

## Verbal Periphrases in Romance



# Empirical Approaches to Language Typology

21

*Editors*

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# Verbal Periphrases in Romance

Aspect, Actionality,  
and Grammaticalization

*by*

Mario Squartini

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## **Abbreviations**

<b>I</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Imperfective</b>
<b>IP</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Imperfect</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Perfective</b>
<b>PF</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Present Perfect</b>
<b>SP</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Simple Past</b>
<b>Subj</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Subjunctive</b>



# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1. Grammaticalization paths**

Grammaticalization is currently defined as a gradual process leading to the transformation of an independent lexical item into a grammatical morpheme. Hopper—Traugott (1993: 95) present the following general cline of structural evolution for grammaticalizing items:

lexical item used in specific linguistic contexts > syntax > morphology

A grammaticalizing lexical item is first used in specific discourse functions, then its structure becomes syntactically fixed and eventually it may end up as a morphologically fused element. The grammaticalization process goes on when the item becomes a morpheme, including different degrees of morphological fusion. According to current grammaticalization theory these steps cannot be reversed (unidirectionality).

Research on grammaticalization is now focusing on two main facets. On the one hand the cognitive processes underlying the transformation of a lexical item into a morpheme are being studied attentively. On the other hand the attempt is being made to derive generalizations concerning the grammaticalization path followed by a grammaticalizing item. The principle of unidirectionality has been extended to the semantics of grammaticalization and the search for generalizations on unidirectional paths has urged to study more specific constraints on the semantic evolution of grammaticalizing morphemes and on the interaction with formal processes of phonetic erosion and morphosyntactic decategorialization.

Bybee—Dahl (1989) and more recently Bybee—Perkins—Pagliuca (1994) have proposed substantial cross-linguistic generalizations on the grammaticalization of verb morphemes. They have demonstrated that across languages the grammaticalization process involves a restricted list of lexical items, which follow comparable semantic paths. For example, they show that Progressives derive most frequently from locative constructions and eventually tend to evolve as general

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imperfective markers. This evolution is paralleled by formal change which phonetically reduces the lexical element involved in the periphrastic construction, transforming it into an affix. For Perfects too an evolutionary path has been proposed in Bybee—Dahl (1989) and Bybee—Perkins—Pagliuca (1994), even if the picture is somewhat more complicated. The authors detect different sources for Perfects or “anterior” (in Bybee’s terminology), such as completives (“to do something thoroughly and completely”) and resultatives (denoting a present state deriving from a preceding situation). The further diachronic path of Perfects includes the evolution as past or general perfective (cf. the Present Perfect in several Romance languages: French, Romanian and, to some extent, Italian), as evidential marker, and also as a form expressing different degrees of remoteness.

The present work will be mainly concerned with reconstructing the path of grammaticalization of some Romance analytic constructions and the competition between synthetic and analytic forms in the verb system, with particular attention to Progressives, Perfects and some perfective periphrases such as the Catalan analytic Perfective Past. Bybee—Dahl (1989) and Bybee—Perkins—Pagliuca (1994) will be used as general background and their grammaticalization schema will be made more precise with respect to Romance languages.

In particular, in this work it will be claimed that the interaction between aspect and actionality plays an important role in the process of grammaticalization. Hopper (1991: 28–30) includes “persistence” among the basic five principles of grammaticalization, meaning by this that the process leading to the transformation of an independent lexical item into an inflectional morpheme is constrained by some form of “persistence” of the original semantic value contained in the lexical item. Bybee—Pagliuca (1987) and Bybee—Perkins—Pagliuca (1994) also insist that even a highly grammaticalized morpheme has some form of “semantic retention” of its original lexical meaning. It will be shown here that, in the case of Romance Progressives and Perfects, it is the intrinsic actional or *Aktionsart* value of the auxiliary that is retained in the process of grammaticalization. Different degrees of actional retention will be detected in Romance analytic forms.

## 1.2. Aspect and actionality

### 1.2.1. Aspect

Since one of the main topics in this work will be the interaction of aspect and actionality, the basic theoretical assumptions underlying these notions will be now briefly sketched.

As for the definition of aspect and its distinction with respect to temporal reference or tense (see Bertinetto 1994: 393 on the terminological confusion in this respect), the issue seems to be settled in the literature. Temporal reference denotes the temporal location of the situation on the time line. On the other hand an aspectual distinction is not concerned with temporal location, but rather with “the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (Comrie 1976: 3).

Much more debated is the distinction between aspect and actionality or *Aktionsart*; this will be dealt with here in some detail, being a focal issue in this work.

In Smith (1991) aspect is defined as a viewpoint on the situation, while actionality (called “situation aspect” by Smith) refers to situation types.

An example of aspectual opposition is the following, in which an Italian Imperfect (imperfective past) in (1) is contrasted with a perfective past (in this case a Present Perfect) in (2):

- (1) *Ieri, quando Paolo è arrivato, Giulio scriveva (IP) una lettera.*  
‘Yesterday, when Paolo arrived, Giulio *was writing* a letter.’
- (2) *Ieri Giulio ha scritto (PF) una lettera.*  
‘Yesterday Giulio *wrote* a letter.’

The situation denoted is the same and its temporal location (*yesterday*) does not change. What changes is the viewpoint on the situation: in (1) the situation is visualized as on-going at a given time coinciding with Paolo’s arrival, while in (2) the situation is visualized as a closed whole, as it is required by perfective morphology.

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### 1.2.2. Actional classification

Turning to the notion of situation aspect or actionality, this requires more accurate clarification, for the debate is far from being settled. Before discussing the thorny question of the relationship between aspect and actionality, the basic classification of situation types or actional classes will be reviewed in outline in what follows, in order to provide a general introduction for the discussion of the crucial notion of actionality. The following presentation comprises some well-known and commonly accepted points, which will be used in this work too as main background. In addition reference will be made to some particularly debated questions concerning predicate classification.

The four predicate classes presented in Vendler (1957) are still the starting point for any actional classification:

- (a) activities (*John ran in the park*)
- (b) accomplishments (*John built a bridge*)
- (c) achievements (*John left*)
- (d) states (*John is tall*).

As is well known, both activities and accomplishments denote durative situations. The difference is that accomplishments, unlike activities, require an intrinsic endpoint (the completion of the bridge, in the case mentioned). This difference can be made apparent by using temporal adverbials. Only accomplishments (3), but not activities (4), are compatible with an adverbial such as *in two years* or *in two hours* (this adverbial type will be referred to as an 'in x time' adverbial), which measures the time spent in reaching the intrinsic endpoint:

- (3) *John built the bridge in two years.*
- (4) *\*John ran in the park in two hours.*

On the other hand, an adverbial such as *for two years* or *for two hours* (the 'for x time' type) is compatible with activities (6) and also with accomplishments (5), provided that the intrinsic endpoint has not been attained.



- (5) *John built the bridge for two years, but then he had to break off because of a shortage of money.*
- (6) *John ran in the park for two hours.*

The behaviour of accomplishments, which in most cases are compatible both with ‘in x time’ and ‘for x time’, shows that there is not “a one to one correspondence between classes of VPs and classes of situations” (Dahl 1981: 89). For this reason, it has been proposed to consider some predicates as neither inherently activities nor accomplishments (these are dubbed “Ø-bounded predicates” by Declerck 1979).

An important issue that is raised most clearly by accomplishments is the influence of the sentential context in determining the actional value. A well-known case, discussed in Verkuyl (1972), is the influence of the direct object on telicity. Thus, a bare plural triggers an atelic interpretation, while a direct object indicating a definite or determinate quantity triggers a telic reading (*\*They played sonatas in two hours* vs. *They played a/the sonata in two hours*). It has also been demonstrated that the external argument (subject) and adverbials have an influence in determining the situation type. According to Verkuyl (1972, 1989, 1993) aspect construal is due to the interaction of different parameters, both temporal and atemporal. Temporal parameters are connected to the verb, while atemporal ones are connected to the quantificational properties of NPs interacting with the verb.

The distinction between accomplishments and activities also requires clarification with respect to the notion of intrinsic goal. It has been noted (Dahl 1981) that accomplishments cannot be simply defined as situations *tending* towards a goal, for such a definition would also include cases which do not respond affirmatively to the test with ‘in x time’, such as *The submarine moved toward the North Pole*. Another problematic point concerns the extensionally predefined nature of the goal. There is a class of predicates which are compatible with an ‘in x time’, even if their intrinsic endpoint is not extensionally predefined. These predicates refer to situations such as *increase*, *decrease*, *improve*, *get worse*, etc. which denote the gradual increase of a given property. As shown in Bertinetto—Squartini (1995), these situations are ultimately telic but allow for two different interpretations, due to their degree word nature. On the one hand, saying that *The level of water has decreased* means that it is now low, on the other hand it can mean that the level is still high but is lower than it was before. What is relevant is that both

interpretations are telic, since both are compatible with ‘in x time’, since not only the final endpoint (*the level is low*) but an intermediate stage too (*the level is lower*) can be interpreted as a telos.

As for achievements (situations such as *reach the summit, recognize, fall down, leave, die* etc.), they are traditionally defined as non-durative, unlike accomplishments, activities, and states, which are intrinsically durative. As a consequence of non-durativity, when an achievement is combined with durative adverbials of the ‘for x time’ and ‘in x time’ type, the adverbials measure the duration of the preparatory stage leading to the achievement (‘in x time’, as in 7) or the resultant stage produced by it (‘for x time’, as in 8), but not the event itself:

(7)        *John left in two hours.*

(8)        *John left for two days.*

The compatibility with an adverbial such as ‘in x time’ shows the similarity between achievements and accomplishments, since both share the same feature, involving an intrinsic endpoint to be reached. In what follows the term telicity will be used for denoting the intrinsic feature which is common to accomplishments and achievements.

The notion of non-durativity, if applied to achievements, raises some problems, for they are compatible with durative adverbials such as ‘in x time’, which imply a duration before reaching the intrinsic culmination. Quite diverse solutions have been proposed, either reducing the basic Vendlerian classes or increasing them, in order to come to grips with the relationship between achievements and durativity. Some scholars (cf. among others Verkuyl 1989, 1993: 46–50) emphasize the similarity between accomplishments and achievements, both characterized by an intrinsic endpoint, and recognize only one major telic class of situation types (but cf. also the defence of the split between accomplishments and achievements in Mittwoch 1991). Other scholars (cf. among others Freed 1979: 52; Bertinetto 1986; Sasse 1991: 36; Smith 1991) do not accept the reductionist view unifying accomplishments and achievements. They rather take the opposite direction, proposing to split the original Vendlerian class into two classes: “gradual achievements” and “sharp achievements” in Freed’s terminology or “gradually terminative” and “totally terminative” in Sasse’s terminology. The former class

admits a preparatory stage which can be measured by means of an adverbial such as 'in x time' (*die, leave, reach the top, fade, fall asleep, etc.*), while sharp achievements (*fall down, note, hit, etc.*) are more consistently non-durative. It is to be noted that the first approach, namely the unifying account, which disregards the difference between accomplishments and achievements, misses the empirical point delivered by adverbial compatibility, in particular the interpretation triggered by a 'for x time' adverbial. Even if some achievements (such as *leave* in (8)) are compatible with 'for x time', the interpretation of such an adverbial is quite different if combined with an achievement or with an accomplishment (*write a letter*). With the latter the 'for x time' adverbial delimits a portion of the situation, transforming it into an activity. On the other hand, with an achievement, it denotes the duration of the resulting state; otherwise the situation can be interpreted as iterative (*John left at two o'clock for two years*).

The fourth Vendlerian category (states) refers to non-dynamic situations, namely to situations which tend to be static, not to change for the time they hold. Examples of states are *be tall, be ill, own a car* etc. In the vast majority of cases states are characterized by refusing any agentive involvement by the subject, even if some states can be agentive (*be proud of, be serious*), as it is demonstrated by the compatibility with Imperatives. States are also often reported to be characterized as strictly continuous and uninterrupted situations without gaps, since one cannot interrupt being tall and resume it later on (unless one pretends to be tall). On the contrary, non-states allow more easily for gaps, but they show different degrees of such a property. Thus, a sentence such as *Yesterday I read for two hours* is likely to be characterized by fewer gaps than *During that summer I wrote a novel*, yet both are non-states. Two main classes of states are often distinguished: permanent states such as *be tall, belong to an old family* etc. and temporary states such as *be ready, be open* etc. Such a distinction corresponds closely to the one proposed by Carlson (1977) between individual level and stage level predicates.

### 1.2.3 The relationship between aspect and actionality

The discussion of the relationship between aspect and actionality is still quite intense. First of all, the terminological question has to be clarified. What it is called here actionality has also been referred to as *Aktionsart*. Nevertheless, as noted

by Comrie (1976: 6, fn. 4), there are at least two different meanings of the term *Aktionsart*. In some cases it has been used as a semantic notion for referring to the situation type denoted by the verb lexeme (in the same sense as actionality), but in some traditions (especially Slavic and German) the *Aktionsarten* are the semantic hues expressed by derivational morphemes (cf. Binnick 1991: 139–149 for a review on the term *Aktionsart*). Due to this latter usage of the term, the list of *Aktionsarten* changes according to the derivational morphemes occurring in a given language and does not correspond to the situation types, which are based on semantic criteria independent of their morphological expression. As an example consider the application of the morphologically-driven interpretation of *Aktionsart* to the Romance periphrases proposed by Chmeliček (1930) and Hamplová (1968). In order to give an account of the Romance periphrastic morphemes the list of *Aktionsarten* far exceeds the basic Vendlerian situation types, including quite diverse notions such as “intensive”, “iterative”, “frequentative” etc. in Chmeliček and “inchoative”, “terminative”, “durative”, “change of state”, etc. in Hamplová.

Once the distinction between a morphologically based notion (Slavic *Aktionsart*) and a semantic notion, which is independent of morphological means of expression (actionality), has been clarified, several debated points remain to be discussed on the role of such a semantic notion in the aspectual system and on its independence with respect to aspect.

In order to introduce the question of the actual interplay between aspect and actionality a comparison between two quite different verbal systems, namely Romance and Slavic, will be presented here.

In a Romance language the focus on the endpoint is a distinctive feature of a perfective situation, so that the delimitative adverbial ‘for x time’ is not compatible with an imperfective situation (unless it is interpreted as iterated). Consider the following contrast between an Italian imperfective past (an Imperfect) and a perfective past (here a Present Perfect):

- (9) *Ieri pioveva (IP).*  
‘Yesterday it *was raining*.’
- (10) *Ieri ha piovuto (PF).*  
‘Yesterday it *rained*.’
- (11) *\*Ieri pioveva (IP) per due ore.*

- ‘Yesterday it *was raining* for two hours.’  
 (12) *Ieri ha piovuto (PF) per due ore.*  
 ‘Yesterday it *rained* for two hours.’

The situation denoted is the same. Nonetheless, when the temporal limits of the situation are focused on (11–12), only the perfective form in (12) is admitted. What counts for determining the aspectual value is the focus on the endpoint. It is crucial that, as recognized quite clearly in Garey (1957: 106–108), such a requirement is independent from the telic or atelic nature of the endpoint. A Romance perfective form is triggered both with a telic endpoint (13) and an atelic one (14):

- (13) *Paolo ha risolto (PF) il problema in dieci minuti.*  
 ‘Paolo *solved* the problem in ten minutes.’  
 (14) *Paolo ha chiacchierato (PF) con Luca per dieci minuti.*  
 ‘Paolo *chatted* with Luca for ten minutes.’

Wide-range typological studies (Dahl 1985) have shown that such a morphological marking of two basic aspectual values (perfective and imperfective) is a quite common phenomenon in the languages of the world. Nevertheless, it has also been shown that languages differ in the way the notion of endpoint is conceived. The Slavic aspectual system is a well-described example showing a different way of conceiving the notion of endpoint in the opposition perfective/imperfective and consequently showing a different interplay of aspect and actionality. Unlike Romance languages, in Slavic the occurrence of a delimiting temporal adverbial such as ‘for x time’ triggers in most cases<sup>1</sup> an imperfective form. Consider the following Russian examples, showing that a situation such as *read a book* requires an imperfective form when delimited by means of an adverbial such as ‘for x time’ (15–16), while the perfective form is used when the attainment of the intrinsic telos of the situation is achieved, namely when the whole book has been read through (17–18):

- (15) *Včera on čital (I) knigu dva časa.*  
 ‘Yesterday he *read* the book for two hours.’  
 (16) *\*On pročital (P) knigu dva časa.*

- ‘He *read* the book for two hours.’
- (17) \**On čital (I) knigu za dva časa.*  
 ‘He *read* the book in two hours.’
- (18) *On pročitao (P) knigu za dva časa.*  
 ‘He *read* the book in two hours.’

The comparison between Romance and Slavic shows that the interplay of aspect and actionality delivers different results across languages (cf. also Lindstedt 1995). In a Romance language the notions of perfectivity and telicity are kept apart, while in Slavic they are more strictly intermingled. In Slavic, perfective morphology is triggered only when the verb occurs in a telic reading (18). On the contrary, in Romance a perfective form does not involve necessarily a telic reading, being triggered when the endpoint, no matters if telic and atelic, is focussed on.<sup>2</sup>

Because of data such as these, it would be natural to admit of different degrees of interference between aspect and actionality across languages, thus assuming the two as distinct notions. Nevertheless, such an assumption is quite debated in the literature and, therefore, the point is worth elaborating. There are basically three different stances on the issue.

### 1.2.3.1 No distinction between aspect and actionality

A first possible approach tends to unify aspect and actionality. There is no difference whatsoever between the two and both are unified under the general category of aspect. This stance is mostly popular in “formal” semantic perspectives, but is not exclusive to these analyses. As a recent example of this approach compare Verkuyl (1993: 11), who uses the term “aspectuality” in order “to capture the whole area covered” by aspect and actionality. Thus, a case of imperfectivity, such as *Judith was eating a sandwich*, is treated as expressing the same aspectual value as an activity inflected with perfective morphology (*Judith ate sandwiches*). Along similar lines Herweg (1991) maintains that “a sentence in the perfective aspect reports that a situation which is conceptually categorized as an event of a certain event type occurs within a period of time”, and “By contrast, sentences in the imperfective aspect assert that a situation which is conceptually categorized as a state obtains at a time”, thus clearly identifying perfective aspect and events on the

one hand and imperfective aspect and states on the other. No distinction is thus admitted between actional notions, such as event and state, and aspectual meaning. This stance, even if justified at a more abstract level, does not seem to give a satisfying descriptive account for those cases, just pointed out, in which aspect and actionality show some degree of independence. Nevertheless, recognizing the function of the distinction between aspect and actionality just as a descriptive tool is not tantamount to saying that it “does not play any theoretically significant role”, having only a “practical” function, as maintained by Verkuyl (1993: 11). Descriptive adequacy is a basic requirement of the theory and should not be considered as a mere “practical” advantage. The ultimate choice rests on which data are considered as most relevant in order to build up the theory.

### 1.2.3.2 A semantic distinction

A second possible interpretation of the distinction aspect/actionality is what can be called a “semantic” approach, which will be assumed in this work too. This approach is explicitly emphasized in Bache (1982, 1995), Bertinetto (1986, 1994), Smith (1991), to mention only a few. Smith, as we saw above, distinguishes between “viewpoint aspect” and “situation aspect”, defined as “independent aspectual components”. According to Bache (1995: 74) actionality (that the author calls “action”) concerns “*what* the speaker talks about”, while aspect concerns “the *way* in which the speaker talks about whatever he or she is talking about”. A clear distinction between aspect and actionality, based on the compatibility tests with temporal adverbials is also proposed in Bertinetto—Delfitto (1992).

A thorny question often arising when dealing with a semantic distinction between aspect and actionality is the objective character of the latter in relation to the subjective nature of the former. Aspect has been defined as subjective, for it involves a speaker’s choice in the way the situation has to be conceived, either as closed whole (perfective aspect) or as a open on-going situation (imperfective). On the other hand actionality is not influenced by the speaker’s choice, being inherent to the situation itself. Such a conception is traditional in the study of aspect (see the discussion in Bache 1982), but it has been repeatedly proved as misleading, from several points of view. First of all, the choice of a given aspectual form is not always a subjective choice of the speaker. There are in fact cases in which it seems

to be so, but the principle of subjectivity cannot be extended to any aspectual opposition. In order to demonstrate the subjectivity of aspect, some given, quite peculiar, contexts are often quoted, where in fact the choice seems to be up to the speaker, such as *Alexandre était un grand conquérant* vs. *Alexandre a été un grand conquérant*, which can both be translated by the same English verb form (*Alexander was a great conqueror*). (Similar examples are also quoted in Smith 1991: 11, who insists on the subjective nature of aspect, introducing the notion of aspectual choice). Another example of such cases is provided by the two sentences (19–20), where the same situation is represented, and in this case the choice between the two is apparently up to the speaker. In fact, the two sentences belong to two different contextual environments: (19) can be conceived as a background utterance, while in (20) the situation is visualized as a complete whole and could be uttered when saying good-bye to a friend with whom the day has been spent (*Thank you! It was a nice day*):

- (19)      *Era (IP) una bella giornata.*  
             ‘It was a nice day.’  
 (20)      *È stata (PF) una bella giornata.*  
             ‘It was a nice day.’

Even if we admit that in these cases it is up to the speaker to choose, not considering the different contextual environment, the notion of subjectivity cannot be extended to all contexts. In most cases the speaker is forced to choose, depending on the situation itself. This point is accepted by Smith (1991: 13–14) too, who recognizes that in some cases “truth constrains aspectual choice”. If a situation is represented as progressive (21), namely going on at a given time, or is viewed as completed (22), the choice between the two forms does not rest with the speaker, but is bound by the situation itself:

- (21)      *Ieri, quando Paolo è arrivato, Giulio scriveva (IP) una lettera.*  
             ‘Yesterday, when Paolo arrived, Giulio was writing a letter.’  
 (22)      *Ieri Giulio ha scritto (PF) una lettera.*  
             ‘Yesterday Giulio wrote a letter.’



Another problem with a conception of aspect as subjective and actionality as objective is that actionality can also be conceived as due to the subjective choice of the speaker. Dahl (1981: 83) notes that the same situation can be described both as telic or non-telic (*He is writing* and *He is writing a letter*). Nevertheless, things are much more controversial and conversational maxims seem to play a role here. Smith (1991: 19) claims that *John was walking in the park* could not be uttered if the speaker knows that the situation represented is a portion of a telic event, such as *John going to school*. Nevertheless, Smith (1983: 479, 1991: 11–13) admits that some situation types are more flexible and can be subjectively modified. She notes that the same situation can be presented both as an activity (*The airplane is flying*) or a state (*The airplane is in flight*), according to the speaker's choice (cf. also Desclés—Guentchéva 1995: 60, from which the example here quoted is taken). In this way Smith, even if insisting on the subjective nature of aspect, rejects the assumption of the objective character of actionality vs. the subjectivity of aspect, by extending the notion of subjectivity to actionality.

### 1.2.3.3 A morphological distinction

A third possible interpretation of the distinction aspect/actionality is the traditional opposition between aspect intended as a grammatical category and actionality (or *Aktionsart*) as a lexical one. This position has been often challenged in the literature for different reasons.

First of all, as noted in Dahl (1985), actionality is not only a lexical issue, since the actional value is determined by the whole context, composed basically of the verb, its arguments and the co-occurring adverbials. Moreover, the identification of aspect with morphology and actionality with lexicon is just an empirical issue and there is no theoretical reason why this should be so (Dahl 1993 raises this specific point). What we know (given a wide range of typological research on verb morphology, such as Bybee 1985 and Dahl 1985) is that aspect is quite frequently associated with morphemes. In the present work it will be shown, that in the grammaticalization of putative aspectual markers, such as Perfect and Progressive, actionality strongly interferes with aspect and imposes selectional restrictions on the aspectual marker. This means that even if it is morphology that conveys the

aspectual value, actionality too plays an important role up to a given degree of grammaticalization.

Recent examples of this third approach, in which aspect is considered as a grammatical category and actionality as lexical, are Karolak (1993), Sasse (1991) and Breu (1994), which will be briefly presented here.

Karolak represents, so to speak, a “strong” version of the third approach, maintaining that between aspect and actionality (*aspect* and *modalité d'action* in his terminology) there is no semantic difference. The only difference is that aspect is expressed by a morpheme and actionality by a semanteme. According to Karolak, there are two basic aspectual values, imperfective (*aspect continu*) and perfective (*aspect discontinu*): states and activities are imperfectives while punctual verbs are the prototypical example of perfectives. An imperfective grammatical marker transforms a perfective verb into an imperfective one and vice versa.

Breu's (1994) stance, based on Sasse (1991), is less radical, for he assumes some form of affinity, rather than full identity, between morphological aspect and lexical meaning, but the result is quite similar: for each of the two basic aspectual markers (perfective and imperfective) there is a lexical meaning to which they are more semantically similar, so that the perfective marker is close to the class of totally terminative verbs (such as *reach*, an achievement in Vendler's terminology). When the perfective marker is applied to other verb classes, it makes them more similar to totally terminative verbs. As for imperfective-progressive aspect (*processualis* in Breu's terminology), it is considered as semantically connected to states by Sasse and to activities by Breu, so that it makes any other verb more similar either to states or to activities. Thus, according to Sasse (1991: 37), “*Aspect* is a grammaticalized mechanism for describing certain states of affairs in terms of stativity (i.e. situation = imperfective aspect), and terminativity (i.e. situation change = perfective aspect)”.

Breu's and Sasse's analyses are certainly correct in pointing out that there are interactions between aspect and actionality, for there are in fact cases where the aspectual marker interferes with the possible actional meaning of the situation, but this should not lead us to negate the independence of the two elements.

Consider for instance the combination of progressive imperfectivity with a telic verb, either accomplishment or achievement, a typical and repeatedly discussed case of interaction between aspect and actionality. It has been observed that a telic

situation, when combined with progressive imperfective forms, neutralizes telicity, suspending the actual reaching of the endpoint. Such a case has triggered a vivacious discussion, mostly in formal semantic approaches. Two different facets of the question have been stressed in the discussion. On the one hand (mainly Dowty 1979: 133–134) it has been noted that the endpoint of a telic situation is still envisaged, even if not reached, and this fact has been considered as paradoxical (“imperfective paradox”). Other approaches have focused on the fact that the telic endpoint, even if envisaged, is suspended. From this point of view the progressive has been considered as an actional operator suspending the telic value of a given situation and transforming it into a non-telic one (Parsons 1989).<sup>3</sup> Given the suspension of the telic value by means of the progressive, the proposal to consider it as actional operator seems to be reasonable. Nevertheless, a complete identification of imperfectivity and non-telic situations, such as an activity or a state, is not possible, since an imperfective form behaves quite differently from an activity or a state. Consider for instance a typical case of imperfective progressivity in which the form cooccurs with a punctual adverbial:

(23) *Yesterday at five o'clock John was leaving.*

In this case the situation is visualized as progressive, as on-going at a given time point (at 5 o'clock). What is relevant is that at the given point the situation is not completed. This entails that the situation is imperfective, but no information is given on the duration of the situation and the only thing we know is what is going on at five o'clock. This means that the usage of a Progressive has no entailment on the actional quality of the situation,<sup>4</sup> it does not entail necessarily a durative situation, as we would expect if a Progressive were to be conceived as transforming a situation into an activity or a state, provided that activities and states, by their definition, are durative.

Consider also the fact that, if the Progressive were to transform an achievement into an activity or a state, it should be expected that achievements could be used in durative contexts, like activities and states. In this respect it has been noted (Mittwoch 1991: 76–77) that a progressive achievement (as in 24) is quite odd when cooccurring with the adverbial *still* which presupposes a certain duration:

(24) ??*He is still leaving/arriving/dying.*

Moreover, Mittwoch notes that an achievement is also odd, and admitted only in iterative or in ironic contexts, when used with a Present Perfect Progressive, which signals the activity character of the situation:

(25) ??*He has been dying/leaving/arriving.*

While discussing the interpretation of the Progressive as an actional operator, it is worth noting that imperfectivity used to be defined as “durative” aspect in traditional accounts. Just to mention one example, Meillet—Vendryes (1927: 168–169), dealing with Ancient Greek aspect, considered duration as the definitory character of Imperfective Past, while the (Perfective) Aorist is characterized as “punctual”. They note that the Imperfect of the verb *flee* refers to a durative situation, while with the Aorist the flight is linked to a given time point. As repeatedly pointed out, such a definition cannot be applied to any case of perfectivity, for the Greek Aorist (basically a Perfective Past) is also compatible with durative situations (*ebasileuse triákonta étē* ‘He reigned thirty years’). For this reason the identification of perfectivity and punctuality is nowadays rejected (Comrie 1976: 16–17) and consequently the definition of imperfectivity as durative has to be reformulated on a different basis. The equation imperfectivity=durativity was actually a confusion between an actional notion such as durativity and an aspectual one such as imperfectivity. From this point of view it is reminiscent of the identification of the Progressive with an actional class (activity or states) and should warn against further confusion.

The idea that progressivity should not be confused with an actional value does not amount to excluding the possibility that in some cases a progressive form is an actional operator rather than an aspectual one. There are in fact cases in which the Progressive can be considered as merely involving durativity and not focussing on the situation as on-going at a given time. One of the major tasks of this work will be clarifying the behaviour of the Progressive in such cases. These are, among others, the progressive perfective constructions, where the progressive periphrasis is combined with a perfective auxiliary (Simple Past or Present Perfect). These

constructions can be found in some Romance languages (notably in the Ibero-Romance area), as in the following example from Spanish:

- (26) *Pilar estuvo hablando con Jaime durante dos horas.*  
 ‘Pilar was (SP) talking to Jaime for two hours.’

These contexts are a rather thorny case of aspectual clustering and have been mentioned in the literature as an example of double aspectual marking (perfectivity and imperfectivity), while in this work, a different proposal will be presented, based on the interaction of aspect and actionality. In fact, they comply with the interpretation of the Progressive as a morphological marker which can be semantically compared to the actional class of activities (cf. a similar proposal for the English Present Perfect Progressive in Mittwoch 1988). Nevertheless, the comparison with Italian, where these constructions used to exist and are now lost, will demonstrate (chapter 3) that these cases represent a less advanced stage in the grammaticalization of the progressive marker. Italian has lost such perfective progressive constructions, while maintaining the imperfective usage of the Progressive. Such a grammaticalization process shows the evolution of an actionally-constrained form to an aspectually-constrained one. In this respect a clear semantic distinction becomes crucial in order to make fine-grained distinctions among different steps in the grammaticalization path. The grammaticalization of the Progressive shows that the relationship between actionality and aspect has to be interpreted as a diachronic process. The Progressive derives diachronically from constructions which are restricted to a given actional class (activities). The relationship between progressive aspect and activities has not to be considered as a tool for defining the semantics of the Progressive (as for instance in Breu’s analysis), but simply in terms of diachronic derivation. Thus, the Progressive has not to be considered as a morphological tool for transforming a predicate into an activity. It is rather to be conceived as an aspectual form, which derives diachronically (at least in some languages) from a construction constrained to a given actional value. From this point of view, even if aspect and actionality have to be considered as independent notions, a diachronic relationship between the two can be assumed, so that aspect emerges from actionality, or, put another way, aspect derives from the grammaticalization of actionality. This is why a semantic

similarity between aspect and actionality can be recognized, as maintained by Breu and Sasse, for aspect emerges from the same cognitive mould as actionality. Nevertheless, at a notional synchronic level, the two must not be confused. The similarity between Progressives and states (see fn. 3), as often proposed in the literature, can be also considered as a diachronic relationship, rather than a semantic convergence. Since several progressive forms derive from stative locational constructions, it is obvious that the stative meaning has some influence on the Progressive, but this is only a diachronic relationship.

Romance progressive constructions are the starting point of this work, which will also be concerned with disentangling the effect of aspect and actionality in the grammaticalization process of several other Romance periphrases. In chapter 4 the behaviour of other Romance constructions will be analyzed. In particular it will be demonstrated that the Portuguese Present Perfect, the Present Perfect of some American Spanish varieties and the Sicilian Present Perfect, as well as the Catalan analytic Perfective Past (*anar* 'go'+ infinitive), show some form of interaction between aspect and actionality in their process of grammaticalization.

The final question analyzed in this work will be the particular behaviour of the gerundial forms constructed with a motion verb, which, even if less frequent than the progressive constructions with locational/postural auxiliaries, are found in most Romance languages (*ir/andar/venir* 'go', 'walk', 'come'+ gerund in Spanish, *andare/venir* 'go', 'come'+ gerund in Italian, etc.). In this case too, the semantics of the form will be derived focusing on the interaction of aspect and actionality in order to show the role of the intrinsic actional value of the auxiliary itself.

### 1.3. Romance periphrases

Given the complexity of Romance periphrastic verb system, it seems reasonable to add a final introductory section containing a list of the main Romance periphrastic constructions (§ 1.3.2). This will help the reader unfamiliar with Romance languages, who is in any case referred to the introductory chapters in Dietrich (1973) for a comprehensive presentation of Romance verbal periphrases. The difficulties and the confusion concerning the distinction between analytic and synthetic forms and the very notion of periphrasticity also require a sketchy presentation of the state of the art on the topic. This will be given in § 1.3.1, where

a scalar notion of periphrasticity will be briefly presented, along the lines that are commonly and more or less implicitly assumed in contemporary studies of grammaticalization and which are explicitly discussed in Heine (1993).

### *1.3.1 Analytic and synthetic verb forms*

Non-bound verb morphemes display different degrees of analyticity, thus demonstrating the intrinsic scalar nature of the synthetic/analytic parameter. Such a scale can be conceived as a diachronic path, gradual enough to encompass different evolutionary stages (Ramat 1987). In this respect the notion of auxiliary and its categorial status, which has always been a major point of debate in the literature, can be seen as scalar, once the dynamic process of grammaticalization from a lexical item into a verb morpheme, and eventually into a zero morpheme, is taken into account (see especially Heine 1993).

Among the parameters currently referred to for establishing a hierarchy in the analytic/synthetic continuum we find criteria of different nature, ranging from the semantics of the auxiliary to its phonological shape. Heine (1993) considers the following parameters as basic elements in the grammaticalization of auxiliaries:

- (a) desemantization of the auxiliary original lexical value;
- (b) decategorialization, consisting in the gradual loss of the auxiliary morphosyntactic status as full verb;
- (c) cliticization, namely the loss of autonomous word status of the auxiliary;
- (d) phonological erosion.

Heine (1993) discusses the interplay of these four parameters, singling out seven stages in the diachronic evolution of auxiliaries. In Heine's model the timing of evolution of each parameter is predicted to be different, so that desemantization is the first shift to be triggered in the process of auxiliarization, while cliticization and phonological erosion occur last.

The scalar nature of such parameters can be clearly observed in some Romance verb forms. Consider the well-studied case of the Romance Future (Fleischman 1982), which developed as new analytic form adjoining the auxiliary 'have' to the infinitive of the lexical verb. This form ended up substituting for the older Latin

Future and can now be considered as completely synthetic. In fact, it shows a high degree of phonological erosion and cliticization to the lexical verb. On the other hand, the new Romance Perfects construed with the auxiliary 'have' + Past Participle are less synthetic, for they are almost never phonologically reduced, and the auxiliary is less cliticized, being still transparent as an autonomous morpheme and separable by inserting a (syntactically constrained) set of lexical items between the auxiliary and the verb.

The application of such criteria may also deliver different results across languages. In some Romance languages (in the Ibero-Romance area and in French) there is a new analytic Future formed with the auxiliary 'go' + infinitive that is nowadays quite common in conversational language. In French the auxiliary 'go' and the infinitive can be separated by lexical material, while this is not possible in Spanish (see Schwegler 1990: 145), thus showing less separability. However, in Spanish the new construction 'go' + infinitive has a higher degree of analyticity with respect to the older future form derived from infinitive + 'have', since in the latter the auxiliary 'have' has lost any transparency, while in 'go' + infinitive the auxiliary is still transparent, being admitted as free lexeme. Transparency can be also a gradual parameter, as it is shown by the Catalan analytic construction formed by the auxiliary 'go' + infinitive, which, unlike in other Romance languages, substitutes for the Perfective Past and not for the Future. The grammaticalization process of such a form will also be dealt with in this work. What is significant here is that the auxiliary 'go' has been submitted to a gradual process of phonological evolution, so that nowadays the auxiliary is only partially homophonous with the Present Indicative of the verb 'go'. The auxiliary of the Perfective Past has the following forms: *vaig/vàreig*, *vas/vares*, *va*, *vam/vàrem*, *vau/vàreu*, *van/varen*, while the Present Indicative of *anar* 'go' is: *vaig*, *vas*, *va*, *anem*, *aneu*, *van* (Hualde 1992: 304).

Besides the most stable and undisputed analytic verb forms such as the ones just mentioned, Romance languages display several other verbal constructions, often referred to as "verbal periphrases", whose status is more debatable and whose complete list is not definite. It is an open list crucially depending on the definition of periphrasis assumed. In this case too, the periphrastic character of the form has to be conceived as a gradual property, represented by a scale of periphrasticity<sup>5</sup> which is nothing other than the extension of the synthetic/analytic scale mentioned above.



In the lowest part of the analytic/synthetic spectrum, represented by the so-called “periphrases”, phonological erosion and cliticization play a less prominent role, while desemantization and decategorialization become crucial in order to reach detailed scalar gradience.<sup>6</sup>

Desemantization (the so-called “semantic bleaching”) is one of the most traditional criteria often used for defining periphrastic forms. Its role is in fact quite prominent in some cases. Take for instance the case of futural constructions with the auxiliary ‘go’ followed by the infinitive, which can be found in French, Spanish and Portuguese. In such cases the verb ‘go’ has nowadays lost its original motional meaning, assuming a purely temporal value.

Nevertheless, apart from such cases in which auxiliary desemantization can be applied easily, it has been repeatedly pointed out that such a criterion is often problematic and must be amended by several provisos. This is first of all because the loss of lexical content of the auxiliary is always balanced by an increase of grammatical meaning as verb morpheme (see Heine 1993: 89–95 for alternative analyses with respect to bleaching). Secondly, even if desemantization is intended only as lexical bleaching, this is not to be considered as an absolute property. As any other of the parameters involved in the grammaticalization of auxiliaries, desemantization is a gradual process with different steps, so that periphrases are often characterized by some form of “persistence” (Hopper 1991) or “semantic retention” (Bybee—Pagliuca 1987; Bybee—Perkins—Pagliuca 1994) of the original semantic value of the lexeme. As mentioned before, such “retention” will be one of the main topics of the present work. It will be shown how some residual part of the original semantic value of the auxiliary can influence the compatibility restrictions of some Romance periphrases, even at a quite advanced stage of grammaticalization.

When dealing with desemantization, it is also important to point out that such a parameter has different consequences if viewed from a diachronic or a synchronic point of view. In some cases desemantization can be observed at the synchronic level. In some Romance languages, the already mentioned verb ‘go’ can be used both as desemanticized future auxiliary and as full verb, but in other cases the desemantization process is much more general and not limited to its periphrastic usage. Thus, the auxiliary can be considered as desemantized only from a diachronic point of view. Consider for instance the Spanish “progressive” form that is formed with the auxiliary *estar*, a descendant of the Latin verb *stare*, plus the

gerund of the lexical verb. The desemantization of the original Latin meaning 'stand'<sup>7</sup> is a general phenomenon in the whole Romance-speaking area and in Spanish *estar* occurs nowadays with the same meaning as English 'be' when referred to a locational context (*Pedro está en casa* 'Peter is at home') or for denoting contingent states or stage-level predicates as in *Pedro está enfermo* 'Peter is ill'. In these cases too nothing is left of the original postural meaning ('stand') and the modern Spanish *estar* is rather a form of the verb 'be', in competition with the verb *ser*. This entails that, at a synchronic level, the periphrasis *estar* + gerund does not show any real desemantization, basically mirroring the general semantic value of the verb *estar* in any context (see Morera 1991 who pursues the discussion of Spanish periphrases along these lines).

In addition, desemantization has often been criticized in the literature due to the occurrence of periphrastic constructions without any semantic bleaching, as in the case of the constructions denoting a given phase of the event, formed with verbs such as 'begin, stop' etc. followed by the infinitive, which do not fulfil the requirement of desemantization of the auxiliary and maintain their original semantic value. In this case other criteria have to be introduced in order to allow for such constructions as verbal periphrases.

Apart from desemantization, the other criteria used for determining the periphrastic status of a verbal construction can basically be reduced to the already mentioned parameter of decategorialization (Hopper 1991; Heine 1993). Among the criteria referred to as decategorialization we find the gradual restriction of the auxiliary morphological paradigm. This is what happens in Italian with the progressive form *stare* + gerund, whose morphological paradigm has shrunk over the diachronic evolution, thus eliminating the compatibility of the auxiliary with perfective tenses (see chapter 3). Another criterion for determining the degree of decategorialization is to test the syntactic restrictions of the putative auxiliary. Consider for instance the well-known case of the Spanish verb *ir* 'go', which is intransitive as a full verb, but, when used as an auxiliary in the periphrasis *ir a* + infinitive or *ir* + gerund, is compatible with a direct object (*lo voy a leer* 'I am going to read it'), provided that the lexical verb is transitive.

Decategorialization is also concerned with the syntactic autonomy of the auxiliary, which is tested in various ways. One of the tests is based on the different reaction to a how-question between a periphrastic construction and a sequence of full verb and

circumstantial adjunct respectively. This test was first proposed by Fontanella de Weinberg (1970) and will be here quoted using an example by Gómez Torrego (1988: 131):

- (27) *Juan caminaba extendiendo los brazos.*  
 ‘Juan *walked stretching* his arms.’  
*¿Cómo caminaba Juan?* – Extendiendo ...  
 ‘How did Juan *walk*? – *Stretching* ...
- (28) *Juan estará comprando el pan.*  
 ‘Juan *must be buying* the bread.’  
 \**¿Cómo estará Juan?* – Comprando ...  
 ‘How *will* Juan *be*? – *Buying* ...’

The how-question is grammatical in (27) for the gerund is a circumstantial adjunct to the finite verb, while in (28), where the periphrastic progressive form *estar* + gerund occurs, the question is ungrammatical because the gerund is the main verb and not an adjunct.<sup>8</sup>

The interplay of different parameters in determining the auxiliary status will not be dealt with in detail in the present work, which is mainly devoted to the semantic evolution of analytic constructions under grammaticalization. It has been sufficient to sketch out very briefly the multifarious nature of the auxiliarization chain and its intrinsic graduality, which has always to be borne in mind when dealing with analytic forms.

### 1.3.2 A list of the analytic verb forms in Romance

In what follows a list of the major Romance analytic constructions will be presented, including both more synthetic constructions, such as Perfects and Passives, and more analytic forms, the so-called periphrases, since all of them can be considered as parts of the same gradual scale including different degrees of analyticity.

The vast majority of Romance analytic forms (both highly synthetic forms and more analytic constructions) are formed with a finite verb form that is marked with inflectional morphology for tense/aspect/mood plus a “nominal” or non-finite form

of the verb, that can be infinitive, gerund, present and past participle of the lexical verb. Apart from the Romance future and conditional forms, that can now be considered as completely synthetic and inflectional endings, in the other constructions the finite element linearly precedes the non-finite one.

There are also some cases in which the construction is formed by two finite forms, but these are much more restricted (see below on coordinative and subordinative constructions).

The reader is referred to the above mentioned caveats (§ 1.3.1), when consulting the following list. It has already been noted that the list necessarily has an “open” character, crucially depending on the criteria assumed as relevant. This list is intended to be a general survey of the major Romance constructions, one whose purpose and usefulness is mainly practical, being a guideline to which the reader is referred in order to follow the major points pursued in the different chapters of this work. No new stance has been taken here with respect to the criteria of analyticity or periphrasticity apart from recalling the gradual character of such notions, as often pointed out in the literature. The list is not even intended to be a hierarchical scale of analyticity, since the precise hierarchization of the different constructions will not be tackled here.<sup>9</sup>

The practical function of the list also justifies the allocation of more space to some constructions than to others, thus mirroring the topics discussed in the following chapters. The constructions this work is mainly concerned with will have more space in the list, so that for instance the constructions with ‘start’, ‘stop’, which are not discussed in this work, will be given less space. Moreover, since this work is mainly devoted to aspectual periphrases, modal and voice constructions will just be mentioned.

Even a cursory look at the list shows that the class of Romance periphrases in general is quite productive, since different auxiliaries (indicating possession, postural location, movement, etc.) occur for construing a vast set of periphrases. There are different potential auxiliaries competing in the same semantic area and showing various degrees of desemantization. In the Ibero-Romance area, the formation of periphrases is the most productive, and several auxiliaries are used.<sup>10</sup>

The basic references on Romance verb periphrases are Lyer (1934: 129–211); Wandruszka (1969: 333–349, 355–361); Dietrich (1973, 1996); Coseriu (1976: 91–123), who treat the whole Romance area.

In addition the following works are dedicated to specific languages:

Catalan and Occitan: Schlieben-Lange (1971); Vasil'eva Švede (1976); Tyško (1988).

French: Gougenheim (1929); Bausch (1964); Böckle (1979, 1984); Werner (1980) on Middle French; Pozdnjakova (1987) on Old French.

Galician: Rojo (1974).

Italian: Škerlj (1926); Dietrich (1985); Bertinetto (1989–1990, 1991: 129–161, 1995–1996, 1996, in press a, in press b); Bertinetto—Delfittò (1996); Squartini (1990), Brianti (1992); Amenta (1994–1995); Del Pietro (1995); Giacalone Ramat (1995).

Romanian: Dumitrescu (1971).

Portuguese: Gonçalves Viana (1890–1892); Schnerr (1954); Dias da Costa (1976); Vasil'eva Švede (1976); Böckle (1979, 1980); Almeida (1978); Meyer-Hermann (1978); Travaglia (1981); Schemann (1983); Dietrich (1984); Berežnoj (1989); Barroso (1994).

Spanish: Alonso (1939); Roca Pons (1958); Vidal' (1958); Coseriu (1962); Hamplová (1968); Fente Gómez—Fernández Alvarez—Feijóo (1976); Vasil'eva Švede (1976); Nakaona (1978); Mori (1986, 1993); Gómez Torrego (1988); Fernández de Castro (1990); García González (1992); Gómez Manzano (1992). Specific works devoted to diachronic analyses of the Spanish periphrases are: Spaulding (1926); Chmeliček (1930); Lyer (1932); Vasil'eva Švede (1957), who analyzes the Ibero-Romance languages in general; Yllera (1980); Dietrich (1985). On American Spanish: Montes Giraldo (1963); Luna Traill (1980); Stone (1980, 1984); Markič (1990); Martínez López (1990); Otálora (1992); Parisi (1992); Quesada (1995).

### Past participle

All Romance languages display an analytic passive formed with the auxiliary 'be' + past participle. Moreover, in Italian and Romansh a different passive paradigm is formed with the auxiliary 'come'.

A "passive" meaning can be found with other participial constructions, which have a lower degree of generality and frequency, such as the Spanish and Portuguese

*ir* ‘go’/*andar* ‘walk’ + past participle etc. (cf. Green 1982 for such voice constructions in Spanish). In Italian (Lo Cascio 1968) *andare* ‘go’+ past participle can have a passive value in some contexts (*Il palazzo è andato distrutto* ‘The building was destroyed (lit. has gone destroyed)’), while most frequently it has modal value (*Questo palazzo va ricostruito* ‘This building has to be rebuilt (lit. goes rebuilt)’). Moreover, a passive form with the auxiliary ‘have’ can be found in the Apulian dialect described in Loporcaro (1988: 290–299).

A perfect participial construction with the auxiliary ‘have’ (or ‘have’/‘be’ in some languages)<sup>11</sup> occurs in every Romance language in different tenses (Present Perfect, Pluperfect, Future Perfect, etc.). In the majority of cases the auxiliary used is the descendant of Latin *habere* ‘have’, while in Ibero-Romance and Southern Italian dialects two different constructions coexist, one formed with the descendant of *habere* and one deriving from *tenere* ‘keep’, which in Ibero-Romance and in Southern Italian dialects denotes possession. The distribution of the two forms varies across languages. In Portuguese the *habere* form is stylistically marked and restricted to formal registers and *ter* (<*tenere*) is most common for construing the compound forms. In contrast, in Spanish, Catalan and Southern Italian dialects it is *habere* that occurs as auxiliary in the perfect forms, while the descendants from Latin *tenere* form with the past participle a construction with a stronger resultative value and with a lower degree of grammaticalization, whose frequency varies across these languages (cf. Seifert 1935; Harre 1991). *Tenere* + past participle is also exceptionally attested in another Romance area (Piedmontese) and described as having a durative value (Rohlf 1966–1969, 3: 127). A resultative construction with a lower degree of grammaticalization is the Portuguese *levar* ‘carry’ + past participle (*Levo fumados 50 cigarros* ‘I have smoked (lit. carry smoked) 50 cigarettes’).

### Gerund (and present participle)

Gerundial constructions occur all over the Ibero-Romance languages and in Italian. In Portuguese and in Italian the gerundial constructions coexist with infinitival constructions with the same auxiliaries. In European Portuguese the latter have become standard, while the gerundial forms are the norm in Brazilian Portuguese and in some areas of Portugal.

French used to have a full-fledged system of similar constructions that are nowadays quite reduced, while in modern Romanian these forms do not exist anymore.

Among gerundial constructions we can also find the “progressive” form of the Ibero-Romance languages and Italian, which is formed with the descendant of the Latin verb *stare*. This form will be given particular attention in the present work, and its semantic role will be also contrasted with the other gerundial forms and in particular with those formed with motion verbs such as ‘go’ and ‘come’ that can occur in the same contexts as the Progressive but are in general much less frequent and present more idiosyncratic restrictions.

The major gerundial forms are the following:

#### Catalan

*estar* ‘be’ + gerund  
*anar* ‘go’ + gerund  
*(venir* ‘come’ + gerund)<sup>12</sup>

#### French

*aller* ‘go’ + gerund

Since in French the entire set of gerundial forms was submitted to a complete reordering, a list of Old and Middle French periphrases must also be added. Note that ‘present participle’ and ‘gerund’ have to be considered as conventional labels since the traditional distinction between the two categories is not supported by formal criteria, the agreement in case, gender and number being not a general and stable feature of the present participle (Werner 1980: 324–327). Note moreover that the periphrasis with *venir* has a quite restricted usage and its very existence has been questioned (Werner 1980: 370–380):

*aller* ‘go’ + gerund  
*être* ‘be’ + present participle  
*(venir* ‘come’ + gerund)