

Romance GO + infinitive: past and future, home and away

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GO verbs in the Romance languages exhibit two patterns of development that have been widely discussed in the literature. On the one hand, there is extensive suppletion as for example French *aller* ‘go.INF’: *vais, vas, va, vont* ‘1/2/3 SING, 3 PLUR’ beside *allons, allez* ‘1/2 PLUR’. (The patterns differ from language to language; see Pomino & Remberger 2019 for recent discussion and references.) On the other, GO verbs are part of a variety of periphrastic constructions, two of which are of particular interest here, what we call the GO-past as in (1) and the GO-future in (2) (Paoli & Wolfe 2022):

- (1) van lo conjurar ... (Old Occitan, early 14th cent; Jensen 1986)
go.PRS.3PL 3SG.ACC beg.INF
‘They begged him ...’
- (2) vos vam pas mèi créder (Modern Gascon, Barcelo 2003)
you go.PRS.1PL NEG more believe.INF
‘We will not believe you any more.’

When it comes to the inflectional morphology, there is a clear difference between the two constructions. In the case of the GO-future, the auxiliary and the lexical verb have identical patterns, what Corbett (2022) calls ‘internal’ or purely morphological split. The contrasting syntactically defined, or ‘external’, split is to be seen with the GO-past, where the suppletion associated with the lexical verb is not present in the grammaticalized auxiliary (Vincent & Wheeler 2022):

Aragonese		Catalan		Guardiol	
Lexical	Auxiliary	Lexical	Auxiliary	Lexical	Auxiliary
1SG voi	va	vaig	vaig	vau	vau
2SG vas	vas	vas	vas	vas	vas
3SG va	va	va	va	vai	vai
1PL imos	vam/vamos	anem	vam	anèm	vam
2PL itz	vatz	aneu	vau	anatz	vatz
3PL van	van	van	van	van	van

The GO-past is found in Catalan documents from at least the 13th century and is still productive in the modern language (Detges 2004 and references therein) and in Aragonese (Martínez Cortés *et al* 2021). The construction is documented in Old Occitan from the 12th century but dies out around the end of the 16th (Wheeler 2017). The GO-future has been attested in Castilian, Portuguese and French since the 15th century while the earliest Occitan uses appear in the 17th century. The GO-past is of particular interest since we find it still today in the displaced Occitan dialect, Guardiol, in the Calabrian village of Guardia Piemontese, as the table above demonstrates. This village was settled by Waldensian refugees in the 14th century and all links with the original community were severed after 1561 (Kunert 1994, Jacobs & Kunert 2014). The surrounding Calabrian dialects have only the suppletive lexical paradigm for the GO verb (*vaju, va, jamu, jati, vannu*) and do not use it in either a past or a future periphrasis. In these dialects reflexes of the Latin synthetic perfect are not found and the past is expressed instead exclusively by a periphrasis with HAVE/BE. Despite this and despite the fact that Guardiol also retains the HAVE/BE periphrasis, the GO-past has survived unaltered for more than half a millennium. Meanwhile in its homeland the Occitan GO-past has died out and in its stead a GO-future has emerged due to contact with French (Mooney 2020).

In short, the contrasting fates of the Occitan GO-past in the language’s home territories and in the displaced community constitute a striking minimal pair of contact-induced change versus non-change.

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