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A Case for 'be going to' as Prospective Aspect

Sara E. Schroeder
The University of Montana

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A Case for *be going to* as Prospective Aspect

By

SARA ELIZABETH SCHROEDER

Bachelor of Arts in Classical Studies and History, Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa 2004

Thesis

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Approved by:

Perry Brown, Associate Provost for Graduate Education
Graduate School

Dr. Leora Bar-el
Linguistics

Dr. Tully Thibeau
Linguistics

Dr. Irene Appelbaum
Linguistics

Schroeder, Sara, M.A. in Linguistics, Spring 2011
Linguistics

A Case For *be going to* as Prospective Aspect

Chairperson: Dr. Leora Bar-el

The focus of this thesis is the feature of current relevance as it is expressed by the English present perfect and the present *be going to* construction. I propose that *be going to* expresses the current relevance of a future situation in the same way that the present perfect expresses the current relevance of a past situation. Based on this shared feature of current relevance, I propose that the *be going to* construction is prospective aspect, the future equivalent of the present perfect.

While literature on the English *be going to* construction has discussed the notion of current relevance as part of the meaning of *be going to* (Joos 1964, Haegeman 1989, Perez 1990, Brisard 2001, Bergs 2010), this feature of the *be going to* construction has rarely, if ever, been the subject of direct examination. This research aims to fill a gap in the semantic literature on tense and aspect by providing an in-depth analysis of the *be going to* construction.

The proposal of this thesis has several implications for the field of linguistics. Cross-linguistically, temporal constructions containing the verb *to go* have been set aside in the literature on tense and aspect. Temporal *to go* constructions have also been the topic of disagreement in the field of tense and aspect (Fleischman 1982). This thesis specifically examines the English *be going to* construction where it has been set aside by others. This research also provides evidence that the various meanings that have been attributed to the English present *be going to* construction can all be accounted for by the notion of current relevance. In this thesis I propose that the *be going to* construction is prospective aspect, the mirror image of the present perfect. English is usually not considered to have a prospective aspect (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994); this thesis shows that it does. By providing evidence that the *be going to* construction is prospective aspect, this thesis also supports the claim that English has no true future tense (Jespersen 1924, Enç 1996).

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1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is the feature of current relevance as it is expressed by the English present perfect and the present *be going to* construction.¹ I propose that *be going to* expresses the current relevance of a future situation in the same way that the present perfect expresses the current relevance of a past situation. Based on this shared feature of current relevance, I propose that the *be going to* construction is prospective aspect, the future equivalent of the present perfect.

Existing literature on the English *be going to* construction discusses the notion of current relevance as part of the meaning of *be going to* (Joos 1964, Haegeman 1989, Perez 1990, Brisard 2001, Bergs 2010), but rarely, if ever, has this feature of the *be going to* construction been the subject of direct examination. This thesis aims to fill a gap in the semantic literature on tense and aspect by providing an in-depth analysis of the *be going to* construction.

The proposal of this thesis has several implications for the field of linguistics. First, cross-linguistically, temporal constructions containing the verb *to go* have been set aside in the literature on tense and aspect. Temporal *to go* constructions have also been the topic of disagreement in the field of tense and aspect (Fleischman 1982). This thesis specifically examines the English *be going to* construction where it has been set aside by others. This research also provides evidence that the various meanings that have been attributed to the English present *be going to* construction can all be accounted for by the notion of current relevance.

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, I focus only on the present form of the *be going to* construction: *am/is/are going to*.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of tense, aspect, and mood in English by suggesting a shared feature of current relevance between the present perfect and an expression of futurity. In this thesis I propose that the *be going to* construction is prospective aspect, the mirror image of the present perfect. English is usually not considered to have a prospective aspect (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994); this thesis shows that it does. By providing evidence that the *be going to* construction is prospective aspect, this thesis also supports the claim that English has no true future tense (Jespersen 1924, Enç 1996), as will be discussed further in §6.2.

This research also has implications for the field of applied linguistics. Specifically, it provides a theory of why the use of the *be going to* construction is more appropriate in certain contexts than other expressions of futurity, such as *will*. The theories put forth in this thesis can serve as helpful instructional tools for teachers of English as a Second Language when teaching tense and aspect, specifically, this research may help teachers explain to students when *be going to* should be used in speech.

This thesis is organized as follows. In §2 I discuss the *be going to* construction and previous theories on how to classify it in the semantics of tense, aspect, and mood. §3 focuses on the present perfect. In this section I discuss current relevance as the defining feature of the present perfect. I also discuss the different interpretations of the present perfect that are available in English. §4 analyzes *be going to* and its ability to express the current relevance of a future event. I also propose that each of the interpretations of the present perfect have a future parallel in *be going to* sentences. In §5 I provide further evidence for *be going to* as prospective aspect by comparing the morphology and

discourse tendencies of the present perfect and *be going to* constructions. In §6 I present my conclusions, the implications of my proposal, and issues for further research.

2. THE *BE GOING TO* CONSTRUCTION AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In the semantics of tense, aspect, and mood, expressions of futurity differ from expressions referring to the past and present, in that the future is not something that speakers can observe or remember (Dahl, 2000). Expressions of futurity are neither true nor false at the moment of speech (Lyons, 1977). While eventualities² in the past have happened, and eventualities in the present are happening, eventualities in the future only have a certain possibility of taking place (Klein, 1994). For this reason, speakers talk about future events with varying degrees of certainty (Copley 2009). Consider the sentences in (1) and (2):

(1) It will rain tomorrow.

(2) It may rain tomorrow.

The sentences in (1) and (2) above both express that the eventuality of raining is a future eventuality, but (1) makes a more explicit statement about a future state of affairs. The sentence in (2) on the other hand only makes an assertion about a possible future world in which it rains tomorrow (Comrie, 1985).³

Given that any number of events may occur that may alter the future world that we expect, Copley (2009) states that it is not surprising that speakers view the future with uncertainty. This difference between expressions of futurity and those of present and past has led some authors to conclude that a future tense is not possible in language (Jespersen

² The term “eventuality” is used to cover both states and events (Bach, 1981).

³ Comrie claims that the sentence in (1) can be shown to be a more definite prediction about a future state of affairs based on the ability to test its truth value. The statement in (1) can be proven true or false by whether or not it rains tomorrow, where the sentence in (2) is compatible with raining and not raining. For further discussion see Comrie (1985: 44)

1924, Enç 1996), and that expressions of futurity cross-linguistically must be something other than tense. Specifically, authors argue that, because future events are not certain, speaking about them refers to an alternate world, which leads several authors to argue that all expressions of futurity are modal expressions (Lyons 1977, Fleischman 1982, Palmer 1986, Copley 2009).

There are several ways of expressing futurity in English. Among these are *will* (3), *shall* (4), *be going to* (5), the present progressive construction (6), and the simple present construction (7) (Leech, 1971).

- (3) I **will** leave (tomorrow).
- (4) I **shall** leave (tomorrow).
- (5) I **am going to** leave (tomorrow).
- (6) I am **leaving** (tomorrow).
- (7) I **leave** (tomorrow).

The two most common ways of expressing futurity in English are by using *will* and *be going to* (Wekker 1976, Szmrecsanyi 2003).

While *will* has been the subject of much semantic analysis (Fries 1927, Wekker 1976, Enç 1996), there has been comparatively little focus on the *be going to* construction (Copley 2009). For example, Enç (1996) proposes that *will* in English is modal. She contrasts the behavior of *will* with the simple past tense in English to show that *will* behaves differently from a tense. Moreover, she shows that the behavior of *will* parallels modal constructions in English. Enç ultimately claims that English has no future tense.

However, she makes this claim without discussing *be going to*. In this thesis I adopt Enç's claim that *will* is modal, and ultimately her claim that English has no true future tense. However, this thesis deals specifically with the *be going to* construction, where it is set aside by Enç and others.

2.1 The *be going to* Construction

The *be going to* construction is commonly used in English to refer to future eventualities, as is shown in sentences (8) and (9) below.

- (8) Mary is going to be sick (all week).
- (9) John is going to move to Iowa (when he retires).

The data in (8) and (9) each shows that *be going to* is used to express that the eventuality referred to is a future eventuality (i.e. *be sick* and *move*, respectively).

Be going to is especially common in informal spoken language (Ota 1962, Haegeman 1989). It is morphologically present, as is shown by the present tense form of the auxiliary *be*, but temporally, it is interpreted as future (Klein 1994). It can be used to refer to the near future as well as the distant future, as is shown in sentences (10) and (11).

- (10) Look! John is going to win the race!
- (11) I am going to be an astronaut when I grow up.

In sentence (10) the eventuality of winning is imminent. In (11) the eventuality of being an astronaut is distant.

Be going to has been claimed to express several meanings, including prior intention (12b), imminence (13), and inevitability (15) (Nicolle, 1997; Brisard, 2001). These meanings are each especially evident when contrasted with *will*, as in the example sentences below. Consider the data in (12):

- (12) Can someone visit John tomorrow?
- a. I will.
- b. I'm going to. (Nicolle 1997)

In (12a), with the use of *will* there is a sense that the subject's intention to visit John originated after the request was made, where in (12b), the use of *be going to* indicates that the subject's intention existed before the request was made (Nicolle, 1997).

In (13) below *be going to* expresses that the eventuality is expected to be imminent—the fainting is expected to occur momentarily. The sentence in (14), with *will*, on the other hand, does not give the meaning of imminence, and appears to require additional context, such as *if I see the sight of blood*, in order for this sentence to not have an elliptical interpretation (Nicolle 1997).

- (13) I'm going to faint!
- (14) ? I'll faint!

Sentence (15) with *be going to* expresses that the explosion of the parcel is inevitable—it will explode whether or not someone approaches it. However, in (16), the use of *will* expresses that the explosion of the parcel is contingent upon someone approaching it (Nicolle 1997).

(15) Don't go near that parcel! It's going to explode!

(16) Don't go near that parcel! It will explode!

In this thesis I argue that all of the uses of *be going to* above share a common underlying feature: the current relevance of a future eventuality. Although the feature of current relevance in *be going to* constructions has been suggested in the literature (Palmer 1979, Haegeman 1989, Perez 1990), to my knowledge, this thesis serves as the first direct and in-depth examination and analysis of the current relevance expressed by the *be going to* construction in English.

In the following section I present some of the previous claims that have been made about the *be going to* construction.

2.2 Previous Claims

Although compared with *will*, *be going to* has received little attention in the literature, those who have analyzed *be going to* have proposed different analyses of its semantics (Fleischman 1982). The *be going to* construction has variously been argued to be tense (Klein 1994), aspect (Palmer 1971, Comrie 1976, Bybee et al. 1991, Klein 1994, Nicolle 1997, Copley 2009), and mood (Lyons 1977, Fleischman 1982, Copley 2009). In this section I discuss several claims that have been made about the *be going to* construction.

Although each claim captures certain usages of the *be going to* construction, none but the proposal that *be going to* is prospective aspect, captures all occurrences of the construction.

2.2.1 Progressive Aspect

Some claim that *be going to* is progressive (Palmer 1986, Bybee et al. 1991, Nicolle 1997, Copley 2009). Palmer (1986) states that *be going to* indicates a progression from the present to the future. Bybee et al. (1991) also find that *be going to* has an imperfective, or progressive component to its meaning, as does Nicolle (1997). Copley (2009) also remarks on the progressive element she believes to be part of the meaning of the *be going to* construction. Copley draws upon the syntax responsible for the interpretation of several expressions of futurity. She claims that the syntax of *be going to* contains a progressive operator—“the same operator that makes progressives progressive” (Copley 2009: 78). She calls *be going to* a progressive future, which has aspectual and modal components, sharing some of *will*'s modal elements, but differing from *will* aspectually, in its element of progressivity.

The progressive aspect denotes that an eventuality is in progress (Parsons, 1990). The claim that *be going to* is progressive captures the meaning of some *be going to* sentences, such as (17), where Mary is perhaps in the process of walking out the door, or in the process of heading toward home.

(17) Mary is going to go home.

The claim that *be going to* is progressive is also supported by the morphology of the construction (the auxiliary verb *be* and the *-ing* suffix). However, in sentences like (18), there need not be any event currently in progress, yet we can still use the *be going to* construction.

(18) I am going to be an astronaut when I grow up.

The sentence in (18) serves as evidence that the meaning of *be going to* is not exhausted by the notion of progressivity. The *be going to* construction may indicate a progression from the present to the future, but I argue that this is not its defining feature.

2.2.2 Modality

Besides claiming that *be going to* has an element of progressivity, Copley (2009) further claims that *be going to* has a modal component to its meaning. She states that it is impossible to omit modality in the meaning of futurates, as they refer to a world that at the time of speech, can only be likely, not certain. In this way, sentences with *be going to* act as predictions, which is a feature of modality (Palmer 1986). Likewise, Lyons (1977) claims that futurity in general is never solely temporal, but always consists of an element of prediction or some other related modal notion.

Comrie (1985) argues that it is possible to have expressions of futurity that are not modal. He claims that expressions of futurity are capable of making a clear prediction about a future world, where modals make reference to alternative worlds. Revisiting the data from above, we saw the contrast in sentences (19) and (20).

(19) It may rain.

(20) It will rain.

Comrie suggests that because it is possible to empirically test the truth value of the sentence using *will*, where it isn't with the sentence using *may*, the sentence with *will* makes a more definite prediction about a future state of affairs. I adopt this reasoning, and say that the truth value of sentences like (21) below can be empirically evaluated.

(21) It is going to rain.

Because the future state of affairs will allow us to evaluate whether or not the sentence in (21) turns out to be true, I argue that the sentence in (21) makes a definite prediction about a future state of affairs, and not to an alternate world. Therefore, it is not modal.

2.2.3 Immediate Future

Some authors claim that *be going to* represents the near future in English (Perez 1990, Millar 2007, Copley 2009). This meaning can be seen below in sentence (22) and (23) where the falling of the ladder and the fainting are expected to occur imminently.

(22) The ladder is going to fall.

(23) I am going to faint!

However, as we've already seen, it is also possible to use *be going to* in sentences that pertain to a distant future as in (24) and (25).

(24) I am going to be an astronaut when I grow up.

(25) If Winterbottom's calculations are correct, this planet is going to burn itself out 200,000,000 years from now. (Leech, 1971)

If (24) is uttered by a child, the *be going to* construction is used to refer to an eventuality that is relatively distant from the present moment. Likewise, the sentence in (25) shows that we can use *be going to* to discuss an eventuality that is quite distant from the present moment. So although one function of *be going to* is the expression of imminent future, this explanation does not account for all instances of the construction.

2.2.4 Current Relevance

Not only is there disagreement over how to classify the *be going to* construction in the semantics of tense, aspect, and mood, but it appears that none of the prior claims discussed above are able to encompass all of the possible ways in which *be going to* is used in speech. I argue that all instances of *be going to* can be accounted for by one underlying feature—that of current relevance.

The notion of current relevance is considered to be a feature of the English present perfect. In the case of the present perfect, there is usually a resultant state in the present that has been caused by an action in the past (Perez, 1990). For example, the utterance in (26) conveys that the window is still broken at the moment of speech, but was caused by the speaker's action in the past.

(26) I've broken the window.

With *be going to*, a future event has current relevance in that its cause (as opposed to its result) is situated in the present (Perez 1990). The utterance below in (27), for example, implies that the subject is pregnant at the present moment.

(27) She is going to have a baby.
(Perez 1990: 11)

Here the future event of having a baby is dependent on the subject's condition of being pregnant in the present. Based on such data, it is possible to make a comparison between the current relevance that is expressed by the present perfect and the current relevance expressed by *be going to* (Perez 1990).

Further support for focusing on the notion of current relevance that is expressed by the *be going to* construction comes from Brisard (2001) who also claims that speakers use *be going to* when there is something present at the time of speech on which to base an assumption about the future. Bergs (2010) also states that *be going to* is used to make a prediction about the future based on a current state of affairs. Haegeman (1989) analyzes *be going to* as a construction that says something about the context of the present. Leech (1971) defines *be going to* as the future fulfillment of the present situation.

Despite the parallels between *be going to* and the present perfect, the present perfect is usually considered to be a construction that refers to past events, not future events. A construction that mirrors the present perfect in its ability to express the current relevance

of a future event is known as prospective aspect (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994). Although some authors have suggested that *be going to* is a candidate for prospective aspect in English (Joos, 1964 Comrie, 1976, Klein 1994), English is usually not considered to have a prospective aspect (Comrie, 1976; Klein, 1994). In other words, English is not usually considered to have an equivalent of the present perfect in expressions of futurity.

2.2.5 Summary

Although the other previous claims about the *be going to* construction serve to capture some of the elements of the meanings associated with the construction, I argue that the only claim that is able to account for all instances of the *be going to* construction, is the claim that *be going to* is prospective aspect, the future parallel of the present perfect.

In this thesis I argue that English has a future equivalent of the present perfect. I present an in-depth analysis of *be going to* as the future equivalent of the present perfect by focusing on the notion of current relevance that is expressed by both the present perfect and by *be going to*. My analysis concludes that *be going to* is prospective aspect, or in other words, the mirror image of the present perfect. In the following section I discuss the present perfect in terms of current relevance before analyzing *be going to* in the same terms in §4.

3. THE PRESENT PERFECT

The present perfect has been widely analyzed in literature on the semantics of tense and aspect. Despite the extensive analysis of the present perfect, there is still disagreement over how to analyze it, as well as how to classify it in terms of tense and aspect, in English and cross-linguistically. In this thesis I argue that the defining feature of the present perfect in English is its expression of the current relevance of a past eventuality. Defining current relevance has been problematic for previous analyses of the present perfect (Klein 1994). I adopt the term “resultant state” (Parsons 1990) and argue that current relevance should be understood as a reference to a resultant state that holds both after an event culminates and at the moment of speech in present perfect sentences.

The present perfect in English is constructed with the present tense form of *to have* plus a main verb in past participle form, as in sentences (28) and (29).

(28) I **have lost** my glasses.

(29) John **has been** to Iowa.

In English, the present perfect has various uses. It can be used to express that the effects of an eventuality still hold, as in (28) above, which implies that the glasses are still lost.

It can also be used to express that the subject of a sentence has had a certain experience in his life, as in (29) above.

In this section I discuss the uses of the present perfect in English and I put forth a proposal that the defining feature of the present perfect is current relevance (Comrie 1976, Iatridou et al. 2001, Parsons 1990).

3.1 The Present Perfect as Aspectual

In discussions of the perfect some have called it a tense (Binnick 1991, Klein 1992), while others argue that it is aspectual (McCoard 1978, Comrie 1985, Pancheva 2003). Tense locates an eventuality on a timeline relative to the moment of speech. Aspect expresses the internal temporal structure of an eventuality (Comrie 1976), focusing on elements other than whether that eventuality comes before, after, or simultaneous with the moment of speech (Copley 2009). Aspect distinguishes the ways in which an eventuality can unfold (Klein 1992). For example, a speaker may interpret an eventuality as being complete (30) or incomplete (31), habitual (32), on-going (33), or imminent (34) (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994).

- (30) John read a book.
- (31) John was reading a book.
- (32) John reads books.
- (33) John is reading a book.
- (34) John is about to read a book.

The debate over whether the present perfect is tense or aspect stems from the fact that the present perfect appears to share properties of both. Like a tense, the present perfect locates an eventuality in relation to the time of utterance (i.e., before the time of utterance) (Comrie, 1976). Like an aspect, the present perfect presents an event in relation to the reference time (Comrie, 1976). For example, like a tense, the sentence in

(35) identifies the eventuality as occurring before the utterance time, specifically by using the past participle form of the verb *to lose*.

(35) I have lost my glasses.

Like an aspect, the sentence in (35) expresses that the speaker views this eventuality as having an on-going relevance to the present moment, in that the glasses are still lost. In other words, although the sentence in (35) places the eventuality in the past, it also expresses the speaker's view that the eventuality has unfolded in such way that it has an ongoing relevance to the current state of affairs.

Although the present perfect contains elements of both tense and aspect, for the purposes of this thesis, I focus on its aspectual element. The element that sets the present perfect apart from the simple past, for example, is that it does more than just locate an eventuality on a timeline. As we've seen in the sentences above, although the present perfect makes reference to a past event, it relates that past event to the current state of affairs.

I argue that the defining feature of the present perfect is that it expresses a notion of current relevance. In what is traditionally called the present perfect, sentences of these types express the current relevance of a past eventuality (Comrie 1976, Parsons 1990, Iatridou et al. 2001). I argue that this notion of current relevance can pertain to future eventualities as well, and that the current relevance of a future eventuality is expressed by prospective aspect, the future equivalent of the present perfect.

3.2 Characteristics of the Present Perfect

There are a range of meanings associated with the present perfect construction, including the expression of completion, an indication of a change of state, and an expression of current relevance (Klein 1994, Iatridou et al. 2001). The sentence in (36) is an example of the present perfect construction being used to express a notion of completedness (Klein 1994).

(36) John has boiled an egg.

Even though it is not explicitly stated, the sentence in (36) implies that the boiling of the egg is complete. I argue that the notion of completedness is not contributed by the present perfect construction, but instead by whether the predicate in question is telic or atelic.⁴ Although the sentence in (36) above expresses that the boiling is complete, this is due to the fact that the predicate in this sentence is an accomplishment, a telic predicate, with a natural endpoint. If we compare (36) above to (37) below, we can see that even though (37) is a present perfect construction, the eventuality of being tired is not complete—it is on-going. The predicate above in (36) has a natural endpoint, while the one below in (37) does not (it is atelic). In other words, there is no natural point at which the event of being tired will be complete.

(37) Mary has been tired lately.

⁴ Telicity is the property of a predicate having a natural endpoint (Comrie 1976). This is further discussed below in §3.3.

The sentence above in (37) has no notion of being complete, yet it can still be expressed using the present perfect. Even though the predicates in present perfect sentences are sometimes expressed as being complete, sentences like the one in (37) above provide evidence that completedness is not always a part of the meaning of the present perfect.

Another meaning attributed to the present perfect is that it expresses a change of state. A change of state is the change from a state where a certain eventuality holds, to a state where it no longer holds, or vice versa (Klein 1994). For example, in sentence (38) the change of state indicated is the change from the house not being completed to the state of the house being completed.

(38) John has built a house.

A change of state is an element that is related to both the perfect and the perfective (Klein 1994). The present perfect sentence above in (38) and the perfective sentence in (39) both indicate a change of state—the state of the house not being completed, to the house's state of being completed.

(39) John built a house. (PERFECTIVE)

Although there typically is a change of state associated with the present perfect, I argue that this cannot be considered the defining feature of the present perfect, due to the fact that it is also an element that is associated with the perfective (Klein 1994).

3.3 Current Relevance

In this thesis I argue that the defining feature that sets the present perfect apart from other temporal and aspectual constructions is the expression of current relevance of a past event. The notion of current relevance expressed by the present perfect can be seen when the present perfect is contrasted with the simple past. The present perfect and the simple past can often be used in the same contexts, and in fact they are sometimes used interchangeably (Iatridou et al. 2001). Consider the sentences in (40) and (41):

(40) I have lost my glasses. (PRESENT PERFECT)

(41) I lost my glasses. (SIMPLE PAST)

The present perfect sentence in (40) and the simple past sentence in (41) can both be uttered after the subject has lost his glasses. However, if the glasses are no longer lost, as in (42) and (43), it is only possible to use the simple past, as in (43).

(42) # I have lost my glasses, but then I found them. (PRESENT PERFECT)

(43) I lost my glasses, but then I found them. (SIMPLE PAST)

The difference between the present perfect and the simple past is that the present perfect above in (40) denotes that the past event of the subject losing his glasses has on-going relevance to the moment of speech—it expresses that the glasses are still lost. Although the simple past sentence in (41) is compatible with a context where the glasses are still lost, this is not part of its meaning. It does not say anything about the relation of the

eventuality to the current state of affairs. In this way, its interpretation is restricted to the past (Ota 1962).

It has been previously argued that the present perfect cannot be defined in terms of current relevance because there is no good definition of what it means to be currently relevant (Klein 1994). This point of view has led authors to argue for other defining features of the present perfect, such as a notion of completedness, or change of state, as discussed above. In this thesis, I propose a definition of current relevance that accounts for the present perfect. I define current relevance as an indication of the existence of a state—either causative⁵ or resultant, that holds at the moment of speech. I adopt the claim that the current relevance expressed by present perfect sentences should be understood as a reference to the resultant state that holds once an eventuality has culminated (Parsons, 1990). For every event that culminates, the state that holds after the culmination is known as the resultant state. Again, contrasting the present perfect with the simple past allows us to see how the present perfect indicates the existence of a resultant state.

(44) Mary arrived. (SIMPLE PAST)

(45) Mary has arrived. (PRESENT PERFECT)

In the simple past sentence in (44), there is an assertion that a certain event of arriving took place in the past. The present perfect sentence in (45) emphasizes that Mary is now in a state of being here; this is the resultant state. While a resultant state exists for all eventualities that culminate, the present perfect indexes the existence of this resultant

⁵ The causative state is the state that exists for *be going to* sentences. It will be discussed further in section 5.

state at the time of utterance, where other constructions, such as the simple past do not. In other words, although sentence (44) and (45) both assert that Mary's arrival occurred at some point in the past, only the sentence in (45) indicates that there is a present state of Mary being here. Simple past sentences only indicate that an eventuality has culminated, but do not say anything about the state that follows that culmination.

The resultant state of an eventuality is defined as the state that holds once an eventuality culminates. Following Parsons (1990), we can also say that the resultant state holds once the target state is reached. The target state is the state that holds after a change of state has occurred, or the eventuality has culminated.⁶ To illustrate what is meant by "target state" and "resultant state," Parsons gives the following example:

(46) I have thrown a ball onto the roof.

In (46) the event culminates when the ball lands on the roof. The target state is the state of the ball being located on the roof (or the change of state from the ball not being located on the roof, to being located on the roof). The target state lasts from the time the ball lands on the roof to the time it rolls off or is removed. This may last a long or short period of time. For example, the ball may land on the roof and then roll off a few seconds later, or the ball may land on the roof and stay there for years, or possibly forever.⁷ The resultant state, on the other hand, refers to the subject of the sentence being

⁶ I use the two terms 'culmination' and 'change of state' here in order to account for all aspectual class types. The term 'culmination' applies to activities, accomplishments, and achievements. For stative predicates, I will refer to a change of state. For activities, I adopt the view that an activity event is made up of a series of small culminations (Parsons, 1990).

⁷ For certain eventualities the target state has no necessary endpoint. For example, a ball may be located on a roof forever. This is even more evident in utterances like *John has proven the theorem* or *Mary has greeted the guests* where there is no point at which the theorem will be un-proven or the guests will be un-greeted (Kratzer 2000).

in the state of having thrown a ball onto the roof. Once the ball lands on the roof, the resultant state will last forever, regardless of how long the target state lasts. In other words, any time after the subject has accomplished the act of throwing the ball onto the roof, he will be in the state of having the experience of throwing a ball onto the roof.

The culmination point or change of state are defined by the telicity of the predicate. The culmination for telic predicates occurs when the eventuality is complete. For example, in sentence (46), the eventuality of building a house does not culminate until the house is complete.

(47) John has built a house.

Telic predicates have a natural endpoint. The eventuality of building a house naturally comes to an end once the house has been completed. The target state in (47) above is the state of the house being completed. The resultant state is John's state of having built a house. For John to be in the state of having built a house, the house must be complete. If John begins to build a house, but does not finish building it, he will never be in the resultant state of having built a house.

Telic predicates can be further divided into accomplishments and achievements (Vendler 1967). The sentence above in (47) is an example of an accomplishment. Accomplishments are typically thought of as being gradual (Vendler 1967). In (47), the building of the house is something that is completed gradually, step by step. In contrast, the sentence below in (48) is an example of an achievement. Achievements also have a

natural endpoint, but are typically thought of as occurring more instantaneously than accomplishments (Vendler 1967).

(48) Jodi has reached the summit.

The act of reaching the summit in (48) is something that is achieved instantly. Like accomplishments, for achievements, the target state does not hold until after the eventuality is complete or, in other words, until Jodi has reached the summit.⁸

The target state in (48) is the state of Jodi being present at the summit. The resultant state is Jodi's state of having reached the summit. The present perfect indexes the resultant state that Jodi is in once she has the experience of reaching the summit. Jodi must complete the action of reaching the summit in order for the resultant state to hold. If she stops ten feet from the summit, she will never be in the resultant state of having reached the summit, because she will not have reached the target state of being at the summit. On the other hand, even when Jodi leaves the summit to go back down the mountain, the resultant state will hold, even though the target state will no longer hold.

Unlike telic predicates, atelic predicates do not have natural endpoints. Predicates such as the one in (49) below are known as activity predicates (Vendler 1967). For atelic predicates, the culmination point occurs at the inception of an eventuality. For activities I adopt the view that each activity is made up of a series of culminations (Parsons 1990). For example, the running event in sentence (49) below is made up of a series of smaller running events, so the event of running culminates as soon as the subject has taken his

⁸ Achievements and accomplishments pair together, and activities and states pair together in terms of their behavior with respect to the present perfect as well as for *be going to* sentences. Therefore the relevant distinction for this thesis lies in telicity. For a detailed account of each aspectual class, see Vendler (1967)

first running step. These small culminations serve to make up the larger culmination of the entire running event.

(49) John has run.

For (49), any time after John has begun to run he will be in the resultant state of having run—even if he has only run one step.

The sentence below in (50) is a stative predicate, which is also atelic. Like activities, stative predicates do not have a natural endpoint.

(50) Mary has been tired.

One difference between activities and states is that while activity predicates can occur in the progressive, as in (51), stative predicates typically cannot, as is shown in (52).

(51) John is running.

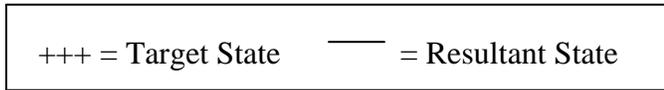
(52) #Mary is being tired.

For stative predicates I will not use the term ‘culmination’, but instead ‘change of state’. For stative predicates, the target state begins as soon as the subject has entered the state indicated by the predicate. For example, in (53), the target state begins as soon as Mary leaves the state of not being tired and enters into the state of being tired. The target state will last until Mary is no longer in the state of being tired.

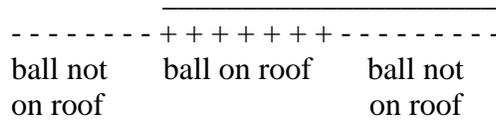
(53) Mary has been tired.

For (53), any time after Mary has entered the state of being tired she will be in the resultant state of having been tired—even if she has only been tired for a few seconds.

The diagrams below serve to illustrate the change of state that takes place for each aspectual class type, and to show that the resultant state holds from the time that the target state is reached, and lasts even after the target state no longer holds, for each aspectual class type.

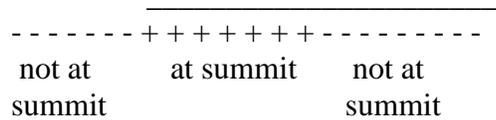


(54) I have thrown a ball onto the roof. (ACCOMPLISHMENT)



The target state for (54) is the state of the ball being located on the roof. The resultant state is the subject being in the state of having the experience of throwing a ball onto the roof. As the diagram shows, the resultant state holds even after the target state no longer holds (after the ball is no longer on the roof).

(55) Jodi has reached the summit. (ACHIEVEMENT)

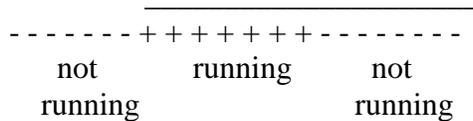


The target state for (55) above is the state of Jodi’s presence at the summit. The resultant state is Jodi’s state of having reached the summit.

The target state for (56) below is John being in the state of running. The resultant state is the state that follows the running event—John’s state of having run.

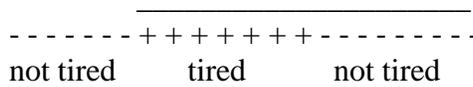


(56) John has run. (ACTIVITY)



In (56) we can see that the resultant state begins once John enters the state of running, and lasts forever. Likewise, below in (57) we can see that the resultant state holds as soon as Mary enters the state of being tired, and lasts forever.

(57) Mary has been tired. (STATE)



For (57) above, the target state is the state that holds when Mary is tired. The resultant state holds forever, once Mary has become tired. It is the state of Mary having been tired at some point in the past leading up to the present.

From the diagrams above, we can see that for all aspectual class types, the resultant state begins to hold as soon as the target state is reached, and continues to hold forever, even after the target state no longer holds. The resultant state holds at the moment of speech for all present perfect sentences in English. I propose that the target state can help to account for the distinctions among the different types of perfect that are identified in the literature (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994, Iatridou et al. 2001, Pancheva 2003, Kiyota 2006). Specifically, the different types of perfect can be distinguished based partly on whether or not the target state holds at the moment of speech, and partly on the telicity of the predicate, as is shown in the following section.

3.4 Interpretations of the Present Perfect

The present perfect can express various meanings. For example, the sentences in (58) and (59) below are both present perfect, but each has a different interpretation. The sentence in (58) expresses that Jodi reached the summit very recently. Sentence (59) expresses that Jodi has reached the summit at three points in the past leading up to the present moment.

(58) Jodi has (just) reached the summit!

(59) Jodi has reached the summit of Mt. Elbert (three times in her life).

English is usually considered to have four types of perfect. These are the universal perfect, the resultative perfect, the perfect of recent past, and the experiential perfect (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994, Iatridou et al. 2001, Pancheva 2003, Kiyota 2006). The

sentence in (58) above is the perfect of recent past. The one above in (59) is the experiential perfect. Each type of perfect expresses a distinct interpretation of the present perfect, and each differs with respect to whether or not the target state holds at the moment of speech, as well as with respect to whether it is available with only telic predicates, only atelic predicates, or both. For example, the universal perfect requires that the target state hold at the moment of speech, and it is only available with states or progressive events (unbounded predicates; see Iatridou et al. 2001) atelic (or unbounded) predicates. The experiential perfect, on the other hand does not require that the target state hold at the moment of speech, and it is available with all predicate types. In this section I discuss the differences among the types of present perfect and propose that the relationship between the moment of speech at the target state, in addition to the telicity of the predicate can account for the distinctions that we find in the types of perfect.

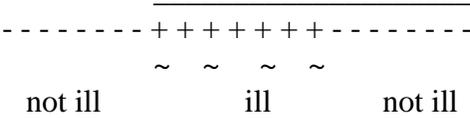
3.4.1 Universal Perfect

The universal perfect is used to describe an eventuality that began sometime in the past and continues into the present. The duration of the universal perfect is typically indicated by temporal adverbs or phrases, such as *since Monday* or *all week* (Klein 1994). The universal perfect is available only with states or progressive events⁹ (Klein 1994, Kiyota 2006), and requires that the target state hold at the moment of speech. For example, in (60) below, it requires that Mary be ill at the moment of speech.

⁹ The universal perfect can be used with events only if they are expressed as being unbounded, as in imperfective or progressive form, for example, as in *John has been building a house since Monday*. For further discussion of the types of perfect see Comrie (1976), Klein (1994), and Iatridou et al. (2001).

+++ = Target state — = resultant state ~ = moment of speech
--

(60) Mary has been ill since Monday.



Like the diagrams presented in §3.3, the diagram in (60) shows that the resultant state begins once the target state is reached, and lasts forever. In addition, the diagram in (60) illustrates that target state must hold at the moment of speech for the universal perfect. The target state is the state of Mary being ill. In order for the sentence in (60) to be considered universal perfect, Mary must be ill when the sentence is uttered.

The universal perfect reading is not available for bounded predicates, unless they are expressed in the imperfective. For example, the sentence in (61) below containing an accomplishment, does not denote that John is still in the process of building a house at the moment of speech.

(61) John has built a house since Monday.

The sentence in (61) cannot be interpreted as saying that John has been in the process of building a house since Monday and is still in that process. Instead of being considered the universal perfect, the sentence in (61) could be considered an example of either the perfect of recent past, or experiential perfect. For example, given the context that John builds houses for a living, the speaker could utter the sentence in (61) to express that John

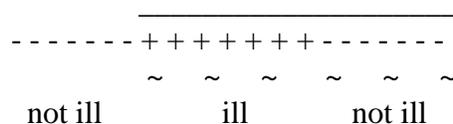
has recently finished building a house, and it would be interpreted as meaning that John both started and finished building a house since Monday.

3.4.2 Experiential Perfect

The experiential perfect is available with all predicate types, and expresses that the subject of a sentence has had a certain experience at some point in the past leading up to the present (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994). If we want to utter a sentence similar to the one above in (60) (*Mary has been ill since Monday*), but with an experiential reading instead of a universal perfect reading, the target state is not required to hold at the moment of speech. In other words, for the experiential perfect, Mary need not be ill at the time of utterance, as is shown in diagram (62).



(62) Mary has been ill (in her life).



In (62) we can see that the moment of speech is possible when the target state holds as well as after it has ended. For sentence (62) to be experiential perfect, Mary must have the experience of being ill at some point in her life. If Mary was ill once twenty years ago, it is still possible to utter sentence (62). It is also possible to utter sentence (62) if Mary is currently ill (if the target state currently holds). For instance, it is possible to say, *Mary has been ill in her life—in fact she’s ill now*. So, where the universal perfect

requires that the target state hold at the moment of speech, the experiential perfect has no such requirement.

3.4.3 Resultative Perfect

The resultative perfect refers to a present state which is the result of a past eventuality (Comrie, 1976). The target state must hold at the moment of speech for the resultative perfect. In sentence (63) below, for example, the glasses must still be lost at the moment of speech.

+++ = **Target state** — = **resultant state** ~ = **moment of speech**

(63) I have lost my glasses.

- - - - -	+	+	+	+	+	+	- - - - -
	~	~	~	~			
glasses not lost	glasses lost	glasses lost	glasses lost	glasses lost	glasses not lost	glasses not lost	

If the glasses are no longer lost, (i.e. the target state does not hold at the moment of speech), this sentence is not resultative perfect, but experiential perfect. If the glasses are no longer lost, this sentence indicates only that the subject has had the experience of losing his glasses at some point in the past, leading up to the present moment. In this respect, the resultative perfect is similar to the universal perfect. The difference between the two is that the universal perfect is only available with unbounded predicates, while the resultative perfect is only available with bounded predicates (Iatridou et al. 2001, Kiyota 2006).

of current relevance in reference to a future eventuality, and I define current relevance as the reference to a causative state that exists prior to an eventuality's culmination.

4. *BE GOING TO AS PROSPECTIVE ASPECT*

In this section I provide evidence that *be going to* shares the defining feature of current relevance that is found in the meaning of the present perfect, and that *be going to* is thus the future equivalent of the present perfect, or in other words, prospective aspect. Not only does *be going to* express the current relevance of a future eventuality in the same way that the present perfect expresses the current relevance of a past eventuality, but each interpretation of the present perfect also has a parallel in *be going to* sentences.¹⁰

4.1 Current Relevance of a Future Eventuality

In this section I analyze the *be going to* construction in the same way that I analyzed the present perfect construction above in §3. I propose that the *be going to* construction denotes the current relevance of a future eventuality just as the present perfect denotes the current relevance of a past eventuality.

Above I discussed the resultant state that holds after an eventuality has culminated. I argued that the present perfect indexes the resultant state in a way that other constructions, such as the simple past, do not. For present perfect sentences, the relevant state is the resultant state because such utterances pertain to an eventuality that occurred in the past, where the moment of speech occurs after or during the event, as a result of the past eventuality. In *be going to* sentences, the eventuality has not yet happened, so the resultant state following the eventuality is not relevant to these types of utterances.

Instead, we focus on the state that occurs prior to an eventuality, which I call here the

¹⁰ Prospective aspect should not be confused with the future perfect. The future perfect expresses a precedence relation between one future eventuality and another future eventuality that precedes it. Prospective aspect, on the other hand, expresses a prospective relationship between the current moment and a future eventuality. For example, *I will have been there three weeks by the time you arrive.*

causative state. I propose that a causative state exists prior to an eventuality's culmination, and that the *be going to* construction, alone among expressions of futurity, indicates the existence of this causative state.

The causative state is the state that exists when the cause of a future eventuality becomes either physically apparent or known by other means to the speaker. For example, in sentence (65), the present cause for the future event of raining could be dark clouds rolling in.

(65) It's going to rain.

For this sentence, we can say that the causative state begins once the dark clouds become apparent to the speaker. The causative state ends once it begins to rain. Raining is the target state of sentence (65) above, so we may say that for this type of sentence, the causative state lasts up until the target state begins. This sentence may also be uttered if it is already raining, as in (66).¹¹

(66) It's going to rain all day.

The *be going to* construction can also be used in sentences where there is no apparent physical cause for a future eventuality. In such cases, the causative state is the existence of a current intention, desire, or expectation for a future eventuality to occur. If sentence (67) below is uttered by a child for example, there may not be any current physical cause

¹¹ The moment of speech may occur prior to or during the target state depending on the interpretation of *be going to* that the speaker intends. The interpretations of *be going to* are discussed below in §4.2.

apparent at the moment of speech, but only a current desire or intention on the part of the child for the future state to hold.

(67) I am going to be an astronaut when I grow up.

In this case, the causative state begins as soon as the child has the intention of becoming an astronaut, and lasts either until the child no longer has that intention, or until the child becomes an astronaut (i.e. the target state is reached).¹²

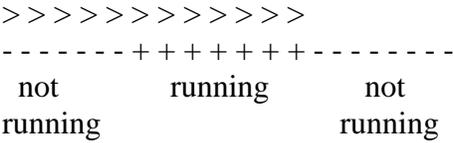
Where the resultant state is the state that exists as a result of a past eventuality, the causative state is the state that exists prior to a future eventuality and serves as the state that will cause the future eventuality to hold. The target state is the state that holds after a change of state occurs. For present perfect sentences the resultant state begins as soon as the target state is reached. For *be going to* sentences the causative state begins as soon as the speaker is aware of a present cause for a future eventuality. For telic predicates, the causative state ends when the target state ends. For atelic predicates, the causative state ends when the target state begins.

The diagrams below show that for activities and states the causative state overlaps with the target state, and that for accomplishments and achievements it does not.

¹² With *be going to*, even though a present cause or intention exists at the moment of speech, the future event may never reach its target state, because some unexpected event may intervene which could prevent the target state from holding.

Target State = +++	Causative State = >>>
--------------------	-----------------------

(68) John is going to run. (ACTIVITY)



For (68) the target state is John being in the state of running. The causative state is the state of a present cause (apparent to the speaker) for John to be in the state of running. For example, the speaker could have some knowledge that John intends to run. It could also be that the speaker has the knowledge that John intends to keep running, as in (69).

(69) John is running now, and he is going to run all day.

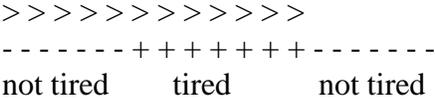
The causative state in (69) lasts from the time that the speaker becomes aware of John's intention to run (or to continue to run), until John is no longer in the state of running.¹³

For (70) below the target state holds when Mary enters the state of being tired, and lasts until she is no longer in the state of being tired. The causative state holds prior to the target state, and because this is an atelic predicate, it holds until the target state ends.

¹³ Again, the moment of speech may occur prior to or during the target state depending on the interpretation of *be going to* that the speaker intends. The interpretations of *be going to* are discussed below in §4.2.

Target State = +++ Causative State = >>>

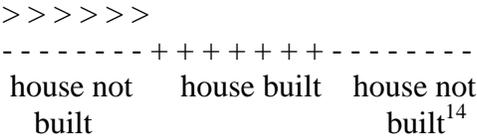
(70) Mary is going to be tired. (STATE)



The causative state holds once a present cause for Mary being tired becomes apparent or known to the speaker. For example, the speaker may see Mary running a marathon, or the speaker might know that Mary is planning to stay awake all night. Either of these situations could be an example of a present cause for the future event of Mary being in the state of being tired.

For telic predicates (accomplishments and achievements) the causative state lasts only until the target state begins, as shown in (71) below.

(71) John is going to build a house. (ACCOMPLISHMENT)



The target state in (71) is the state of the house being completed. The causative state for this sentence could be the speaker’s knowledge of John’s intention to build a house. The causative state cannot overlap with the target state for telic predicates. It is possible to

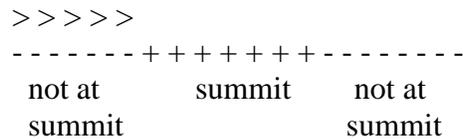
¹⁴ The state after the target state may not ever exist for some types of sentences. In other words, the target state may last forever (see footnote 7 for further discussion).

utter the sentence in (71) only before the house is built. So, even if John has already begun to build the house, it is still possible to utter the sentence in (71) all the way up until the house is built. Once the house is completed, however, it is no longer possible to utter the sentence in (71).

The same is true of the achievement in (72). The target state of (72) is the state of Jodi's presence at the summit. The causative state is the state leading up to Jodi's presence at the summit.



(72) Jodi is going to reach the summit. (ACHIEVEMENT)



In order for a speaker to utter the sentence in (72) he or she must be aware of the existence of a present cause for the future event of Jodi reaching the summit. This could be Jodi's intention to reach the summit. It is not possible for the speaker to utter (72) if Jodi is already at the summit, unless the speaker is referring to a separate future event.

4.2 Interpretations of *be going to*

Having defined the causative state, I now show how the causative state allows us to distinguish between the different types of *be going to*. I propose that each of the four different interpretations discussed above in relation to the present perfect has a parallel

interpretation in *be going to* sentences. This provides further evidence that *be going to* is prospective aspect in English.

The four interpretations available for the present perfect construction in English parallel the meanings of the present *be going to* construction. Recall that the four meanings expressed by the present perfect are the universal perfect, the resultative perfect, the perfect of recent past, and the experiential perfect (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994, Iatridou et al. 2001, Pancheva 2003). The parallels that we find in *be going to* sentences I call the *persistent perfect*, *the perfect of present cause*, *the perfect of imminent future*, and *the perfect of expectation*, respectively. Each type expresses a different way of using *be going to*, and differs with respect to whether or not the target state holds at the moment of speech, as well as whether it is available with only telic predicates, only atelic predicates, or both, just as we found in present perfect sentences. For example, in the same way that the universal perfect requires that the target state hold at the moment of speech, so does its parallel, the persistent perfect, and both are available only with unbounded predicates. In present perfect sentences, the experiential perfect does not require that the target state hold at the moment of speech, and neither does the perfect of expectation, its parallel in *be going to* sentences. Both the experiential perfect, and its parallel, the perfect of expectation, are available with all predicate types. The table below shows the types of perfect and their parallels in *be going to* sentences. The table in (74) shows how each type can be distinguished based on the relationship between the target state and moment of speech, as well as on the telicity of the predicate.

(73)

Type of Present Perfect	Example Sentence	Type of <i>be going to</i>	Example Sentence
<i>Universal Perfect</i>	Mary has been ill since Monday	<i>Persistent Perfect</i>	Mary is going to be ill all week
<i>Experiential Perfect</i>	John has gone to Iowa (in his life).	<i>Perfect of Expectation</i>	John is going to go to Iowa (someday).
<i>Resultative Perfect</i>	Jodi has lost her glasses.	<i>Perfect of Present Cause</i>	Jodi is going to lose her glasses.
<i>Perfect of Recent Past</i>	Bill has just fainted!	<i>Perfect of Imminent Future</i>	Bill is going to faint!

(74)

Type of Present Perfect	Target State Required to hold at Moment of Speech	Available with bounded, unbounded, or both types of predicates?	Type of <i>be going to</i>	Target State Required to Hold at Moment of Speech	Available with bounded, unbounded, or both types of predicates?
<i>Universal Perfect</i>	√	Unbounded	<i>Persistent Perfect</i>	√	Unbounded
<i>Experiential Perfect</i>	X	Both	<i>Perfect of Expectation</i>	X	Both
<i>Resultative Perfect</i>	√	Bounded	<i>Perfect of Present Cause</i>	X	Both
<i>Perfect of Recent Past</i>	X	Both	<i>Perfect of Imminent Future</i>	X	Bounded

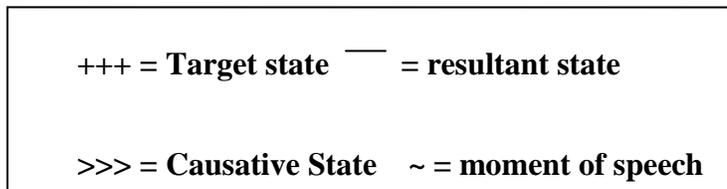
4.2.1 Persistent Perfect

The persistent perfect parallels the universal perfect. The universal perfect is used to describe an eventuality that began in the past and continues into the present. The persistent perfect is used to describe an eventuality that begins in the present and continues (or persists) into the future. The persistent perfect, like the universal perfect, can be indicated by temporal adverbs or phrases, such as *until Thursday* or *all week*. The

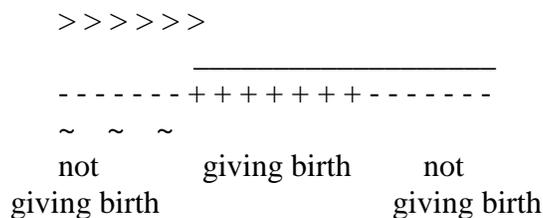
sick now. Where the persistent perfect requires that the target state hold at the moment of speech, the perfect of expectation has no such requirement, just as we saw in comparing the universal perfect and the experiential perfect in the present perfect sentences in §3.4 above.

4.2.3 Perfect of Present Cause

The perfect of present cause parallels the resultative perfect. The resultative perfect refers to a present state which is the result of a past event (Comrie, 1976). The perfect of present cause is used to refer to a present state which will result in a future eventuality. As the name “perfect of present cause” indicates, for this interpretation of *be going to*, a present cause exists at the time of utterance that will result in a future eventuality.



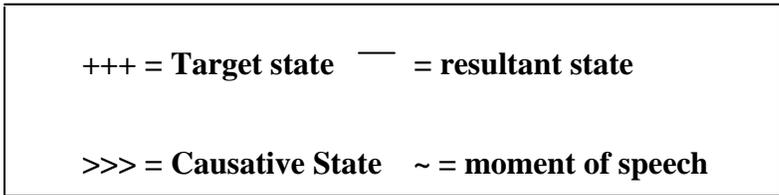
(77) She is going to have a baby.



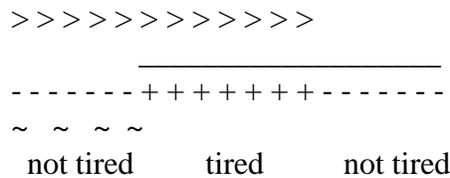
For (77) the present cause is the subject’s state of being pregnant at the moment of utterance. It is only possible to utter this sentence until the target state of giving birth to

the baby has occurred. In other words, once the subject has had the baby, the sentence in (77) is no longer felicitous in this context.

In (78) below the target state is the state of Mary being tired. The causative state is the state that exists prior to Mary being tired. This could be Mary hiking a mountain, staying up all night, or running a marathon. In order for this sentence to have the perfect of present cause meaning, the moment of speech must occur prior to the target state beginning.



(78) Mary is going to be tired.



Where the other interpretations of *be going to* line up with their parallels in present perfect sentences in terms of whether or not the target state is required to hold, the perfect of present cause does not. The target state must hold at the moment of speech for the resultative perfect. In the perfect of present cause the target state cannot hold at the moment of speech. The perfect of present cause differs from the perfect of result in whether or not the target state may hold at the moment of speech. Furthermore, where the resultative perfect is available only with telic predicates, the perfect of present cause is available with both telic and atelic predicates. The two interpretations still mirror each

speaker. This state could be John looking pale. The perfect of imminent future is only available with telic predicates, where its parallel, the perfect of recent past is available with both telic and atelic predicates. Although the perfect of present cause and the perfect of imminent future do not line up exactly with their present perfect parallels, in terms of telicity and the relationship between the moment of speech and the target state, the differences that exist may be able to be accounted for by the differences in the nature of expressions of futurity. I leave these differences to future research.

4.3 Summary

Based on the *be going to* sentences above, and the extent to which they parallel present perfect sentences in their abilities to express current relevance, I propose that *be going to* is prospective aspect, the future equivalent of the present perfect. The element that separates the present perfect from other tenses and aspects, like the simple past or simple present, for example, is that it expresses the current relevance of a past eventuality. Current relevance can be defined as reference to a state that holds at the present moment and is the result of some past event or eventuality. In present *be going to* sentences, a similar state exists—the causative state—but instead of a state holding as the result of a past eventuality, this is the state of the existence of a present cause or expectation for a future eventuality.

5. FURTHER EVIDENCE FOR *BE GOING TO* AS PROSPECTIVE ASPECT

In this thesis I claim that what the English present *be going to* construction and the present perfect construction share in common is the feature of current relevance. There are further similarities between *be going to* and the present perfect that serve to strengthen the claim that *be going to* is prospective aspect. In this section I discuss the morphological similarities and similar discourse tendencies in the two constructions.

5.1 Morphology

Further evidence for *be going to* as prospective aspect can be found in the morphology of the *be going to* construction and the present perfect construction. Both constructions have present tense morphology, indicated on the auxiliary verb in each construction. We can see this in the present tense form of *to have* in the present perfect sentence in (80) and in the present tense form of *to be* in the *be going to* sentence in (81).

(80) John **has** been to Iowa.

(81) John **is** going to faint!

According to Haegeman (1989), morphological tense determines the contextualization of an utterance. The present tense morphology of both the *be going to* construction and the present perfect construction lends to the meaning of current relevance that is expressed by each by placing them in the context of the present moment.

5.2 Discourse Tendencies

Behavior in discourse contexts provide further evidence of the parallels between *be going to* and the present perfect. It has been noted that in speech based in futurity, speakers will often begin the discourse with *be going to* and then continue with *will* (Wekker, 1976, Perez, 1990). For example:

Finally, tonight on the weather forecast for the south. The night's **going to** be rather cloudy, but most places **will** remain dry. The temperature **will** fall around 4 C near the coast, ... and the winds **will** be southeast...
(Wekker, 1976:125)

Wekker argues that this tendency in speech is not simply a matter of style, but comes from something inherent in the meanings of *be going to* and *will*. Wekker explains that the weather forecast begins with *be going to* because it is based on some present indication. When the weatherman switches to *will* it is because he is focusing on the future. Wekker points out the similarity with the present perfect. He claims that speakers tend to begin a story using the present perfect and then switch to past tense. Haegeman (1989) gives the following example:

A collection of 45 drawings ... **has been sold** by Sotheby's in New York for \$21,288,300 ... They **were owned** by Mr. John Gaines, a race horse breeder whose fortune **came** from a dog food company. Mr. Gaines **decided** to sell ... (Guardian I9.II.86, P. 2 coll. 3-5) (From Haegeman 1989: 300).

In both examples the speaker begins with a form that has current relevance and continues with the more distant form.

5.3 Summary

In addition to the current relevance that is expressed by both the present perfect and the *be going to* construction, we can see that there are also similarities in the two expressions in their morphological makeup as well as the way that they are each used in discourse. The similarities presented in this section provide further evidence for the claim that the present perfect and *be going to* are parallel constructions and that *be going to* is thus prospective aspect.

6. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this section I discuss the conclusions of this research on the present perfect and the *be going to* construction. I discuss the implications that this research has in the field of linguistics, and I outline issues for further research raised by this analysis.

6.1 Conclusions

In this thesis I have shown that the *be going to* construction and the present perfect both express a notion of current relevance. The present perfect expresses the current relevance of a past eventuality, and the present *be going to* construction expresses the current relevance of a future eventuality. I have proposed that each of the interpretations of the present perfect has a parallel in present *be going to* sentences. The similarities that exist between the present perfect and *be going to* have led me to argue that the present *be going to* construction is the future version of the present perfect, or in other words, the present *be going to* construction is prospective aspect.

6.2 Implications

The proposal of this thesis has several implications for the field of linguistics. First, it analyzes a widely-used temporal construction that has previously been set aside in tense and aspect literature. In examining this construction, this thesis contributes to the understanding of tense, aspect, and mood in English by proposing that an expression of futurity has the same defining feature as a construction that is typically thought of as pertaining only to past eventualities. Furthermore, by analyzing the *be going to* construction as prospective aspect, and adopting Enç's claim that *will* is modal, this research supports the theory that English has no true future tense (Jespersen 1924, Enç

1996), specifically because it identifies the typically unaddressed *be going to* construction as prospective aspect. In addition, I have shown that contrary to what has previously been reported in the literature, English does have a prospective aspect (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994). In showing this, this thesis contributes more broadly to our understanding of the organization of the tense and aspect system in English.

This research also has implications for the field of second-language pedagogy. The misuse of *be going to* in place of *will* and vice versa does not result in ungrammaticality, but it does give a sentence an unnatural or non-native sound. For second-language learners of English, it may not be intuitive when to use *be going to* versus *will* or other expressions of futurity. The proposals made here, concerning the importance of current relevance in relation to the *be going to* construction contribute to our understanding of the conditions in which *be going to* is most felicitously used. This information can be useful to teachers of English as a second language when explaining to students the appropriate context for each construction.

6.3 Issues for Further Research

In this section I discuss several areas that I leave for future research on the shared feature of current relevance between the present perfect and *be going to*. This thesis lays the groundwork for future research in the areas of historical linguistics and language change.

6.3.1 Grammaticalization

The *be going to* construction is a grammaticalized construction. Grammaticalization is the process of a word with a lexical meaning taking on a grammatical meaning in the language, or becoming a grammatical marker (Millar 2007). In the case of *be going to*, at one time in the English language it had only the directional meaning of a subject being in motion towards a location (Millar 2007). While this meaning still exists in the language, as shown in (82), it has also become a grammatical marker of futurity, as shown in (83) (and throughout this thesis).

(82) I am going to the store.

(83) I am going to be an astronaut.

This grammatical marker of futurity is becoming phonologically reduced, which is a characteristic of constructions that are in the process of becoming grammaticalized (Millar 2007). The phonological reduction of *be going to* can be seen in comparing (84) where *be going to* is not reduced, and (85) where it is reduced to *gonna*.

(84) It's **going to** rain.

(85) It's **gonna** rain.

The reduced version of *be going to* shows us that this construction is becoming more grammaticalized. This could eventually lead to the *be going to* construction becoming a bound morpheme (Millar 2007). An important area of further research is the role of

grammaticalization in the semantics of *be going to*, with the following questions of particular interest: How has the interpretation of *be going to* changed as it has become grammaticalized? How will its meaning change as it continues on the path of grammaticalization? My preliminary hypothesis is that as *be going to* has become increasingly grammaticalized, it has increasingly taken on more of a meaning of futurity. As it continues on the path of grammaticalization, *be going to* may continue to take on even more of a meaning of futurity, perhaps eventually becoming a future tense marker.

6.3.2 Time Adverbials

One characteristic of the English present perfect is that it is generally not compatible with definite time adverbials¹⁵ (Klein 1992, Klein 1994, Iatridou et al. 2001, Pancheva 2007), as is illustrated by the unacceptability of the sentence in (86) (Dahl 1985).

(86) #I have met your brother yesterday.

This restriction against definite time adverbials is one area where *be going to* does not appear to parallel the present perfect. Where it is rarely acceptable to use definite time adverbials with the present perfect, it appears that it is virtually always acceptable to use definite time adverbials with *be going to*, as is shown by sentence (87) below.

(87) I am going to meet your brother tomorrow.

¹⁵ This restriction against the use of specific time adverbials with the present perfect is does not hold cross-linguistically (Comrie 1976, Klein 1994).

While at first glance this appears to be a significant difference between the two constructions, there are cases where the present perfect does allow specific time adverbials, as is illustrated by the sentence in (88).¹⁶

(88) They believe him to have been arrested at six o'clock p.m. last evening.

The present perfect appears to be compatible with definite time adverbials when it is expressed in its infinitival form. The relations between embedded and infinitival present perfect forms and finite present *be going to* constructions, and more broadly, the relationship between tense and definite/indefinite time, are areas for further research.

¹⁶ Thank you to Dr. Tully Thibeau for bringing this to my attention.

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