	20%	14%	1%	0%	35%
Gonna V	3%	11%	1%	1%	16%
Going V-ing	11%	17%	1%	0%	29%
Gonna V-ing	4%	15%	0%	1%	20%
Total	38%	57%	3%	2%	100%

3.1.5 Tense of the verb be *in the matrix clauses*

We classified the tenses of the constructions as follows: if the matrix verb is conjugated as *am, are, is* (or their contracted equivalents) or *ain't*, it counts as 'present'; if instead it shows up as *was* or *were*, it counts as 'past'; finally, if the finite verb is missing but reconstructable from the co-text, it is coded as appropriate; e.g.:

(19) "I'm gonna do the same for you" (FP0:986; present)

(20) "I wasn't going to say that" (JXT:596; past)

(21) "and I said oh you should apparently you've got have erm, er, application form and Mrs going to send you one" (KCP:6023; reconstructed as present)

(22) "Initial accession to corpus going to be lecturing you" (JSL:1; other)

As Table 7 shows, most of the concordances instantiate the present tense (83%), which is slightly more frequent among the *going/gonna V-ing* forms (45%) than the *going/gonna V* forms (38%). On the other hand, past tenses occur in about

16 per cent of the data, and are more frequent in the *going/gonna V* set (12%). Only about 1 per cent of the data cannot be unambiguously defined for tense.

Table 7: Distribution of tenses

Data set	**Present**	**Past**	**Other**	**Total**
Going V	25%	10%	0%	35%
Gonna V	13%	2%	0%	15%
Going V-ing	26%	3%	0%	29%
Gonna V-ing	19%	1%	1%	21%
Total	83%	16%	1%	100%

3.1.6 Polarity of the clauses

We marked the polarity of the clauses on the basis of lexico-syntactic cues. We used the label 'positive' for matrix clauses containing no form of negation, and the label 'negative' for those containing one such form (e.g. *not, never, nobody*). The occurrence of a clause-final question tag was not considered relevant to the classification of polarity. We used the label 'other' for unclear or irrelevant cases (e.g. unclear scope of a negation, lack of a finite verb in the matrix clause); e.g.:

(23) "we're going to be considering education" (JT4:540; positive)

(24) "She wasn't going to waste her strength" (A73:1121; negative)

(25) "they're no [sic] gonna be using their flash guns are they?" (KGK:131; negative)

(26) "There was no way they were going to spare her or Julie" (GOP:306; other)

Most of the concordances show positive polarity (86%), the preference being more marked in the set with progressive infinitives (56%) than non-progressive ones (29%). Negative polarity accounts for about 12 per cent of the data, and is rather more frequent in the *going/gonna V* set (8%) than in the *going/gonna V-ing* set (4%); see Table 8:

Table 8: Polarity of clauses

Data set	Positive	Negative	Other	Total
Going V	29%	5%	1%	35%
Gonna V	11%	3%	1%	16%
Going V-ing	27%	2%	0%	29%
Gonna V-ing	18%	2%	0%	20%
Total	86%	12%	1%	100%

3.1.7 Co-occurrence with adverbs

We examined the co-occurrence of *going/gonna V/V-ing* with adverbial expressions. More specifically, we counted the adverbs and adverbial phrases occurring between the subjects of the clauses and the lexical verbs, to the exclusion of the negation *not*, as well as those appearing right before and right after,[13] and thus always occurring within the relevant clause. Other elements, such as quantifiers, occurring in the same position were not considered; e.g.:

(27) "of course, we're always going to be inserting and deleting and moving things" (HDW:425; adverb between subject and verb phrase)

(28) "For an instant Fox was going to hit the little idiot, but the impulse faded" (BN1:1274; adverbial before subject)

(29) "Or perhaps you're going to wash your hands of the whole business?" (FEE:2306; adverb before subject)

(30) "Anyway, what was I gonna say?" (KCE:1414; adverb before subject)

(31) "Cos I was going to be ordering carrier bags anyway" (JP0:294; adverb after verb phrase)

(32) "you're gonna be paying basically the same rate" (KB7:3539; adverb after verb phrase)

Table 9 shows that, overall, adverb(ial)s occurring after the verb phrases are about three times as frequent as those occurring before or after the subjects (i.e. about 14% *vs* 5%). In the first two groups, the frequency of the adverb(ial)s in percentage values is similar across the four constructions (i.e. about 5%), while in the third group, the *going V-ing* data set has a higher frequency value of adverbials (i.e. 22%) than the other three data sets. In the three groups of

adverb(ial)s, the frequency values are slightly higher for the *going/gonna V-ing* concordances than the *going/gonna V* concordances.

The 35 types of adverb(ial)s found before the subjects mostly express temporal notions (e.g. *at midday, from now on, this term*), but occasionally also point of view or attitude (e.g. *essentially, of course, unfortunately*). The most frequent one is *now* (6 occurrences).

The 24 types of adverb(ial)s occurring between the subjects and the verb phrases mainly encode the modal notions of 'degree of certainty' or 'degree of frequency' (e.g. *always, certainly, effectively, in no way, never*, *obviously, perhaps, really*) or alternatively, (chrono)logical relationships (e.g. *eventually, somehow*); the only adverb with lexical content is *automatically.* The most frequent one is *just* (10 occurrences).

There are 78 types of (adverbial)s instantiated after the verb phrases. Sixty-five of these express temporal notions (e.g. *for hours, in a minute, later, over the next few weeks, soon*), while the others can express various concepts like quantity (e.g. *twice as much*), space (e.g. *out there*), modality (e.g. *really, basically*) and manner (e.g. *badly, carefully, voluntarily*). The most frequent ones are *again* (9 occurrences), *anyway* (10), *here* (12), and *now* (10).

Altogether, therefore, the adverbs occurring with the *going/gonna V-ing* and *going/gonna V* concordances are not linked to any specific lexical field, but rather express general temporal or modal notions.

Table 9: Frequency and distribution of adverb(ial)s occurring before subjects

Adverb(ial)s	***Going V* (%)**	***Gonna V* (%)**	***Going V-ing* (%)**	***Gonna V-ing* (%)**	**Total**
Before subjects	15 (4)	3 (2)	14 (5)	13 (7)	45 (5)
Between subjects and VPs	15 (4)	7 (5)	16 (5)	13 (7)	51 (5)
After VPs	29 (8)	18 (12)	66 (22)	26 (14)	139 (14)

3.1.8 Verbs in the infinitival complements

To explore the possible lexical-semantic associations of the constructions, we counted the number of occurrences (tokens) of the verbs instantiated after *going to / gonna* in the corpus. We considered phrasal verbs as distinct verb types (e.g. *to give*, *to give up* and *to give in* as three verb types rather than three tokens of one type). In the case of verb chains, or coordinated verbs, we counted only the first verb occurring after *going to* or *gonna*;[14] e.g.:

(33) "you seem even worse than oh were going to go and do your bedroom" (KCD: 4669; verb: *go*)

(34) "something that you're going to have to be thinking" (JJH: 947; verb: *have to*)

(35) "But if I'm going to let myself be bored to death" (HGN:217; verb: *let*)

The data instantiates a total of 314 lexemes (on average, one every 2.3 concordances). Of these, 142 occur in the *going/gonna V* set and 172 in the *going/gonna be V-ing* set. Thirty-four are shared between the two sets. Most verbs are instantiated only once. Verbs occurring at least five times are very common ones: *do*, *get, have, make, say, take, use* and *work*. The verbs exemplified in the corpus encode a variety of general concepts, such as movement (e.g. *come, go, leave, run, walk*), cognitive/emotional experience (e.g. *feel, love, need*), verbal communication (e.g. *ask, discuss, lecture, mention, say, speak, talk, write*), (unintentional) physical experience (e.g. *choke*, *fall off, hurt*), and (deliberate) physical action (e.g. *carry, drive, exercise, go away, kill, lend, marry, play, put, rescue, sell, vote*). However, no single verb or lexical field appears to distinctively characterize either the *going/gonna V* set or the *going/gonna be V-ing* set.

3.1.9 Semantic roles of the subjects

We classified the subjects of the clauses containing the constructions in terms of the semantic roles played by their referents in the events represented in the infinitival complements. We used the label 'agent' for a referent that could be said to perform an act consciously and deliberately (e.g. *to push*), considering this label applicable also to non-human entities if talked about in human-like terms, i.e. with attributes typical of people (e.g. personified inanimate entities). Our label 'agent', then, corresponds to the traditional thematic role of agent understood as the deliberate, "active instigator" or "self-driving force" of the process (Frawley 1992: 203). Additionally, we employed the label 'experiencer' for the referent of a subject apparently involved in a conscious but involuntary event (e.g. *to like, to be sorry*), but also for the referent of a subject that is presented as the unintentional cause of an event (e.g. *to please, to explode*). Our label 'experiencer', then, comprises not only the traditional notion of experiencer as the entity whose "internal state or constitution" is affected by the event as its "logical recipient" (Frawley 1992: 213–214), but also that of author/effector as the indirect, inactive, sufficient but not necessary cause of the process (Frawley 1992: 206). We used 'patient' as the label for referents of subjects apparently affected by some external entity or situation without having any control over it

(e.g. *to be pushed*). Our label thus identifies the standard notion of 'patient' as the entity that is the primary recipient of, and is directly affected or changed by, the event (Frawley 1992: 210). Finally, we used 'other' as the label for unclear cases (such as ambiguous or incomplete clauses); e.g.:

(36) "How are we going to prepare ourselves for that competitive market" (KRT:2160; agent)

(37) "you know when you're going to be working" (FUF414; agent)

(38) "the role they're going to have in the children's lives" (KRF:1054; experiencer)

(39) "I think I'm going to need it" (HTW:2639; experiencer)

(40) "but you're going to be finding out they're all rushing off" (FMH:625; experiencer)

(41) "it's going to be evaded" (BP8:1897; patient)

(42) "you're gonna be getting the kit soon" (K6W:661; other: *get* may mean 'receive (by chance)' or 'procure (through effort)')

The majority of the subjects (average: 72%) are assigned the role of agents. This preference is more marked when the infinitival complements display progressive infinitives (45%) rather than non-progressive ones (27%). A smaller set of the subjects play the role of experiencers (average: 25%). The different frequency of occurrence of 'agents' *vs* 'experiencers' is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), their distribution being stronger in the constructions with a non-progressive infinitive (21%) than a progressive one (4%). There are only marginal instances of subjects playing the role of patients, and only about 1 per cent of ambiguous data. These findings are summarized in Table 10:

Table 10: Semantic roles of the subjects

Data set	**Agent**	**Experiencer**	**Patient**	**Other**	**Total**
Going V	18%	14%	2%	1%	35%
Gonna V	9%	7%	0%	0%	16%
Going V-ing	27%	2%	0%	0%	29%
Gonna V-ing	18%	2%	0%	0%	20%
Total	72%	25%	2%	1%	100%

3.1.10 Animacy of the subjects

We classified the subjects of the clauses containing *going/gonna V/V-ing* in terms of their degree of animacy, to be understood as the influence exerted by an entity over an event, which often corresponds to the biological notions of life and locomotion (Frawley 1992: 89). We assigned the subject to three animacy categories: 'human', 'non-human animate' and 'inanimate'. We applied the label 'human' to two main groups of subjects: those encoded through pronouns unambiguously referring to people (i.e. all instances of *I, you, she, he, we, who, somebody, anybody, nobody*, and instances of *they* with a clear human referent in the neighbouring co-text and/or associated with a verb denoting a process applicable only to people, like *to think*), and those encoded as personal names or noun phrases identifying people.[15] We decided to use the label 'non-human animate' for subjects identifying animals either through descriptive noun phrases or through pronouns like *it* or *they* with a clearly relevant referent in the near co-text. We regarded as 'inanimate' the referents of subjects identifying concrete and abstract things, and institutions, including personified entities (see section 3.1.9). Finally, we used the label 'other' for all the other cases; e.g.:

(43) "that people are gonna be going" (F7G:365; human)

(44) "I'm gonna take it higher" (K7G:437; human)

(45) "No your school's going to be a polling station next week" (KCH:249; inanimate)

(46) "Mm. are going to be doing under the new contract" (H5E:193; other)

Table 11: Animacy of the subjects

Data set	**Human: pronouns**	**Human: other**	**Animate**	**Inanimate**	**Other**	**Global**
Going V	21%	5%	0%	9%	0%	35%
Gonna V	11%	3%	0%	6%	0%	20%
Going V-ing	20%	1%	0%	5%	0%	26%
Gonna V-ing	18%	0%	0%	1%	0%	19%
Total	70%	9%	0%	21%	0%	100%

Table 11 shows that the majority of the subjects of the clauses have human referents (79%). There are no instances of non-human, animate referents, while inanimate referents account for about 21 per cent of the data, and are three times as frequent in the *going to / gonna V* set than in the *going to / gonna be V-ing* set (15% *vs* 6%, respectively).

3.1.11 Syntactic types of the clauses

The classification of the syntactic type of the clauses instantiating *going/gonna V/V-ing* was based on a consideration of the order of the clauses' subjects and predicate constituents. Matrix clauses containing no subject-(auxiliary) verb inversion were called 'declarative' and those displaying such an inversion were called 'interrogative'. We used the label 'other' for clauses with no subject inversion but a clause-final question mark, or with no subject or finite verb, or with a final question tag; e.g.:

(47) "Is that gonna be suitable for you really?" (KSR:530; interrogative)

(48) "I think it's going to rain" (KBH:6840; declarative)

(49) "if you are going to be spending a whole lot of money" (KE2:509; declarative)

(50) "you're not going to find one ten times as dear as the other, are you?" (JP5:176; other)

(51) "Or perhaps you're going to wash your hands of the whole business?" (FEEE:2306; other)

Overwhelmingly, the concordances instantiate declaratives (see Table 12), especially with non-progressive infinitival complements (55%). Interrogative clauses account for only 11 per cent of the data, while the remaining 4 per cent of the data could not be assigned an unambiguous speech function.

Table 12: Syntactic type of the clauses

Data set	**Declarative**	**Interrogative**	**Other**	**Global**
Going to V	30%	5%	0%	35%
Gonna V	25%	3%	1%	29%
Going be V-ing	14%	1%	0%	15%
Gonna be V-ing	16%	2%	3%	21%
Total	85%	11%	4%	100%

3.2 Meanings of the constructions

As anticipated in section 3.1, we regarded the identification of the syntactic types of the clauses instantiating *going/gonna V/V-ing*, as well as the classification of the semantic roles and degrees of animacy of their subjects as features helpful, and even necessary, for a non-random, motivated assignment of semantic interpretations to the concordances. The meanings typically attributed to *going/gonna V/V-ing* (i.e. 'intention' and/or 'prediction') revolve around notions of 'deliberate volition' *vs* 'indirect cause or involuntary consequence/participation', respectively. The possibility of plausibly determining these notions rests on the detection and classification of the above discussed lexico-syntactic clues.

3.2.1 Classification of the meanings of the concordances

We considered three meaning options as relevant to our data: (a) 'intention', understood as 'the projected realization of a conscious, deliberate and willing action by the subject'; (b) 'prediction', that is, 'the foreseeable realization of an event that involves the subject as an involuntary participant, whether sentient or not'; and (c) 'either intention or prediction' for ambiguous cases. (We thus did not consider more specific meaning distinctions like 'premeditation', 'imminence' or 'assumption'.)

To assign interpretive semantic labels to the concordances, we started out by taking into consideration the interplay of three features previously classified in the concordances: the semantic role and degree of animacy of the subjects, the syntactic type of the clauses containing *going/gonna V/V-ing* as well as the meanings of the verbs in the infinitival complements. More specifically, we adopted the following six interpretive criteria, relevant to the constructions and their immediate environment:

– criterion 1: the meaning of 'intention' applies to a concordance in which a first person subject encodes the semantic role of an agent in a declarative (cf. Bybee 1988: 255). We regarded it as likely that the utterer of a message in the first person, as a volitional agent, is making predictions about their will to act rather than about circumstances that will affect them independently of their will; e.g.:

(52) "Look, here's what I'm going to do" (FR3:1580)

(53) "we're gonna be taking up our morning offering" (J90:264)

(54) "Yeah. I was gonna say." (KSR:1105)

– criterion 2: the meaning of 'intention' also applies to a concordance in which a second person subject encodes the semantic role of an agent in an interrogative.

We regarded it as plausible that an addresser assumes that their addressee – identified by a second-person subject – is a rational and co-operative co-interlocutor, and also a volitional agent, who can be asked questions about their ability and willingness to control their future deliberate acts, rather than someone who can be sensibly queried about events that are not under their control; e.g.:

(55) "What are you going to do about that conifer?" (KBB:337)

(56) "How are you gonna be occupying yourself?" (K6Y:949)

(57) "What are you gonna be doing now that you're not working?" (K6Y:945)

– criterion 3: the meaning of 'prediction' applies when a concordance expresses an involuntary experience, unintentional cause, state or the undergoing of a process realized by some other entity, and/or when the subject of the clause denotes an inanimate entity (cf. Bybee 1988: 255). In such cases, it is the nature of the verb that mainly determines the interpretation, with the caveat that some verbs are compatible with both an 'intentional' as well as an 'unintentional' reading (e.g. *get*, *harm, work*), and that some verbs change their (un)intentionality value depending on the argument they take (*give thanks vs give results*); e.g.:

(58) "I honestly don't know what's going to happen then" (K5J:492)

(59) "Preserving such diversity in the context of diminishing INSET budgets and the trend to school-led INSET is going to become increasingly difficult" (G1F:1295)

(60) "If you square a number you're gonna get a positive answer" (KND:709)

(61) "and unfortunately it's going to take a while" (KCE:6265)

– criterion 4: the meaning of 'prediction' also applies when a concordance encodes a first person agentive subject in an interrogative. The interpretation here is due to the interplay between the syntactic type of the clause and the semantic role of the subject. Indeed, when addressers identified by first-person agentive subjects ask themselves what they are going to do, they are wondering what will happen to them, rather than trying to penetrate the recesses of their minds to figure out what it is exactly that they intend to do. Thus, a sentence like *Where am I going to go?* can be more sensibly paraphrased as *Where can/should I go?* than as *Where do I want to go?*; e.g.:

(62) "Were we going to be looking at guys backing into the path of oncoming lorries in order to preserve the decencies?" (HR9:376)

(63) "are we going to decide what we think can be missed out?" (F7E:210)

– criterion 5: the meaning of 'prediction' also applies to a concordance encoding a second-person agentive subject in a declarative clause. Here too the plausibility of the interpretation is due to the interplay between the syntactic type of the clause and the semantic role of the subject. When an addresser makes a prediction about the future events involving the addressee – referred to by a second-person subject – the former informs the latter of what is going to happen to him/her, regardless of the latter's intentions or hopes. The prediction in this case may be based on background knowledge of external circumstances – possibly including the typical, and thus predictable, behaviour of the addressee – or an awareness of one's authority over the addressee (i.e. that one's present imposition will unfailingly determine a precise future course of events), but in any case does not involve a consideration of the other person's will. The notion of intention is not necessarily ruled out from such a scenario, but it can only be interpreted as the *speaker's* rather than the *subject's* intention; e.g.:

(64) "it's the sort of thing you're going to be plotting anyway" (K6J:1218)

(65) "And you are going to be going skiing" (KBF:13401)

(66) "You're not going to be walking down that road and say look there's an ox or No" (FMG:351)

– criterion 6: the meaning of 'intention and/or prediction' is relevant to concordances encoding third person agentive – not necessarily human – subjects. In such cases, the addresser is informing the addressee about a third party that may either be intentionally planning future events or alternatively be inescapably affected by them; e.g.:

(67) "everybody's gonna be colouring in" (KCK:28)

(68) "and he's gonna be cooking all these sausages" (KCT:12018)

(69) "People's gonna be sending them in" (KD8:3564)

(70) "the future engineers are going to be coming from" (F8B:249)

(71) "Quite how Phonogram are going to market the band remains to be seen" (CHB:1388)

(72) "She thought he was going to start talking about abortions again" (EDN:1176)

Also, co-textual cues may further contribute to determining the interpretation to be assigned to a construction, in support of the above-mentioned classificatory guidelines. For example, in (73), the representation of an event as involving an experiencer in subject position signals that the meaning conveyed is 'prediction'; in addition, the embedding clause *to know*, which indicates degree of certainty, signals that the future event is to be interpreted as highly probable. In (74), a second-person agentive subject in a declarative suggests that 'prediction' is the meaning being conveyed; this is also signalled by the adverbial of certainty *no doubt*:

(73) "We put enough rehearsal in to know we were going to be ok" (C9M:278)

(74) "You're not going to give me his name, either, no doubt, because he told you something he shouldn't have done" (GV2:2927)

Table 13 summarizes the basic meaning assignment procedure adopted:

Table 13: Basic meaning assignment procedure

Criteria	**Meaning assigned**		
	Intention	**Prediction**	**Intention and/or prediction**
1. First person agentive subject in a declarative	+	-	-
2. Second person agentive subject in an interrogative	+	-	-
3. Experiencer or patient and/or inanimate subject	-	+	-
4. First person agentive subject in an interrogative	-	+	-
5. Second person agentive subject in a declarative	-	+	-
6. Third person agentive subject	-	-	+

The above criteria helped us assign plausible semantic labels to most of the concordances. However, we sometimes (see Table 14, last column) noticed that the application of these guidelines did not produce intuitively satisfactory interpretations, that is, the meaning assigned occasionally seemed to clash with our intuitive understanding of the concordances. In such cases, we also examined the wider semantic-syntactic environment of the constructions, looking for clues that might motivate our divergent interpretations.

To begin with, the encoding of a conscious deliberate act by an agentive subject does not necessarily also signal willingness to act; rather, it may imply a forced choice (i.e. a duty that one has to carry out, but whose realization requires deliberate intervention), or a predictable consequence that is not under the subject's control; in either case, this triggers a predictive reading. For instance, the deliberate act of paying encodes a strong refusal in (75) (i.e. it conveys determination, as it expresses the volitional notion of having made up one's mind), and the inevitable consequence of an external circumstance in (76) (i.e. it manifests coercion or forced involvement; indeed, "judging from the basis of the that" serves as the source of evidence for a predictive reading):

(75) "Lepine walked to his rented car. No chances with the bus, and besides, he wasn't going to be paying any more bills" (ECU:1904)

(76) "Ian said that judging from the basis of the that some of the nurses there are gonna be paying a hundred and twenty percent more, whatever it was, in contributions." (F7J:773)

Similarly, in the following examples, the lexical verbs *say*, *look at*, *produce* and *go up* denote conscious, deliberate acts; however, the *if*-clauses, which represent conditions, qualify the events depicted in the main clauses as probable consequences – and thus as predictable phenomena – rather than intentional acts:

(77) "The other thing is that if you do ask these questions when the guy gets on the telephone to you, he's going to say, 'Here is somebody who knows something about the media, who knows how we operate.'" (KRP:328)

(78) "If George wins, erm a lot of artists are gonna be looking at their contracts and erm those that are signed on similar terms will no doubt want to er er renegotiate. George Michael will be giving evidence and the case could last till Christmas." (K6D:170)

(79) "you're that if everybody was the same then erm then you're somehow necessarily going to be producing at a subsistence level" (KM6:579)

(80) "He's going to be going up erm each weekend if this happens" (KE2:46)

Also, adverbs or embedding structures may affect the interpretation of given concordances. In (81) and (82), *obviously* and *I think*, which express degree of (un)certainty rather than (un)willingness, colour *going/gonna V/V-ing* as expressions of prediction, even if the lexical verbs in the infinitival complements encode intentional acts; along the same lines, agentive verbs like *help* encode the notion of volition, but if applied to inanimate subjects, they can only be assigned a predictive reading, as in (83):

(81) "Yeah. And we're obviously going to ask him to He, he" (KD8:4566)

(82) "Well, I think that's what we're gonna be doing" (KCW:2096)

(83) "It's not gonna help the patient like, at the time, like, at the time if your patient complains, something will be done" (KBU:1551)

From the opposite perspective, verbs denoting involuntary experiences like *be* and *find out* may be used in the encoding of events represented as intentional, that is, as the outcome of goal-oriented, volitional effort (i.e. as if they evoked an implicit notion of volitional attempt or decision); e.g.:

(84) "Yeah. I am going to be in the front seat! Oh no you're not!" (KBL:3044)

(85) "And I've got this with Neil. The moment I get er over Christmas, I'm going to be finding out where are the training courses. That's it." (KBF:6649)

Moreover, not all intention-oriented *vs* prediction-oriented co-textual elements are easily classifiable, as the following examples illustrate:

(86) "Good, because with this new project in the offing I'm going to be working to a very tight schedule." (HA7:3142)

(87) "For instance, if you are going to be discussing inner city problems" (ADK:1731)

(88) "So you're gonna be heading for the sun? Yeah. Spain" (FLK:343)

In (86), the occurrence of a human agentive first-person subject signals 'intention', but the expression *in the offing* hints at a cause likely to bring about the event being discussed as a consequence to be expected. In (87), the presence of a second-person subject in a declarative suggests that 'prediction' is the right interpretation, but the introductory *if* prefacing the construction makes this compatible with an 'intentional and/or predictive' meaning. In (88), the syntax suggests that the original utterance was a declarative, but the punctuation signals that it was intended as a request for information; the meaning conveyed is therefore that of 'intention' rather than 'prediction'.

Therefore, our coding procedure for the assignment of meanings to the constructions first took into consideration the syntactic type of the clauses, the semantic role of the subjects, and the grammatical person (first, second or third) of the subjects. When the interpretation as determined by these semantic-syntactic cues seemed to be at variance with the intuitive interpretation attributable to a given concordance, then we also took the larger co-text into consideration. We cannot claim that our meaning attribution procedure actually detects the meaning the speaker had in mind on any specific occasion. However, the procedure adopted represents an attempt at a consistent and replicable classification of the meanings of the *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* concordances, meanings whose assignment can be plausibly motivated by co-textual clues.

Table 14 summarizes the findings of the application of the above procedure to our sample. 'Prediction' is the most frequently instantiated meaning, accounting for about 66 per cent of the data. Its distribution is similar in the main sets; indeed, it accounts for 34 per cent of the *going/gonna V* data and 32 per cent of the *going/gonna V-ing* data, respectively. The next most frequent meaning is 'intention', relevant to about 27 per cent of the concordances; more specifically, 12 per cent of the *going/gonna V* set and 15 per cent of the *going/gonna V-ing* set. The difference in frequency of occurrence of the two meanings is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Finally, about 7 per cent of the data is compatible with a twofold interpretation. Overall, about 8 per cent of all the concordances were classified on the basis of co-textual cues apparently overruling the main classificatory criteria presented above.

Table 14: Distribution of meanings 'intention', 'prediction' and 'intention and/or prediction'

Data set	Intention	Prediction	Either	Total	Co-text overruling classification rules
Going V	7%	25%	3%	35%	2%
Gonna V	5%	9%	1%	15%	0%
Going V-ing	9%	19%	2%	30%	1%
Gonna V-ing	6%	13%	1%	20%	5%
Global	27%	66%	7%	100%	8%

Therefore, the constructions often appear to convey clear-cut intentional or predictive values, mostly identifiable by applying the above-described procedure. Resorting to other co-textual information for assigning an interpretation is necessary only for a small number of concordances. Despite this, there still remain cases in which the interpretation cannot be disambiguated even in context.

4 Discussion

In this study we addressed two questions: one, under what co-textual conditions – similar or different – *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* are used, and two, how to plausibly assign the meanings of 'intention' and/or 'prediction' to instances of *going/gonna V*/*V-ing* on the basis of semantic-syntactic clues of their co-text.

With regard to the first question, our data suggests that *going/gonna V-ing* displays colligational patterns highly comparable to those of *going/gonna V*. Both constructions show a preference for the oral medium, are realized mostly with the phrase *going to* rather than the word *gonna*, tend to combine with active infinitives, usually have finite verbs conjugated in the present tense and appearing in contracted forms, may occasionally co-occur with adverbs, tend to occur in affirmative declaratives, and are typically associated with subjects encoded in the form of pronouns (especially first and second person) whose referents identify human agents. Finally, both constructions can encode the grammatical meanings of 'intention' or 'prediction' or be ambiguous between the two, and display similar distribution patterns for these semantic distinctions. Overall, therefore, *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* reveal converging semantic and syntactic patterns when their immediate co-textual environment is taken

into consideration, even if neither construction shows a distinctive preference for a specific set of lexical verbs representative of a specialized semantic field.

The progressive and non-progressive data sets, however, differ in other respects. The *going/gonna V-ing* concordances occur in spoken data much more frequently (72%) than the *going/gonna V* concordances (52%), the latter being also frequently instantiated in literary texts (see Table 4). Also, the *going/gonna V-ing* concordances are more frequently associated with agentive subjects, and with contracted, present tense forms of the matrix verbs. That is, they correlate more strongly with features of spontaneous, oral, dialogic interaction. Finally, *going/gonna V-ing* is, on the whole, much less frequent than *going/gonna V*, the former being marginally represented in the BNC as a whole (see Table 1). Its link to the here-and-now of the communicative context (i.e. its association with features of informal, unplanned interaction), its limited frequency and the concentration of its distribution mostly in spoken data suggest that *going/gonna V-ing* is a construction that characterizes an informal register, and that it is not fully established yet; indeed, it is emerging in that form of language production which is in general open to the introduction of innovative expressions, namely speech. *Going/gonna V-ing* may thus be a manifestation of the increasing spread of the progressive in English, which is subject to weaker and weaker co-textual constraints (Gavis 1998, Hundt 2004).

In addition, there are qualitative differences between *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing*, which our corpus sample reveals in part. The presence of a progressive infinitive in *going/gonna V-ing* attributes the semantic notion of 'being in progress' to the event being represented, if this is being compared to another one located in the same temporal context. Thus, for instance, *We are going to be having lunch when they arrive* signals that the event of having lunch extends before, during and after the arrival of a third party; the former is an ongoing, future event – glossable as 'will already/still be in the process of having lunch' – that forms the background against which the latter, punctual event is framed. Alternatively, the event in progress can be associated with a parallel one taking place over the same extension of time, as in *When he's swimming, I'm gonna be making my phone calls*. Our sample contains a few concordances in which *going/gonna V-ing* is used with a progressive meaning; e.g.:

(89) "Next Sunday at this time we're going to be having a a [sic] service of rededication for the leaders of our organizations" (G5H:9)

(90) "Well certainly not in the period during which we're going to be discussing the various submissions" (HVJ:244)

(91) "and whilst we're singing this we're gonna be taking up our morning offering" (J90:264).[16]

Despite the limited number of instances found, the compatibility of *going/gonna V-ing* with the progressive meaning may explain why there are no stative verbs used in the *V-ing* form in our sample,[17] and why punctual verbs only occasionally occur in this form.[18]

In addition, the notion of 'being in the process of performing an action' may also colour instances of *going/gonna V-ing* with the pragmatic nuance of 'being engaged in a course of action (independently of one's will)', the adverbial triggering an implicature ('deliberately, but not necessarily willingly'). For instance, in *I'm going to be doing this for the rest of my life, if I'm not careful*, the future action is represented as an extended event that will be in progress – due to the explicit encoding of progressive aspect – and that the subject-speaker will be involved in as it unfolds; the subject-speaker is thus portrayed as the participant that will happen – rather than decide – to realize the event when it is already under way – i.e. seemingly having no control over it – even if the event *per se* does require the performance of a deliberate act.[19]

Instead, in *I'm going to do this for the rest of my life, if I'm not careful,* the future action is represented as a whole event, not susceptible to change, definite and fixed (due to the lack of an explicit mark of the progressive), as if already decided upon by the speaker who sets out to carry out a deliberate action; however, this contrasts with the larger situation being represented, which is about unwanted consequences affecting, or happening to, the subject-speaker in contrast with, or independently of, her/his desires (the *if*-clause identifies a hypothetical condition, from which a predictable conclusion can be drawn). As a result, this second sentence sounds less felicitous than the previous one. (In contrast, *I'm going to do this for the rest of my life, I really enjoy it* sounds fine because the speaker-subject's inferable decision to act is supported by a congruent motivation.)

Thus, in the representation of concomitant events, *going/gonna V-ing* is more compatible with a 'predictive' rather than an 'intentional' reading. In our sample, a few examples appear to bear this out. That is, some concordances encode deliberate actions, but require a predictive reading because they represent events as consequences of other events, rather than as outcomes of the subject's decisions – due to co-textual cues acting as evidentials – and as happening as a matter of course – due to the progressive, which acts as a responsibility-disclaimer, thus reinforcing and confirming the predictive reading (Celle, Smith 2010); e.g.:

(92) "Judging by the thickness of the file in front of me we are going to be working together for some little time yet" (J17:1453)

(93) "if we continue like this we're gonna be re-inventing the wheel every year" (J8D:1436)

(94) "Because if you're speaking from a script you're going to be speaking like this (HUU:86).

At the same time, both the progressive and the non-progressive infinitive are felicitous with *going/gonna* if the event represented involves the subject as an experiencer, which necessarily rules out an intentional reading, as in *I am going to suffer for the rest of my life, if I am not careful* and *I am going to be suffering for the rest of my life, if I am not careful*; e.g.:

(95) "if you square a number you're gonna get a positive answer" (KND:709)

(96) "I want to know whether we're going to be blushing when they put him up in the Foreign Ministry at a press conference and he spills" (CJT:1344).

The above examples, therefore, suggest that the *going/gonna V* and the *going/gonna V-ing* constructions are compatible with different semantic-pragmatic nuances: they can be associated with the representation of different types of events (i.e. in progress *vs* complete, unintentional *vs* deliberate). As in other syntactic constructions, the progressive in *going/gonna V-ing* may allow the speaker not to fully commit him-/herself to the representation of the situation, to describe it as susceptible to change (Williams 2002), and as dynamic and focused on the speaker's subjective interpretive perspective (Rydén 1997).

The second question addressed in this paper was how to assign the meanings of 'intention' and 'prediction' to instances of *going/gonna V/V-ing*, and how to motivate such assignment. We used syntactic and semantic co-textual cues as assignment criteria. More specifically, we considered an interplay of factors (i.e. (degree of) humanness, (degree of) agentivity, person number and the interactional function of messages) as co-determining the meanings of *going/gonna V/V-ing*. That is, we did not think that either meaning is activated when a single given semantic/syntactic element is present. Thus, 'intention' does not equate merely with 'volition', but requires two concomitant notions – potential for deliberate volition plus willingness to act – while 'prediction' is possible, for

instance, both with sentient human participants involved in involuntary experiences and with inanimate participants unconsciously causing events.

Our data shows that in most cases it is possible to unambiguously assign the meanings of 'intention' or 'prediction' (93%), while in a minority of cases (7%), the interpretation remains ambivalent between the two meanings. We also noticed that 92 per cent of the time (see Table 14) the assignment criteria adopted gave rise to interpretations that matched our intuitive classification of the concordances as instantiations of the meanings of 'intention', 'prediction' and 'either intention or prediction'. Both findings lend support to the validity of the assignment procedure adopted.

When there was a mismatch between our intuitive interpretation of a given concordance and its meaning assignment based on the above-mentioned criteria, it was still possible, however, to retrieve information from additional co-textual elements that could motivate the alternative reading. This strongly suggests that it is the variable co-text of instances of *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing,* rather than the constructions *per se* – which remain the same across concordances – that is involved in meaning assignment.

In particular, our findings reveal that the frequency with which the meaning of 'intention' is instantiated (32%) correlates not merely with the incidence of human subjects (70%) and agentive subjects (72%) in our sample, but with the frequency of first-person agentive subjects in declaratives (28%) and second-person agentive subjects in interrogatives (1%). This suggests that meanings can be plausibly assigned by considering a set of relevant contextual elements.

5 Conclusion

The global picture emerging from this study is that an interplay of factors guides the use of the *going/gonna V(-ing)* constructions. Their immediate co-textual environments are quite similar; in particular, they convey the same range of semantic values (i.e. 'intention', 'prediction' or either), although these meanings appear to be a result of converging semantic clues – especially the event types represented and participant arguments of the predicates – rather than a property of the constructions *per se*.

Despite these similarities, the usage of the constructions is not totally equivalent. *Going/gonna V-in*g is not as well-established as *going/gonna V*; the former is generally infrequent and typical mainly of oral, dialogic, spontaneous communication, which suggests it is an emerging construction, part of the larger phenomenon of the increase of the progressive in English. In addition, *going/gonna V-in*g appears to be compatible with semantic and pragmatic nuances not

as easily available to *going/gonna V*; this suggests that the morphological-aspectual encoding of the verbs in the infinitives is not necessarily an indifferent choice; that is, the progressive form may retain its progressive meaning (ongoingness) and be exploited for pragmatic purposes (e.g. expression of lack of intention), or indirectly evoke progressive meaning, thus pre-empting the use of *going/gonna V-ing* with stative verbs and discouraging its employment with punctual ones.

However, our corpus data does not allow us to carry out extensive, systematic comparisons of alternative morphological encodings of the same predicates (only 34 verb types are shared between the sets of *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* constructions; see section 3.1.8). The associability of the constructions with the representation of events differing in terms of aspectual marking and/or pragmatic implications can thus be directly checked with data specially elicited for that purpose. This suggests that an extension of this study could involve the collection and analysis of native speaker judgements on the suitability of the *going/gonna V* and *going/gonna V-ing* constructions with the representation of events differing in terms of duration (i.e. telic, punctual, durative, iterative, habitual), process-like qualities (i.e. dynamic, stative) and aspect (e.g. progressive, perfective), and on their pragmatic interpretability (e.g. intentionality *vs* involuntary involvement, tentativeness *vs* confidence/certainty).

Notes

1. The authors would like to thank Dr Ylva Berglund for her precious help and advice in the selection of the data. The first and second author are responsible, respectively, for sections 1–3.1.11 and 3.2–5.
2. Binnick (1991: 62), however, calls it a post-present, while Comrie (1976: 64–65) includes it among expressions of prospective *aspectual* meaning.
3. Here and elsewhere, examples in italics are made up.
4. The resulting datasets, therefore, would *not* mirror the frequency and distribution of the *going/gonna V/V-ing* constructions in the BNC.
5. These include (a) cases in which *going* is used as motion verb (e.g. "she was now thinking about going to stay with her brother and his wife" B30:443); (b) cases where a *V-ing* form after *be* is syntactically part of the subject complement (e.g. "The whole problem is going to be catching her off guard" ASS:1976)'; and (c) cases in which the automatic POS-tagging has mistakenly analyzed an instance of *V-ing* as the form of a verb, rather than a noun or adjective (e.g. in "the main cost is going to be harvesting cost" (HY:111) *harvesting* is a noun that premodifies the noun *cost*, not a

verb that takes the noun *cost* as its argument; so the sentence means 'the main cost will consist in cost relevant to harvesting' rather than *'the main cost will harvest cost').

6. This differs somewhat from Berglund and Williams (2007), who define four categories: prediction, prediction with some intention, intention, intention with some prediction.
7. We first worked on one fourth of the set together to be able to arrive at a common framework for the analyses and make sure we would adopt and follow a common coding procedure. We compared our individual analyses of the first quarter of the examples and discussed unclear examples in order to develop the analysis scheme. This way we were able to see where our analyses tended to disagree and address problematic cases with the view of making consequent analyzes more similar. Having trained ourselves on a section of the data, we moved on to analyze the rest of our examples divided into two sets. The analysed occurrences were merged and the results examined.
8. For an example, see Meyer's (1991: 176, 179) findings on the distribution and functions of appositions in various genres.
9. In addition, pragmatic inferences may be drawn about alternative encoding of a given construction; see Grundy's pragmatics (politeness)-oriented interpretation of the use (or non-use) of resumptives (Grundy 2000: 90).
10. This corresponds to the distribution of *going/gonna V* forms across spoken and written texts in the whole BNC: 52% *vs* 48%, respectively.
11. This is in line with Francis and Kučera's (1982: 555) findings about the distribution of progressive forms in the Brown Corpus.
12. The text type labels used in the table reproduce the BNC taxonomy. Here follows an explanation of what each label corresponds to. *Conversation*: conversation, recorded by volunteers carrying portable tape-recorders; *Other spoken*: spoken material sampled in four contextually based categories; *Unpublished*: written material such as letters, memos, reports, minutes, and essays; *Other published*: written material such as brochures, leaflets, manuals, advertisements; *Newspapers*: a selection of national and regional titles; *Non-academic/non-fiction*: written texts other than fiction or academic; *Fiction and verse*: imaginative literature; *Academic prose*: academic writing.
13. *Right after the verb phrase* means either 'immediately after the lexical verb' or 'after the lexical verb and its arguments'.
14. However, in the case of a repetition of the syntactic construction itself, we did not consider the re-occurring *going/gonna* form (e.g. "Yes that's right.

He's going to be going to talk about the. We'd much rather you came to the banquet." JTE:876; lexeme: *talk*).

15. We thus did not make any internal distinctions among degrees of humanness – as determinable by properties of the referents such as age, social status – or more generally, among degrees of (human) animacy – as determinable by the linguistic encoding of the subjects (e.g. pronoun *vs* proper name *vs* common noun; Frawley 1992: 94–95).
16. Other possible examples include: "Nigel's going to be turning in his grave" (FUJ:1796); "And what's he going to be doing meanwhile?" (HR4:1102); "In about two or three weeks they're gonna be digging up every inch of pavement" (FXT:1223); "over these next three weeks, we're gonna be looking at these three, er illustrations" (J90:18); "in seven years' time they're going to be playing Carter" (CK6:1787); "Does he know I'm going to be babysitting him when he gets to New York?" (EF1:962) and "when she first starts she's gonna be getting through seven or eight pairs a day" (KBG:3251).
17. Those with a likely stative meaning are actually used dynamically; e.g.: "having a service" (G5H:9), "having a speaker" (F8U:178), "having people staying" (KCF:1845), "having a new one" (KD4:847), "having a conversation" (KSS:112), "seeing a lot more of her" (FYV:994), "seeing more substantial redundancies" (HYE:279) and "considering education" (JT4:540).
18. Punctual verbs include: *arrive, ask, buy, catch, close down, delete, drop off, find, find out, get, give, hit, join, leave, meet, pass, pick up, reach, start,* and *vote*. Others, while intrinsically punctual, are used in the representation of durative or habitual events (e.g. "sneezing for a few minutes" D90:10; "cropping up from time to time" BPK:57). The findings are in line with Gesuato (forthcoming), in which out of 242 instances of *going/gonna V-ing*, collected from corpora exemplifying native and non-native varieties of English, 70% instantiate dynamic durative events, 8% telic events, 2% iterative events and 16% punctual ones, while 4% are unclear.
19. Leech (2004 [1971]: 68–69) makes a similar remark about the matter-of-course reading of the *will be V-ing* future, which is sometimes applied to events that cannot be literally said to happen in the normal course of events, but are depicted with an element of comic exaggeration: "This is what things will come to in the natural course of events if he carries on in this absurd way".

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