# CONVERGENT GRAMMATICALIZATION OF SOME ROMANCE AUXILIARIES

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**Abstract.** The paper discusses a situation that may occur during the historical process of grammaticalization. This phenomenon, labelled *convergent grammaticalization*, consists of several items evolving along clines that ultimately lead to a single grammatical function. After a brief theoretical projection, the paper analyses three such situations: the French future, the Italian passive, and the Romanian future. In each of these cases, two or more items began to grammaticalize, drew closer and closer in meaning, construction and usage, and ended by competing for the same grammatical meaning, with more or less predictible issues. Such convergencies may occur or have occurred during any grammaticalization process, with important consequences upon the pace and issue of the process.

**Key words**: grammaticalization, auxiliary, future, passive, French, Italian, Romanian.

The present study originates in the observation of a peculiar linguistic phenomenon in contemporary Romanian: the coexistence of several competing future auxiliaries. Starting from this situation, I investigated possible similar evolutions in French and Italian, which led me to identify a situation that may occur along the grammaticalization cline of an item. I label this situation *convergent grammaticalization*, i.e. the grammaticalization of different lexical items in different constructions, which in time come closer to each other and tend to express a single grammatical meaning.

Traditional descriptions of grammaticalization clines (Traugott, Heine 1991, etc.) assume that such clines imply only one item evolving into one gram. However, some linguists described clines involving more than one item: Craig (1991) coined the term *polygrammaticalization* about a situation she found in Rama, in which one lexical item is the source of several grammaticalization clines, and ultimately of different grams. Further studies (Lai 2001 on Hakka language, Robert 2004, etc.) have shown that polygrammaticalization is a rather common phenomenon in various languages.

Polygrammaticalization can thus be described as a one-to-multiple grammaticalization cline. The opposite phenomenon, a multiple-to-one cline, was dubbed *convergence* by Hopper and Traugott (1993)[2]:

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[2] A recent study on Romanian futures in the sixteenth century (Niculescu 2011) proposed the label "competition".

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> forms from several slightly different domains may converge on one grammatical domain, provided that there is pragmatic, semantic and syntactic appropriateness. (Hopper, Traugott 1993: 113)

Similarly, Bybee and Dahl (1989) analyzed the multiple origin of future in world languages. They identified three possible semantic sources for future grams: verbs of volition, motion verbs and verbs expressing need or possession. As one can notice, these approaches are cross-linguistic and 'symbolic', since they focus mainly on semantic and cognitive regularities across languages. But such convergence situations can also be found inside one single language, at a given moment. This situation has been given little attention so far[3].

It is thus important to study the mechanism of convergent grammaticalization inside a single language. After a brief theoretical projection, convergence situations in three Romance languages shall be analyzed. The analyzed grams are the French future, the Italian passive and the Romanian future, each illustrating one of the three convergence situations identified in the first part of the study.

## 1. CONVERGENT GRAMMATICALIZATION

In a purely theoretical approach, one may identify three stages in a grammaticalization cline involving more than one source item:

1. A first, pre-convergence stage, can exhibit one of the following situations:

a. The grammatical role A is expressed by a fully grammaticalized gram *a*. (Since the present paper deals with verbal auxiliaries, this situation can be described as: the tense/aspect/mood/diathesis A is expressed by an old, fully grammaticalized auxiliary, maybe an affix.) A second verbal construction, involving a different source item, *b*, begins the cline, first as a more expressive and 'heavier' synonym of *a*.

b. There is no grammatical role A, because there is no *a* gram[4]. It may happen that several constructions *a, b, c,...* are used ever more frequently to express meanings that by bleaching become closer to each other, thus initiating simultaneous grammaticalization clines.

2. The second stage is the real convergence stage: several constructions evolve toward a single grammatical role. In situation a, one may say that the *b* form simply comes to challenge the older form, *a*. In the second situation, the grammaticalizing forms *a, b, c...* may come to compete in order to express the same grammatical meaning.

In both cases, however, this should logically be a situation of fragile balance, since competing forms (be they of the same age or of different ones) necessarily distribute themselves according to a given criterion. As there is no 'absolute' synonymy among lexical items, there cannot be synonymy among grams. Competing (or 'convergent') items will distribute during this grammaticalization stage:

[3] Except for Kuteva's (2001) study on the triple source of English future (*shall, will* and *be going to*), but she did not correlate this phenomenon with the proposed notion of *convergence*.

[4] Cf. the '*gap-filling* hypothesis' (Hopper, Traugott 1993: 126, Wischer 2008, etc).

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a. according to a semantic distinction: *a, b, c...* being at an incipient stage of grammaticalization, their original, mostly lexical meaning is not completely bleached out; the remains of the original meaning can lead to subtle semantic distinctions between the crystallizing auxiliaries. This was the case in earlier stages of the grammaticalization of *shall* and *will* in English, for instance, where the meaning of need or volition was still perceptible;

b. according to the construction they participate in: what grammaticalizes at a given moment is not an isolated item, but a construction. Hence, grammaticalizing auxiliaries may each maintain a preference for a particular construction; for instance, Kuteva (2001) insists upon the period in which the future auxiliary *shall* was used with the first person singular or plural, and *will* with the other persons, as an echo of the original meaning and use of the modals *shall* and *will*;

c. according to language register or other extra-linguistic criteria (social, contextual or gender variation, if pertinent for a given language). An example can be the distribution between the so-called 'written' and 'oral' future auxiliaries in Romanian, as shown in the second part of the present article.

3. Eventually, a third stage may solve the convergence situation: a single construction express a single grammatical meaning, which will allow the grammaticalization to continue. This situation may theoretically intervene in several ways:

If there is a semantic distinction among the competing grams (situation a. above), two solutions can be imagined:

a. *a* and *b* being slightly different as to their meaning, *b* bleaches more quickly, it overlaps with and absorbs the meaning previously expressed by *a*; in this situation, *a* may decay in use and disappear, and *b* continues the grammaticalization cline. If *a* was an older gram, this evolution is a case of what Pinkster (1987) called *overlapping*, leading to a renewal of grams, as in the gradual replacement of Latin passive suffixes by the new auxiliary 'be'.

b. *a* and *b* have very different meanings and maintain an equal bleaching pace; in this case, the grammatical meanings to express may remain distinct, although very close. A case in point is the genesis of the two passives in German: an 'active', dynamic passive expressed by *werden* (originally 'to become'), and a 'static', resultative passive using *sein* ('to be'). Yet passive, if possessing grammatical expression, is generally expressed cross-linguistically by a single gram, thus representing a single grammatical 'case' in a given language.

If the competing items *a, b, c...* are distributed according to context (situation b.), convergence will be solved by the creation of a single paradigm by means of suppletism, which is indeed about to occur in the case of *shall* and *will*.

Finally, the third situation, distribution according to language register, characterizes linguistic dialects not yet standardized, or at the beginning of the standardization process. Convergent grammaticalization can thus be regarded as another aspect of the non-standardized situation, and its solution will depend on the normalization process, which will choose among the competing items.

Items that tend to express at the same moment a single grammatical meaning are logically little grammaticalized ones; the competition and the necessary distribution of these items should slow down the grammaticalization process for two reasons. First, when several items are available to the speaker, the frequency of occurrence of each will

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normally be much lower than if there was only one available item. As is well known, frequency of occurrence is an essential element to grammaticalization. Secondly, competing items tend to better and longer preserve their lexical meaning or their original construction, in order to distinguish themselves from neighboring grammaticalizing items. This too should slow down semantic bleaching and/or the reduction of transparadigmatic variability, both considered by Lehmann (1982) to be part of grammaticalization processes. For these reasons, the existence of a convergence situation along a grammaticalization cline is to be logically regarded as a factor slowing down the grammaticalization process.

## 2. CONVERGENT GRAMMATICALIZATIONS IN ROMANCE AUXILIARIES

I identified three convergent grammaticalizations affecting auxiliaries in French, Italian and Romanian, illustrating each of the three theoretical situations presented above. They concern two different grams (future and passive), which are here compared only in what concerns the grammaticalization cline. The French future and the Italian passive will be analysed only in passing, since their situation is well known: only the role of convergence along their grammaticalization cline shall be taken into account. More emphasis will be placed on the Romanian future, which illustrates convergence according to language register.

### 2.1. Distribution according to meaning: French future

As is well known, French created a new future at the same time as the other Romance languages, using the *habere* auxiliary after an infinitive: *cantare habeo* > *chanter-ai*. This grammaticalization was a rapid phenomenon. A form *daras* is attested as early as the Fredegard Chronicle, in the seventh century (according to Pinkster 1987: 214); in the *Oaths of Strasbourg* (ninth century) the following future constructions are mentioned: *salvarai* 'I will save' and *prindrai* 'I will take'. These forms appear to be highly grammaticalized: their only meaning is temporal futurity, without any trace of the previous, modal meaning of the *habere* construction, the form is phonetically eroded (especially in the plural forms: compare *avons* 'we have' full verb and *–ons* in *chanter-ons* 'we will sing') and morphologically bound (affix).

Old French sometimes uses verbal periphrases with *devoir, vouloir* and *aller* to express a futurity meaning. A *debere* construction and a *volere* construction were already accounted for in Late Latin (Gamillscheg 1957, Pinkster 1987, etc.), and they are continued by Old and Middle French. These constructions generally express a modal meaning of necessity or strong will, close to the future:

DEVOIR:

(1) *Pur* *ço* *prist* *sun* *ainned* *fiz,* *ki* *dut* *apres* *lui* *regner*
for that take.PST.3.SG his elder son who must.PST.3.SG after him rule

'for that, he took his elder son, who would be king after him' (*Rois* 66f, *apud* Gougenheim 1951)

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(2) *Et* *li* *chargea* *que* *il* *dëust* *dire...*
and he.ACC entrust.PST.3SG that he must.SBJV.PST.3.SG say

'and he entrusted him with saying' (*Troie prose* 160f, *apud* Gougenheim 1951)

VOULOIR:

(3) *de* *la* *dame* *vos* *voldrai* *dire* *un* *petitet* *de* *sa* *beauté*
of the lady you.D want.COND.1SG say a little of her beauty

'I shall tell you a few words about the lady's beauty' (*Fabliaux*, *apud* Gamillscheg 1957)

Both constructions seem to specialize during Classical French: *devoir* is used more and more as a future subjunctive, a future infinitive, after *si* and sometimes as future in the past (cf. 4 and 5), whereas *vouloir* becomes more or less a proximative-avertive (example 6; for a cross-linguistic description of proximative and avertive grams, see Kuteva 2001).

(4) *Que* *pensez-* *vous* *qu'* *il* *doibve* *advenir*
what think.PRS.2PL you that it must.SBJV.3SG happen

'What do you think would happen' (Larivey)

(5) *Demain,* *le* *temps* *semble* *devoir* *être* *plus* *Clement*
tomorrow the weather seem.PRS.3SG must be more mild

'It seems that tomorrow the weather will be milder' (Le Journal, 1928)

(6) *Lorsqu'* *il* *voulut* *mourir...*
when he want.PST.3SG die

'As he lay dying...' (Brantôme)

Both *devoir* and *vouloir* constructions have maintained these modal-future meanings up to modern French (cf. example 5), and Wilmet (2003) records a *vouloir* construction with a future meaning as a feature of the Champagne dialect nowadays.

On the contrary, the *aller* construction is a French innovation. Gougenheim (1951) and Wilmet (1970) evaluate its appearance as a future construction in the fifteenth century, and they both underline its rapid evolution during the whole sixteenth century:

(7) *Je* *vois* *lire,* *faictes* *silence*
I go.PRS.1SG read make.IMP.2PL silence

'I will read, be quiet' (*Farces* Cohen XLVI, 220)

The semantic evolution from motion to futurity and the grammaticalization of *aller* are well described (see, most recently De Mulder 2008).

But the present-day situation of the 'synthetic' or 'simple' future (*je chanterai*) and of the 'periphrastic' or 'close' future (*je vais chanter*) is all but clear. Scholars seem to agree on only one aspect: that there is indeed a competition between the two constructions. Comparative studies (such as Fleischmann 1982), French-based descriptions (Sauvageot

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1962, Helland 1995) or grammar handbooks for native or foreign speakers (Siouffi, Van Raemdonck 1999, for instance) all acknowledge a real challenge between the two future constructions, which are interchangeable in various contexts.

Other studies, on the contrary, insist upon a difference in meaning or in construction of the two French futures, but there, again, no agreement can be found as to the nature of this difference. Damourette and Pichon (1936) described the difference in terms of vision of the futurity: the simple future is a 'true' future, whereas the *aller* future expressed an *ultériorité*, 'durativity' or, in negative contexts, the 'extraordinary'. More recently, Vet (1993) places the difference at a pragmatic level: the simple future belongs to the 'discourse universe' centered on the third person, whereas the periphrastic future deals with the speaker's universe, with the *hic et nunc* of speech. This distinction was analyzed and somehow modulated by the comparative French-English monography of Celle (1997); finally, dedicated papers of the last decade, such as Laurendeau (2000) and Wales (2007) choose to describe the distinction between the two futures as a difference in modality.

Other analyses, such as Bossong (1981) and Jeanjean (1988), point out a difference in context rather than meaning. They show that the periphrastic future is by far more frequent in spontaneous, spoken French, while the simple future generally occurs in written texts. However, Blanche-Benveniste (1987) insists that meaning and usage distinctions are tightly correlated:

> les différences de formes signalent des différences de contenu, ne serait-ce que dans les façons subtilement différentes d'organiser l'information (Blanche-Benveniste 1987: 56)[5]

What conclusion can be drawn from such a variegated picture? First of all, there is a convergence situation of the two future constructions in contemporary French, which get closer to each other as their differences tend to become more and more subtle. Secondly, one must consider the overall historical evolution of the French future and its expressions. The figure below shows a period of multiple convergence during Old and Middle French, which was gradually reduced to only two competing forms, an older and a newer one.

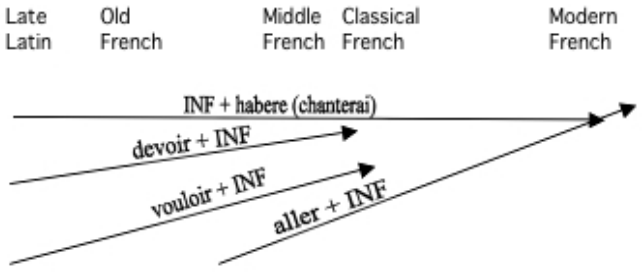



*Figure 1*
*French future constructions*

[5] 'Differences of form hide differences of meaning, at least in what concerns a subtle, different organisation of the information.'

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Hence, the maximum convergence period seems to have been left behind us. The two remaining competitors are closer then ever, which suggests that a solution is imminent. Indeed, at least one scholar, Wilmet (2003: 414), anticipates the complete replacement of the simple future by the periphrastic one. This may thus be regarded as a case of convergence preceding and announcing a renewal of grams.

### 2.2. Distribution according to construction: the Italian passive

The present-day situation of the Italian passive is slightly different from the situation of the French future. Most histories of Italian agree on dating the passive auxiliaries: *essere* followed by a past participle is a common Romance construction, inherited from Late Latin; passive uses of *venire* are first attested at the end of the fifteenth century, and uses of *andare* less then a century later. The historical evolution is summarized below:

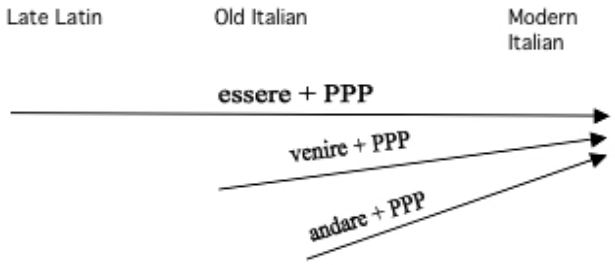



*Figure 2*
*Italian passive auxiliaries*

The three auxiliaries are today in competition with respect to several criteria. The first difference mentioned by grammars concerns the constructions in which the verbs are used. *Venire* can replace *essere* in any context, with any full verb and without any sensible change of meaning, but it can only be used in simple tenses (present, future, simple past, etc.).

Other scholars (Fornaciari 1974, Regula, Jernej 1975, Serianni 1988, Lepschy, Lepschy 1993) point out that there is also a semantic difference: *venire* presents a dynamical view of the event, whereas *essere* (by its affinity with adjective constructions) presents the 'stative' result of the event:

(8) *La* *porta* *viene* *chiusa* (dynamic point of view)
the door come.PRS.3SG closed.PART.F.SG

'The door is being closed'

(8') *La* *porta* *è* *chiusa* (static point of view)
the door be.PRS.3SG closed.PART.F.SG

'The door is closed'

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Lepschy and Lepschy (1993: 137) argue however that the dynamic vs static interpretation is rather the result of the chosen tense; from this point of view, no semantic distinction is inherent to the auxiliary itself.

Other, more subtle distinctions have sometimes been made: Fornaciari (1974) highlights the meaning of an involuntary or accidental event of *venire* in some contexts; Cresti (1999) highlights a difference of register (*venire* is unusual in informal spoken Italian); finally Van Molle-Maréchal (1974) shows that *venire* tends to occur with third person subjects.

*Essere* and *venire* thus seem to be distinguished according to meaning, construction and register. In this regard, Milan's (1985) comparative analysis of German and Italian passive auxiliaries pointed out that German and Italian auxiliaries were different with respect to the semantic distance between the members of each couple except for a small overlapping zone (*Überlappung*). *Werden* and *sein* assume different meanings, whereas *essere* and *venire* seem to be in an inclusion relation, hence competing on a larger meaning area.




*Figure 3*
*German and Italian passive auxiliaries* (Milan 1985: 286)

The solution of the convergence of Italian passive is less obvious, and only one linguist ventured a prediction about it. Schwarze (1988) sees the solution in the creation of a single, suppletive passive paradigm, in which *venire* would be used in simple tenses and *essere* in compound ones. This would mean that the distribution of *essere* and *venire* is primarily one of construction, not of meaning.

However, a third passive construction, using *andare*, is grammaticalizing in Italian. In this case too, linguists do not always agree about its place with respect to the two others. According to Fornaciari (1974), Serianni (1988), Regula and Jernej (1975), etc., *andare* seems to cover several clear-cut semantic areas or usages: attenuation of a praise or criticism (9), necessity (10), or disappearance verbs such as *smarrire, perdere*, etc. (10):

(9) *non occorre esemplificazione nessuna [...]*
NEG appear.PRS.3SG example none
*va solo notato che pare non esista un uso Riflessivo*
go.PRS.3SG only note.PART.M.SG that seem.PRS.3SG NEG exist.PST.3SG a use reflexive
'There is no need of exemplification [...], but it must be noted that there seems to be no reflexive use' (Serianni 1988)

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(10) *Questo film va visto senz' altro*

this movie go.PRS.3SG see.PART.M.SG without other

'This movie must absolutely be seen'

(11) *Il pacco è andato smarrito*

the parcel be.PRS.3SG go.PART.M.SG lose.PART.M.SG

'The parcel has been lost'

As to the distribution of *andare*, it is unanimously accepted that the verb never appears with an overt agent (impersonal passive), that it is used mainly in written texts of administrative style, and is generally employed with third person subjects. Blanche-Benveniste's remark seems to apply best in the case of *andare*, where context, construction and meaning are clearly related: *andare* expresses an impersonal passive, an event that happened as by an unknown, superior will. This meaning serves best to attenuate a personal attitude (such as criticism) or to describe events without a known agent (such as to disappear). On the other hand, impersonal constructions are rare in spontaneous speech (which by definition is built upon the first and second persons) and in informal writing, but they are frequent in the administrative and official register, again for their impersonal and attenuative effect (cf. Gaatone 1998 about impersonal passive in French).

In Italian, three items are grammaticalizing toward the passive meaning, but the issue of the convergence process is not as clearly acknowledged by linguists as that of the French future convergence (except in Schwarze's hypothesis, which only concerns two of the three competing auxiliaries though). Italian passive auxiliaries seem to retain part of their original meaning; however, the choice between them seems to be guided mainly by the construction they can (or cannot) be part of.

One may also remark that in the case of the Italian passive, three forms are competing (four if one counts the reflexive voice, which can also express the passive). Thus, the issue is less predictible than for the French future.

### 2.3. Distribution according to language register: Romanian future

With respect to the French future and the Italian passive, scholars at least agreed on the number of competing auxiliaries: two in French, three in Italian. Such is not the case for the Romanian future auxiliaries, however. Depending on the linguist and on the perspective adopted (historical or synchronical), the inventory of Romanian futures varies from one author to another. A first point to settle is to establish which are the possible future constructions in Romanian today.

Historical linguists, such as Sandfeld, Olsen (1936), Iordan, Guțu-Romalo, Niculescu (1967), Graur (1968) and Coteanu (1981) list five possibilities to express future:

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1. *vrea* 'will' + infinitive: *voi*[6] *merge* 'I will go';
2. *o* + infinitive: *oi merge* 'I will/may go' (cf. the meaning of French *devoir* in 2 and 4);
3. *o* + subjunctive: *o să merg* 'I will go';
4. *avea* 'have' + subjunctive: *am să merg* 'I will go';
5. *avea* 'have' + infinitive: *am (a) merge* 'I need to go/I will go'[7].

The second construction has a strong dubitative meaning; its past form, *oi fi mers* 'I might have gone', only express the dubitative. Iordan, Guțu-Romalo and Niculescu (1967) consider that the present, which could sometimes express future, was slowly triggered by the corresponding past form toward a modal meaning, and it became the auxiliary for the presumptive (an individual TAM in contemporary Romanian). *O* followed by the infinitive does not express futurity anymore, as it did in the sixteenth century[8]. *Avea* followed by the infinitive was attested in sixteenth-century texts with a future meaning. It dissapears completely thereafter, probably as a consequence of the global reduction of infinitive constructions, acknowledged as a 'Balkanism' (cf. Sandfeld 1930, Joseph 1983, Hock, Joseph 1996).

Three future constructions remain: *voi* with the infinitive, *o* with the subjunctive, *am* with the subjunctive. A fourth one may be added, which is currently grammaticalizing into a future: *urma* 'follow' with subjunctive (*urmează să merg* 'I follow to go > I will go'). This construction is well attested in the corpus used for the present study.

Four future constructions, considered to be productive today, have thus been taken into account:

1. *voi merge* ('want' verb);
2. *o să merg* ('go' verb);
3. *am să merg*/*aveam să merg* ('have' verb);
4. *urmează să merg*/*urma să merg* ('follow' verb).

The last two auxiliaries have also developed a future in the past, using the imperfect of the auxiliary. Only the past of form 3 is indexed by Graur (1968) and Coteanu (1981)[9].

In terms of meaning, some linguists consider that *voi* can replace an imperative, and it expresses a higher level of certainty; *am să*, by its modal origin ('need/must'), sometimes introduces an idea of obligation; finally, *o să* expresses certainty according to Iordan, Guțu-Romalo and Niculescu (1967), or, on the contrary, a hypothetical meaning, according to Coteanu (1981). All these meanings appear in specific contexts (subordinate clauses, for instance) or are context-induced (imperative); the meaning distinctions mentioned above are not regular or intrinsic to the auxiliaries themselves. In terms of construction, Sandfeld and Olsen (1936) consider that *am să* alone cannot occur in a subordinate clause (but see example 12).

[6] The auxiliary is a phonetically reduced form of the main verb. The reduced form will be used hereafter to indicate the auxiliary verb 'to want'. For reasons of clarity, I will use the form for the 1st person singular, if the auxiliary varies in person, and the unique form, if the auxiliary is invariable.

[7] Niculescu (2011) records yet another form, *vrea* 'will' + *fi* 'be' + gerund, that apparently expressed futurity in some 16th-century texts, before specializing in the modern use of an epistemic (expressing doubt).

[8] Indeed, the modern corpus used for this analysis never showed any occurrences of this construction with a future meaning.

[9] The first construction (*voi merge*) has a corresponding anterior past *voi fi mers* 'I would have gone', very rare and exclusively literary. The second construction has no corresponding past form.

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It is unanimously acknowledged that there is a difference as to register, but its definition varies from one author to another. The first auxiliary, *voi*, is generally said to belong to written, literary or even 'bookish', sometimes even to 'livresque and pretentious' style (Iordan, Guțu-Romalo, Niculescu 1967). It is said to be replaced in spoken language by *o să* (Sandfeld, Olsen 1936) or, on the contrary, to have entered the spoken language in replacement of *o să* (Graur 1968). The second and third forms, *o să* and *am să*, are unanimously qualified as 'oral' and 'popular'. For Sandfeld and Olsen (1936), the difference is geographical: *o să* is used in Valachia (South Romania) and *am să* in Moldavia (North-East of the country). For Coteanu (1981), the difference is not geographical, but concerns age and degree of grammaticalization: *o să* is older and more grammaticalized, judging by its reduced and invariable form (*uado* 'I go' > *ua* > *o*), whereas *am să* is less grammaticalized, because it still tolerates the insertion of other words between the auxiliary and the main verb.

Table 1 below presents the results of my corpus analysis, aimed at measuring the frequency of each of the four future auxiliaries according to context (formal or informal), and channel (written or spoken). Given the multiple distinctions pointed out in the litterature, the corpus includes various types of texts: fiction from the beginning of the twentieth century (considered the 'canon' of written language and taught as such at school), contemporary fiction, contemporary non-fiction, contemporary newspaper articles, spontaneous informal and formal speech.

*Table 1*

Comparative frequency of the four future auxiliaries in Romanian

| Texts | *voi* + INF | *o să* | *am să* | *urmează să* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fiction corpus | 73, 2% | 4, 4% (all in dialogues) | 20, 9% (of which: present tense 14,8%, imperfect 5,3%) | 1, 6% (all in the imperfect) |
| Drama corpus | 71, 6% | 13, 4% | 15% (all in present tense) | - |
| Contemporary fiction corpus | 37, 08% (of which: in dialogues 9,67%, in narrative 27,41%) | 37, 09% (of which: in dialogues 35,48%, in narrative 1,61%) | 22, 6% (equally (11,3%) in present and imperfect) | 3, 22% (equally (1,61%) in present and imperfect) |
| Contemporary non-fiction | 95, 05% | 1, 35% | 2, 25% (all in the imperfect) | 1, 35% (of which: present tense 0,45%, imperfect 0,9%) |
| Newspaper corpus | 91% (of which: in quotations 16%, in the text 75%) | 1% (all in quotations) | 0, 33% (all in the present tense) | 7, 67% (equally distributed in the present, imperfect, conditional and gerundive) |

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*Table 1 (continued)*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transcripts corpus | 82, 8% | 11, 28% | 3, 25%* (all in the present tense) | 2, 67% (of which: present tense 1,71%, gerundive 0,96%) |
| Formal speech | 94% | 6% | - | 3, 58% (of which: present tense 1,2%, in the imperfect 2,38%) |
| Spontaneous speech | 17, 85% | 70, 23% | 8, 33%* (all in the present tense) | - |

* only 1st person singular

'Classical' literary texts seem to confirm that *voi* belongs to the 'high' variety (in Ferguson's 1959 terms[10]) of Romanian, with a high frequency in narrative fragments. The distribution between *o să* and *am să* is more complex: it is not dialectal, since both forms are used by authors or characters from all dialectal areas. The fiction corpus tends to show a distribution between transcription of dialogues (*o să* more frequent) and narrated dialogues or internal monologues (*am să*). However, this distribution is not confirmed by the drama corpus, where the alternation between *o să* and *am să* is irregular. Both corpora may also indicate a distribution according to temporal meaning, since *are să* is often used, even in its present form, with the meaning of a dubitative future in the past, as in 12 and 13 below:

(12) *Botticelli* *asigură* *pe* *Ioanide*
Botticelli assure.PST.3SG PREP Ioanide

*că* *monumentul* *are* *să* *iasă* *foarte* *frumos.*
that monument.ART have.PRS.3SG SUB exit.SBJV.3SG very beautiful

'Botticelli assured Ioanide that the monument would be very beautiful' (Călinescu, *Ioanide*, I, 137)

(13) *Kaurava* *nici* *nu* *îndrăzni* *să* *întrebe*
Kaurava NEG NEG dare.PST.3SG SUB ask.SBJV.3SG

[10] The 'high (or H) variety' is "a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature (...) which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation." (Ferguson 1959: 435).

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| *ce* | *are* | *să* | *se* | *aleagă* | *de* | *vitele* | *lor* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| what | have.PRS.3SG | SUB | REFL | happen.SBJV.3SG | PREP | cow.ART.PL | POSS |

| *dacă* | *Mahavira* | *va* | *părăsi* | *vatra* | *părintească.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| if | Mahavira | FUT.3SG | leave | home.ART | parent.ADJ |

'Kaurava did not even dare ask what would happen to their cows, if Mahavira left his parents' home' (Rebreanu, *Adam şi Eva* 37)

*Urmează să*, the most recent construction, appears only in one literary text of my corpus, and only in the imperfect, encoding future in the past. Contemporary literature shows a penetration of the so-called 'oral' auxiliaries *o să* and *am să* in the written style. The more formal and conservative non-fictional corpus confirms the high status of the *voi* future.

The newspapers corpus shows a lower frequency of the high future, but indicates a greater extension of the new auxiliary *urmează*, used with the same frequency in four TAM: present indicative, imperfect, present conditional, gerundive. It appears mainly in subordinate or coordinate clauses, in relation to another tense:

(14)

| *După* | *rezolvarea* | *problemelor* | *ridicate* | *de* | *companii,* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| after | solving.ART | problem.ART.PL.G | raise.PART.PL | by | company.PL |

| *acestea* | *urmau* | *să* | *solicite* | *Departamentului* | *de* | *Stat* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| these | follow.IMP.3PL | SUB | ask.SBJV.3PL | department.ART.D | of | state |

| *acordarea* | *statutului* | *de* | *economie* | *de* | *piaţă* | *pentru* | *România* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| giving.ART | status.ART.G | of | economy | of | market | for | Romania |

'After solving the problems raised by companies, the latter intended to ask the State Department to give Romania the status of market economy' (*Ziua,* 1 September 2009)

(15)

| *Guvernul* | *a* | *discutat* | *ieri* | *a* | *doua* | *rectificare* | *a* | *bugetului,* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| government.ART | have.PRS.3SG | discuss.PART | yesterday | ART | second | readjustment | ART | budget.ART.G |

| *urmând* | *să* | *ajusteze* | *deficitul* | *de* | *la* | *4,6%* | *la* | *7,3%* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| follow.GER | SUB | adjust.SBJV.3SG | deficit.ART | from | at | 4,6% | to | 7,3% |

'The government discussed yesterday a second budget readjustment, and it will adjust the deficit from 4,6% to 7,3%' (*România liberă* 2 September 2009)

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Finally, the spoken corpora exhibit a mirror situation: in spontaneous, informal speech, *o să* is clearly dominant (70% of all futures), whereas in formal speech (transcriptions of meetings and television/radio interviews) *voi*, the high future, is as frequent as in literary texts. All speech corpora also indicate a decay of the *am să* future, which only appears in the first person singular, probably as an attenuative strategy (*o să* being probably felt as too assertive, and *voi* too commanding):

(16)

| *Am* | *să* | *revin* | *la* | *asta* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| have.PRS.1SG | SUB | return.SBJV.1SG | to | this | | | |

| *atunci* | *când* | *vom* | *discuta* | *despre* | *fiecare* | *în* | *parte* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| then | when | FUT.1PL | discuss | about | each | in | part |

'I shall come back to this when we discuss each of these aspects' (Transcript of the Central Executive Board of the Social-Democrat Party, 16 June 2003)

(17)

| *O* | *să* | *zic* | *atunci* | *că* | *n-* | *am* | *vorbit* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FUT | SUB | say.SBJV.1SG | then | that | NEG | have.PRS.1PL | speak.PART |

'I will then say that we didn't speak' (Jinga corpus)

The following tendencies may then be summarized. *Voi* is indeed to be considered the high, literary auxiliary: it is frequent in written texts and formal speech and almost absent in dialogues or spontaneous, informal speech.

*O să* is the spoken, informal, less valorizing auxiliary; it is productive and frequent in its own register, contrary to what some linguists assumed. The corpus did not show sensible differences in meaning or construction between *voi* and *o să* futures.

*Am să* shows a clear loss in frequency: it appears in literature as a future in the past (whatever may be the actual tense of the auxiliary), and in formal speech only with the first person, as a polite, attenuative variant.

*Urmează să* is rare in older fiction, but it seems to penetrate today an intermediate register of Romanian (journalism, formal speech). It appears mostly in connection with other tenses, and has forms unattested in the other auxiliaries, such as the conditional and the gerundive. It may be a constructional variant of the others (like Italian *venire* vs *essere*), but it may also evolve toward the proximative meaning it already exhibits, mainly in the conditional and gerundive.

The present-day situation of Romanian future auxiliaries is a convergence of four items, of which one (*am să*) is probably getting reduced, and another (*urmează*) is hardly beginning its grammaticalization. The other two auxiliaries, *voi* and *o să*, are fully grammaticalized forms, and they are distributed according to register: *voi* is the high variant, *o să* the low one. The corpus analysis did not show any sensible meaning or construction difference, and no ongoing replacement. Both are equally productive, each in his own register. Thus, the main distribution criterion for Romanian future auxiliaries is

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register; meaning and/or construction distinctions are secondary and less visible, and the convergence situation is not yet heading towards a solution.

One point needs to be made at this juncture: an explanation for the multitude of competing grams in the Romanian future is that two subordination strategies are possible: the inherited Latin infinitive subordination, and the Balkanic subjunctive subordination. In addition to auxiliaries coming from different lexical sources, future constructions in Romanian also resort to different subordinating strategies: infinitive for *voi*, subjunctive for the others. The possibility to use several constructions may be considered a potential cause of convergent grammaticalization.

## 3. COMPARISON AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of these convergent grammaticalizations must modify an aspect of the theoretical projection in the first paragraph. It was assumed that competing grams may be distinguished according to meaning, construction or some extra-linguistic criterion (such as register). The analysis has nevertheless shown that these elements have to be combined. Convergent grammaticalizing items were shown to exhibit, after some time, a fuzzy distribution that mixed meaning, construction and register criteria.

Moreover, I assumed that speakers choose one of the competing items according to one criterion, but the criterion may vary from one situation to another. This probably contributes, in turn, to drive the items more and more closely one to another, which ultimately makes possible, as for the French future, the eviction of one of the competing auxiliaries.

When describing a grammaticalization cline, it is important to take into account the existence of other items that may grammaticalize in the same direction. The gram will follow a different cline of grammaticalization or will be slowed down if it is in a convergence situation.

## ABBREVIATIONS

1,2,3 person
ACC accusative
ADj adjective suffix
ART article
COND conditional
D dative
F feminine
FUT future
G genitive
GER gerundive
IMP imperative
M masculine
NEG negation
PART participle (past)
PL plural
POSS possessive
PREP preposition
PRS present
PST past
REFL reflexive pronoun
SBJV subjunctive
SG singular
SUB subordinator

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