

RU

Venir de + inf в современном французском языке: аналитическая форма или аналитическая конструкция

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Аннотация. Цель исследования – определить грамматический статус французской глагольной перифразы *venir de + inf* в современном языке, опираясь на фиксированный набор внешних и внутренних критериев выделения аналитических форм глагола (наличие синтетического противочлена, возможность замены другой временной формой, степень десемантизации служебного элемента и утраты автономности компонентов). В статье рассматривается грамматическая семантика перифразы, степень ее грамматизации как единой синтаксической структуры, эволюция глагола *venir* в ее составе от полнозначного глагола направленного движения в сторону служебного элемента аналитической конструкции. Научная новизна исследования определяется полученными результатами. Комплексный анализ семантики и функционирования перифразы *venir de + inf* с использованием современного языкового материала (подкорпус XIX–XXI вв. Национального корпуса французского языка Frantext) позволил сделать вывод о том, что, несмотря на высокую степень грамматизации и аналитизации (фиксированный порядок слов, утрата глаголом *venir* пространственного значения, расширение сочетаемости), конструкция не может быть признана аналитической формой в силу допустимости ее замены на другие формы предшествования в большинстве изученных контекстов. Впервые предложена классификация *venir de + inf* как грамматизованной конструкции, находящейся на переходном этапе эволюции «аспект → таксис → время» и демонстрирующей тенденцию к интеграции форм с презенсом и имперфектом глагола *venir* в систему прошедших времен индикатива.

EN

“Venir de + inf” in modern French: an analytic form or an analytic construction

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Abstract. The aim of the study is to determine the grammatical status of the French verbal periphrasis “venir de + inf” in contemporary usage, drawing on a fixed set of external and internal criteria for identifying analytic verbal forms (including the existence of a synthetic counterpart, the substitutability by another tense form, the degree of semantic bleaching of the auxiliary component, and the loss of autonomy of the constituent elements). The article examines the grammatical semantics of the periphrasis, the degree of its grammaticalization as a unified syntactic structure, and the evolution of the verb “venir” within the construction from an independent lexical verb of directed motion into an auxiliary element of an analytic construction. The novelty of the present study lies in its findings. A comprehensive analysis of the semantics and functioning of the periphrasis “venir de + inf” based on contemporary language data (the 19th–21st-century subcorpus of the French national corpus Frantext) has led to the conclusion that, despite a high degree of grammaticalization and analyticity (fixed word order, the loss of the spatial semantics by “venir”, broadened combinatorial possibilities), the construction cannot be classified as an analytic verbal form, since in the majority of the examined contexts it can be replaced by other forms expressing anteriority. The present study is the first to classify “venir de + inf” as a grammaticalized construction at a transitional stage of the evolution ‘aspect → taxis → tense’, displaying a tendency toward the integration of the forms with “venir” in the present and imperfect forms into the indicative past tense system.

Introduction

French possesses a considerable number of analytic verbal structures that display varying degrees of lexical and grammatical cohesion and highly specific grammatical semantics. Among these structures is the verbal periphrasis *venir de + inf*, which is the object of the present study.

The criteria distinguishing verbal periphrases from free verbal combinations on the one hand and from analytic verbal forms on the other, as well as the question of whether certain periphrases should be included in the French conjugation system, remain a matter of debate (for an overview of the main positions and current research, see (Gosselin, Bertin, 2022)). Romance linguistics has yet to reach a consensus on the grammatical status of *venir de + inf* in contemporary French, which accounts for the relevance of the present study. In most French-language works on the semantics and functioning of French verbal forms and constructions, *venir de + inf* is classified as an aspectual verbal periphrasis, i.e., a verbal combination that is grammaticalized to a certain degree and regularly realizes a fixed aspectual value. For *venir de + inf*, this is the value of ‘retrospective aspect’ (Bres, 2020) or, in other words, the value of immediate post-process phase (Bres, Labeau, 2015; Gosselin, 2021). At the same time, the same scholars note that under certain conditions, the periphrasis realizes a temporal value of recent past (*passé récent* (Gosselin, 2021, p. 115)) or include *venir de + inf* with *venir* in *présent* and *imparfait* of the indicative in the French verbal conjugation system as a periphrastic tense form (Azzopardi, Bres, 2017).

If such grammaticalized verbal constructions are viewed as an intermediate stage between a free syntactic combination and an analytic tense form (Штейнберг, 1955, p. 13-14), the integration of the periphrasis *venir de + inf* into the paradigm of analytic verbal forms would signify the completion of the grammaticalization process of the entire construction and of the motion verb *venir* within it as a grammatical marker of anteriority (Bres, Labeau, 2018, p. 51). Therefore, in order to determine the current grammatical status of the periphrasis, it is essential to establish a set of criteria that allow to assess its degree of grammaticalization and its potential place among the existing tense-aspect verbal forms.

In accordance with the aim, the study addresses the following tasks:

- to systematize and synthesize existing approaches to distinguishing between analytic forms and analytic constructions, and to identify a necessary set of criteria for their differentiation;
- to trace, drawing on prior research, the semantic evolution of the verb *venir* within the periphrasis under study;
- to determine the extent to which *venir de + inf* satisfies the criteria for identifying an analytic verbal form through a contextual analysis of its grammatical semantics and that of its verbal components, as well as an analysis of its potential functionality within the French tense-aspect form system;
- to assess the prospects for the integration of the periphrasis into the system of French verbal forms by analyzing the realizations of its aspectual, taxis, and temporal semantics in various contexts.

The data for the study were collected through exhaustive sampling of occurrences of the periphrasis *venir de + inf* in the 19th-21st-century subcorpus of the French national corpus Frantext. The research corpus, comprising 705 occurrences of the periphrasis, was assembled by random sampling from the initial dataset.

The theoretical background of the study draws on the general tenets of grammaticalization theory as set forth in the works of V. A. Plungian, B. Heine, L. Gosselin, and the Grande Grammaire Historique du Français under the general editorship of C. Marchello-Nizia (Плунгян, 2011; Narrog, Heine, 2021; Gosselin, 2021; Marchello-Nizia, 2020); on the principles of identifying analytic word forms proposed by N. D. Arutyunova, V. M. Solntsev, V. N. Yartseva, and M. K. Sabaneeva (Арутюнова, 1965; Солнцев, Солнцева, 1965; Ярцева, 1981; Сабанеева, Щерба, 1990); and on specialized studies of French verbal periphrases (Bres, 2020; Gosselin, Bertin, 2022) and of the diachronic evolution of the verb *venir* within *venir de + inf* (Bres, Labeau, 2015; 2018).

The primary research methods employed are contextual analysis and corpus analysis. Contextual analysis made it possible to determine the grammatical semantics of the studied construction in each individual instance of its use and to assess the combinatorial range of the verb *venir* within it. Corpus analysis was employed to obtain statistically significant data that allowed for the identification of usage patterns of the periphrasis. Component analysis served as a supplementary method in examining the redistribution of semantic components within the semantic structure of the verb *venir* under grammaticalization.

The practical value of the study lies in the potential applicability of the proposed approach to the comprehensive analysis of the grammatical semantics of verbal structures with a contested grammatical status. The results obtained may be applied in courses on language theory, theoretical grammar, and in teaching French as a foreign language.

Discussion and results

Defining characteristics of analytic forms: general considerations

The defining feature of an analytic word form lies in the distributed expression of lexical and grammatical meaning (Ярцева, 1981, p. 63). As a result of grammaticalization, one of the discontinuous components of an analytic form comes to function as the carrier of grammatical meaning, whereas the “substantive” component (Солнцев, Солнцева, 1965, p. 81) carries the lexical meaning and is almost or entirely devoid of grammatical marking. Researchers generally agree that the recognition of a grammaticalized construction as an analytic form requires two conditions: a high degree of grammaticalization and its ability to be integrated into the paradigm of corresponding synthetic forms in the language (Арутюнова, 1965; Сабанеева, Щерба, 1990; Солнцев, Солнцева, 1965). Thus, following N. D. Arutyunova, we consider it appropriate to distinguish between “external” and “internal” criteria for identifying analytic forms. For a grammaticalized verbal construction to be considered an analytic form, the external criteria can include, on the one hand, its opposition to synthetic tense forms with respect to tense-aspect features and, on the other hand, the obligatory use of this particular form to express a specific meaning (Арутюнова, 1965), that is, the absence of “paradigmatic variability” in expressing this meaning (Narrog, Heine, 2021, p. 45). The internal

criteria traditionally associated with grammaticalization include the extent to which the auxiliary verb has lost its lexical meaning, its inability to enter into independent syntactic relations with other sentence constituents, and the adjacency or “limited discontinuity” of the components of the construction (Апутьюнова, 1965, p. 89; Сабанеева, Щерба, 1990, p. 144; Marchello-Nizia, 2020, p. 931).

Before examining the present-day grammatical status of *venir de + inf* using the criteria outlined above and the research corpus data, it seems appropriate to briefly review the main diachronic stages of the grammaticalization of the verb *venir* as an auxiliary element described in recent specialized studies of French scholars (Bres, Labeau, 2015). The subsequent empirical analysis will draw on these data.

Grammaticalization of “venir” in “venir de + inf”: a diachronic perspective

On the basis of diachronic language data and adopting the model of grammaticalization proposed by H. Narrog and B. Heine (2021, p. 124-125), J. Bres and E. Labeau (2015, p. 533-537) describe the stages of grammaticalization of the verb *venir* as follows:

Stage 1. In the 12th-13th centuries, *venir* within *venir + de + inf* with a human subject denotes the physical movement of the subject away from the location where the event designated by the infinitive takes place, toward a destination that most often remains implicit. At this stage, the event denoted by the infinitive necessarily precedes the action expressed by *venir*:

(i) *Chevaliers sui d'estranges terres / De tournoier vieng pour conquerre. / I am a knight from foreign lands / I come from taking part in a tournament to conquer* (Recueil général de fabliaux du XIIIème et XIVème (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 533)).

Alongside *venir (de)*, the verb *revenir (de)* was used with the same meaning.

Stage 2. From the 16th century onwards, *venir (de)* with an infinitive began to occur with inanimate subjects (example ii), which excluded the possibility of interpreting the construction as denoting spatial movement, and/or with infinitives whose semantics did not allow them to be interpreted as the point of departure of the movement. In other words, upon completing the event denoted by the infinitive, the subject referent cannot plausibly engage in active physical displacement (example iii).

(ii) *Quand je vous ay rencontré, cinq heures venoient de sonner. / When I met you, five o'clock had just struck* (Larivey P. Le Morfondu. 1579 (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 534)).

(iii) *Hippolyte (ô regret !) vient de perdre la vie. / Hyppolite (oh, regret!) has just lost his life* (Garnier R. Hippolyte. 1585 (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 534)).

Thus, the constraints on the semantics of the infinitive and on the categorial status of the subject referent that were inherent in the structure *venir + de + inf* at the stage of free syntactic combination are lifted.

The broadening of combinatorial possibilities is accompanied by a syntactic analyticization of the structure from *venir + de + inf* to *venir de + inf*. At the initial stage, the word order was free: *de tournoier vieng*. From the 16th century onward, however, the linear order of elements becomes fixed: *venir de* is invariably positioned before the infinitive.

J. Bres and E. Labeau note that at this stage, the verb *venir* can still fully retain its meaning of spacial movement:

(iv) *Guillot ..., caché derriere un buisson, au soir, attend Marion qui vient de querir ses vaches, douteux si elle luy refusera ce dequoy elle a esté par luy souventes fois importunée. / Guillot ..., hidden behind a bush in the evening, waits for Marion, who comes back from fetching her cows, wondering whether she will refuse him what he has many times bothered her about* (Du Fail N. Les Propos rustiques de Maistre Leon Ladulfi champenois. 1547 (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 535)).

Stage 3. *Venir de* loses its meaning of spacial movement, which is henceforth confined to *revenir de*. At this stage, the verb *venir* undergoes grammaticalization, bringing it functionally closer to an auxiliary. This is confirmed by the emergence of impersonal uses of the periphrasis (example v), as well as instances in which *venir* functions as an auxiliary with itself as the main predicative verb (examples vi, vii, viii).

(v) *Il vient de me souvenir que certains demy-çavans ont remarqué que les personnages de ma Tragi-comedie y parlent des Dieux en pluriel. / I just happen to remember that some half-educated people have noticed that the characters of my tragi-comedy speak of the gods in the plural within it* (Scudéry G. de. Ligdamon et Lidias ou la Ressemblance. 1631 (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 536)).

(vi) *Nous sommes en grande apprehension du bruict qui vient de venir de la rupture du traicté de la paix. / We are in great fear of the news that has just come of the breaking of the peace treaty* (Peiresc N. Lettres à M. D'Andilly. 1622 (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 537)).

The construction *vient de venir* was criticized by purists but was admitted into the dictionary of the French Academy in 1740, with the label ‘familial’. Such uses are found in 19th-century literature and in contemporary colloquial speech:

(vii) *Un juge, un commissaire, un magistrat, je ne sais de quelle espèce, vient de venir. Je lui ai demandé ma grâce en joignant les deux mains. / A judge, a police officer, a magistrate of whatever type has just come. I have asked him for pardon with clasped hands* (Hugo V. Le Dernier jour d'un condamné. 1829 (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 537)).

(viii) *Il était une fois un ado de 13 ans qui a voulu sortir avec une nouvelle, qui venait de venir d'un autre établissement public. / Once upon a time, a teenager of 13 wanted to go out with a new girl, who had just come from another state school* (www.jeuxvideo.com/2010 (Bres, Labeau, 2015, p. 537)).

L. Gosselin, in describing the semantic evolution of the verbs *aller* and *venir* within verbal periphrases, notes that their grammaticalization did not proceed in isolation but rather in interaction with specific contextual elements (in the case of *venir*, the preposition *de* and the infinitive). It is therefore possible to speak of a constructionally conditioned meaning of the verb *venir*, which arises through metaphoric or metonymic transfer of the original verbal semantics (spatial motion) under the influence of elements with which it regularly co-occurs (Gosselin, 2021, p. 95).

Grammatical status of the periphrasis in contemporary French

External criteria determining the grammatical status of the periphrasis

In assessing whether *venir de + inf* qualifies as an analytic tense form, we considered two external criteria: 1) the existence of a synthetic tense-aspect counterpart and 2) the obligatory use of the periphrasis for expressing the tense-aspect meaning that contrasts with the meaning of the corresponding synthetic form, that is, the impossibility of replacing it in a given context with an equivalent synthetic or analytic tense form.

1. An analytic form expressing completion and anteriority can be contrasted with a synthetic form expressing non-completion and non-anteriority in terms of both aspect and tense (Сабанеева, Щерба, 1990, p. 144). In the indicative system, the French synthetic present and imperfect forms may be regarded as tense-aspect counterparts to *venir de + inf* with *venir* in *présent* and *imparfait* of the indicative, respectively (the most frequent forms in the research corpus: *indicatif présent* of the auxiliary verb accounts for 57.4% of all occurrences, and *imparfait* for 41.7%): *je fais / je viens de faire; je faisais / je venais de faire*. The aspectual opposition consists in the contrast between an incomplete and a completed action, while the temporal (or relative-temporal) opposition lies in the contrast between an action simultaneous with the moment of speech or a chosen reference point in the past and an action immediately prior to the moment of speech or a reference point in the past. The same applies to *venir de + inf* with *venir* in *conditionnel présent* and *subjonctif présent*: *je ferais / je viendrais de faire; que je fasse / que je vienne de faire*.

2. The possibility of replacing the periphrasis with another tense form while preserving its specific aspectual and temporal oppositions was assessed on the basis of examples from the research corpus.

(1) *Dassigne se trouvait à la tête d'une fortune assez grande, et sa conduite pendant l'occupation lui permettait de rester fier de ses biens et de ne pas les dissimuler. Il venait de bâtir une belle maison flanquée d'une terrasse au-dessus d'un petit chemin, sur une pente plus élevée que celle où s'implantait le lycée* (Dhôtel A. Le ciel du faubourg. 1956 (Fran-text) – all the examples below are drawn from this source unless otherwise indicated). / *Dassigne was in possession of a rather large fortune, and his conduct during the occupation allowed him to remain proud of his assets and not to conceal them. He had recently built a fine house with a terrace above a narrow path, on a slope higher than the one where the lycée stood* (here and below, the translations are provided by the authors. – T. K., O. Kh.).

(2) *Je répète ici ce que je disais dans la brochure dont je viens de parler : pressé par les évidences morales qui s'imposent à moi, je n'interviens que pour rendre témoignage à la vérité* (Maritain J. Primaauté du spirituel. 1927). / *I repeat here what I was saying in the brochure I have just mentioned: impelled by the moral evidence that asserts itself to me, I intervene only to bear witness to the truth.*

(3) *A... est en train d'écrire, assise à la table près de la première fenêtre. Elle s'apprête à écrire, plutôt, à moins qu'elle ne vienne de terminer sa lettre. La plume est demeurée suspendue à quelques centimètres au-dessus du papier. Le visage est relevé en direction du calendrier fixé au mur* (Robbe-Grillet A. La Jalousie. 1957). / *A*** is writing, seated at the table near the first window. Or rather, she is about to write – unless she has just finished her letter. The pen has remained suspended a few centimeters above the paper. Her face is turned toward the calendar fixed to the wall.*

In examples (1) and (2), the surrounding context foregrounds not the post-process phase of the action denoted by the infinitive, but rather the process itself. The periphrasis thus realizes the meaning of completion in the recent past relative to the moment of speech – i.e., a temporal value of recent past (example (2)) – or relative to the narrative reference point – i.e., a taxis value of immediate anteriority (example (1)). Replacing the periphrasis with another anteriority form in the corresponding temporal domain (the past perfect form (*plus-que-parfait*) *il avait bâti* in example (1), and the perfect form (*passé composé*) *j'ai parlé* in example (2)) is entirely admissible. What is lost is the indication of the brevity of the temporal gap between the completion of the infinitive action and the current narrative moment. However, the general differential features of the analytic tense-aspect form remain intact: the value of completion and the value of anteriority within a given temporal domain. Thus, the tense-aspect relations between the verbal forms are preserved after substitution; what is lost is supplementary, specifying information about the short temporal distance between the endpoint of the infinitive action and the relevant situational moment – a loss that does not disrupt the semantic coherence of the sentence or the overall logic of its relative-temporal relations.

In example (3), the speaker is uncertain as to which moment of the situation he is observing: the woman is about to begin writing her letter, or she has just finished it. The context shifts the topic time away from the process and toward the resultant state at the onset of the post-process phase of the infinitive *terminer*; that is, the aspectual semantics of the periphrasis comes to the fore. *Subjonctif présent* of *venir* within the periphrasis indicates that the onset of the post-process phase of the infinitive event coincides with the moment of speech. Replacing the periphrasis *venir de + inf* with the perfect form of the subjunctive (*subjonctif passé*: *elle ait terminé*), and the attendant loss of the value of immediate post-processuality, would undermine the coherence of the utterance. The temporal interval between the inferred event and the topic time must be interpreted as short, since the speaker's inference as to why the pen has come to a halt a few centimeters above the paper is based precisely on the recency of the event. Replacing *venir de + inf* with an analytic anteriority form in this case would be impossible without introducing additional lexical means to compensate for the value of temporal proximity between the resultant state and the moment of the action's completion.

Thus, of the two external criteria for identifying an analytic word form proposed by N. D. Arutyunova, only one is consistently met by the *venir de + inf* periphrasis, namely the existence of a corresponding synthetic counterpart. By contrast, the criterion that the periphrasis should not be replaceable by any of the existing tense-aspect forms is not met in most cases. In examples such as (3), replacing the periphrasis with an analytic tense form would disrupt

the intended interpretation of the utterance because of the contextual salience of the aspectual meaning specific to *venir de + inf*, namely the location of the resultant state at the onset of the post-process phase of the event denoted by the infinitive. Moreover, the intended meaning of the utterance can be recovered by means of lexical markers, such as temporal adverbs and adverbial expressions, e.g., *à l'instant même / tout à l'heure / récemment* etc.

Internal criteria determining the grammatical status of the periphrasis

The internal criteria for classifying the *venir de + inf* periphrasis as an analytic form correspond to the features indicating an advanced stage of grammaticalization, both of the verb *venir* as a functional element and of the construction as a whole. As shown above, these features include: 1) the loss of syntactic autonomy of both verbal elements of the periphrasis; and 2) the desemanticization of the functional element, i.e., its complete loss of independent lexical meaning, accompanied by the removal of restrictions on lexical compatibility.

A manifestation of the loss of syntactic autonomy can, in particular, be seen in the fixed linear order of the elements of the construction. As shown by J. Bres and E. Labeau, the fixed order of the elements in the periphrasis under study has been established since the 16th century. At the same time, occurrences of *venir* within the periphrasis began to appear with an inanimate subject argument, with impersonal pronoun *il*, and with infinitives whose semantics is incompatible with the lexical meaning of *venir* (*il vient de perdre la vie*). Thus, the combinability of *venir* undergoes a considerable expansion, extending even to its combination with itself (*il vient de venir*). This could be regarded as evidence of its complete desemanticization already at this stage of the semantic evolution of the periphrasis.

The data from the research corpus, representing a synchronic sample of modern French (19th–21st centuries), show that the periphrasis displays greater selectivity, compared with French analytic tense forms, regarding the semantic class of the predicative element. The analysis of occurrences of *venir de + inf* in terms of the aktionsart of the infinitive component (Плунгян, 2011, p. 77) yielded the following results (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Aktionsart of the infinitive component in “venir de + inf”*

States	Activities	Accomplishments	Achievements
1.3%	5.2%	40.8%	52.7%

In more than 90% of cases, the infinitives designate events associated with telic situations (predicates belonging to the aktionsart classes of ‘accomplishments’ and ‘achievements’). This distribution between telic and atelic verbs within the periphrasis can be explained by the fact that the post-process aspectual semantics of *venir de* in its auxiliary function favors combination with telic verbs, since their meaning presupposes an inherent endpoint of the process (‘accomplishments’) or the absence of appreciable process duration (‘achievements’). In rare cases, the periphrasis is used with infinitives denoting an activity, and it almost never occurs with stative verbs. Thus, the analysis of infinitival combinability demonstrates that the grammaticalization of *venir de* as an aspectual auxiliary verb has taken place. Its specific aspectual meaning, namely the placement of the topic time in the beginning of the post-process phase, is determined by the original semantics of directed motion associated with *venir* combined with the preposition *de* and imposes corresponding restrictions on the aktionsart class of the predicate.

An exhaustive search of occurrences in the 19th–21st-century subcorpus of the French national corpus Frantext (42,294 tokens in total) revealed only 28 instances with *venir* as the infinitive component, providing indirect evidence of the low frequency of such combinations in contemporary usage. It can be assumed that the degree of desemanticization of *venir* as a functional element is insufficient for the verb to be interpreted exclusively as a carrier of grammatical markers within an analytic form. Consequently, combinations of the periphrasis with *venir* as the infinitival element may be perceived as a kind of tautology, at least in formal written French.

However, uses of *venir de + venir* are not uncommon in less normatively constrained texts, such as personal correspondence, internet posts, and regional newspapers. Such texts reflect the trends of spoken usage to a greater extent than the codified literary language represented in Frantext and are therefore also of interest to the present study.

(4) *...je n'aurais pas le bonheur de vous connaître, du moins pour le moment [parce que] mon ordre de rapatriement vient de venir et je pars cette nuit. Quel dommage que cela ne fût pas quelques jours plus tard. Je serai en France demain matin* (Epiney, 1917). / *I shall not have the good fortune of knowing you, at least not for the time being, because my repatriation orders have just come and I leave tonight. What a shame it was not a few days later. I shall be in France tomorrow morning.*

(5) *Castelnau-D'arbieu. Lucas vient de venir au monde* (Castelnau-D'arbieu..., 2009). / *Castelnau-d'Arbiéu. Lucas has just come into the world.*

Example (4) is an excerpt from a letter by a soldier during the First World War. The infinitive *venir* could be replaced by the synonymous verb *arriver*, thereby avoiding the repetition of the same verb without any loss of meaning. In example (5), the headline of a brief report in the regional newspaper *La Dépêche du Midi* announcing a child's birth, the infinitive *venir* within the periphrasis forms part of the idiomatic expression *venir au monde* (to be born); accordingly, only a replacement of the entire expression with the synonymous verb *naître* would be possible.

In our view, the higher frequency of such constructions in texts whose functional style is characterized by a significant influence of spoken usage is due to the fact that the main restriction on their use is stylistic rather than grammatical in nature. From a grammatical standpoint, the verb *venir* satisfies the selectional requirements imposed on the predicative element of the periphrasis: it describes a telic situation, and its aktionsart class does not conflict with the overall aspectual semantics of the periphrasis, as is the case with atelic and stative verbs. It may therefore be hypothesized that an additional factor inhibiting the spread of *venir de + venir* in carefully edited texts is the formal similarity

between the finite forms and the infinitive of *venir*. The high frequency of analytic structures involving the same verb in both functional and predicative uses can be regarded as an argument in support of this assumption, since the suppletive nature of its finite and non-finite forms and the absence of formal similarity between their stems prevent such structures from being perceived as tautological (*j'ai eu – passé composé; je vais aller – futur immédiat*).

Our research corpus contains isolated examples in which the meaning of physical motion cannot be entirely excluded from the semantics of the verb *venir*:

(6) *Alors il rencontrait le curé Malassagne venant de dire sa messe et descendant à grands pas furieux* (Daudet A. Sapho. 1984). / *Then he would meet the priest Malassagne, who had just finished saying mass and was striding down in great fury*.

In example (6), the partial reactivation of the spatial meaning of *venir* is contextually motivated. The situation described involves the actual movement of an agentive subject (the priest); the expression *dire sa messe* denotes an event with a specific spatial location and can therefore be interpreted as the point of departure of the movement. Moreover, *venir* occurs adjacent to the motion verb *descendre*, which functions here as a coordinated participial modifier. These factors facilitate the situational restoration of the directed motion semantics of *venir* with contextual support, without, however, precluding the realization of the aspectual value of immediate post-processuality by the periphrasis as a whole. Consequently, instances such as example (6) cannot serve as sufficient grounds for challenging the assertion that *venir* within the periphrasis has lost its original lexical meaning and has functionally converged with an auxiliary verb.

Thus, applying the proposed criteria to the contextual analysis of the periphrasis and its verbal elements confirmed its high degree of grammaticalization as a functional-syntactic unit and demonstrated that the auxiliary *venir* has largely lost its original lexical semantics and combines freely with infinitives belonging to different aktionsart classes. At the same time, infinitives denoting telic situations show a clear predominance.

Conclusion

The review of the existing literature and the analysis of the corpus data based on the proposed criteria lead to the following research findings:

- At its current stage of semantic evolution, the *venir de + inf* periphrasis displays clear evidence of grammaticalization and analyticity. These include the fixed linear order of its elements, the loss of the original lexical meaning of directed motion by *venir* in its auxiliary use, and the existence of morphological tense forms in French that may be regarded as synthetic counterparts of *venir de + inf* within the corresponding temporal domains.

- The combinability of *venir de* in its auxiliary use with infinitives belonging to all major semantic classes, together with the occurrence of *venir de venir* in less strictly regulated varieties of French, suggests that a series of successive semantic changes has led to the grammaticalization of *venir* within the periphrasis as an auxiliary verb. The semantic evolution of *venir* within the periphrasis resulted in the loss of the semes of spatial movement and directed motion, while preserving the temporal seme denoting the short interval of time required for movement from the location of the event expressed by the infinitive to the implicit destination. Thus, the original lexical semantics of *venir* determines the specific grammatical meaning it acquires as a functional element, namely that of an aspectual auxiliary expressing immediate post-processuality. More generally, it also shapes the grammatical meaning of the periphrasis as a whole, which conceptualizes the transition from the fixed endpoint of the event denoted by the infinitive to the speaker or protagonist, not in physical space but along the temporal dimension. Due to the pronounced resultative meaning of the periphrasis, *venir de* in its auxiliary use preferentially combines with infinitives of telic verbs belonging to the aktionsart classes of “accomplishments” and “achievements”.

- In most of the contexts analyzed, the periphrasis can be replaced by one of the existing verbal forms expressing a similar tense-aspect meaning, as long as the context allows such a substitution without affecting the overall meaning or logic of the utterance. This means that, at the present stage of its development, *venir de + inf* does not occupy a distinct functional slot within the French tense system that could not be filled by any of the existing tense-aspect forms. However, the use of the periphrasis is the only possible option when the logic of the utterance foregrounds the beginning of the post-process phase, i.e., the specific aspectual meaning of the construction itself. If, on the other hand, the context foregrounds the event itself and emphasizes its completion shortly before the moment of speech (or another reference point in the past or future), the temporal meaning of recent past becomes predominant when *venir* is in the present tense, whereas the taxis meaning of immediate anteriority comes to the foreground when *venir* is in *imparfait* or *futur simple*. The possibility of replacing the periphrasis with an anteriority form in the corresponding temporal domain in such cases may indicate the emergence of a zone of competition between the periphrasis and analytic tense-aspect forms expressing the broader taxis meaning of anteriority. This, in turn, provides evidence for the gradual grammaticalization of the periphrasis as a marker of immediate anteriority.

Thus, the proposed criteria do not provide sufficient grounds for including *venir de + inf* in the system of French analytic tense-aspect forms. The results obtained indicate that *venir de + inf* has reached the stage of a grammaticalized construction whose primary function is to express immediate post-processuality as an aspectual meaning, while its associated taxis meaning is that of immediate anteriority. Drawing on the semantic evolution of the compound tenses based on *avoir* and *être*, which initially arose as periphrastic structures functioning as aspectual counterparts to the corresponding simple forms, it can be assumed that the current development of *venir de + inf* involves a gradual shift in the hierarchy of its grammatical semes, along with the increasing grammaticalization of *venir* as an auxiliary expressing anteriority.

In contemporary linguistics, grammaticalization is viewed as the gradual acquisition of a new grammatical status by a linguistic element (Marchello-Nizia, 2020, p. 1485). Taking into account the diachronic primacy of aspect over

tense, as well as the combined nature of Romance taxis (i.e., the expression of taxis and absolute tense through the same tense-aspect forms in Romance languages) (Плунгян, 2011, p. 272), it may be hypothesized that *venir de + inf* occupies the second stage in the universal evolution of grammatical semantics of verbal forms: *aspect* → *taxis* → *tense*. At this stage, the construction shows a tendency towards integration into the past-tense domain of the French indicative system, in the forms of “*passé immédiat*” and “*plus-que-parfait immédiat*”. This tendency is supported by the significant predominance of *présent* and *imparfait* of the indicative of *venir* in the corpus data. This predominance may be explained by two factors. Firstly, indicative forms provide a more fine-grained representation of the temporal organization of an event than the oblique moods. Secondly, past events are generally more readily actualized than future ones. The further grammaticalization of the periphrasis appears to be constrained by the specific nature of its aspectual meaning, which places a number of restrictions on its use. We see promising future research perspectives in the continued observation of the semantic evolution of the periphrasis on the basis of the proposed set of criteria, as well as in applying these criteria to other French verbal periphrases.

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