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Title of talk: "English progressive(s) and the typological shift from bounded to unbounded discourse"

Abstract:
Constructions denoting progressive aspect are found in most Germanic languages, but none of these has grammaticalised a progressive marker to the same extent as the English BE V*ing* periphrasis. This "is reflected on the one hand in the optionality of the markers, on the other in a variety of alternative forms" (Ebert 2000: 605). This notable departure of English from the other members of the Germanic family has sometimes been attributed to contact with languages where a progressive construction was more firmly established, such as Latin, Celtic or French (see Visser 1963–1973: III, 1988–1991; Bertinetto 2000: 559; Ahlqvist 2010; Filppula & Klemola 2014, among others). There is no conclusive evidence, however, that any of these languages played a significant role in the origin of the construction.

Recently, Los (2012) has suggested that the rise of the progressive and its enormous increase in frequency from Early Modern English onwards (Elsness 1994) might be linked to the decline of Verb-second order (V2) from the fifteenth century. This decline may have brought about, according to Los, a typological shift from *bounded* to *unbounded* discourse, affecting the way in which English narratives are structured.

Contrastive German/English studies (Carroll & Lambert 2003; von Stutterheim, Carroll & Klein 2003; Carroll, Rossdeutscher, Lambert & von Stutterheim 2008: 164; von Stutterheim, Bouhaous, Carroll & Sahonenko 2012) show that the presence or absence of the V2 constraint has far-reaching consequences for macro-structural planning (i.e. what to say, and how to say it). In a given narrative sequence, German speakers typically view events holistically, as bounded events presented as reaching a point of completion, with no decomposition into sub-phases. Linkage between events is typically expressed by the temporal shifter *dann* 'then':

(1) ... ***dann geht er*** *zu der feuchten Stelle und* ***dann nimmt er*** *einen Felsbrocken und* ***dann hämmert er*** *ein Loch in den boden*
'... then he walks up to the wet spot and then he takes a piece of rock and then he hammers a hole in the ground'
(von Stutterheim et al. 2012: 346)

In English narratives, by contrast, events are typically presented as unbounded, related to a temporal anchor established by an external narrator who describes what is in 'the camera's range'. Events linked to this external anchor can be segmented or decomposed into different phases, and ongoing events may form an integral part of the sequence, as in (2):

(2) *...he* ***is chiseling*** *faster and faster as pieces of debris and metal* ***are getting pushed*** *towards him and eventually he realizes that he doesn't have enough time... and suddenly we* ***see the sand filtering*** *through the rusted hole and the chiseled parts of the earth*
(von Stutterheim et al. 2012: 346–347)

My presentation at the workshop will explore whether this type of macro-structural planning is related to, and can account for, the emergence and development in English, in relatively recent times, of a number of constructions whose role is to code events as backgrounded, partly overlapping, situations that are temporally aligned to the situation evoked by another clause. Such constructions include, among others:

(3) The BE V*ing* progressive (Elsness 1994; Kranich 2010; Petré 2016):
    The moon was still high in the heavens, [...] as we **were creaking and jolting** *up the very steep main street of a place whose name I have forgotten,* (CLMET3.03 1885 Mathilde Blind, *Tarantella*)

(4) The COME/GO progressive (Fanego 2020):
    The maid was answering 'Yes' to each of these questions when a hansom cab **came rattling** *up to the front of the house, and the old lady leaped out of her seat.* (CLMET3.03 1897 Hall Caine, *The Christian*)

(5) Situation-oriented premodifying -*ing* participles (De Smet & Vancayzeele 2015):
    Swinging on her heel, she grabbed a glass of champagne from the tray of a **passing** *waiter.*

(6) The *Way* Construction (Israel 1996; Fanego 2019):
    A favourite animal, white as snow, brought by one of the visitors, **purred its way gracefully among the wine-cups**, (CLMET3.03 1885 Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*)

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