

IS THERE A GRAMMATICALIZED PROGRESSIVE IN LADIN? A PRELIMINARY FIELD REPORT

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Abstract. This paper provides empirical insight into the progressive aspect in Ladin. Current literature does not provide an exhaustive explanation of how progressive is encoded in this Raeto-Romance variety. Some clues, however, do exist and suggest the presence of a progressive periphrasis of different types in different varieties of Ladin (e.g. *ester tl laür de fà* – ‘to be at work to do’ > ‘I am doing’ – Badiotto; Gallmann *et al.* 2008). This article provides novel data aiming to shed light on the verbal periphrasis in this Alpine variety.

Keywords: progressive, periphrasis, Ladin, Raeto-Romance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ladin is a minority Raeto-Romance language spoken in the central-eastern Alpine area of Italy (Fig.1). It is surrounded by the South Tyrolean German in the North and Germanic minorities, such as Cimbrian and Mòcheno and by Standard Italian and Venetan, or better Veneto-Trentino dialects, in the South.

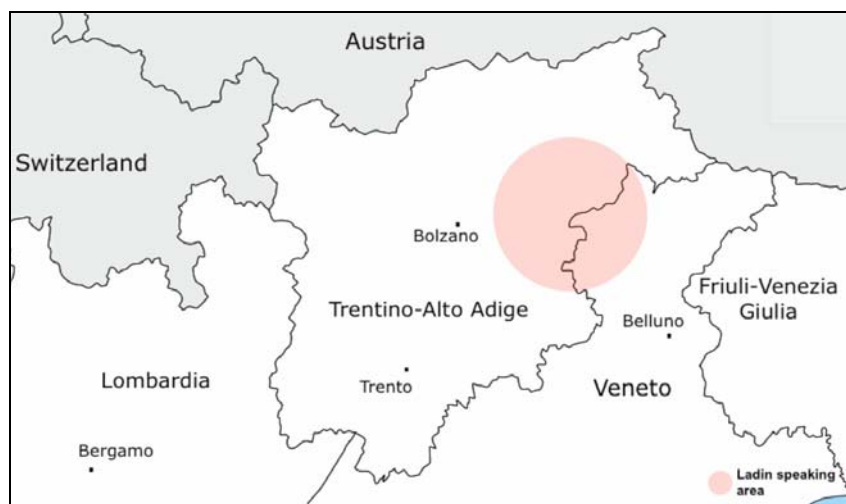


Fig. 1. – *The collocation of Ladin-speaking areas.*

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It has 5 sub-varieties: Badiotto (spoken in Val Badia), Gardenese (Val Gardena), Ampezzano (Cortina d'Ampezzo), Fodom (Livinallongo del Col di Lana) and Fassano (Val di Fassa). The two northern valleys, i.e. Val Badia and Val Gardena, have a trilingual system involving German, Italian and Ladin Badiotto/Gardenese, whereas the remaining three valleys have implemented a bilingual system establishing Italian and Ladin for public communication and official acts. Fig. 2 illustrates the partition and distribution of Ladin sub-varieties.

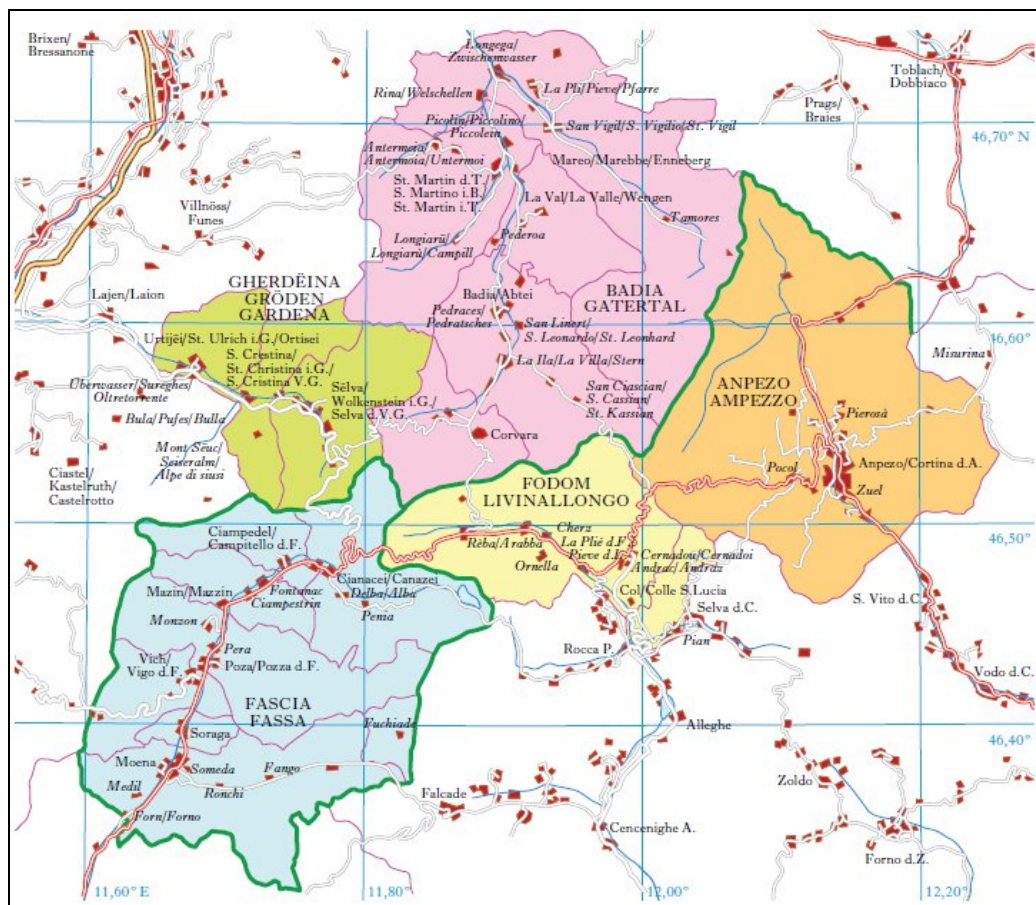


Fig. 2. – *The internal partition of Ladin*

(retrieved from: http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/comunita-ladina_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/)

In this article I will address the progressive in Ladin by presenting fieldwork data gathered in the area of Val Badia, along with a corpus of written texts. This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 will be entirely dedicated to an overview of the progressive aspect. Section 3 will go through the existing literature on the progressive in Ladin. Finally, sections 4 and 5 will carefully describe the methodology and the results of the inquiry.

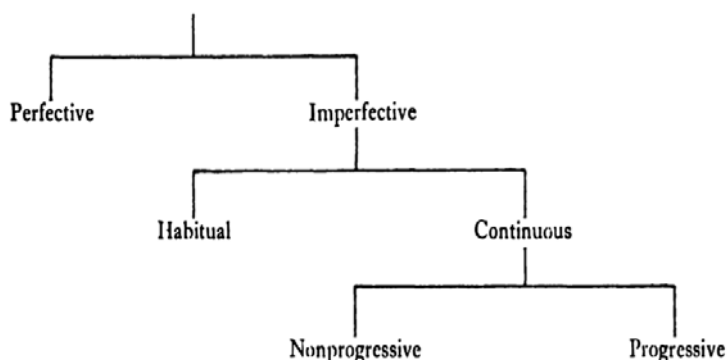
2. A FEW WORDS ON THE PROGRESSIVE

2.1. Progressive as imperfective aspect

Progressive is traditionally assumed as a subcategory of the imperfective aspect (cf. Comrie 1976: 32–40). To be more precise, the imperfective aspect can provide a habitual (hereafter HAB) or a continuous value, according to Comrie (1976). In turn, the continuous (hereafter CONT) value can either be expressed through a progressive (hereafter PROG) or non-progressive (hereafter NON-PROG) construction. For purposes of clarity, Tab. 1 illustrates the options provided by the imperfective aspect.

Tab. 1

Imperfective aspect (Comrie 1976: 25).



Considering the fact that many scholars having similar views on the imperfective aspect normally define the habitual value and subsequently derive the notion of progressiveness (or first of continuousness and at a later step that of progressiveness, as for Comrie 1976) on the basis of the subtraction of habituality from imperfectivity, I will illustrate several definitions in the same order.

HAB conveys “a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period” (Comrie 1976: 27–28), as in (1) *The Eiffel Tower stands in Paris* (cf. Comrie 1985: 39). HAB can also convey a meaning of iterativity, which can at times fully overlap with HAB, in the sense that the iterative interpretation is the only available one, as in (2) *The old professor used always to arrive late* (cf. Comrie 1976: 28).

Smith (1997: 33–34), instead, derives habitual readings from statives. She claims that “habitual predicates present a pattern of events, rather than a specific situation, and denote a state that holds consistently over an interval”, as in (3) *My cat eats mice frequently*. It is rather intuitable that the habitual reading in the example (3) is provided by the frequency adverb. However, Smith (1997) affirms that certain constructions obligatorily require the habitual reading even in absence of frequency adverbs, for example (cf. Smith 1997: 33–34):

- (4) *Susan is happy.*
 (5) *Mary feeds the cat.*

Smith claims that although (4) expresses a specific state and (5) a pattern of events, both examples are to be considered as denoting habituality, as both cases depend on a pattern of the occurrence of the event, unlike sentences which Smith names ‘dispositionals’, designating abilities, but not events, as in (6) *Dwight plays bridge*. Indeed, example (6) does not provide any clue on the existence of a playing bridge event, but it rather informs of Dwight’s ability or activity (of which we have no further information, therefore no knowledge of a specific event) of playing bridge.

A more detailed approach is to be found in Dahl (2010), who attributes to habituality the quality of expressing situations which occur “on a regular basis throughout a certain period of time”. The habitual value is strictly related to iterativity, yet the two are not fully equivalent. Indeed, the iterative value implies that the number of situations is limited, whereas the habitual reading provides a context of potentially unlimited situations, though the number of instances has to equal >1 . As Dahl (2010: 71) points out, both readings are context-dependent and can be formalized as $t_E=t$, that is, the event time equals, or is co-extensive with the reference time. The iterative reading can, thus, be considered as a subset of HAB.

As mentioned above, Comrie (1976) distinguishes between PROG and NON-PROG constructions as two ways of expressing continuousness. We find varieties expressing progressive and non-progressive meaning through the use of two separate constructions, but also varieties with no such distinction (i.e. the progressive reading is encoded in the non-progressive form, for example). Indeed, the Italian present simple, as in (6) can bear a progressive reading, despite the existing option of a specific progressive periphrasis (7).

- (6) *Marco mangia.*
 (7) *Marco sta mangiando.*
 ‘Marco is eating’

The distinction between PROG and NON-PROG is, thus, not mandatory, as shown by the Italian examples. In fact, PROG can be replaced by other forms without necessarily implying a NON-PROG reading. Furthermore, Comrie (1976) makes a first distinction between stative and non-stative verbs, claiming that the former typically do not encode progressive, whereas the latter do. There are, however, exceptions which vary according to the variety at issue. For instance, Comrie (1976: 36-37) specifies that present-day English allows the use of progressive with statives such as *be* or *live* as in the examples (8) and (9) respectively, whereas the equivalent examples (10) and (11) in Italian are ungrammatical.

- (8) *Fred is being silly.* (Comrie 1976: 36)
 (9) *I’m living at 6 Railway Cuttings.* (Comrie 1976: 37)
 (10) **Fred sta essendo sciocco.*
 (11) **Sto vivendo in Railway Cuttings n.6.*

The reason behind the setting appears to be rather straightforward. PDE allows for pairs such as *Fred is silly* vs. *Fred is being silly*, where the PROG highlights a temporary

behavior, which is not linked to a distinctive aspect of the subject. *I'm living at 6 Railway Cuttings* vs. *I live at 6 Railway Cuttings*, instead, attributes to PROG a state of temporariness versus habituality with the use of the simple present.

Again, Smith (1997: 171–175) discusses the PDE progressives, which are typically durative and denote dynamism and volition and focus on a specific interval. Therefore, as for Comrie (1976), Smith (1997) also affirms that specific verb classes do not have PROG forms, such as statives. Besides statives, instantaneous events are also not likely to have a PROG form, whereas achievement progressives are grammatical or ungrammatical depending on their nature. For instance, (12) is odd and hardly acceptable, whereas (13) is perfectly acceptable.

(12) ?*Mary was finding her watch.*

(13) *Helen was reaching the top.*

(Smith 1997: 172)

Smith does not provide a more detailed explanation on why (12) differs from (13), but she speculates that the absence of preliminary stages in ‘find’ may play a role in the use of the progressive form. I personally find myself in agreement with this hypothesis, as ‘find’ can be considered as binary, meaning that its semantic value is either 0 or 1. As a consequence, there is no interval which presumes intermediate stages between a previous phase and the act of finding, since the previous stage is a phase of complementary antonymy. Verbs such as ‘reach’, instead, presume a previous phase of graded antonymy, thereby assuming the existence of an interval between the previous stage and the act of reaching and allowing for the use of a progressive form. On the contrary, activities, such as *play* or *cook* always allow for the use progressive, being durative.

Dahl (2010: 33–46) once again clarifies specific problematic aspects by defining a set of recurring types of aspectual verb classes based on the binary opposition of four specific semantic features, i.e. [+Change of State], [+Dynamic], [+Singular Event], [+Punctual]. The combination of these features provides the following combinatorial pattern:

Tab. 2
Aspectual verb classes according to Dahl (2010: 40).

	[+Change of State]	[+Dynamic]	[+Punctual]	[+Singular Event]
Stage-level states				
States				x
Activities		x		
Semelfactives		x	x	
Instantaneous achievements	x		x	
Achievements	x			
Accomplishments	x	x		

He distinguishes instantaneous achievements (e.g. *explode*) from general achievements (e.g. *win*), which differ in the [+Punctual] feature. General achievements, in fact, can have a progressive form, whereas punctual achievements cannot. As previously mentioned, other verb classes, such as statives and semelfactives, do not have a progressive form. This brings us to a preliminary conclusion that verb classes having [+Punctual] and [+Singular Event] features do not have a PROG form. This conclusion may be hasty, as Tab.2 does not represent an exhaustive representation, however, Dahl also affirms that the reading which he labels as progressive-processual refers to the internal interval of the situation denoted by the predicate, formally represented as the proper inclusion between the event time and the reference time ($t' \subset t_E$). The cardinality of the situation must be equal to 1. Formally, the progressive-processual reading may be represented as $[\lambda P.\lambda t'.\exists e(t' \subset t_E(e) \wedge |e| = 1 \wedge P(e) = T)]$, which differs from the habitual reading represented as $[\lambda P.\lambda t'.\exists e(t' = t_E(e) \mid e| > 1 \wedge P(e) = T)]$.

In this article I consider Dahl (2010) as the main reference including key statements provided by Comrie (1976) and Smith (1997).

2.2. Morpho-syntactic vs. lexical encoding of the progressive

Having discussed the progressive reading and its differentiation from the habitual reading, I will now focus on the modality of the encoding of PROG.

As Bertinetto (1996, 1998, 2000) points out, along with Bertinetto & Delfitto (2000) and Bertinetto *et al.* (2000), PROG may be encoded as a semantic notion or via a formal manifestation of a morpho-syntactic device. Particularly important in this respect is to remember that a formal manifestation, such as the presence of a progressive periphrasis, does not directly imply a PROG reading. Indeed, the PDE future-time reference, as in (14) *John is flying to Moscow next week*, does not imply a progressive meaning. It is rather a grammaticalized structure, which at a certain earlier stage used to convey PROG. Some of the main strategies of the morpho-syntactic encoding of the progressive are listed here (cf. Blansitt 1975):

- affixal progressive markers (e.g. Turkish; by means of an affix *-yor*)
- complex verb phrases as progressive signals
 - i. verb phrases with a copula as auxiliary (e.g. Spanish, Italian; *cop.+GER*)
 - ii. verb phrases with a motion or postural verb as auxiliary (e.g. Italian, Spanish; motion verbs *come* or *go* + GER)
 - iii. verb phrases with a pro-predicate (*do*-type) as auxiliary (e.g. Swedish, Yiddish; with the verb ‘to hold’)
 - iv. verb phrases with a special progressive auxiliary verb (e.g. Albanian; by the use of the particle *po*).

Following Bertinetto (2000), it is necessary to mention that the presence of a specific PROG construction does not directly imply that such constructions are exclusive or automatically prevail, but the presence of a specialized device favors its use.

A different approach to the analysis of the Romance periphrastic system is provided by Coseriu (1976, 1980), who claims that aspect may be made explicit lexically (i.e. derivationally), inflexionally or periphrastically. Notably noteworthy is his definition of two semantic notions designated to describe Romance periphrases, namely *Schau*, standing for view and *Phase*, being the phase. As for *Schau*, the speaker sees the action denoted by

the periphrasis either as a whole or partially, whereas *Phase* indicates the period or phase of the action (e.g. It. *cominciare a* ‘to start to’ or Fr. *venir de* ‘to have just (concluded an action)’).

3. PROGRESSIVE IN LADIN

Current literature on this topic linked to Ladin is scarce and when present, it does not provide an exhaustive explanation of how progressive aspect is used in this Raeto-Romance variety. The few existing sources suggest the presence of a progressive periphrasis, which varies diatopically across Ladin varieties. For instance:

- (15) *son/sun* *tl* *lëur/laur²* *de fě/fâ* *da cëina/cëna*
 be.PRES.1SG in+DET work to make to dine/have dinner
 ‘I am making the dinner’ lit. I am in the work of making to have dinner’
 (Gardenese/Badiotto; Maraffino 2018 pres., submitted – original source:
 Gallmann et al. 2008)
- (16) *son* (*dò*) *che chante*
 be.PRES.1SG behind that sing.PRES.1SG
 ‘I am singing’ lit. I am behind that I sing
 (Fassano; Maraffino 2018 pres., submitted – original source: Gsell 2008)

The references mention the PROG construction without any further and more detailed explanation. The only sketch of a possible analysis is provided by Maraffino (2021), who is currently working on the mapping of the progressive constructions in the entire central and eastern area of the Alps through fieldwork. So far, it seems that the above-mentioned constructions are locally confined. Specifically, example (15) indicating the process of doing (working on) something seems to be found in Gardenese, whereas example (16) involving a locative preposition is more frequent in Fassano, reflecting the Veneto locative-type constructions *son qui che canto* (lit. ‘I am here that I sing’) and *son drio cantar* (lit. ‘I am behind singing’).

Despite the absence of specific detailed literature on this topic on its own, additional clues on the use of progressive construction can be found. Somewhat surprisingly, some of the latest works, such as Videsott (2020b) do not provide examples of the Ladin progressive. However, the TALL CorpusLad confirms the productivity of the above-mentioned constructions, which occur consistently. Specifically, there are 10 occurrences of ‘*tl laur/laour da/é*’ (e.g. 17), all of which are written Badiotto and 203 of ‘*tl lëur de/é*’ in Gardenese. There are no examples of this type when it comes to Fassano texts.

- (17) *Le* *Comun da Corvara é tl* *laur* *da trá ite* *deplü sanziums*
 DET Council of Corvara is in+DET work to collect.INF more sanctions
por le *frabiché abusif.*
 for DET edification abusive
 ‘The Council of Corvara is collecting more sanctions for illicit building.’

² The lexeme is given as *laur* in the *Dizionar Ladin* issued by the Istitut Ladin “Micurá de Rù” and in Videsott (2020b), or as *laür* in the *Dizionar Ladin Standard*, issued by the Istitut Cultural Ladin “majon di fascegn”. It is found as *laor* (Fassano), *laoro* (Ampezzano) and *lëur* in Gardenese.

As expected and following Maraffino (2021), the locative-type construction occurs in Fassano, but also in Ampezzano and Fodom.

- (18) *Son cà che vardon in su, sechel benedeto San Piero el*
 are here that watch.PRES.1PL in up if that blessed Saint Piero him
se dezide de me mandà sò una fré de guergno.
 REFL decide.PRES.3SG to to_me/us send.INF down one bit of rain
 ‘We are looking up, (waiting/checking) whether Saint Piero will decide to send us
 some rain’

Additional important clues are provided by the Fassano grammar (*Gramatica del Ladin Fascian*) and the latest Gardenesse grammar (*Gramatica Ladin Gherdëina*), published in 2019, potentially suggesting the use of a semantically encoded progressive in the description of the present tense. Indeed, the Gardenesse grammar illustrates the present as “the tense between the moment of speech and the fact that is announced”³, while the Fassano grammar depicts it as indicating “that the action is done or goes forward while speaking or that it is out of time”⁴. Although the definitions incorporate various aspects and uses of the present tense, I believe that the Fassano definition may be implying an overlap between event time and reference time, amongst other possible cases. Nonetheless, the Gardenesse grammar briefly mentions the *tl lëur de* construction, when discussing the verbal aspect. According to the short description, this construction is used to describe the devolving from one moment to another and what is more, it provides the meaning of ‘to start to’ (“Uni azion, nfati, possa unì a se l dé da n mumënt al auter, *vester tl lëur de, scumencé a*”, Forni 2019: 85).

Assuming that these interpretations are accurate despite the absence of specific examples, it is possible to deduce that Ladin may be using two strategies in expressing progressive: an overt syntactic encoding through a periphrasis and a covert lexical progressive. Further clarifications on their variation and productivity are yet to be delineated. In addition, further investigation of the ‘work’-type construction is necessary.

3.1. The grammaticalization of the progressive periphrasis

The development of PROG constructions is still a matter of discussion within the linguistic community. Bybee (2015: 141–145) and previously, Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994: 127–133) provide an insight into the diachrony of the morpho-syntactically encoded progressive, claiming that a common path for progressive constructions involving a stative auxiliary is through a grammaticalization process of locative constructions ‘indicating that the subject is located in a space where the verbal action is taking place’, specifically ‘be in the place of verbing’/‘be at verbing’/‘sit verbing’/‘stand verbing’. Indeed, the notion of location can be conveyed via a verbal auxiliary followed by a non-finite form or via a pre/postposition standing for a locative marker, such as *at, in, on*, etc.

When it comes to the above-mentioned structures, they are shared by the surrounding varieties, such as Veneto in *son invià (a) + INF lit.* ‘I am set off to’, *son drìo (a) + INF lit.*

³ “L presënt ie l tēmp danter l mumënt che n rejona y l fat che vën nunzià” (Forni 2019: 88).

⁴ “L prejent indichea che l’azion vegn fata o va inant endèna che se rejona, o che la é fora dal temp” (Chiocchetti & Iori 2002: 105).

'I am behind to' (Bondardo 1972, Bonfante 2018:77), Trentino *èsar dré a* + INF 'to be behind to' (cf. Cordin 2011), Friulan *soi daür a* + INF 'I am behind to' or regional Italian 'son qui che' + finite form lit. 'I am here that'. Contrarily, the Badiotto and Gardenesi *tl laur da* + INF does not denote a proper location, but rather an activity, intended as 'I am in this activity/work to do something'. It may be argued that constructions such as those in (15) and (16) grammaticalized more recently, as they are still relatively transparently analyzable as 'work' and 'after'. We may therefore, assume that the grammaticalization process can last for centuries⁵ with a significant delay between the semantic change and a syntactic readjustment. The proper origin of these structures is still unknown, however, a possible cause is to be attributed to an alloglot influence, as similar types of periphrasis can be found in modern German, for instance, *im Begriff sein etwas zu tun* 'to start doing something', lit. 'to be in the idea to do something' (inchoative periphrasis). Nonetheless, there is no literature mentioning this hypothesis.

The first Ladin texts containing relevant constructions are to my knowledge very recent, although the first written sources of Ladin date back to 1632 with chancellery minutes regarding the collection of taxes (cf. Videsott 2020a: 282-287). Indeed, we find the 'work' construction in *Calënder Ladin*⁶, starting from the 1963 edition.

- (19) *Mo chësta se n'à entenü atira y'à dé*
 but this REFL not+AUX understood immediately and+AUX give.PP
l'alarm, y l'arestant é gnü pié, deperpo che al ê tl
 DET+alarm and DET+arrest AUX come.PP take.INF while that he is in+DET
laur de scavalché le müir dla porjun.
 work to trespass.INF DET wall of+DET prison
 'But this has not been understood immediately and the alarm was raised and the prisoner went on foot while he was trespassing the wall of the prison'
 (*Calënder Ladin*, 1968, p.46)

Additional constructions which are worth taking into account involve the use of gerund, as opposed to the infinitive are provided by Bertinetto (2000) and found in the New Testament (Vetus Latina, Vulgata, ex. 20, 22), mirroring the structure in early Italian (21, 23):

esse + ablative gerundive

- (20) [...] *erat Darius vociferando et congregando multitudinem*
 was Darius shouting and gathering crowd.ACC
 'Darius was shouting and gathering the people'
 (21) *Le mani me son lavando*
 DET hands REFL.1SG am washing
 'I am washing my hands'

⁵ A good example is that of the continuous periphrasis with motion verbs in modern Italian, which maintains the minimal monoclausal vs. biclausal pairs, such as *Vado raccontando storie* 'I go telling stories' vs. *Vado verso casa raccontando storie* 'I am going home telling stories'.

⁶ *Calënder Ladin* is an annual edition of essays, photographs and stories related to Val Badia and published by Ert por i Ladins. Analogous volumes are published on a yearly basis in Val Gardena (*Calënder de Gherdëina*) and in Val di Fassa (*Calandèr Ladin*).

stare + ablative gerundive

- (22) *stetit dux diu cunctando [...]*
 was chief long-time hesitating
 'The chief was hesitating for a long while [...]'
- (23) [...] *stetti molt'anni libertà sognando*
 was.1SG many_years freedom dreaming
 '[...] for many years I dreamt of freedom'

Having the role of an adverbial modifier of manner, the gerund here provides the meaning of the way the subject is behaving/acting while being located in a place or positioned in a specific way or time. This can most likely be considered as a pre-grammaticalization stage, where the inflected verb has not yet reached the adequate level of auxiliatization, thereby maintaining its lexical meaning. As a consequence, there is a bi-clausal structure, where the relation of simultaneity between the two 'actions' is fundamental for the process to occur.

The gerund-type constructions are detected in CorpusLad exclusively as *continuous*⁷, rather than progressive periphrases, i.e. a motion verb + GER, as in Gar. *L se n va ciantan*, Fas. *Noi joventù sen jon pian pian*, etc. Having a relatively limited amount of data available, gerund-type constructions are not to be excluded.

4. DATA AND METHODS

This article is part of a larger project on the development of the Latin gerund in Raeto-Romance, therefore, the methodology of the overall project is more structured and layered.

The empirical part is made up of two corpora which are complementary to each other. On one hand, we have a corpus of fieldwork data gathered in La Villa, in the province of Bolzano, Val Badia, therefore, covering the variety of Ladin Badiotto. Participants were asked to do a translation task consisting of 12 sentences from Italian into their local variety. The input structures contain either a subordinate clause containing a gerund (e.g. *Ogni mattina vado al lavoro cantando a squarciagola in macchina*) or an explicit progressive periphrasis with the gerund (e.g. *Sto mangiando un pezzo di torta*). The data was collected in the Scores Altes La Ila, the local high school and 33 total participants took part in the data collection.

In addition to the data collected in the Ladin area, a control group of 10 participants was added in order to verify possible interference due to the written input. The speakers were asked to do the same translation task from Italian into their local Venetan variety. The evidence provided by this additional test run is supposed to provide a clue on the influence of Italian in case of a phonologically adapted version of the *stare* + gerund periphrasis. Precisely, the speakers run the risk of being biased in environments such as that of a school and through the administration of a written task. In a schooling setting, the students are used to rigorous evaluations, therefore, they tend to strictly comply with what is being asked. A written input containing a gerundial structure could trigger the use of a periphrasis which would resemble the Italian input, despite the existence of peculiar Ladin (and

⁷ A detailed overview of the continuous periphrasis can be found in Bertinetto (1998).

Venetan) constructions. Analogous results in the control group could, therefore, confirm the hypothesis of interference. This data was collected in the Veneto region, precisely in Verona and Vicenza, by mixing speakers from central and peripheral areas of the respective provinces.

On the other hand, the corpus of contemporary written texts is a set containing 40 texts specifically collected for the purpose of this study and divided into 4 subcategories: a. school texts, b. newspapers articles, c. scientific articles, d. literary texts. The sentences containing any gerundive structures and possible progressive forms were pulled out of the corpus and analyzed qualitatively. Unlike the control group, which is meant to verify potential interference via the administration of the same task, but in a different environment, the second corpus was added to fill the need for non-elicited data.

5. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The preliminary results provide an interesting picture of the Ladin progressive, which partially deviates from the data collected by Maraffino. The participants were asked to translate the following sentences from Italian into Badiotto:

- a. *Sto mangiando un pezzo di torta.*
'I am eating a piece of cake'
- b. *Sto guidando la bici.*
'I am riding my bike'
- c. *Stavo andando in bicicletta quando ha cominciato a piovere.*
'I was riding my bike when it started raining'

The result of the questionnaire is relatively linear and straightforward. The speakers used the progressive periphrasis in sentence b. exclusively. Indeed, we find:

(24) Ita. *Sto mangiando un pezzo di torta.*

Bad. *I mangi en toch de turta.*

I eat.PRES.1SG a piece of cake

lit. 'I eat a piece of cake'

(25) Ita. *Sto guidando la bici.*

Bad. *I sun tl laur da ji cun la roda*⁸.

I am in+DET work to go with DET bike

lit. 'I am in the process/work to go with the bike'

(I am in the process of riding my bike)

(26) Ita. *Stavo andando in bici quando ha cominciato a piovere.*

Bad. *I je cun la roda canche al à metü man da pluvëi.*

I go.IMPF.1SG with DET bike when he AUX put hand to rain.INF

lit. 'I was going with the bike when it put the hand to rain'

⁸ Following the test, one of the speakers confirmed that (25) can also be expressed as *I vá cun la roda*, lit. 'I go with the bike'.

This combination is somewhat surprising, since all three examples denote activities and as such, they are all good candidates for the progressive periphrasis. However, despite the ‘work’, which could be a common thread, a distinction among the three examples may be made. Specifically, (25) seems to be the only example denoting a sustained and repeated effort with no specific endpoint, which is that of propelling a bicycle. Contrarily, (24) denotes an interval with a specific endpoint, but does not require a significant amount of energy. (26), instead, may be considered as a minimal pair along with (24), differing according to complexity. However, the ‘riding my bike’ is a background activity in (26), while the focus is on the ‘starting of the rain’. Taking into account this piece of data only, a potentially relevant clue emerging here is an exclusive focus on a durative action with no specific endpoint.

This outcome itself allows us to discredit any considerations on the possible influence of the Italian written input. This is further corroborated by the fact that the control group shows somewhat similar results when it comes to the use of the locative-type periphrasis in peripheral areas of Verona and Vicenza. However, two speakers from the central Veronese area and one speaker from the central Vicentino area have consistently used borrowed forms, for instance, *Mi sto magnando un tochetin de torta* ‘I am eating a piece of cake’. Leaving the noticeable influence of the Italian input on Veronese and Vicentino aside, the relevant results out of this double-check for the Ladin matter testify to the authenticity of the Badiotto data which is not affected by the written input.

The corpus of written texts, instead, presents very few occurrences of an explicit progressive construction. Precisely, there are only 4 occurrences of the *tl laur da/e* + INF, all of which occur in the 2010 edition of the *Calënder Ladin*, as follows:

- (27) *Canche la löna crësc é döt tl laur da*
 when DET moon grow.PRES.3SG be.PRES.3SG all in+DET work to
tó ö, trà ite, da crësce y da se mangé ite.
 put_on.INF weight integrate.INF to grow.INF and to REFL over_feed.INF
 ‘When the moon grows, it is all putting on weight, integrating (it), it is growing and over feeding herself (eating a lot).’
- (28) *Ti dis che la löna cara é indere döt*
 to_him/her/them say.PRES.1SG that DET moon dear is instead all
tl laur da lascè ia, tó jö y lascé fora.
 in+DET work to give_up.INF loose.INF weight and discharge.INF
 ‘I tell him that the dear moon is instead giving up, losing weight and discharging (itself)’
- (29) *Lois Irsara à dit che por ël é l’ert bela y lëdia, che ël é*
 Lois Irsara AUX say.PstP that for he is DET+art nice and free that he is
sinzier tl laur da fà ert y che l’ert po gnì n mestier
 sincere in+DET work to do.INF art and that DET+art can become.INF a profession
sce an laora tröp y bun [...]
 just_in_case one work.PRES.3SG much and well
 ‘Lois Irsara said that according to him, art is nice and free, that he is making art sincerely and that art can become a profession in case one works a lot and well’
- (30) *La professuria Ruth Rungger é tl laur da arjigné ca n liber por*
 DET professor Ruth Rungger is in+DET work to prepare.INF here a book for

todësch sön i cors de dlijia dla Val Badia.

German in/on DET choirs of church of+DET Val Badia

‘The professor Ruth Rungger is preparing a book in German on the church choirs of the Val Badia.’

Some of these examples may be more transparent with respect to the concept of ‘work’, as (29) and (30), whereas others may not be. Here is a brief description on why I assume that these are to be interpreted as progressives, in addition to the reference in the literature. The assumption is formulated on the basis of three elements which should help us get to a straightforward understanding of the structures: 1) the use of specific aspectual classes; 2) the use of the preposition *da*; 3) the overall interpretation of the construction.

1) Following Dahl’s aspectual verb classes, the infinitives of the above-mentioned examples may be analyzed as a set of accomplishments, achievements⁹ (27 and 28) and activities (29 and 30). Specifically, achievements, such as *lascè ia* ‘give up’, designate a change of state from a specific condition into admitting defeat. Accomplishments such as *tó sō* ‘to gain weight’ also denote a change of state, but an internal gradual evolution of increasing the body weight before the final outcome of full moon is required. Such semantic configurations are not suitable for an interpretation in terms of a working activity, specifically when it comes to achievements, which lack the [+Dynamic] feature. Contrarily, activities in (29) and (30) as such describe a frequent occupational state of being active. The latter are certainly more suitable for a more transparent reading in terms of a working activity, but because non-activities can bear the same structure, one must assume that ‘work’ is not the correct lens for the understanding of all the examples, but rather a predictable overlap of an aspectual feature. As Dahl (2010:40) suggests, general achievements can bear PROG, differentiating from instantaneous achievements. These three verbal classes, namely activities, accomplishments and achievements, are indeed, the only ones bearing PROG in these Ladin examples.

2) Another potentially relevant clue is the use of the preposition in the PROG formula. The literature suggests the use of both *da* ‘to’ and *de* ‘of’, however, the gathered data show a rather clear preference for *da*. I believe that this choice provides little if no assistance at all for a straightforward reading of ‘work’, as ‘X in is in the middle of something’ or ‘X is in the work of something’. The purpose-type preposition highlights the main activity expressed through the infinitive and leaves the ‘work’ as a background activity to express an ongoing process.

3) My final remark concerns the interpretation of the overall structure, which does not mirror the sum of all the elements taken individually. On the contrary, the above-mentioned examples emphasize the discrepancy between the two sides, leading us to deduce that a (partial) grammaticalization process could have occurred. In this way, *laur* has partially lost its lexical component becoming a functional element of PROG. This hypothesis is strengthened by the use of achievement and accomplishment verbs, which obfuscate the interpretation of the overall structure in terms of a working activity.

What is questionable is the very limited use of progressive despite a relatively large written corpus. Moreover, (27), (28), (29) and (30) only occur in literary texts and may

⁹ Some verbs, such as *crësce* could be interpreted more precisely as degree achievements displaying both telic and atelic properties. (cf. Dahl 2010:40; Hay *et al.* 1999 for a detailed overview).

suggest a targeted use of the structure for stylistic purposes or perhaps reflecting the oral speech. Indeed, the scientific texts, journal articles and school texts do not contain a specific periphrasis. Surely, the results of the control group which show a significant increase in the use of the PROG periphrasis, using both the gerund (e.g. *sto magnando*) and the locative periphrases (e.g. *son drio magnar*) tell us that the Ladin fieldwork data are not biased by the Italian input. This is also confirmed by the absence of hybrid (phonological adaptations of *stare* + gerund) forms in the written texts.

6. CONCLUSION

The limited amount of examples does not allow for an elaborated analysis of the progressive in Ladin. However, I believe that this preliminary field report has provided an interesting and novel set of examples which leave open questions and some assumptions on this understudied phenomenon. Summing up what has been described in the previous section, we may deduce that the Ladin progressive is encoded both semantically and morpho-syntactically, as shown in (24), (25) and (26). The reason why the overt periphrasis is not contained in all the fieldwork examples could be related to the perception of the action by the speaker and/or the degree of transparency between the semantics of the predicate and the notion of ‘work’. What is clear is that the syntactic-type progressive occurs with [+dynamic] and/or [+change of state] verb classes, thereby with activities, accomplishments and simple (non-instantaneous) achievements. However, potential additional criteria are yet to be understood. In addition, consistent research in diachrony is necessary to trace the development of locative-type and work-type periphrasis.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Accusative	INF	Infinitive
AUX	Auxiliary	NON-PROG	Non-Progressive
CONT	Continuousness	PDE	present-day English
cop	copula	PL	Plural
DET	Determiner	PP	Past Participle
FUT	Future	PRES	Present
GER	Gerund	PROG	Progressive
HAB	Habitual	REFL	Reflexive
IMPF	Imperfective	SG	Singular

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