“Don’t go getting into trouble again!”

The emergence and diachrony of the English *Go VPing* construction

Teresa Fanego

University of Santiago de Compostela

Building on Goldberg’s (2006: 52) observation regarding the existence of “a family of related constructions in English” centred around the verb *go*, this article explores the history of the construction exemplified in the title (“Don’t go getting into trouble again!”) and its relation to other members of the network of *go*-constructions. The analysis, conducted using three large corpora, shows that the *Go VPing* construction emerges from two source constructions (one with an *-ing* participle following the verb *go* and the other with an infinitive) which exhibit overlap in terms of certain aspects of their form and meaning. From its earliest attestations in the eighteenth century, the *Go VPing* construction has grown increasingly more interpersonal, and has become conventionalized as a marker of admonitive mood (Bybee et al. 1994: 321) which serves to dissuade or limit the performance of an activity that is apprehended as undesirable and counter-normative.

Keywords: admonitive mood, auxiliiation, construction grammar, counter-normativity, expeditionary *go*, *go*-constructions, horizontal link, multiple source constructions

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the rise and historical development of the construction referred to in the title and seen in Examples (1) to (3).

- (1) ‘now Miss Floy, you come along with me, and don’t **go hanging** back like a naughty wicked child [...], don’t!’

(CLMET3.02 FICTION 1844 Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*)

- (2) ‘Never mind me,’ says she. Then Gabe brought her some of the new cider, and she must needs **go drinking** it through a strawmote, and not in a nateral way at all.

(CLMET3.03 FICTION 1874 Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*)

- (3) ‘If I’m to talk to Evelyn Lennox,’ he said calmly, ‘I need to brief myself in advance with anything she might throw at me.’ ‘You’ve got no goddamned right to **go poking** around in that computer,’ Frank snarled.

(BNC FICTION_PROSE 1991 Colin Forbes, *Whirlpool*)

The *Go VPing* construction consists of the verb *go* followed by the *-ing* form of another verb, which can be transitive, as in Example (2), or intransitive, as in Examples (1) and (3). Semantically, *go* does not convey physical movement and appears to function instead as a marker of evaluative modality that expresses the speaker’s stance (Biber et al. 1999:966–967) towards a situation that is apprehended as counter-normative (Givón 1979:106–108; Bourdin 2003:106, 122), in that it deviates from the speaker’s assumptions of what is right or desirable.

The *Go VPing* construction, though well established in Present-Day English (PDE), has received very little attention synchronically (see only Bourdin 2003), and has never been examined diachronically. Such neglect is all the more surprising if we bear in mind the extensive body of research devoted over recent decades to the historical development of various other periphrases also involving *-ing* forms, such as the *be* progressive (“I was reading a book”; Kranich 2010; Petré 2016), the “be going to” future (Garrett 2012; Petré and Van de Velde 2018), or the numerous combinations of *-ing* with aspectuals (*begin, continue, cease, go on, keep on, start, stop*, etc.) and other classes of catenatives (*avoid, decline, hate, intend, like, love, propose, remember, suggest*, etc.) discussed in Fanego (1996, 2007), Mair (2002, 2003) and De Smet (2013), among many others. This paper seeks to fill this gap, using corpus data from both historical and contemporary English. More specifically, the analysis will try to assess the inter-relation between the *Go VPing* construction and the two constructions illustrated in Examples (4) and (5). The pattern in Example (4), discussed in Fanego (2020) under the label of the *VVingOBL* construction, is a progressive periphrasis where *go* functions as a motion verb; the abbreviation OBL (for ‘oblique’) denotes the locative complement (“to and fro alongest the Iles”) following the *-ing* form. In turn, in the construction in Example (5), which will be referred to henceforth as *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction, *go* has lost its reference to movement in space and is glossed in the *OED* (s.v. *go* v. 32.b.[a]) as conveying the modal meaning ‘to do or resort to doing something regarded as improper, bold, foolish, etc.’

- (4) they procured him besides, the ill will and displeasure of all the friendes and confederates of the athenians, for that he **went sayling** still to and fro alongest the Iles, exacting money of the inhabitants of the same:
(EEBO 1579 Plutarch / Sir Thomas North, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*)
- (5) PANC: E'ne let him go as he please, and the master too: a horse for his man!
PLAUT: come, sir, ne'r stick out for so small a matter; **don't go to intangle** your self in law: give it, give it, to save the trouble of going to law:
(EEBO 1677 Edward Ravenscroft, *Scaramouch a Philosopher, Harlequin a School-boy, Bravo, Merchant, and Magician. A Comedy after the Italian Manner*)

This article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the existing literature on the *Go VPing* construction. Section 3 outlines the theoretical background, Goldberg's (1995, 2006, 2019) model of Construction Grammar (CxG), which will be used to interpret the results obtained from the corpus data. Section 4 describes the data sources for the analysis of the *Go VPing* construction from the Late Middle English (LME) period to the present day. Section 5 considers the development of the usage and sense of the verb *go* over the course of history. Section 6 offers an account of the two precursors of the *Go VPing* construction mentioned above, namely the *V VingOBL* construction and the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction; it also describes the main features of a third construction interrelated in various ways with the *Go VPing* construction, the *Expeditionary Go* construction ("Jane went shopping"; Salkie 2010). Section 7 presents the results of the detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis carried out on the basis of the corpus materials. Section 8 concludes the paper.

2. Earlier research on the *Go VPing* construction

As already noted, the construction under discussion in this article has received very little attention to date, either synchronically or diachronically. Brief references to its use in earlier English can be found in Visser (1963–1973: III/2, 1908–1909) and the *OED*. Visser's earliest example dates from 1864–1865 (Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* I.iii.41, "Don't go saying I never knew a mother"), but he lumps the construction together with sequences such as "go cycling", "go fishing", "go hunting", and the like, which belong to a different type, as will be discussed in Section 6.3. The information in the *OED*, on the other hand, is much more accurate and is illustrated with examples dating from the eighteenth century

(e.g., 1739 Whitefield, *Christian's Compan.* xii.294, “therefore, do not contradicting”); the usage is glossed as:

to do or resort to doing something regarded as improper, bold, foolish, etc., or which otherwise prompts disapproval, annoyance, surprise, or amusement. [...] Frequently in negative or hypothetical contexts (OED s.v. *go* v. 32.b.[c])

Concerning PDE, the construction is briefly mentioned in Spears (1982: 865–866), Bolinger (1983: 162–163), Salkie (2010: 179–180) and Matsumoto (2016: 147–149), who all highlight the modal colouring of *go* through their choice of labels: *go* of “disapproval” (Spears 1982: 865), “virtual modal” (Bolinger 1983: 153), *go* of “avoidance” (Salkie 2010: 179) and “evaluative” *go* (Matsumoto 2016: 148). A more detailed treatment of the construction is offered by Bourdin (2003), who draws attention in particular to its semantics of counter-normativity and its “interpersonal quality” (Bourdin 2003: 108), which, he argues, is reflected in its close association with dialogues. Finally, the *Go VPing* construction has also been briefly examined by Goldberg (2006: 50–54) from the perspective of CxG. Her analysis is summarized at the end of the next section.

3. Theoretical background

This article, as will have become clear from my repeated use of the term “construction” in the preceding sections, assumes a model of language that accords with a constructional view of grammar such as that expounded in Goldberg (1995, 2006, 2019) and Hilpert (2019), among others. Central to this view is the idea that knowledge of language consists of a large network of constructions, or stored pairings of form and meaning, of varying levels of generality and productivity. The whole network of constructions in a particular language is called the “Construction”, which, as the name suggests, “contains everything that would be contained in a lexicon, but in addition to that a large number of symbolic units that are larger in size than single words” (Hilpert 2019: 2).

Constructions “are mentally represented along a continuum of schematicity” (Hilpert 2013: 5) and are not unordered, but rather highly structured by means of various kinds of “inheritance links” (Goldberg 1995: 72–98). Vertical taxonomic inheritance links are a crucial property of CxG, and as such they feature in all scholarly literature on the model (e.g., Hilpert 2019: 60–65). Vertical taxonomic links serve to represent the hierarchical relationships existing between higher and lower levels of abstraction in the constructional network – for instance, between the transitive construction (“John wrote a letter”) and constructions at a lower level that inherit features from, or are sanctioned by, the transitive construction,

such as the ditransitive construction (“John wrote Mary a letter”) and the transitive resultative construction (“John kissed Mary unconscious”), among others.

Alongside vertical taxonomic links, recent work on CxG has stressed the importance of recognizing that constructions can also be related to one another on the horizontal axis. Horizontal construction links, which are of special relevance to the construction examined in this article, connect constructions that show similarities on the form and/or meaning poles. They play an important part in the synchronic network of constructions and also, crucially, in diachronic change, since they support the emergence of new levels in the taxonomy of inheritance relations (for discussion see, in particular, Van de Velde 2014: 158–172; also Van de Velde et al. 2013; Hoffmann 2018: 113–114). To adduce just one example of this kind of development, McColm and Trousdale (2019) examine the recent rise of English *whatever* as a free-standing discourse marker (e.g., “All right. Whatever. I’ll let Rush speak for millions”); they show on the basis of corpus data that the emergence of this new form–meaning pairing can be traced back to two input constructions linked horizontally, one where *whatever* is used as a fused relative determinative that represents a variable element in a list of potential items (e.g., “Whatever you say, honey”) and a second one where *whatever* closes a series of coordinated noun phrases and functions as a general extender that leaves unspecified the category to which listed members belong (e.g., “He wants to be an opera singer, a film star or whatever”). As McColm and Trousdale (2019: 104) put it, while one construction may be the most likely source of a new form–meaning pairing, other constructions “may bolster change in another, related or linked part”.

To sum up so far, it is assumed in this article that “the form–function relation of a particular construction may be partly motivated in relation to its neighbours” (Van de Velde 2014: 147) – an issue that will be explored in detail in the sections that follow. In addition, it is also assumed here that the construction has a diachronic side to it, since new constructions can appear in the network – a process that Traugott and Trousdale (2013) call constructionalization – old constructions may disappear, and constructions can change over time, as extensively discussed in the literature on grammaticalization generally (Lehmann 1995; Hopper and Traugott 2003; among many others) and in Diachronic Construction Grammar in particular; this is the branch of CxG which seeks to integrate insights from grammaticalization research, in order to advance our understanding of empirical cases of constructional change (see Hilpert 2013, 2018; Traugott and Trousdale 2013; Barðdal and Gildea 2015; Coussé et al. [eds] 2018).

Returning now to Goldberg’s (2006) conception of the language system as made up of an inventory of constructions that are part of speakers’ linguistic knowledge, she draws attention in her monograph to a family of “related, quite

understudied constructions” in English (Goldberg 2006:50); these include the bare infinitival pattern seen in “Go tell your sister to come here” (examined in Flach 2015), the VVingOBL construction (“Jane came/went weeping into the room”; examined in Fanego 2020) and the *Go VPing* construction discussed in this article. Regarding this last, Goldberg (2006:54) notes the “particular syntactic, semantic and pragmatic constraints” that characterize the construction; they coincide, largely, with those identified by earlier research, namely: (i) the fact that the construction only allows *go* as main verb (but not *come*), and that this cannot be interpreted as a motion verb; (ii) the implication “that there is something negative about performing the action designated by the complement” (Goldberg 2006: 53); and (iii) the construction’s restriction to informal speech.

Goldberg also provides a convenient formal representation of the construction, reproduced here as Figure 1, which can serve as a useful starting point for the discussion that follows. The representation employs the kind of notation characteristic of the CxG model, which consists of the pairing of a semantic side (“Sem”) with a formal side (“Syn”). The semantic side specifies that the event meaning is a type of action; the formal side specifies a particular configuration of constituents, namely *go* as V, followed by a V-*ing* form which can express its own arguments, as indicated by the use of the notation VP instead of simply V.

Figure 1. The *Go VPing* construction (from Goldberg 2006: 53)

4. Data sources

Like my research (Fanego 2020) on the development of the related VVingOBL construction (“Jane went walking down the street”; see Section 1), the analysis of the *Go VPing* construction that is presented here draws on data gathered from a variety of sources. For usage in Old and Early Middle English I relied chiefly on the influential monograph by Ogura (2002) and Visser’s historical syntax of English (1963–1973: III/2, 1908–1909). These were supplemented with reference works including the *Dictionary of Old English* (DOE; Cameron et al. [eds]

2018), the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED; Kurath et al. [eds] 1952–2001) and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED).

The quantitative data were retrieved from several large electronic corpora of British English. For Late Middle English and Early Modern English (EModE) I have used EEBO BYU (Davies 2017),¹ focussing on the decades 1470s to 1500s (7,699,661 words), the 1570s (26,927,229 words), the 1640s (47,129,000 words) and the 1690s (79,719,722), totalling some 161,475,612 words. As the main source on usage in Late Modern English (LModE), I have employed the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts*, version 3.0 (CLMET3.0; De Smet et al. 2013). CLMET3.0 is a collection of texts consisting of six major genres and three different sub-periods, as indicated in Table 1. In total, the corpus contains 34 million words of running text, of which 19,358,280 words correspond to “Narrative Fiction”, “Drama” and “Letters” (mostly personal). In terms of Biber’s (1988: 102, 122–130) Multi-Dimensional model, “Dialogues in Fiction”, “Drama” and “Personal Letters” are genres which score high on Dimension 1, “Involved versus Informational Production”; they are therefore characterized by frequent occurrences of present tense forms, first- and second-person pronouns and other grammatical features that are relevant for the study of a construction which, as was pointed out in Section 2, seems to have an essentially interpersonal flavour. In addition, CLMET3.0 contains, within its category Other, 288,553 words of instructional writing, a text type which, as will be seen in Section 7.3 below, also needs to be taken into account.

To represent late twentieth-century usage, the BNC BYU (100 million words; Davies 2004), which covers the years 1975–1994,² was employed. The BNC comprises both a spoken component (9,963,663 words) and a written one, the latter being structured into seven text categories: Fiction, Magazine, Newspaper, Non-Academic, Academic and Miscellaneous; Personal Letters (a small 51,840 words sample) and Instructional Writing (976,585 words) are included within Miscellaneous. As regards the text category Fiction (15,909,312 words), it is subdivided into Fiction_prose (15,644,928 words), Fiction_poetry (219,409 words) and Fiction_drama (44,975 words). The sub-category Fiction_prose can be roughly equated with the category Narrative Fiction in CLMET3.0, and is practically identical in size. But, other than this, the BNC and CLMET3.0 are not fully

1. For a prior pilot study, I used *The Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (PPCME2; Kroch et al. [eds] (2000–); 1,155,965 words from the period 1150–1500). The paucity of the data obtained made it clear that a far larger corpus was required, hence the decision to use EEBO BYU, whose coverage starts only in the 1470s.

2. The BNC contains a few texts from the 1960s, but the vast majority (95.91 percent) date from 1975 onwards. See <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/docs/URG/BNCdes.html#BNCcompo>.

comparable, since genres such as Drama and Personal Letters, for instance, are poorly represented in the BNC, by comparison to CLMET_{3.0} – a difference which might potentially have a distorting effect on the data obtained for the analysis.

Table 1. Contents of CLMET_{3.0} by sub-period

Genre	CLMET _{3.01} 1710–1780	CLMET _{3.02} 1780–1850	CLMET _{3.03} 1850–1920	Total
Narrative Fiction	4,642,670	4,830,718	6,311,301	15,784,689
Narrative Non-Fiction	1,863,855	1,940,245	958,410	4,762,510
Drama	407,885	347,493	607,401	1,362,779
Letters	1,016,745	714,343	479,724	2,210,812
Treatise	1,114,521	1,692,992	1,782,124	4,589,637
Other	1,434,755	1,759,796	2,481,247	5,675,798
Total	10,480,431	11,285,587	12,620,207	34,386,225

5. Go: Usage and sense development

Go, as the *OED* indicates, “is the most general verb of motion in English” (s.v. *go* v.). It was already a very common verb in Old English (OE), with about 3,700 occurrences in the extant OE records (*DOE* s.v. *gan* v.). In current usage, it plays a central role in the system of deixis, together with *come*, “from which it differs by the implication that the movement is not towards the place occupied (in fact or in thought) by the speaker” (*OED* s.v. *go* v.; for further discussion, see Fillmore 1971). What is not clear, however, is that the deictic pair represented by PDE *come* and *go* can be assumed to have existed in the same function during earlier stages of the language; as noted by Ogura (2002: 25), “that basic picture is adjustable to Old English grammar only by chance” (see also Huber 2017: 41–42). In OE the primary meaning of *gan* was in fact ‘to go on foot, walk, irrespective of the point of departure or destination’ (*DOE gan* v. I), and this sense remains conspicuous in ME (*MED gon* v. 1.a), as can be seen in Examples (6) and (7), and until well into the eighteenth century (*OED* s.v. *go* 1.a).

(6) *Wommen may go saufly vp and doun* ‘Women may walk safely up and down’
(c1395 Chaucer CTWB. (Manly-Rickert).D.878; *MED* s.v. *gon* 1.a)

(7) *Walkyn, or gone: Ambulo, io, spacior*
(1440 PParv.(Hrl 221)514; *MED* s.v. *gon* 1.a.(a))

In its use as ‘to walk’, as also in the frequent non-orientated sense of ‘to travel, proceed, move’ (*MED* s.v. *gon* 2.a.(a)), illustrated in Example (8), *go* expresses the category of *Aktionsart* that Vendler (1957) has termed an activity – that is, an atelic action lacking a natural end point. This is reflected in the great frequency with which, in both ME and EModE (see further Fanego 2020), *go* is combined with locative phrases which do not denote a goal, but rather a trajectory over an extended location, as is the case of “vp and down” in Example (6) and *about* in Example (8). In such contexts, *go* is frequentative (Bybee et al. 1994: 317): if someone goes around places doing something, it is inferred that this “doing” is repeated. Note also Example (7), where the Latin verbs *ambulo* (‘to promenade, pace up and down’) and *spacior/spatior* (‘to walk around, stroll’) used in the English–Latin dictionary *Promptorium Parvulorum* (1440) to gloss *walk* and *go* are both frequentative (see Blázquez Fraile 1954).

- (8) 3oure aduersarie [...] as a roryng lyoun **goith** aboute, sekinge whom he shal deuoure.

(c1384 WBible(1) (Roy 1.B.6)1 Pet.5.8; *MED* s.v. *gon* 2.a.(a))

It will be shown in Section 6.1 that instances such as those in Examples (6) and (8) just quoted, where *go* co-occurs with phrases implying multiple or extended locations, provided the discourse context for the development of one of the constructions that have served as sources of the *Go VPing* construction under examination in this article.

6. The *Go VPing* construction and its precursors

This section examines a family of constructions which can be conceived of as being closely related, since they show similarities in form (they all contain the verb *go* followed by the non-finite form of another verb) and meaning (they often carry negative overtones). In Section 7 they will be argued to have contributed, in various ways, to the emergence and development of the *Go VPing* construction, as we know it today.

6.1 The *V VingOBL* construction

Instances that prefigure the construction exemplified by “Jane came/went walking down the street”, with the motion verbs *come* or *go* followed by a present participle (*Ving*) expressing a simultaneous action, can be found sporadically as early as OE, as in Example (9), where *eode*, the past tense of *gan* (‘to go on foot,

walk'), is followed at some distance by the present participle of *gangan* ('to go, walk').

- (9) *Swa eode heo on uppan þa hnescan yða wið his weardes gangende swá swá on dringum*

So went she on the soft waves towards him walking as if on dry land

[‘So she went on the soft waves, walking towards him as if on dry land’]

(LS23 (*Mary of Egypt*) 684–5; quoted from Ogura 2002: 84)

At this stage, the participle was merely an adjunct clause of “accompanying circumstance, or exemplification/specification” (Ringe and Taylor 2014: 494), but from about 1450 onwards, as I have discussed elsewhere (Fanego 2020), instances in which V and V-*ing* appear adjacent, as in Example (4) (“went sayling”), become common, their frequency increasing exponentially over the course of time, as shown in Table 2. The analysis carried out in Fanego (2020) made it possible to identify the VVingOBL pattern as a construction, or form–meaning pairing, whose overall event meaning is aspectual (progressive) and can be glossed as ‘motion along a path which takes place simultaneously with a certain manner of action.’

My research on the VVingOBL construction also revealed the existence of considerable semantic, pragmatic and syntactic differences between the two sub-patterns of the construction – one with *come* as V, the other with *go* – which arise largely from the sense of non-orientated motion that *go* frequently coded in earlier stages of English, as discussed in Section 5 (see Examples [6] to [8]). This explains why in the data retrieved from EEBO for the period 1470s to 1640s the *go*VingOBL pattern is very frequently combined with locatives which, rather than encoding the goal of motion (as in, for example, 1579 *The Historie of Guicciardin*, “the corsegnans went wandring towards the army”), encode a trajectory over an extended location: “about all the country” (1572), “euery where” (1579), “fro Prouince to Prouince” (1579), “from common welth to common welth” (1575), “here and thare” (1553), “through places and Countryes” (1647), “to and fro” (1579, and *passim*), “up and down” (*passim*), *etc.* Overall, in the decades 1550s to 1570s, twenty-six (43.3 percent) out of the sixty tokens of *go*VingOBL recorded contain obliques of this type.

Aimless, non-orientated motion is apt to be coloured with negative overtones. This can be observed quite consistently, for instance, in the Spanish progressive periphrasis formed with *andar* ('to walk, go around') and a gerund, as in *andar golfeando* ('to go hanging around'), *andar diciendo* ('to go around saying [in reference to a false rumour]') (Torres Cacoullos 2000:166–167; Real Academia Española 2009:2199). It is also evident in many attested examples of the

*goVing*OBL pattern, both in EModE and at all later stages; see Examples (10) and (11).

- (10) certainly jesus christ will never deny maintainance to his spouse, it's a dishonour for a husband to have the wife **go whining up-and down**;
(EEBO 1649 Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*)
- (11) make wicked and ungodly men affraid of you: let not drunkards dare to **goe reeling and staggering** in the streets; nor swearers dare to open their mouthes in oaths and blasphemies in the streets; nor children &; others dare to be playing up &; down the streets on the lords day:
(EEBO 1645 Elidad Blackwell, *A Caveat for Magistrates in a Sermon, Preached at Paul's*)

Both examples exhibit the negative semantic prosody (Sinclair 2004: 33–35) which is also characteristic of the *Go VPing* construction, as well as the frequentative interpretation observable in some of its occurrences, for instance in Example (3); *go*, however, retains its meaning of physical motion, as suggested by the locative phrases “up and down” and “in the streets”. Cases such as Examples (10) and (11), therefore, must still be interpreted as progressive periphrases, with *go* and the following *V-ing* coding two simultaneous actions.

Table 2. Historical development of the *VVing*OBL construction, based on Fanego (2020); token frequencies normalized per million words

Sub-pattern	1470–1490	1550s and		1850–1920	1975–1994
	(6,411,570 w.)	1570s (34,146,652 w.)	1640s (47,129,000 w.)	(12,620,207 w.)	(15,644,928 w.)
<i>ComeVing</i> OBL	51 (i.p.m. 7.9)	226 (i.p.m. 6.62)	287 (i.p.m. 6.09)	433 (i.p.m. 34.31)	644 (i.p.m. 41.16)
<i>GoVing</i> OBL	5 (i.p.m. 0.78)	60 (i.p.m. 1.76)	100 (i.p.m. 2.12)	147 (i.p.m. 11.65)	205 (i.p.m. 13.10)

6.2 The *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction

As Visser (1963–1973: III/1, 1400) notes, “[i]n the course of the Modern Period there begin to appear constructions with *go* + infinitive in which *go* has lost its reference to movement in space and developed various fresh meanings”. One of those constructions is the infinitival pattern shown in Example (5) and in Examples (12) to (14).

- (12) about which observe the first law of horace, where he adviseth: that if you be a pigmy, you should **not go to charge** your shoulders with a world, as if you were an atlas:

(EEBO 1660 Daniello Bartoli / Thomas Salusbury, *The learned man defended and reform'd a discourse of singular politeness and elocution*)

- (13) but his judgment is no better than thine, and therefore i shall not regard it: i **won't go to particularize** your nonsensical expressions, but in general, these three parts are very ridiculous; besides, thou hast a notable way of stealing from thy self;

(EEBO 1692 Charles Gildon, *Poeta infamis*)

- (14) you will **not go to put** any more such phims in my brother's head, to the prejudice of my pocket; but rather give me some raisins (which hitherto you have not done) to subscribe myself your humble servant,

(CLMET3.01 FICTION_EPISTOLARY NOVEL 1771 Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*)

Semantically and pragmatically, this is the infinitival counterpart of the *Go* VPing construction, and the *OED* in fact discusses both patterns within the same entry (s.v. *go* v. 32.b), glossing them as 'to do or resort to doing something regarded as improper, bold, foolish, etc., or which otherwise prompts disapproval, annoyance, surprise, or amusement'. For the infinitival pattern specifically, the *OED* provides quotations dating from 1686 onwards and adds the observation 'chiefly colloquial (now archaic and regional)'.

The information in Visser (1963–1973: III/1, 1400) suggests that the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction may have been felt to be sub-standard as early as the second half of the eighteenth century. Example (14), from my own data, might point in the same direction; it occurs in a letter written by Tabitha Bramble, a Welsh character notorious for her “many comic overtones [...] and malapropisms” (Flick 1975: 13; Blake 1981: 121–122). It has to be borne in mind, however, that the representation of speech in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels was often stereotypical, focussing mostly on faulty spelling and pronunciation; these, then, may have been the features which Smollett was poking fun at in that particular passage, rather than Tabitha's morphosyntactic choices. By the nineteenth century, at any rate, the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction had become sub-standard, as clearly indicated by the *OED* quotations.

In order to supplement the information adduced in Visser (1963–1973) and the *OED*, I conducted searches in EEBO (755 m. words) and CLMET3.0 (34 m. words); EEBO yielded twenty-five examples of the construction, dating from 1652

onwards, and CLMET3.0 eight.³ Overall, these reveal, first, that the construction often took the form of a negative imperative clause (eleven tokens from the thirty-three in my data set), as in Example (5) (“don’t go to intangle your self in law”); second, that it was closely associated with dialogic passages; and third, that it could refer both to actions that are performed only once, as in Examples (12) and (13), and to actions that have occurred before, as in Example (14). These features are shared by the *Go VPing* construction, as will be discussed at greater length in Section 7. Also worthy of mention is the fact that a large proportion of the tokens of the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction in EEBO, and all of those attested in CLMET3.0, can be classified as admonitive utterances (see for instance Examples [5], [12] and [14]). Admonitives form part of the family of directives (Lyons 1977: 823), together with imperatives, prohibitives, optatives and hortatives (Bybee et al. 1994: 179, 321; see also Carracedo Doval 2018: 76–77). They are most closely related to prohibitives (“Don’t move!”), but whereas these convey a negative command with which compliance is required and “generally need institutionalised authority” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 930), admonitives can be glossed as ‘You had better not...’ (Bybee et al. 1994: 321), ‘Beware of..., let me warn you about...’ (Andrews 2003: 84), and their goal is “to dissuade or limit the performance of an activity” (Coupe 2007: 392–393). These definitions, as will be shown in Section 7, also describe with great precision the core meaning of the *Go VPing* construction under analysis here.

6.3 The Expeditionary *Go* construction

The label “expeditionary” was coined by Salkie (2010) to refer to PDE collocations such as “go fishing”, “go hunting”, “go shopping”, and the like. These go back to a type of sequence attested very rarely in OE, but common from ME (Mustanoja 1960: 577–578; de Groot 2007: 179). It consisted of a V, belonging to a limited set of verbs (*be*, *go*, *ride*, etc.), which combined with a prepositional phrase formed by the preposition *on* – usually weakened to *a(n)* (cf. *OED a prep.*¹ 11.a,b) – and a gerund or verbal action noun in *-ing*.

3. For EEBO I used the search strings *do _x go to VERB+*; *no*_pn go to VERB+*; *_x go to VERB+*; *_x*_go to VERB+*, and for CLMET3.0 the strings *do not go to*; *don*_go to*; *don*_you go to*; *not*_go to*. These searches are not completely exhaustive, since they do not retrieve sequences with the past tense form *went*, but I proceeded on the assumption that there would be very few of these, given the fact that the *Go VPing* construction occurs exclusively in the present tense, as shown in Section 7.3.

- (15) *The kynge is gone on huntynge, certayne*
 ['The king has gone hunting, for certain']
 (c1300 *Beves-of-Hamtoun*, 2051)
- (16) *Ich wolle now a-ffisschyng go*
 ['I will now go fishing']
 (a1325 (c1280) *Southern Passion* (Pepys 2344) (1927) l 2176; *OED go* v. 30.f.(a))
- (17) *For sikerly my dette shal be quyt Towardes yow how euer that I fare To goon a beggyng in my kirtel bare*
 ['For assuredly my debt to you shall be repaid even though I proceed to go begging in my gown, scantily clad']
 ((c1395) Chaucer CT.Fkl.(Manly-Rickert)F. 1580; *MED gon* v. 11a. (g))

According to Mustanoja (1960: 578), the pattern was employed in ME “to express the purpose or result of the motion”. Over the course of LModE it became archaic and/or regional (cf. *OED go* v. 30.f.[a]), being superseded by the current pattern, shown in Example (18); in this, the *a(n)* prepositional prefix is lacking and “the verbal noun [is] treated as a participle” (s.v. *OED a* prep.¹ 11.a), a development which forms part of the disintegrating gerund/participle distinction that has been taking place in English since ME times, as discussed in De Smet (2013: 102–130, 2014) and Fanego (2015, 2016).

- (18) We used to **go shrimping** together, and said and thought we were in love with each other;
 (CLMET3.03 FICTION 1914 Gilbert K. Chesterton, *The Wisdom of Father Brown*)

Within the network of English *go* constructions, expeditionary *go* is linked to the *Go VPing* construction because some of the most frequent and earliest expeditionary collocations carried strong negative overtones. Arguably, “go (a) fishing” (186 occurrences in EEBO) and “go (a) hunting” (401 occurrences) were mostly semantically neutral, but “go (a) begging”, attested also from a very early date (see Example [17]) and totalling 341 occurrences in EEBO, was consistently negative, given the social conditions of the time. With the coming of the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century, between a third and a half of the population of England died. Scarcity of labour gave workers the power to demand higher wages; where landowners refused to pay what was demanded, many rural people simply went on the road in search of alms elsewhere, turning beggary into their profession. In these circumstances, “the church and authorities began to develop nuanced attitudes towards poverty, particularly the wandering poor, which drew distinctions between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ beggars; between those who were

capable of labour but refused and those who, through no fault of their own, were incapacitated” (Jones 2017; see also Baker and McEnery 2014). The following example from EEBO is representative both of the hostile attitudes to beggars and vagrants, and of the negative terms with which the activity of begging was usually described:

- (19) he that soweth in teares, shall reape in ioy [...] the slothfull man would not plowe because of the colde weather, he shall therefore **goe a begging** in the sommer, and no man shall releue him:

(EEBO 1578 William Touris / Richard Robinson, *A Dyall of Dayly Contemplacion*)

In the sixteenth century, a new collocation with strongly pejorative semantics was added to the inventory of expeditionary *go*, namely “go (a) whoring”. This is attested from 1535, and is formed on the verbal noun *whoring*, which is defined by the *OED* as ‘the action of *WHORE* *v.*; fornication; also *figurative*: *spec.* in biblical use, applied to idolatry, as an act of unfaithfulness to the true God’. Given the context of religious zeal prevalent in Early Modern England, the collocation became extremely frequent, as is clear from its 738 occurrences in EEBO, one of which is quoted below; the sense of motion, as can be seen, is considerably weakened.

- (20) reioyce not, isral for ioye for thogh all other people escape, yet thou be: as (other) people: for thou hast **gone a whoring** fro thy god:

(EEBO 1561 William Whittingham / Anthony Gilby / Thomas Sampson, *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament...*)

It is conceivable that the widespread use of such common collocations may have reinforced the inference, evident from many examples of the *goVingOBL* pattern discussed in Section 6.1 (e.g., “Let not drunkards **goe** reeling and staggering in the streets”; cf. [11]), that combinations of *go* with a following *-ing* form carried negative connotations, thus facilitating the rise of the *Go VPing* construction from the eighteenth century, at the expense of the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction, as is discussed in the next section.

7. The emergence and development of the *Go VPing* construction

7.1 Late Middle English and Early Modern English (1470s–1690s)

The results from EEBO presented in this section are based on the lemmatized search string *GO _v?g**, which ensures the retrieval of the various forms of a verb’s

paradigm (e.g., “go wand(e)ring”, “goes wand(e)ring”, “goeth wandring”, “went wand(e)ring”, *etc.*). The search options, set to 1,000 hits, yielded 833 hits and 3,214 occurrences. Of these latter, 617 occurrences corresponded to the different sub-periods of EEBO examined here, which total some 161,475,612 words; 26 occurrences date from decades 1470s to 1500s, 132 occurrences from the 1570s, 264 occurrences from the 1640s, and 195 from the 1690s.

The 617 occurrences were then manually sorted in order to discard all the sequences not relevant to the analysis, which turned out to be the vast majority. Most of the examples obtained were cases of VVingOBL (1499 “i **went wepynge** thyder”), but also a considerable number of other sequences which also encoded two simultaneous events, but which contained a transitive V (1577 “as he went traueiling, they **went drawing and painting**, all cities, castels, riuers, mountaines, nations, kingdomes, and prouinces, by & through which he passed”) or lacked an explicit oblique phrase (1577 “as he **went traueiling**”). The sample also contained cases of expeditionary *go*, though not very many, as at this stage the majority of instances of this construction still contained an intervening *a* prefix (e.g., “goe a begging” and “go a whoring”) and hence are not retrieved by the search string GO_v?g*. Finally, I also removed a small number of mistaggings and duplicates – that is, examples which are repeated in EEBO as a result of the corpus including several different editions of the same text but reprinted years apart.

After completing the above procedure, it became clear that the seven decades of EEBO material examined contain a number of instances that point to the desemanticization (Lehmann 1995: 127–128) of *go* and its loss of spatial meaning, through repeated combination with a following V-*ing* form. Good sources of evidence in this regard are the translations of Spanish works included in EEBO. Spanish possesses a large number of aspectual and modal periphrases formed with motion verbs, so when rendering into English *ir* (‘to go’) + gerund and *andar* (‘to walk’) + gerund, the English versions resort to a form of *go* in order to translate uses which in the Spanish originals are purely aspectual or modal. Cases in point are Examples (21) to (23); in Example (21) “goes rousing” translates Spanish “*va despertando*” (‘is awakening, keeps awakening’), where *va* is an auxiliary of continuative aspect (Bybee et al. 1994: 164–166; Torres Cacoullós 2000: 97); in Examples (22) and (23) “go taking” and “go playing” render, respectively, Spanish “*andan tomando*” (‘[they] take’) and “*andan jugando*” (‘[they] play’), which carry the implication that the actions being referred to are wrong or unlawful, a negative nuance prominent in the Spanish frequentative periphrasis *andar* + gerund (Torres Cacoullós 2000: 165–168).

- (21) for that noblenesse of blood which my parents have given me, **goes rovvsing** up my spirits, and puts such metall into them, that they already promise me eyther a remedy of my received vvrong, or a full revenge of my offered affront: [‘porque la nobleza de la sangre que mis padres me han dado **va despertando** en mí bríos que me prometen o ya remedio, o ya venganza de mi agravio’]
(EEBO 1640 Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra / James Mabbe, *Exemplarie Nouells in sixe books*)

- (22) my lord Earle, be none of those that haue two quentes of rent, & foure of follies, which alwayes **go taking** by lone, dealing by exchange, taking rent aforehand, and selling their patrimonie: in such maner, as all their trauel doth cosist not in mainteyning house, but in sustayning follies: [‘No seáis, señor Conde, de los que tienen dos cuentos de hacienda y cuatro de locura, los cuales siempre **andan tomando** emprestado, sacando a cambio, arrendando, adelantando y vendiendo el patrimonio, de manera que todo su trabajo consiste, no en mantener la casa, sino en substentar la locura.’]
(EEBO 1575 Antonio de Guevara / Edward Hellowes, *The Familiar Epistles of Sir Anthony of Gueuara*)

- (23) and really, it is true, that it hath hapned to me sometimes, to conceaue, that the diuells **goe playing** with a Soule, as men would doe with a ball; and she, the while, is without anie meanes at all, to deliuer her self, out of their power: [‘Y es así que me ha acaecido parecerme que **andan** los demonios como **jugando** a la pelota con el alma, y ella que no es parte para librarse de su poder.’]
(EEBO 1642 Teresa of Avila / Tobie Matthew, *The Flaming Hart, or, The Life of the Gloriov S. Teresa*)

Note in particular Example (22); this seems of special interest in that it exhibits several of the features of the *Go VPing* construction which will be discussed in Sections 7.2 and 7.3: interpersonal setting, negative overtones, and admonitive semantics conveyed through the negative imperative clause “be none of those...”.

Other than in translations, examples where *go* seems to have lost its physical motion meaning and to function primarily as a marker of modality and/or aspect can also be found sporadically, as in Examples (24) and (25). In Example (24), *go* follows a series of progressive forms and its role is to stress the repeated nature of the action described (‘wallowing in vices’) and its unfavourable connotations, though the motion reading is arguably also present. With regard to Example (25), an interpretation of “go pickeering” as implying both motion and purpose (‘go in order to engage in verbal skirmishing’) is not impossible, but a reading as simply ‘shall engage in verbal skirmishing’ seems also plausible, with the plural NP “in all coffee-houses and publick places” signalling repeated occurrence.

- (24) when writers passe through labour, they goe abroade solasing: when writers watch, they sleepe: when writers faste, they are a banquettyng, and a feastyng: when that the writers are tossyng and turnyng theyr bookes, they **goe wallowing** in vices: & yet for al this, they wil set the selues to iudge [...] and to condemne other mens doctrine,

(EEBO 1578 John Florio, *Florio His Firste Fruites*)

- (25) articles of a league offensive and defensive, made between [] and the directors of the bank of england, the day of bringing in the bill for establishing a land-bank: # 1: that there shall be provided a flying squadron of volunteers (to be commanded by sir i: f:) who shall **go pickeering** in all coffee-houses and other publick places, to rail against the land bank:

(EEBO 1696 Thomas Neale, *The Tryal and Comdemnation of the Trustees of the Land-bank at Exeter Exchange*; s.v. *OED pickeer* v. 2.c ‘to engage in verbal skirmishing, to bicker’)

To sum up so far, the decades analysed in EEBO have helped identify a few examples where *go* has been reduced to little more than an auxiliary with negative connotations. Yet taking into account the paucity of the data obtained, it seems clear that the emergence and consolidation of the *Go VPing* construction takes place beyond the EModE period, as will be discussed in the next section.

7.2 Late Modern English (1710–1920)

Table 3 presents the results obtained for the *Go VPing* construction in the three sub-periods of CLMET3.0. The combination of *V-ing* with the various forms of the lexeme *GO* was searched by means of WordSmith Tools 6.0 within a context window of one word to the right (i.e., *ing oL 1R). Total hits recorded came to 731, of which most had to be discarded, since they corresponded to cases of expeditionary *go* or of the *VVingOBL* construction and other patterns not relevant to the analysis; this is based, therefore, on a set of eighty-four tokens. As can be observed in Table 3, the construction increases in frequency from 0.095 tokens per million words in sub-period 1 (1710–1780) to 5.07 in sub-period 3 (1850–1920). The overall number of occurrences of *go* in CLMET3.0 also rises over the same period, from 12,520 tokens to 26,885 – that is, it approximately doubles, but this increase in frequency is far less marked than that of the *Go VPing* construction.

Table 3, which will be discussed in greater detail in Section 7.3, is organized in terms of the type of non-assertive context where the construction occurs. The typology of contexts is based on the typologies proposed in Quirk et al. (1985:784–785) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002:831–843), with slight adjustments; thus the ad hoc category ‘Other’ is used to accommodate examples, such

as the exclamation in Example (26), which are not clearly covered by any of the other categories.

- (26) MR. B.: do you think, once more, I would offer any thing dishonourable to your daughter? [...] JOHN ANDREWS: Why, sir, said he, pray forgive me; but there is no harm to say, What bishop's, or whereabouts? MR. B.: What, and so you'd **go troubling** his lordship with your impertinent fears and stories!
(CLMET3.01 FICTION_EPISTOLARY NOVEL 1749 Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*)

This is the only token of the *Go VPing* construction attested in sub-period 1 (1710–1780). In contrast, examples of the *VVingOBL* construction with negative connotations, along the lines of those quoted as Examples (10) and (11), are common, as in Example (27). Here the presence of the locative “about the house” forces a motion interpretation of *go*, with the actions of pining and moping understood to occur simultaneously with the motion.

- (27) Miss Bridget is an example of all these observations. She had not been many times in the captain's company before she was seized with this passion. Nor did she **go pining and moping** about the house, like a puny, foolish girl, ignorant of her distemper: she felt, she knew, and she enjoyed, the pleasing sensation,
(CLMET3.01 FICTION 1749 Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*)

Sub-period 2 (1780–1850) provides a number of examples closely reminiscent of this one, but which I have instead classed as instances of the *Go VPing* construction, because in the absence of a locative phrase, retention of the motional sense is difficult to argue for; Examples (28) and (29) are cases in point. Note in Example (29) the co-ordination of “go moping” with the modal progressive “be shaking off”, an expressive device also serving to convey negative speaker attitude (Wright 1994; Kranich 2010: 202, 222).

- (28) ‘Without meaning to tell a falsehood, however,’ said the lady, ‘he might make a mistake.’ ‘No, ma'am, he never makes mistakes; it is not his way to **go gossiping and tattling**; he never tells anything till he's asked’
(CLMET3.02 FICTION 1796–1801 Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant*)
- (29) I don't know what you've all been doing to him, but he's as down-hearted a chap as I'd wish to see. He's had his sorrows sure enough, poor lad! But it's time for him to be shaking off his dull looks, and not **go moping** like a girl.
(CLMET3.02 FICTION 1848 Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*)

I consider the above examples as illustrating the kind of formal reduction which can often be seen at work in grammaticalization processes, as discussed in work

by Lehmann (1995:132), Bybee (2010:7, 34–53) and McColm and Trousdale (2019:97–101), among many others. In Examples (28) and (29), the absence of the locative complement leads to an ambiguous context where *go* could be considered either as a motion verb or simply as a modality marker. The shift to the modality meaning represents a loss in lexical content, but an increase in abstraction, as commonly seen in grammaticalization (see, for example, Hopper and Traugott 2003:94–98). In turn, the category shift from lexical verb to auxiliary correlates with changes in argument structure and so-called host-class expansion, which Himmelmann (2004:32) defines as an expansion within “the class of elements the gram is in construction with”: whereas the *V VingOBL* construction (“She went pining and moping about the house”) only allows the intransitive *V-ing*, this restriction does not apply to the *Go VPing* construction, in which the transitive *V-ing* can occur freely, as in Example (26) and Example (30). Note that in Example (26) (“you’d go troubling his lordship”) a motion reading of *go* would still be possible, provided the *-ing* clause is interpreted as indicating purpose (i.e., ‘you’d go [there] in order to trouble his lordship’); in Example (30), however, the motion reading is incompatible with the clausal syntax and semantics.

- (30) ‘It’s our parrot, this is.’ ‘Mr Carker’s parrot, Rob?’ ‘Will you hold your tongue, Misses Brown?’ returned the goaded Grinder. ‘What do you **go naming** names for?’

(CLMET3.02 FICTION 1844 Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*)

The developments just outlined suggest that in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries *Go VPing* constructionalized (Traugott and Trousdale 2013:22; Hilpert 2018:29), that is, it emerged as a new form–meaning pairing different from the source constructions which constitute its reference points. These source constructions, as already noted in Section 1, are two: on the one hand, the *go* variant (e.g., “Let not drunkards goe reeling and staggering in the streets”; see Example [11]) of the *V VingOBL* construction; on the other, the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction discussed in Section 6.2. These input constructions show overlap with regard to some aspects of their form and meaning, namely in that they both:

- a. contain the verb *go* followed by the non-finite form of another verb;
- b. have grammatical subjects carrying the feature [+animate]; and,
- c. occur in contexts which carry negative overtones and have admonitive semantics (‘You had better not...’), whether explicitly (see Examples [5], [10]–[11], [12] and [14]) or implicitly (see Examples [4] and [27]).

The amalgamation – to borrow a term popularized by Lakoff (1974) – of the two constructions just mentioned results in a new construction, the *Go VPing*

construction, which gradually encroached upon the functional niche occupied by the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction and eventually ousted it. One can view this process as forming part of the large scale replacement of infinitives by *-ing* forms that has taken place in English in many environments, as discussed in Fanego (1996, 2007:169–186) and De Smet (2013:131–251). The earliest function of the English *to*-infinitive was that of a purpose adjunct (Los 2005: 27, 46), but already in OE it broadened its uses by extending to verb complement positions. Here it stood unrivalled until, in the course of EModE, *-ing* clauses emerged as a second type of non-finite complement, which has come to be employed with an ever-increasing number of verbs. As I have shown elsewhere (Fanego 1996, 2007:169–172), the spread of *-ing* complements at the expense of *to*-infinitives proceeded by diffusion across the lexicon, and was led, crucially, by verbs of avoidance (*avoid, escape, forbear, refrain*, etc.) and by egressives (*blin* [‘to cease from, stop’], *cease, leave (off)* [‘to cease, desist from’], etc.). In view of this, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the *Go VPing* construction must have been felt as a much better option than the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction in order to convey a meaning which is not purposive but consists, rather, in dissuading from the performance of an activity. In addition, the replacement of the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction by the *Go VPing* pattern may have been supported to some extent by the existence of another *go V-ing* sequence also often carrying negative semantics, namely the Expeditionary *Go* construction discussed in Section 6.3.

Table 3. The *Go VPing* construction in relation to non-assertiveness. (Note that the percentages of negative imperatives over totals per period are as follows: 0.0 percent [CLMET3.01], 10.5 percent [CLMET3.02], 21.9 percent [CLMET3.03] and 45.8 percent [BNC].)

Type of non-assertive context	BNC			
	CLMET3.01	CLMET3.02	CLMET3.03	1975–1994 (100 million words; 1,138 token sample)
	1710–1780 (10,480,431 words)	1780–1850 (11,285,587 words)	1850–1920 (12,620,207 words)	
Negative imperatives ("Don't go missing the step", 1901)	–	2	13	43
Negative <i>Let</i> -imperatives ("Let us not go thinking of might have beens", 1873)	–	–	1	1

Table 3. (continued)

	CLMET3.01	CLMET3.02	CLMET3.03	BNC
	1710–1780	1780–1850	1850–1920	1975–1994
	(10,480,431	(11,285,587	(12,620,207	(100
	words)	words)	words)	million
Type of non-assertive context				words;
				1,138
				token
				sample)
Modalized negative declaratives ("You can't go putting up shelves", 1991)	–	1	5	17
Negative declaratives with directive force ("I don't want her to go getting any wrong ideas", 1991)	–	–	6	5
Negative declaratives ("I don't go giving people presents", 1990)	–	–	–	5
Wh-questions ("Why will you go cutting your loaf with a razor when you have a bread-knife?", 1891)	–	1	3	4
Yes-No questions ("Wouldn't it be a bitter thing for a girl to go marrying the like of Shaneen?", 1907)	–	–	6	4
If-conditionals ("If you go voting wildly, you'll be thrown out", 1867)	–	–	8	4
Other conditional constructions ("He... to go biting others, he would put in them the same malice", 1913)	–	–	3	–
Expressions of unfavourable evaluation or counter-expectation ("It is a very unkind thing to go drawing chimneys down on me and soot", 1913)	–	11	16	10
Other	1	4	3	3
Total tokens	1	19	64	96
	(i.p.m. 0.095)	(i.p.m. 1.68)	(i.p.m. 5.07)	

Table 4. The *Go VPing* construction in relation to interpersonal involvement (figures in parentheses are percent)

Type of subject	CLMET3.01 (1710–1780)	CLMET3.02 (1780–1850)	CLMET3.03 (1850–1920)	BNC (1975–1994)
First- or second-person	1 (100)	6 (31.6)	50 (78.1)	82 (85.4)
Third-person	–	13 (68.4)	14 (21.9)	14 (14.6)
Total tokens	1	19	64	96

Table 5. Productivity rate of the *Go VPing* construction (number of hapax legomena / number of tokens)

	CLMET3.02 (1780–1850)	CLMET3.03 (1850–1920)	BNC (1975–1994)
No. of types	17	52	47
No. of hapaxes	15	43	30
No. of tokens	19	64	96
Productivity rate	0.79	0.67	0.31

7.3 Present-Day English (1975–1994)

This section offers an overview of the course of development of the *Go VPing* construction, based on data from the BNC BYU and their comparison with usage in CLMET3.0. The search string employed for EEBO BYU (see Section 7.1), namely *GO_v?g**, yielded in the BNC a total of 1,643 occurrences, out of which I randomly selected 1,138 for analysis; after manual sorting, ninety-six of these were found to be instances of the *Go VPing* construction. This is not a very high proportion, but it has to be borne in mind that included in the random sample were a few collocations with expeditionary *go* which are extremely common in PDE, such as “go shopping” (286 occurrences in the BNC) or “go swimming” (62 occurrences), as well as the high-frequency lexicalized collocation “go missing” (‘to become lost’; e.g., “two helicopters went missing on a routine mission”; s.v. *OED missing* adj. & n.²; 147 occurrences).

Tables 3 and 4 show that over time the *Go VPing* construction has become increasingly more interpersonal and involved. Among the criteria most frequently employed to measure interpersonal involvement are features such as present-tense verbs, first- and second-person pronouns, attitude markers and directives

(see Biber 1988:102; Hyland 2005:176–186). Attitude markers –whether in the form of derogatory verbs and adjectives, discourse markers or other forms – are not represented explicitly in Tables 3 and 4, since their role in the *Go* VPing construction and its two source constructions is prominent from the start, as we can clearly observe in all the examples provided in these pages. As regards the other criteria, Table 4 reveals the notable progression of first- and second-person subjects; in sub-period 2 (1780–1850) of CLMET3.0 they represent only 31.6 percent of grammatical subjects, but rise to 78.1 percent in sub-period 3 (1850–1920) and to 85.4 percent in the BNC (1975–1994), with second-person subjects constituting the majority: 62.5 percent ($n=40$) in sub-period 3 of CLMET3.0, and 72.9 percent ($n=70$) in the BNC. These shifts correlate with an increase in dialogic contexts, and hence in the percentages of negative imperatives (see, for instance, Examples [32] and [33]), which, as shown in Table 3, rise from 10.5 per cent of the tokens recorded in sub-period 2 (1780–1850), to 21.9 percent in sub-period 3 (1850–1920), and to 45.8 percent in the BNC. Finally, as regards verb forms, the expression of subjective evaluation and interpersonal involvement is unlikely to be divorced from the present time; this explains why my data from LModE and PDE contain only one preterite (“went marrying”), shown in Example (31), but since it is an irrealis form that conveys modal rather than temporal meaning (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 50, 148), its reference is not to past time. Note its co-occurrence with the modal progressive “you’d be having” (see Kranich 2010: 202, 222), a combination already seen in Example (29).

- (31) The Almighty God’s made a fine match in the two of you, for if you **went marrying** a woman was the like of yourself you’d be having the fearfulest little children, I’m thinking, was ever seen in the world.
(CLMET3.03 DRAMA 1905 Edmund John Millington Synge, *The Well of the Saints*)

Overall, the developments just outlined – restriction to the present tense and (largely) to first- and second-person subjects, increased occurrence in the imperative form – can be interpreted as indicative of the fixation and loss of syntagmatic variability which often characterize grammaticalizing constructions (see Lehmann 1995:158, 164). This trend can also be discerned when the data are examined in terms of productivity rate (see Table 5). Productivity, “the likelihood that a construction will apply to a new item” (Bybee 2010: 94), is often employed as a way of assessing the degree of “entrenchment” (Langacker 1987: 59–60) of morphosyntactic constructions or their degree of grammaticalization (see, for example, Coussé et al. [eds] 2018). A well-known method for measuring syntactic productivity, proposed by Baayen and Lieber (1991), is to divide the number of *hapax legomena* (types that occur only once in a sample) by the total number

of tokens. The assumption is that hapaxes can be taken as indications of the degree to which a construction is open to new uses; in other words, the higher the number of hapaxes compared to the total number of tokens, the higher the productivity rate.

Information on the productivity rate in three of the historical periods examined in this article is displayed in Table 5, together with the figures for *V-ing* types and tokens; sub-period 1 (1710–1780) has not been included, since there is only one example of the construction (Example [26]). When the productivity rate equals 1, this means that the construction's types are all hapaxes but, as can be observed, this is not the case for any of the sub-periods. Even in sub-period 2 (1780–1850), where the productivity rate is very high (0.79), the collocations “go hanging” and “go mumming” (s.v. OED *mum* v. 3 ‘to act in a dumbshow’) are attested twice each. In sub-period 3 (1850–1920) the productivity rate decreases to 0.67, reflecting the fact that the construction is becoming gradually entrenched, with some collocations occurring as many as three times (“go marrying”, “go spending” and “go talking”). Finally, in the BNC (1975–1994), while the token frequency (ninety-six occurrences) has increased, the productivity rate has decreased to 0.31, as a result of the fixation of some collocations; among others, “go buying” (four occurrences), “go looking (for)” (six occurrences), “go poking” (four occurrences), “go telling” (five occurrences), “go thinking” (four occurrences) and especially “go getting” (nine occurrences), which at this stage has clearly acquired the status of an admonitive “prefab” (for this label, see Erman and Warren 2000: 31; Bybee and Torres Cacoullós 2009) – that is, an automated multi-word string used conventionally for chiding and warning, as in Examples (32) and (33). As shown by Bybee and Torres Cacoullós (2009) on the basis of data from the history of Spanish progressives, prefabs contribute to auxiliation processes by demoting the independent lexical status of emerging auxiliaries.

- (32) He took both her hands and gazed lovingly. ‘I shall remember every feature.’

‘Oh, darling, don’t **go getting** into trouble again.’

(BNC FICTION_PROSE 1991 William Fox, *Willoughby’s Phoney War*)

- (33) Rory hid her face against his shoulder. ‘Thanks, Dad,’ she whispered. ‘Well, don’t **go getting** eye make-up all over my good coat!’ But he was smiling broadly as he held her away to arm’s length.

(BNC FICTION_PROSE 1992 Rachel Elliot, *Lover’s Charade*)

Admonitions, warnings and recommendations are likely to occur in dialogues, the discourse environment which Bourdin (2003: 108) identified as the most frequent for the *Go VPing* construction, but note that they are also at home in genres and contexts which are not strictly dialogic and whose role is primarily instructional, as happens in Examples (34) and (35). Overall, eleven (=11.5 percent) of the

ninety-six examples recorded in the BNC occur in that kind of genre. This is not an entirely new development, since occasional occurrences of the construction in passages that can be classified as instructional are found in CLMET3.0 and, if we move farther back, also in the EEBO data for the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction (Examples [36] and [37] are two cases in point). Yet my guess is that the association between instructional genres and the *Go VPing* construction may be on the rise, though further research is needed in order to confirm this.

- (34) Energy can be supplied in a variety of ways but the best source is fat. However, before you **go adding** vast quantities of fat to your dogs' food, spare a thought for what it will do to the rest of your diet.

(BNC POPULAR LORE 1992 *Dogs Today*)

- (35) The regulation distance that a soakaway must be from the nearest building has increased over the years. This possibly presenting a problem, which isn't that common, would be minimum of two to three metres away, but where exactly? You can't **go digging** at random, leaving behind mounds of earth until you find the right spot;

(BNC MISCELLANEOUS_INSTRUCTIONAL 1992 *Do It Yourself*)

- (36) i speak experimentally: for i heretofore, in my youthful dayes took several of them, according as i was ordered, to my small comfort but great hurt: away with such poysonous medicines; away with them: [...] # and **not go to prescribe** crocus metallorum for a vomit, as one did not long since;

(EEBO 1674 Robert Godfrey, *Various Injuries & Abuses in Chymical and Galenical Physick*)

- (37) As soon as a gentleman makes a nice speech, we get a heap of letters to say, 'Make us into that gentleman's constituency'. But we cannot do that. Here is our list. If you do not want to throw your vote away, you must be guided by us: here are three very satisfactory gentlemen (and one is an Honourable): you may vote for either of these, and we will write your name down; but if you **go voting** wildly, you'll be thrown out altogether.

(CLMET3.03 TREATISE 1867 Walter Bahegot, *The English Constitution*)

I will conclude this survey of PDE usage by drawing attention to cases such as those illustrated in Examples (38) to (41). These represent a sub-type of expeditionary *go* which is already found occasionally in CLMET3.0 (see Example [38]), but becomes far more common in the BNC data, coinciding with the growth in frequency of the *Go VPing* construction and with the loss of the *a(n)* prepositional prefix which had served to keep expeditionary *go* and the *Go VPing* pattern formally separate. In Section 6.3, I hypothesized that pejorative expeditionary collocations such as "go (a) begging" and "go (a) whoring" may have served to

strengthen the mental representation, as semantically negative, of combinations of *go* and *V-ing*; this could have facilitated the eventual rise and spread of the *Go VPing* construction, at the expense of the *Not Go-to-Infinitive* construction. In the cases presented in Examples (38) to (41), however, the influence has gone in the opposite direction: it is the *Go VPing* construction that has “contaminated” – to borrow a term coined by Pijpops et al. (2018) – the Expeditionary *Go* construction, by transferring its non-assertive morphosyntax to it, as well as its counter-normative semantics. In the process, the distinction between these two neighbouring constructions in the network of *go*-constructions has been blurred further, with an instance like Example (41) (“go drinking”) located at the end of the cline from a motion (“teachers don’t go to pubs to drink”) to a modal (“teachers should not drink in pubs”) reading.

- (38) She told me that in the Arctic Regions, as they call some places, a long way north, where the Great Bear lies all across the heavens, and no sun is up, for whole months at a time, and yet where people will **go exploring**, out of pure contradiction, and for the sake of novelty, and love of being frozen – that here they always had such winters as we were having now. It never ceased to freeze, she said;
(CLMET3.03 FICTION 1869 Richard Blackmore, *Lorna Doone. A Romance of Exmoor*)
- (39) What happens to her then? What happens if her father is unwilling or unable to stay at home with her? Is it any better to oblige her to **go abseiling or butterfly-catching** instead? However much she may enjoy such pursuits, there will be times when she would actually rather wander the streets unaccompanied.
(BNC ACADEMIC 1989 M. Whitford and M. Griffiths, *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*)
- (40) I saw loud T-shirts, biceps, facial hair. These people, they had nothing to tell us except that we were white and had money. Perhaps they were also saying -- you can not **go slumming**, not in New York. You just can not **go slumming**, because slumming pretends that slums aren’t real. They were real.
(BNC FICTION_PROSE 1985 Martin Amis, *Money: A Suicide Note*)
- (41) ‘Oh, hello,’ said a voice brightly. ‘I thought teachers didn’t **go drinking** in pubs.’ ‘You’re way out of date,’ said Greg automatically; ‘nowadays we do nothing else.’
(BNC FICTION_PROSE 1992 Robert Barnard, *Posthumous Papers*)

The exact details of this process of convergence of the *Go VPing* construction and expeditionary *Go* surely deserve further investigation, but for the time being must be left for future research.

8. Summing up

Building on Goldberg's (2006:52) observation on the existence of "a family of related constructions in English" centred around the verb *go*, this article has explored the emergence and historical development of one of those constructions, the *Go VPing* construction and its relation to other members of the network.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis carried out using data from three large corpora showed that the *Go VPing* construction originates in two source constructions: on the one hand, a sub-type of the *V VingOBL* construction (Fanego 2020) where the combination *go Ving* is followed by a non-orientated locative complement encoding an extended trajectory, as in "Let not drunkards goe reeling and staggering in the streets" (see Example [11]); on the other hand, the infinitival pattern exemplified by "Don't go to intangle your self in law" (see Example [5]). These two *go*-constructions are connected by evident formal and semantic resemblances: both contain the verb *go* followed by the non-finite form of another verb, their grammatical subjects are [+animate], and they carry the strong implication that there is something negative about performing the action designated by *VPing*, so that this is to be avoided. The combination of these two input constructions into a new one highlights the importance and pervasiveness of horizontal links in the construction, and the role that they can play not only in the choice between two linguistic variants synchronically, but also in constructional change, by providing the basis for the emergence of new taxonomic network structure (in this regard, see Section 3 and the citations therein).

As mentioned in Sections 7.2 and 7.3, the *Go VPing* construction did not acquire overnight the form it has today. Changes in the features of a construction proceed gradually across the linguistic system (Traugott and Trousdale 2013:74–75), and from its earliest attestations in the eighteenth century the construction under analysis here has grown more interpersonal and involved, the percentages of features such as negative imperatives and second-person subjects increasing visibly. In this way, the *Go VPing* construction has become conventionalized as an analytic marker of the admonitive, a type of directive which in some non-Indo-European languages is signalled by means of dedicated morphological markers, such as in Mongsén Ao (Tibeto-Burman; see Coupe 2007) and Classical Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecán; see Andrews 2003). Taking into account that the data presented here have been retrieved from texts published not later than 1994,

it would be worthwhile to explore how the *Go VPing* construction has evolved since then, as well as to investigate its history and current usage in other varieties of English, most notably American English, for which corpora with sufficient diachronic depth, such as the *Corpus of Early American Literature 1690–1920* (CEAL; 13,544,297 words; Höglund and Syrjänen 2016), are available.

This article has focussed on a small set of *go*-constructions. But I would like to conclude by drawing attention to the fact that their development forms part of a broader phenomenon, and is inter-connected with various other changes which also take place over the Early and Late Modern English periods and have profoundly altered the grammar of the English verb phrase. Such changes include the following, among others:

- a. The rise of several aspectual and modal periphrases, four of these featuring the verb *go*, the *-ing* participle, or both, namely the “be going to” future (“You’re going to become a poet”; Petré and Van de Velde 2018), the *be* progressive (“Jack is reading”; Kranich 2010), the *V VingOBL* progressive (“Mary came/went sauntering down the road”; Fanego 2020), and the *Go VPing* construction which has been our concern here.
- b. Dramatic shifts in *-ing* constructions generally (Fanego 1996, 2007, 2016; De Smet 2013, 2014), manifested sometimes in the spread of *-ing* patterns at the expense of *to*-infinitives, as has been shown in this article, and sometimes in the merger of participial and gerundive patterns, which has contributed, for instance, to bringing the *Go VPing* and Expeditionary *Go* constructions closer together, as discussed in Sections 6.3 and 7.3.

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Address for correspondence

Teresa Fanego
Department of English and German
University of Santiago de Compostela
Santiago de Compostela E-15782
Spain

teresa.fanego@usc.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3072-7839>

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