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Lexicalization and grammaticalization: the case of verbo-nominal expressions be on the/one’s way/road

In this article we show that verbo-nominal expressions be on the/one’s way/road emerged as lexical composite predicates in Old English. These templates came to be elaborated by directional adjuncts, adjuncts describing states or events, and purpose clauses. In Late Modern English, the structure with to-infinitive was functionally reinterpreted as secondary auxiliary + lexical head, whose core sense is imminential aspect. This case study forms the occasion of theoretical reflection on the differences between lexicalization and grammaticalization, as they emerge within a functional constructional approach. On the syntagmatic axis, we adopt Boye & Harder’s (2007, 2012) principles for distinguishing lexicalized from grammaticalized uses on the basis of their having primary or secondary status in discourse usage. On the paradigmatic axis, we rethink the neo-Firthian distinction between lexis and grammar in diachronic terms. Individual lexical items are defined by their collocations (Sinclair 1990) and grammatical values by their systemic interdependencies (Halliday 1992). Lexicalization is then characterized by the development of distinctive lexico-semantically motivated collocational networks and grammaticalization by the acquisition of the defining interdependencies with values from related grammatical systems.

Keywords: lexicalization, grammaticalization, composite predicate, secondary auxiliary, collocation, system

1. Introduction

Recent studies have recognized the challenge of distinguishing grammaticalization from the in many ways similar process of lexicalization (e.g. Brinton & Traugott 2005, Lehmann 2002, Diewald & Sirmova 2012, Trousdale 2012). Both processes affect syntagms, not individual items, and involve some kind of semantic erosion, fusion and fixing of the component elements. Their outcome, however, differs. Lexicalization yields a new conventionalized association of a specific, contentful sense with an expression at the level of the lexicon (Blank 2001:1603). Grammaticalization adds a new (realization of a) grammatical structure with schematic meaning to the grammar.

The recently increased awareness that it is not so easy to distinguish grammaticalization from lexicalization seems to have coincided with the ‘constructional’ turn that studies of language change have generally taken. Construction grammar has rightly drawn attention to the point that constructions are composite structures, some of whose components are transparently assembled, whilst others are “only partially discernible (or even indiscernible) within the composite whole” (Langacker 1999:152). It has alerted analysts to the fact that both grammaticalization and lexicalization involve the creation of a new conventionalized expression as part of an overarching change in the larger construction in which the new expression functions (Boye & Harder 2012:35-36). Change revolves around the interplay between the internal semantic and structural make-up of the changing unit and its grammatical and textual function in the larger syntagmatic environment (Fried 2010).

However, certain tenets of construction grammar have brought with it the risk of obscuring some distinctions and meaningful patterns (cf. Boye & Harder 2012:35). Firstly, in some construction grammar studies, constructions are reduced to a string with ‘slots’ whose ‘fillers’ are specified as grammatical classes or specific lexical items. Against this, we hold that constructions are constituted by syntagmatic relations such as modification and
complementation, which have their own type of schematic semantics (Langacker 1987:277-359, Huddleston & Pullum 2002:23-26). We also side with the cognitive-functional view that “syntactic categories, including those commonly labeled with parts of speech, are derivative from the constructions that define them” (Croft 2000:85). Classes are defined by their function in the overall structure and by the smaller component functions they realize (Halliday 1961:261, Langacker 1991:51-55, 277-313).

Secondly, some variants of construction grammar focus strongly on the surface properties of syntagmatic strings (e.g. Goldberg 2002) and how they change -- at the expense of paradigmatic grammatical systems and lexical sets and how these are reorganized in change. For grammaticalization, this gives short shrift to Lehmann’s parameter of paradigmatization, “the degree to which [a grammaticalizing sign] enters a paradigm, is integrated into it and dependent on it” (Lehmann 2002 [1982]:110). As for lexicalization, little or no attention has so far been paid to its paradigmatic side. Taking our inspiration from the (neo-)Firthian tradition (Firth 1951/1957), we will argue that lexicalization and grammaticalization are characterized by different types of paradigmatic organization. A lexicalized item imposes specific lexico-semantically motivated collocational relations. Grammaticalizing elements come to express meaning options within grammatical systems, and acquire increasingly the interdependencies with values from other grammatical systems that are constitutive of their type of grammatical meaning.

We will, in other words, argue for a functional-cognitive approach that does justice to the differential syntagmatic relations contracted by grammatical elements and lexical items as well as to the distinct types of paradigmatic networks they figure in. We will apply this approach to distinct uses that developed from be on followed by nouns way or road. (Be) on the/one’s way/road can currently be used as a composite predicate designating ‘motion’, while (be) on the/one’s way/road to function as an auxiliary whose core sense is ‘imminent’ aspect. These syntagms thus acquired both new lexical and new grammatical uses. In recent discussions aiming at delineating lexicalization more precisely from grammaticalization, ‘composite predicates’ actually figure as one of the moot cases with regard to the question which of the two processes is involved in them (e.g. Brinton & Traugott 2005, Trousdale 2012). In examining the diachrony and synchrony of the different uses of (be) on the/one’s way/road (to), our aim is to identify the different properties of grammaticalization and lexicalization, as instantiated by these periphrastic expressions.

The structure of the article will be as follows. In Section 2, we present the case study. In Section 3, we survey the literature on composite predicates (3.1) and secondary auxiliaries (3.2), and we discuss the controversy of whether to view composite predicates as resulting from grammaticalization or lexicalization (3.3). In Section 4, we reconstruct the diachronic development of the different uses, applying mainly syntagmatic recognition criteria to distinguish lexicalized from grammaticalized uses. In Section 5, we base ourselves on a set of synchronic corpus data to outline the synchronic state that the historical paths led to. This description adds analysis of the distinct paradigmatic properties of lexicalization and grammaticalization to the overall picture. In Section 6, we offer theoretical reflections and conclusions.

2. The case study

In Present-day English, the strings (be) on the/one’s way/road (to) are used in two different ways in VP-structure, illustrated by the contrast between (1)-(5) and (6)-(7).

(1) MORE than 2,000 Royal Marines will soon be on the way to the Iraqi hotspot town of Najaf… (CB)
A little after eight the next morning, Tanya Domie and Alan Stevens are on their way to do yet another talk-radio show… (CB)

But Heinz's Steve Marinker - on his way to the hotel in La Baule, Brittany - said: “Beans are a fantastic source of protein and fibre…” (CB)

As I drove I picked up the phone and called Marcus. “I'm on my way”. (CB)

Toddle off back to Victoria... On your way, amigo. (1974 Yuill Bornless Keeper)

The government is due to run out of money again at midnight tonight, but the White House says that if the conferees are on their way to agreeing to a budget compromise, the president will sign another stop-gap spending measure to fund government for a few more days. (CB)

Now she [Janet Jackson] could be on her way to becoming the richest Jackson, … (CB)

The contrast pertains to the lexical versus grammatical status of the elements, as shown by the recognition tests developed by Boye & Harder (2007, 2012). These recognition criteria apply to the function of the unit in its larger syntagmatic and discourse environment (cf. Fried 2010). Boye & Harder start from the observation that information given in discourse may be the primary predication, i.e. the most important information of an utterance, or a secondary predication, which serves only to support the primary one¹. Grammatical elements, they argue, can be recognized by their coded secondariness, while lexical items can be identified by their primariness.

Boye & Harder’s (2007:581-585) criterion to distinguish lexical from grammatical elements is ‘addressability’, which can be operationalized in linguistic tests such as really-queries and tags. The really-query shows that examples (1)-(5) contain primarily lexical(ized) uses of be on the way (to) and examples (6)-(7) grammatical(ized) uses. Example (2), for instance, can be queried as Are they really on the way?, which shows that be on their way is part of the primary, lexical material. By contrast, (6) has to be queried as Are they really on their way to agreeing to a budget compromise? One has to include agreeing to a budget compromise because it constitutes the crucial lexical material that the clause is about. The unit are on their way is not addressable in its own right, which shows that it is a grammatical modifier, ‘secondary’ to the lexical material.

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

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

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

In these two constructional patterns, (be) on the/one’s way has a telic meaning component, that is, it describes a situation with a natural or inherent point of completion (Declerck et al. 2006:62). It also has a dynamic and durative meaning component, designating actions that are “continually subject to a new input of energy” (Comrie 1976:49). These features characterize the Aktionsart or lexical aspect of the predicate, which includes the lexical verb and its
complements. This unit is referred to by Declerck et al. (2006: 40) as the “abstract enriched situation-template”.

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

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

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

The present analysis of the aspectual use of \( \text{(be) on the/one’s road/way to} \) differs from the one proposed in Author3, Author1 & Author2 (2012). In our earlier analysis we characterized them as ‘telic progressive’. We had assumed too readily that the components of ‘telicity’ and ‘durativity’ from the lexical predicates persisted in the semantics of the auxiliaries. However, on further reflection, the auxiliary uses illustrated in (6) and (7) do not construe the transitional predications as ‘ongoing’. Example (7), for instance does not mean that Janet Jackson is already in the state of ‘being the richest Jackson’ and is going through further stages of gradually increasing the value of ‘the richest in the Jackson clan’, which is what a progressive reading would entail. As we will see in Section 5, in a few cases, auxiliaries \( \text{(be) on the/one’s road/way to} \) do have progressive meaning, but this is not their core sense. There is thus no straightforward ‘semantic persistence’ between the lexical predicate and the aspectual auxiliary. Rather, the diachronic relation between the two is one of semantic reorganization, which we will examine in Section 4.

Given the importance of lexical aspect to this study, we give an overview here of the typology of Aktionsart that we will work with (Author2 forthc.). Table 1 sums up the parameters that will be distinguished, viz. dynamicity, durativity, transitionality and telicity. This typology adopts the key notions from the literature on Aktionsart as conceptualized by Declerck et al. (2006)\(^2\). Their inventory of binary lexical aspect features is primarily rooted in the work of Vendler (1957), Dowty (1979), Comrie (1976), Brinton (1988) and Smith (1991).

[Insert Table 1 here]
Dynamic situation types such as *tell the story* or *fall down* involve some kind of change, motion or activity, fueled by a source of energy (Comrie 1976:49). With the exception of punctual dynamic situations, dynamic predicates can usually be decomposed into “successive phases following one another in time” (Vendler 1957:144), “each of which is considered as being slightly different from the previous stage” (Declerck et al. 2006:51). Non-dynamic, or stative, situation types such as *be sick* are unchanging and consist of stages that cannot be differentiated. States are not set in motion by a sustaining force or other instigator and are by definition non-agentive.

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

Transitional situations (Declerck et al. 2006:59-60) constitute a subtype of punctual situations and refer to a sudden transition from one state to another. Examples such as *die* or *win a race* convey transitions that result in a new “consequent” state (Moens & Steedman 1988:17-18, Verkuyl 2005:26).

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

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

3.1. Form and function of composite predicates

All characterizations of composite predicates in the literature have pointed out the ‘light’ or ‘delexical’ semantics of the verb and the nominalized or action noun status of the nominal element (e.g. Brinton & Akimoto 1999, Sinclair 1990). As pointed out by Ronan (forthc), the greatest barrier to a uniform delineation lies in the lack of agreement on which verbs and action nominals are members of the composite predicate class. Claridge (2000:38, 110) is one of the few authors to discuss the template of light verb + preposition phrase, which she illustrates with such expressions as *be/fall in love, set/be on fire, be at an end*, and which also subsumes *be on the/one’s way/road*.

The derivation of composite predicates is agreed to be idiosyncratic, because it is not clear why some action nouns can occur in them and others not (Sapir 1949:114–115). A number of authors argue for analyzing the internal structure of composite predicates up to the degree of compositionality that is discernible, while acknowledging that some may have meanings “not predictable from their individual components” (Ronan forthc:2). ‘Light’ as the meaning of the verb may be, we still view it as more than “an insignificant verb, to which the marks of person and tense are attached” (Jespersen 1956:VI, 117–118). The schematic meaning and valency potential of the light verb typically sanction the phrase types they take. In the hitherto neglected composite predicates with *be*, its schematic meaning of ‘being located at’ (Halliday 1994:135) sanctions elaboration by preposition phrases, rather than by the object-like NPs elaborating *give, take and have* (Quirk et al 1985:753).

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

3.2. Form and function of secondary auxiliaries

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

As observed by Hopper (1991), periphrastic secondary auxiliaries, many expressing aspect,
have increased exponentially in the history of English. Reference grammars tend to include
only well-established cases, e.g. be allowed to, on an ad hoc basis. Under the heading of
imminential aspect, Declerck (1991) includes be going to, be about to/on the point of while
Huddleston & Pullum (2002) discuss be (just) going to, be about to. However, Navalpotro-
Gómez (2000) also identifies be on the verge/brink of as markers of imminence, and Author2
(forthc.) argues that imminence can be expressed too by be in the middle/midst/act of and be
in the process of. This study adds be on the/one’s road/way to this list.

3.3. Composite predicates: lexicalization or grammaticalization?

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

Brinton & Traugott (2005:130-2) note that composite predicates come in two different
basic types exemplified by lose sight of and give an answer respectively. If considered as
individual units, and taking “lexicalization to be ‘adoption in the lexicon’, then the
development of all composite predicates would appear to be a case of lexicalization”
(2005:131). However, they claim, this misses important distinctions between the two basic
types. The type exemplified by lose sight of is non-productive, very fixed, semantically
idiomatized and non-compositional. This type can be viewed as lexicalization proper. By
contrast, the light verb type illustrated by give an answer is productive in the sense that its
template sanctions many lexical types. It can be thought of as a phrasal construction in which
the NP has decategorialized and the verb has taken on “a clearly identifiable grammatical (i.e.
aspectual or dynamic/stative) function”. Have expresses stative meaning while give and take
express dynamic meaning. The verb might “conceivably one day come to be a grammatical
(derivational) prefix not unlike be-“ (2005:131). This type is therefore better viewed, they
conclude, as grammaticalization.
Trousdale (2012) assumes a similar position but spells it out further. He (2012:170) posits that three features of constructions are relevant to their structure and to how their structure may change: generality, productivity and compositionality. He defines the process of grammaticalization, or grammatical constructionalization, as involving (i) an increase in generality, with the constructional schema licensing an increasing number of micro-constructional types; (ii) an increase in productivity in the sense of token frequency; (iii) a decrease in compositionality, i.e. erosion of the predictability of the form-meaning pairing. Lexicalization, or lexical constructionalization is said to be characterized by (i) a decrease in generality; (ii) a decrease in productivity; (iii) no change, or decrease, in the compositionality of the construction. These definitions of lexicalization and grammaticalization apply, Trousdale holds, to the two basic kinds of composite predicates identified by Brinton & Traugott (2005:130-2), exemplified by pay heed to, poke fun at versus have a look, take a bath. In addition, he argues, there is a third type of composite predicate, which is the result of both lexicalization and grammaticalization. He exemplifies this third type with the pattern of give + gerund, e.g. give s.o. a kicking. It constitutes "grammaticalization, since it involves the coding of particular kinds of aspectual meaning” (Trousdale 2012:188) such as telicity. At the same time, these composite predicates have clearly idiomatized meanings, with for instance give someone a kicking meaning ‘berate’ and give someone a talking to meaning ‘reprimand’, and in this respect, they involve lexicalization.

Whilst it is true that distinct types of composite predicate can be distinguished on the basis of the observed differences, we think it is problematic to correlate these with lexicalized versus grammaticalized status.

Firstly, the main semantic argument for claiming grammaticalization status for some types is that they code ‘aspectual’ meanings. However, as noted in Section 3.1, the aspectual meanings put forth in this context have a long-standing association with Aktionsart or lexical aspect in the linguistic tradition (Vendler 1957:97-121, Comrie 1976:41-51), viz. telicity, durativity versus punctuality, dynamicity as opposed to stativity. These features have always been viewed as capturing the semantic properties of the ‘abstract situation-template’ (Declerck et al. 2006:40), which, as noted by Moens & Steedman (1988:20), is a “type assigned in the lexicon”. When we considered the aspectual meanings of composite predicates be on the/one’s way/road, illustrated in (1)-(5) in Section 2, we stated them in terms of lexical aspect. Many current uses are telic-durative, but some are punctual, such as the imperative On your way (‘go’, ‘leave’) in (5). Its non-durative nature is shown by the impossibility of using it with stop: *stop being on your way (Dik 1989:95). The fact that some meanings of the composite predicate are punctual also thwart any attempt to systematize their aspectual meaning in grammatical terms. Leaving aside all other considerations that argue against viewing composite predicates as coding grammatical aspect, one might think of progressive aspect as a possible value of be on the/one’s way/road because a progressive alternate with a simple predicate such as go is possible for many examples, e.g. (1) Royal Marines will soon be on the way :: be going to … Najaf, (4) I’m on my way :: I’m coming. However, no progressive paraphrase is possible for an example such as (5): On your way :: *Be going. This shows that the composite predicate can in any case not be viewed as a systematic marker of progressive aspect. Hence, we view be on the/one’s way/road as polysemic lexical items, whose different, but related, meanings convey different types of lexical rather than grammatical aspect.

Secondly, a number of observations about the internal structure of these composite predicates point at lexicalization, rather than grammaticalization. To begin with, there are many instances of composite predicates in which the action noun does not derive from a verb, as in have a yarn, have a game, etc. In this respect, composite predicates cannot be viewed as forming a systematic construal option within the verbal grammatical system. Moreover, the
action noun may also take descriptive modifiers, as in *take another quick look*, *have a game of cards* (Halliday 1994:146-9), which clearly add to the lexical material of the predication. These observations argue for viewing composite predicates as *semi-fixed, variable idioms*, which as noted by Sinclair (1991), Langacker (1999:344), are analysable up to a certain degree. At the same time, various co-selection relations and restrictions obtain between their elements (Sinclair 1991:110-114), e.g. between light verb and NP in *get/take/have a look*, but not *make a look*, *take/have a bath*, but not *make/get a bath*, between determiner and action noun, e.g. *get some rest* but not *have some play*, and between action noun and descriptive modifiers, e.g. *have a game of cards/tennis* but not *have a play of cards/tennis*. All these collocational relations internal to the variable idioms have to be stored individually by the language user. This puts them in the lexicon, and shows, in our view, the processes leading to them to be lexicalization.

4. Diachronic development

4.1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

(9) Beo þu onbugende þinum widerwinnan hraðe þþa hwile þe þu eart on wege mid him. *(c1000 West Saxon Gospels: Matt.)*

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

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

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

4.2. *Be on (the/one’s)* way

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

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

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

(13) Trusting that the gonners *be well on the waye hiderwards*. (1523 Surrey in Ellis Orig. Lett. Eng. Hist.)
(14) You should haue *bin well on your way to Yorke*. (1600 Shakespeare Henry IV)

Three centuries later *be on the/one’s way* started patterning with purpose clauses expressing the more abstract endpoint of the subject’s directed motion, which enabled the grammaticalization into semi-auxiliary *be on one’s way*. Directional-purposive sentences with *be on the/one’s way* seem to have followed the same path of change as the well-known example *be going to*. The natural inference of intention of future action (Hopper & Traugott 2003:2) in directional-purposive bi-clausal constructions is generally assumed to have led to the reanalysis of lexical *be going + to* (Hopper & Traugott 2003:63-64) into semi-auxiliary *be going to + lexical head*. With directional-purposive sentences containing *be on the/one’s way*, we first find untypical lexical constructions (Diewald 2006) such as (15)-(16), in which (*be*) *on one’s way* expresses directed motion followed by a purpose clause, but which also clearly invite the inference of intended future action.
Along with these was a pedestrian, who ... was ... on his way to hear and to decide the disputes of his neighbours as a petit juror. (1823 Cooper Pioneers)

He ... was on his way to report himself at head-quarters, in the hopes of being reinstated in the service. (1837 Irving Capt. Bonneville)

Next came isolating contexts (Diewald 2006) such as (17), in which was on the way describes only past, and non-realized, future intention. In such examples, the earlier bi-clausal structure of directional clause + to-infinitive of purpose has been reparsed as a single clause containing a complex VP. This VP has visit as lexical head, and was on my way to has a grammatical modal-temporal meaning, paraphrasable as ‘was going to’. It refers to the future relative to a deictic past.

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

At around the same time of the first reanalysis, the syntagm (be) on the way + to-infinitive, which had been made available by bi-clausal constructions such as (15)-(16), underwent a second, different, reanalysis illustrated by (18). In this example (be) on the way + to-infinitive has a function similar to a catenative verb (Huddleston & Pullum 2002:65): it adds a modification with the meaning ‘almost’ to the following lexical verb. We propose that (be) on the way has the value of degree modification in this pattern, because it changes the degree of the predication ascribed to the subject by copular verbs become or be, and can be glossed as ‘almost become/be’. For instance, in (18) negative or washed blondes are ascribed the quality of being ‘almost albinesses’.4

(18) Negative or washed blondes, arrested by Nature on the way to become albinesses. (1858 Holmes Autocrat of Breakfast-table)

The complex VP pattern in which (be) on the way modifies the degree of a qualitative predicate then shifted into a VP in which (be) on the way construes imminental aspect on the following predicate. A number of attestations like (19) occur, which can be viewed as bridging contexts (Evans & Wilkins 2002): (19) can mean that the jodhpurs are ‘almost’ world-famous or that they are in the stage preceding the transition to world-fame, because world fame is something that is acquired over time. The pragmatic inference motivating the extension from degree modified predication to imminental aspect is an obvious one: if something almost has a certain quality, it can often be thought of as being in the temporal stage preceding the acquisition of that quality. Adding a temporal dimension to a qualitative difference, as in the imminental reading of (20), implies taking a specific aspctual viewpoint on the “internal (…) constituency” (Comrie 1975:3) or flow of the situation.

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

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

(20) A nation with whom sentiment is nothing is on the way to cease to be a nation at all. (1886 Froude Oceana)

(21) … a manufacture that…may well be on the way to become a monopoly. (1903 James Ambassadors)

(22) … you were well on the way to being a big executive … (1953 Gordimer Lying Days)

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

(23) The successive stages.. on the way through self-diremption to the return unto self. (1876 Contemp.Rev.)

(24) Communism is well on the way to world-power, … (1931 Porter Let. Feb. 11)

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

[Insert Table 2 here]

4.3. Be on (the/one’s) road

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Insert Table 3 here]

5. Synchronic state

In this section we will outline the synchronic organization of the composite predicate and auxiliary uses of (be) *on the way/road (to)* led to. The description is based on a dataset compiled from the 56,000,000 word subcorpus of the *Collins Wordbanks Online English*
From this corpus, all strings were extracted that consisted of on followed by way/road to, with zero to four words intervening between on and the noun. This resulted in 1,190 instances of the constructional layers this study focuses on, distributed over way and road as visualized in Table 4.

[Insert Table 4 here]

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

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

We propose that the composite predicate uses behave essentially as lexical items in that they impose collocational constraints on the lexical items they co-occur with (Firth 1951/1957:196). As rightly stressed by Sinclair (1991), lexical meaning does not reside solely in the lexical ‘node’. Rather, the semantic structure of a lexical item is determined by its co-selection of specific (sets of) collocates. Sinclair translated this into a model in which the central lexical item, the node, is lexico-semantically identified by its most frequent and most entrenched collocates. Specific collocate ‘clouds’ are diagnostic of a lexical item’s meaning. This distributional view of lexical meaning, according to which the corpus environment is diagnostic of a lexical item’s meaning, is currently informing advanced work in corpus-based lexical semantics, in which, for instance, (partial) synonymy is established in terms of similarity between collocate clouds (e.g. De Deyne et al. 2009).

The composite predicates with way and road clearly behave as lexical items in imposing collocational constraints. As is typical of (partly) synonymous lexical items, they share many general collocational restrictions, viz. the co-selection of spatial goals or of states/events that lie (potentially) ahead. However, they still display distinct preferences in attracting individual collocates.

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

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

We can conclude that progressive lexicalization processes such as undergone by be on the/one’s way and (be) on the/one’s road involve the diachronic development of distinctive collocate networks that reflect the lexical items’ evolving phraseologies and semantic profiles.

Grammaticalization, by contrast, involves what one might call increased systemicness. Systemicness is related, in the first place, to the traditional notion of paradigmatization (Lehmann 2002 [1982]). Diewald (2010) has argued for a broader understanding of paradigmatization as including the creation of systemic oppositions between members of the paradigm and the establishing of marked and unmarked members. The new grammatical sign becomes increasingly associated with the more abstract grammatical meaning serving as common denominator of the whole paradigm. These paradigmatic oppositions and general features integrate the constructions into a closely interrelated network of constructions. Diewald & Smirnova (2012) argue that only paradigmaticization thus conceived allows one to distinguish grammaticalization from lexicalization.

Do be on the/one’s way to and be on the/one’s road manifest paradigmatization as understood by Diewald (2010), taking into account that be on the/one’s way to was clearly the model to which be on the/one’s road to was attracted by analogization?

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

(32) Thank you very much indeed and we will give you the number. I don’t have it here but ere r at this particular moment some of our android helpers are on their way to find it. (CB)

(33) A: Er so therefore now the Post Office have … have got expensive -- B. But you think … you think it's on the road to stay? -- A: Oh I'm most definitely [sic]. (CB)

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

(34) Peter Gesner said the museum was well on the way to finishing the task of collecting the contents of the wreck. (CB)

(35) Only when we can answer questions of this kind will we be on the road to understanding teenage suicide. (CB)

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

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

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

How do the two aspectual values, viz. progressivity and imminence, relate to each other in terms of markedness? Following Jakobson (1971 [1939]), we assume that marked terms are more restricted in the range of contexts in which they occur, and are semantically the more specific ones. From this perspective, the progressive has the wider range of distribution and expresses more general meanings subsuming sub-senses of continuousness,habituality (temporary habit) and iterativity (Author2 forthcoming). While progressive aspect zooms in on the ‘medial’ phases of a situation, conceptualized either as progressive-continuous, progressive-habitual or progressive-iterative, and backgrounding the beginning and end, imminental aspect focuses on the preparatory phases leading up to a new state. Imminence has a more restricted range of contexts and was long even not clearly distinguished from the ingressive–progressive–egressive continuum, but recent studies have argued to view it as a separate category (e.g. König 1993:85). Within the system of English aspect, progressivity is the unmarked and imminence the marked term.

From a diachronic perspective, we can relate the marked status of imminence within the aspectual paradigm to the observation that it rarely is, or remains, the only meaning of a grammaticalized expression. If it is the first aspectual meaning acquired, as in the case of be on the/one's way/road to, it shifts to other aspectual values such as progressivity. This involves a reorganization of the perspective, by which the speaker as conceptualizer positions him- or herself not within the preparatory phases leading to the situation profiled by the lexical verb, but within the component phases of the situation itself. If imminence is a later development, it is preceded by, and continues to co-exist with, other values. Thus, be in the process of and be in the middle/midst of first developed progressive auxiliary uses focusing on the medial phases of the situation (Author2 & Author1 subm.). Some of their auxiliary uses, particularly of be in the process of, have also come to construe imminence, focusing on the stage just before the situation (Author2 forthcoming), as in (37), where Erik Menendez ‘was about to answer’.

(37) ERIK MENENDEZ: Me telling Lyle that- Ms. ABRAMSON: You telling Lyle what? Was it you telling Lyle about something that was happening? (…) ERIK MENENDEZ: My dad- Ms. ABRAMSON: Wait one second, Mr. Menendez, let me ask for a recess JUDGE No, no, he was in the process of answering, so there's no need to ask (COCA, Author2 forthcoming).

While subscribing to Diewald’s views on paradigmatization as an essential component of grammaticalization, we want to add a further dimension, endebted to Halliday’s (1961, 1992) thought about the paradigmatic organization of the grammar. Halliday views the oppositions within a grammatical paradigm not so much as obtaining between its members, but, at a more abstract level, as obtaining between features associated with the members. By conceiving of systemic oppositions as features, it is possible to capture the interactions and interdependencies between features from different systems. Author1 et al. (2012) argued that grammaticalization not only involves an expression acquiring one particular value within its own system, but also the defining interrelations with values from other systems. This is the second dimension of the increasing systemicness which, we claim, characterizes
grammaticalization processes: newly grammaticalized expressions have really entered the grammatical system if the options available for them approximate the possible combinations of semantic features coded by established grammatical expressions. In Author1 et al. (2012), this was illustrated with the interdependencies between distinct values from the systems of modality and polarity acquired by the grammaticalizing expression there’s no question. There’s no question has acquired all possible combinations that auxiliaries such as must and will can express, viz. both epistemic and dynamic/deontic meanings and positive and negative polarity, and within the latter, internal and external negation. This is a sign of its advanced grammaticalization because such specific interdependencies between semantic values from related grammatical systems are constitutive of grammar at large (Halliday 1992).

In the case of grammatical aspect markers, such defining interrelations obtain with the Aktionsart values of the predicates. It is generally accepted that a specific grammatical aspect will “concord” (Michaelis 2004:28) with certain Aktionsart values, and will “override” (Declerck et al. 2006:81) others. In Michaelis’s (2004) terms, grammatical aspect constructions can be either “type-sensitive” or “type-shifting”. A type-sensitive construction “denotes the same kind of entity or event as the lexical expressions with which it is combined” (Michaelis 2004:28). For instance, type-sensitive progressive constructions combine with predicates whose Aktionsart is inherently dynamic, durative and preferably atelic, as these are the features that are fully compatible with the meaning of the progressive (Author2 forthcoming:20), e.g. the placebo effect has been improving over time. Type-shifting progressive constructions, by contrast, impose a progressive reading on lexical predicates whose Aktionsart is as such incompatible with them, e.g. stative or punctual predicates. The conflict created by this is resolved by the semantics of the whole grammatical construction ‘shifting’ the type of, the predicate into a compatible type (Michaelis 2004:29), a process often referred to as ‘coercion’ (Moens & Steedman 1988). A prime example is the ‘stative progressive’, e.g. She is being kind, in which the as such [+stative] predicate be kind is converted into a [+durative] predicate, viz. ‘she is acting kind’. If be on the/one's way/road to have acquired the status of an aspectual auxiliary, they can be expected to figure in both concording and coercing constructions.

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

(38) He [Pinchot] also came to see that the only organization strong enough to make business socially responsible was the federal government. With this perspective, Pinchot was well on his way to becoming a progressive; (CB)

(39) And the only person with any determination was clearly Maresa, ... who … may be on her way to getting her man at last. (CB)

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

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

We see that in these cases, the mismatch is resolved by the coercion effect, which triggers reinterpretation of the incompatible filler-types. In examples (40)-(43) the imminential construction shifts the Aktionsart of the predicates into ones compatible with the whole construction. Stative predicates are converted into dynamic ones so that being in (40) comes to mean ‘becoming completely gaga’, having in (41) ‘getting a Communist government’ and being able in (42) ‘acquiring the ability to manufacture 60mph cars’. Durative predicates are reinterpreted as consisting of preparatory stages distinct from the stage to be transited to, such as ‘doing better experiments’ and ‘doing the experiment that will lead to a vaccine’ in (43). We can conclude that the imminential semantics of be on the/one’s way to are so well established that they are not only type-sensitive but also type-shifting. This shows that imminential be on the/one’s way to has fully entered the aspectual grammatical system in terms of its interaction with the Aktionsart of the predicates.

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

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

The progressive use of be on the/one’s way to is not yet found with stative predicates that are incompatible with progressive aspect. That is, at this stage, the progressive use of be on the/one’s way to has not yet acquired all the interactions with the lexical aspect types found with established progressive constructions such as be V-ing, which do type-shift stative predicates into durative ones. Grammaticalization of progressive be on the/one’s way to is thus only in its incipient stage.

Finally, be on the/one’s road to is a typical example of a low-frequency grammaticalizing item, which acquired its grammatical value by analogization with the entrenched model be on the/one’s way to (cf. Hoffmann 2004). Interestingly, the distribution of its imminential and progressive uses, and their interaction with the Aktionsart of the predicate is fully parallel with those of its model. The imminential uses are found with both concording transitional predicates, as in (45), and with incompatible predicates that are shifted into compatible ones, such as stative (46) understand, which is reinterpreted as ‘coming to understand’. The one progressive use of be on the/one’s road to, example (45) above, also has a concording durative predicate.
she could be on the road to becoming the world’s most sought after face – the new Audrey Hepburn. (CB)

Only when we can answer questions of this kind will we be on the road to understanding teenage suicide. (CB)

6. Concluding discussion

In diachronic construction grammar studies, the question has been raised whether certain types of composite predicates that convey general ‘aspectual’ meanings should be viewed as cases of grammaticalization. Such a case has been made for the type give/take/have + a + deverbal noun in view of the bounded, telic and static/dynamic meaning the pattern conveys. As added argument for grammaticalization status, the higher productivity of this type has been advanced – in contrast with the lower productivity of composite predicates such as pay heed to, poke fun at, which are viewed as instantiating lexicalization (Brinton & Traugott 2005, Trousdale 2012).

In this article, we studied the case of be on the/one’s way/road (to), which along these lines could be viewed as conveying general aspectual meanings – such as durativity or, conceivably, progressivity – and hence as a case of wholesale grammaticalization. We have argued for a different approach, reconstructing their diachronic development “from composite predicates to verbal periphrases” (Garachana et al 2013). We characterized the emergence of the composite predicate uses as lexicalization, and that of the secondary auxiliary uses as grammaticalization on the basis of distinct syntagmatic and paradigmatic patterning.

On the syntagmatic axis, we followed Boye & Harder’s (2007) recognition criteria for distinguishing lexical(ized) from grammatical(ized) uses on the basis of their having primary or secondary status in discourse usage. This approach does not focus uniquely on changes in the internal structure of the string, such as semantic erosion or decreasing compositionality, which characterize both lexicalization and grammaticalization (Trousdale 2012). Rather, the focus is on the interplay between the internal reorganization of the unit and the reparsing of its external function in the larger verbal and clausal structure. The primary discourse status of the composite predicate uses argued for their lexical status, and the different aspectual meanings of their various situation-templates were captured in terms of categories of lexical aspect such as durativity, telicity and punctuality. Only the uses with secondary discourse status, where be on the/one’s way/road to is ‘ancillary’ to a lexical predicate, were ascribed grammatical status. They were found to have recognizably general grammatical meanings such as relative future (‘be going to’), imminence (‘be about to’), and progressivity (‘be V-ing’).

We further argued that the paradigmatic axis is a hitherto neglected dimension of the difference between lexicalization and grammaticalization. We proposed that individual lexicalizing items develop distinctive lexicosemantically motivated collocational networks, as be on the/one’s way and be on the/one’s road clearly did. For grammaticalizing elements, we argued that the paradigmatic effects of the grammaticalization process extend beyond the single paradigm that they enter into, in that they also crucially start interacting with terms from other related grammatical systems.

Productivity of the templates and token frequency do, in our view, not provide distinguishing criteria between lexicalization and grammaticalization. We proposed that individual lexicalizing items develop distinctive lexicosemantically motivated collocational networks, as be on the/one’s way and be on the/one’s road clearly did. For grammaticalizing elements, we argued that the paradigmatic effects of the grammaticalization process extend beyond the single paradigm that they enter into, in that they also crucially start interacting with terms from other related grammatical systems.
lexicalized units rose to high token frequency in the ten centuries of their existence, and still strongly outnumber the grammaticalized uses that co-exist with them.

References

[Without references to Author 1, Author 2 and Author 3]

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

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

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

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

This was the only subcorpus that was publicly available until 2010.

Uses in which way and road designate a path leading to a goal were classified, but otherwise left out of consideration. For on the way to, these totalled 152, and for on the road to 186 tokens.
Table 1. Overview of lexical aspectual properties (based on Declerck et al. 2006:49-71)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aspectual feature</th>
<th>values</th>
<th>examples abstract situation-template</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dynamicity</td>
<td>[+ dynamic] or [- stative]</td>
<td>knock on the door, tell the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[- dynamic] or [+ stative]</td>
<td>be sick, be kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durativity</td>
<td>[+ durative] or [- punctual]</td>
<td>tell the story, save lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[- durative] or [+ punctual]</td>
<td>knock on the door, choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transitionality</td>
<td>[+ transitional]</td>
<td>choose, die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[- transitional]</td>
<td>tell the story, knock on the door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>telicity</td>
<td>[+ telic]</td>
<td>bake a pie, tell the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[- telic] (or atelic)</td>
<td>keep secrets, save lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Lexicalized and grammaticalized construction types of (be) on the/one’s way (to): diachrony
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>construction type</th>
<th>OE (750-1150)</th>
<th>ME (1150-1500)</th>
<th>EModE (1500-1710)</th>
<th>LModE (1710-1920)</th>
<th>PDE (1920-present)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>composite predicate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composite predicate + directional adjunct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composite predicate + to-infinitive of purpose</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composite predicate + to + state/event noun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary auxiliary + infinitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary auxiliary + gerund</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>construction type</th>
<th>way</th>
<th></th>
<th>road</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composite predicate + directional adjunct</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>62.42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composite predicate + to-infinitive of purpose</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6.82</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composite predicate + to + state/event noun</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>72.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary auxiliary + gerund</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary auxiliary + infinitive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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