

verbal action or verb-related operators such as the truth value of the predication, affirmativity etc., as in (3), and, at the same time, functions as progressive (and, in this language, as imminence) marker (cf. 4):

- (3) a. *tũ-tônia kwĩka maũndũ ásu*
 1P-can:PRS INF:do things those
 ‘we can do those things (not others)’
- b. *ñĩ-tũ-tônia kwĩka maũndu ásu*
 FOC-1P-can:PRS INF:do things those
 ‘we can do those things’ (in the sense of: ‘we can do those things’; C.P.)
- (4) *ñĩ-méũ-theka*
 PROG-2:?-laugh
 ‘they’re laughing’ (or: ‘they’re about to laugh’) (*apud* Güldemann forth.: 7)

The type of focus illustrated in (3b), relatively widespread in Bantu and highly grammaticalized in these and other African languages, is called ‘predication focus’ by Güldemann, a specific type of non-contrastive and, hence, completive focus (Dik *et al.* 1981), itself a focus type “close to the category of presentational focus” (Drubig / Schaffar 2001: 1086). It is between this type of focus and progressive – or, more particularly, present progressive – morphology that remarkable resemblance exists, an isomorphism that, according to Güldemann (*op. cit.*: 17ss.), also holds for several other African and non-African languages, even if the similarities are more than often not as straightforward as the above-cited examples might suggest.

Although Güldemann (*op. cit.*: 20) concedes that (predication) focus and (present) progressive aspect belong to rather different domains of language, the former operating on the level of pragmatics and the latter on that of semantics, he maintains that the formal similarities alluded to above are not fortuitous but reflect a “semantic-functional relation” (*ibid.*) according to which “the progressive is a verb category with inherent focus” (*op. cit.*: 21). It is no accident either, according to Güldemann, that the formal resemblance holds especially for present progressives: “Anchored in the deictic viewpoint of the speech participants”, he argues, “a present progressive can focus on the HIC-ET-NUNC of the relevant state of affairs. [...] the continuous, ongoing nature of an event is that information which is viewed by the speaker to be the most relevant for the addressee in a given communicative context.” (*ibid.*) Therefore, in diachronic terms, focus-marking structures should be taken as an alternative to locative expressions, which are otherwise considered as an almost universal source for progressive morphology (Güldemann *op. cit.*: 17; Bybee / Perkins / Pagliuca 1994: 127ss.). According to Güldemann’s analysis, the diachronic development ‘focality > aspectuality’ meets the (controversial) criterion of grammaticalization processes known as the unidirectionality hypothesis, as (predication) focus markers seemingly happen to develop into (present) progressive markers but not the other way around.

The claim that focus and aspectuality interact and that progressive aspect bears some inherent focality, appears appealing and intuitively plausible. However, a proviso has to be made in that the type of focus that Güldemann's analysis is based upon, i.e. predication focus (in the sense of: focus on predicative operators), is not common in European languages, at least as far as morphological or morpho-syntactical coding is concerned. Romance languages entirely lack any grammatical(ized) expression that might be identified as clearly and exclusively expressing predication focus, with the notable exception of Gascony Occitan where a cleft-based paradigm of predication markers (called 'enunciative particles' in most sources; cf. Pusch 1999; 2001) exists. It will therefore be necessary to take a more general perspective when investigating the interaction of focus and aspect in Romance languages.

2. *Semantic links between focus and progressive aspect in Romance*

It has been repeatedly suggested, within various theoretical approaches, that focus is affected by different pragmatico-semantic devices which may be considered as inherently focus-attracting. Among these, and most prominently, are markers of negative polarity and illocutionary force (cf. Drubig / Schaffar 2001: 1090), the latter surfacing mostly as adverbials but also in more complex morpho-syntactic forms, as in the case of the Spanish emphatic affirmative *sí que* construction illustrated in (5) (cf. Campos 1986: 151ss.):

(5) *sí que* ha llovido mucho este año (Campos 1986: 159)

It is partly due to the non-obligatory character of markers such as affirmative *sí que* that a focal interpretation may arise or be considered as inherent in the construction.

Optionality is also one of the features that characterize the marking of progressive aspectuality in Romance. Contrary to English, simple tenses in Romance languages are – at least to a large extent – aspectually neutral (in the sense of Smith 1991; cf. Labelle 2002) and may therefore assume the expression of both perfectivity and imperfectivity, of which the progressive constitutes a specific sub-type (cf. Comrie 1976: 25). The only exception is found on the temporal level of past, where a morphological distinction of perfectivity vs. imperfectivity exists. It remains controversial however, whether this paradigmatic distinction is aspectual or temporal in nature, as the involved forms are primarily tense forms (cf. Molendijk 2002, with regard to French). Apart from this case, progressive aspect in Romance is expressed through verbal periphrases of various forms and different though generally low to intermediate degrees of grammaticalization. Even a cursory look at the most frequent periphrastic forms that are found in the individual Romance languages (cf., e.g., Bertinetto 2000: 561) immediately makes obvious that these periphrases may be easily traced back to the most common source of progressive forms found cross-linguistically, i.e. locative expressions, with the

positional verb *STARE* occupying a highly prominent place among the auxiliariized verbs.

Even if the structural and distributional properties of progressive aspect marking in Romance (and other European languages; cf. Bertinetto 1995; Bertinetto / Ebert / De Groot 2000) are quite different from the situation that Güldemann describes for African languages, the notion of focality is by no means unknown in the analysis of the Romance (and, *mutatis mutandis*, European) progressives. In fact, in order to understand the divergent uses and different interpretations of the progressive periphrases in these languages, the distinction between focalized progressives and non-focalized (durative) progressives, developed by P. M. Bertinetto (1986: 120ss.; 1995; 2000),² seems to be highly significant and (at least but not only) descriptively useful.

Progressive aspectuality is commonly defined as “viewing a situation from within” (Comrie 1976: 24), i.e. as an aspectual contour which looks at an action that has started at some indefinite previous point of time and is still going on at the moment of reference which however leaves its end indeterminate (cf. Laca 1995: 499). According to Bertinetto, focalized vs. durative progressivity constitute two sub-types of this aspectual contour,³ with focalized progressives “viewed as going on at a single point in time, here called ‘focalization point’.” (Bertinetto / Ebert / De Groot 2000: 527) Durative progressives, on the other hand, “are evaluated relative to a larger interval of time. Here again [as with focalized progressives; C.P.], the actual duration of the event remains indeterminate.” (*ibid.*) The following examples from Italian (6) and Spanish (7) illustrate both types of progressives:

- (6) poi si è messo a a cosare / come si dice / a provocare uno zingaro
che stava facendo i compiti tranquillamente (Cresti 2000 corpus)
- (7) bueno, se estaba quejando porque el médico le había dicho
que no era importante (Azorín / Jiménez 1996 corpus)

In (6), an action interrupts the on-going process expressed by a periphrastic progressive construction, but this on-going process is focussed on for a short period only, at precisely the moment of its interruption, i.e. at Bertinetto’s ‘focalization point’. In (7), the on-going action is observed during a larger period of time, and no other action intervenes. This corresponds to durative progressivity in Bertinetto’s terms. As can be easily derived from this description, the use of focalized progressives is prototypically found in the so-called ‘incidence schema’ (Pollak 1976; Bertinetto / Delfitto 1996: 52s.; Krause 2002: 22s.) (8), whereas durative progressives frequently occur in a kind of ‘parallel schema’ (9):

² For antecedents of Bertinetto’s model within Romance linguistics (an early one being Shetter [1961] who identifies focus in Brazilian Portuguese progressives), cf. Squartini (1998: 137ss.), who treats the ‘focalized vs. durative’ distinction under the labels of the ‘actional’ vs. ‘aspectual’ approach to progressivity.

³ A third type of aspect that, according to Bertinetto *et al.* belongs to or at least is structurally very close to progressivity, is the absentive, which is not taken into consideration here.

- (8) en el momento que estaba... que llamaste, estaba él recogiendo
para marcharse (Marcos Marín 1992 corpus)
- (9) estaba limpiando la cocina... a recoger la cocina y él estaba en el baño
terminando... (*ibid.*)

The relation between the two sub-types of progressivity is not that of clear-cut opposition, but rather one of gradual transition. For example, both Spanish examples (10a) and (10b) express durative progressivity:

- (10) a. Juan estuvo colocando libros de 3 a 5
b. Juan fue colocando libros de 3 a 5 (*apud Bertinetto 2000: 578*)

but “while (a) is a mere case of durativity, (b) is (so to say) an instance of ‘plurifocalization’” (Bertinetto 2000: 578), whereas progressives as used in incidence schemas or similar constellations would have to be described as ‘monofocalized’ (cf. Bertinetto / Delfitto 1996: 55).

It will have become clear that the distinction between focalized and durative progressivity is not morphological, but semantic. As a matter of fact, a differential marking of these two subtypes of progressive aspect is the exception rather than the rule among languages, a fact that Bertinetto / Delfitto (*op.cit.*: 64) attribute to the principle of linguistic economy. However, what may indeed be found in some (Romance) languages is a high degree of specialization of periphrases in one of the two subtypes of progressivity. This may lead to some ‘secondary’ morphologicalization of the contrast between these subtypes. For instance, in Italian the progressive periphrasis <*stare* + gerund> seems to be synchronically restricted to the expression of focalized progressivity, while another periphrasis, <*andare* + gerund>, is used to express durative (or plurifocalized) progressivity:

- (11) Istante dopo istante, Anna Laura *andava* / * *stava annotando* le sue
impressioni (Bertinetto / Delfitto 1996: 55)

This does not hold for Spanish, where the corresponding periphrases may express both aspectual subtypes and therefore overlap semantically:

- (12) Un momento tras el otro, Maria [sic] *iba* / *estaba anotando* sus
impresiones (Bertinetto / Delfitto 1996: 59)

According to Bertinetto / Delfitto (*op.cit.*: 61), the semantic specialization that characterizes the Italian progressive periphrasis is shared, in the context of European languages, only by Albanian and French (cf. also Bertinetto 2000: 577). The case of the French periphrasis <*être en train de* + infinitive>, dominant in contemporary usage, deserves attention in this and other respects. It differs from the most current expressions of progressivity found in neighboring Romance languages in both syntagmatic complexity (the <*être en train*> periphrasis being morphologically particularly ‘heavy’ and cumbersome) and paradigmatic marginality; here French is the only major Romance language (apart from Romanian where true progressives are now virtually inexistent) that privileges a periphrastic

structure not based on a true locative (positional or motion) verb but on a weakly locative copularized ESSE and involving an infinitival instead of a gerundial form of the main verb.⁴ Diachronically, a ‘root-modal’ or intentional expression ‘être en train’, to be paraphrased as ‘to be in the mood’, is traditionally taken as the starting point for the development of the <être en train de + inf.> periphrasis (cf. Mitko 1999: 80ss.; Pusch forth. for an overview); Haßler (2002: 171s.), relying on corpus-based analyses and counts, advocates an intermediate non-grammaticalized causative-inchoative periphrastic structure <mettre en train de + inf.> as the basis for nowadays’ <être en train de + inf.>, which she considers as an originally resultative derivation of the <mettre en train> construction.

The most remarkable feature of the French <être en train de + inf.> periphrasis, as analyzed within the ‘focalizing vs. durative progressivity’ framework as put forward by Bertinetto, is that this periphrasis is supposed to have achieved a strictly focalized progressive reading ‘off the cuff’; as Bertinetto (2000) shows, it has attained an advanced level of diachronic development (and grammaticalization) “bypassing all previous stages” (*op.cit.*: 577; cf. also Squartini 1998: 121ss.). Among the characteristics of focalized progressives (cf. Bertinetto / Ebert / De Groot 2000: 532ss. for an annotated list), the compatibility with non-durative (particularly achievement) verbs – excluded from durative progressives –,⁵ the categorical exclusion of stative verbs⁶ and the incompatibility with perfective tenses are certainly the most pervasive features. Perfective tense forms, which, by definition, tend to emphasize the conclusion or ‘endedness’ of a past action, do not allow for any reference (i.e. focalization) point to be contextually anchored during the action’s development, thereby impeding the incidence schema and the focalized reading of the progressive. If progressives appear in perfect tense forms, as illustrated by the Spanish examples (10a) or (13), a non-focalized (durative) reading prevails:

(13) Ayer Pilar *estuvo hablando* con Jaime durante dos horas (Squartini 1998: 73)

In Spanish, this form may even surface in contexts of extended persistence where the appropriateness of the very concept of ‘progressivity’ becomes questionable:

⁴ It is for this feature that Haßler (2002), assuming a compositional view of periphrastically expressed progressivity, ventures the idea that the French periphrasis is less likely to undergo strong grammaticalization. However, as Bertinetto *et al.*’s typological survey shows, the infinitive, though perhaps “not specified in expressing aspectuality in itself” (Haßler 2002: 171), cross-linguistically is by no means rare as an element of progressive periphrases.

⁵ As we learn from Squartini (1998: 85s.), “durativity is not compatible with an achievement [...] since this latter is intrinsically non-durative, unless it becomes iterative. But, as far as semelfactive achievements are concerned, when formed with the Progressive, they can only be viewed as on-going and non-completed at a given vantage point and not as durative.”

⁶ This incompatibility is in fact one of the most prominent criteria that are used to define progressivity and to distinguish it from (more general) imperfectivity; cf. Comrie (1976: 35), Bertinetto / Ebert / De Groot (2000: 537). However, durative progressives are less tightly incompatible with statives than focalized progressives; cf. Squartini (1998: 103ss.) for examples in the context of a comparison of Spanish and Italian.

- (14) A través de “Radio Damasco” y en lengua española *estuvo emitiendo* durante tres años mensajes cifrados para Israel (Marcos Marín 1992 corpus)

However, as Squartini (1998: 73ss. and 121s.) argues (and corpus data confirm), the French *<être en train de + inf.>* periphrasis (15b) as well as its Italian counterpart *<stare + gerund>* (15a) are excluded from such contexts:

- (15) a. * Ieri Giulio *stette / è stato* parlando con Marco per due ore
 b. * Hier Jules *fut / a été* en train de parler avec Marc pendant deux heures
 (based on Squartini 1998: 73)

Furthermore, Squartini claims that in both French and Italian, the two Romance languages where the dominant progressive structure has specialized in the expression of focalized progressivity, other progressive periphrases have ‘counter-specialized’ in the expression of durative progressivity; this leads to the ‘secondary’ morphologicalization of the contrast between the two subtypes of progressivity through complementarity, noted above. In Italian, this ‘counter-specialization’ would have taken place particularly with the *<stare a + inf.>* construction (cf. Squartini 1998: 130s.) whereas in French, this would hold for the *<être à + inf.>* and the *<être après + inf.>* periphrases (*op.cit.*: 123s.). However attractive such a complementary distribution may be from a system-internal point of view, it does not, at least on synchronic grounds, withstand closer scrutiny. In Québec French, which, together with other North American varieties of French, constitutes a stronghold of the *<être après + inf.>* periphrasis with frequency values that are sufficiently high in order to allow for testing complementarity, *<être après>* combines easily with the eventive foreground marker *tu pas* (a kind of surprisative or mirative marker in the sense of DeLancey 1997), like in the prototypically incidental context shown in (16), just as the *<être en train>* progressive does in (17):

- (16) Quand chus [= je suis] arrivé, elle *était-tu pas après* manger la tarte
 (Vinet 1998: 189)
 (17) Fak là [= ça fait que là], j’ai vu qu’elle *était-tu pas en train* de fouiller
 ici dedans (ibid.)

Tu pas, when combined with progressives, appears to be an unequivocal indicator of focalized progressivity, while it is incompatible with non-focalized uses of progressive periphrases as in (18).

- (18) * Elle *était-tu pas toujours après* rêver (Vinet 1998: 189)

The characterization of French *<être en train de + inf.>* as specialized in the expression of focalized progressivity has nevertheless proven valid. Its use in present tense contexts is particularly instructive in this respect. While in past contexts, the distinction of progressive vs. non-progressive aspectuality (or, to be exact, the superordinate distinction between imperfective vs. perfective aspectuality) may be expressed by tense forms alone, in the present tense the use of the periphrasis, as opposed to the simple (synthetic) tense form, is the only way of

morphologically encoding progressivity. According to Mitko's (1999: 89ss.) analysis, it is precisely in these contexts that *<être en train de>* has acquired a rather high degree of quasi-obligatoriness and, hence, of advanced grammaticalization. Present reference, being imperfective *per definitionem*,⁷ does not allow situations or processes to be visualized as durative, without, however, precluding the option of emphasizing them as on-going at the reference point. Therefore, even if the prototypical incidence schema that might serve as a solid testing ground for focalizing progressivity, is difficult to establish within a present tense context – example (19), suggested by Mitko, which is only apparently a point in case, due to the fact that we are dealing with a mere narrative present –,

(19) Je suis en train de monter dans l'avion, c'est alors qu'il m'appelle et il dit...
(Mitko 1999: 91)

there are indeed incidence-schema-like constellations with a reference to the present where the use of the progressive periphrasis proves to be highly appropriate, such as a dialogical situation like in (20):

(20) – Qu'est-ce que tu fais ?
– Je suis en train de lire
(Mitko 1999: 91)

It is precisely in this type of communicative setting, where the incidence schema is construed pragmatically or interactionally, with the intervention of the first speaker interrupting the on-going activity carried out by the second speaker, that Quesada (1994: 220) claims *<estar + gerund>* to be almost obligatory in Spanish. As present actions may most probably be expected to be on-going at the reference (= utterance) time, the apparently redundant marking of progressive aspectuality must serve a different function, namely that of focussing on the verbal action as the informative center of the message,⁸ Güldemann's emphasis on the HIC-ET-NUNC mentioned *supra*.

3. *Isomorphic links between focus and progressive aspect in Romance*

It probably has become obvious that the notion of focality plays an important role in Bertinetto's conception of progressive aspectuality, which, in this sense, converges with Güldemann's hypothesis outlined before. Both approaches are also similar in the way that Güldemann as well as Bertinetto venture a diachronic

⁷ Or, to say it in more cautious terms: in the present, the opposition between perfective and imperfective is systematically neutralized.

⁸ Cf. Mitko (2000: 187): "Durch das Syntagma [*<être en train de + inf.>* in present tense contexts; C.P.] wird das im Verb geschilderte Geschehen ins Zentrum der Mitteilung gerückt." Mitko illustrates this focalizing use with the following literary example, where two presently on-going actions are contrasted (cf. also Mitko 1999: 91):

(i) Retournez-vous ! Je ne suis pas en train de vous braquer ! [...] Je suis juste en train de vous expliquer que c'était une erreur.
(*apud* Mitko 2000: 187)

application of their hypotheses. Güldemann, as mentioned above, suggests a (uni-directional) path of grammaticalization leading from focalizing to progressive constructions, thus crossing the border between functional domains. Bertinetto, on the other hand (1995: 49ss.; 2000: 561ss.), concludes – mainly on the basis of evidence from Latin, Old English and Early Italian – that the non- or plurifocalized ‘durative’ type of progressives diachronically preceded the prototypical (mono-)focalized progressives; an aspect of Bertinetto’s work that, for the sake of brevity, cannot be referred to in detail here. What is worth emphasizing at this point, however, and what constitutes an important difference between these two approaches trying to link focality and progressivity, is that in Bertinetto’s approach, focality is linked semantically to aspectuality, with aspect-marking devices being read as focalizing due to context-induced interpretation, but the devices under scrutiny remain in the realm of progressivity, their original and primary functional domain. Güldemann, on the other hand, studies focality and aspectuality on the basis of morphological isomorphism that serves him as a starting point in arguing for functional links and some semantic overlap.⁹

This difference in argumentation follows naturally from the fact that most European languages, including Romance, are primarily temporal language systems (cf. Coseriu 1976: 110) with more than often weakly grammaticalized aspectual markers, as noted before. In these languages, and contrary to what happens in Bantu and numerous other African languages, aspectual distinctions rely more heavily on lexical devices and context than on morphology. It comes as no surprise, then, that isomorphic links between focality and aspectuality in Romance, if they exist at all, tend to remain somehow ‘anecdotally’; nevertheless, it seems worth searching for such links.

An instance of such an ‘anecdotal’ isomorphism may be found in St Barth *patois*, a both geographically and demographically marginal overseas variety of French carried to the minuscule island of St Barthélemy in the northern Lesser Antilles by colonists during the 17th century.¹⁰ Progressivity in St Barth *patois* is expressed through the periphrastic construction <*être qui* + finite verb>, as exemplified in (21) and (22):

⁹ Another obvious difference between the approaches concerns the temporal anchorage of the aspectual forms under investigation: whereas Güldemann is concerned with present progressives, Bertinetto’s model is best exemplified with past progressives, but it has just been shown that this is mainly due to the heuristic use of the incidence schema as a means of describing focalized progressivity.

¹⁰ St Barthélemy is still part of France, being an administrative district of the rather distant island of Guadeloupe. St Barth *patois* is also spoken on the island of St Thomas, now part of the US Virgin Islands, due to emigration in the mid-19th century; cf. Maher (1996; 1997) for a historical and linguistic overview and Highfield (1979) for a detailed study and documentation of St Barth *patois* as spoken on St Thomas.

- (21) *maman est qui m'arprend à faire d(e) la tresse* (Maher 1994 [n.p.])¹¹
 'mother is teaching me to plait (straw)'
 (22) *on est qui vient pour l(u)i* (*ibid.*)
 'we are coming for him'

The St Barthian progressive periphrasis also appears in the imperfective past, interestingly with both the auxiliarized *être* and the finite main verb displaying past morphology:

- (23) *parrain Emile Bernier était qui venait à bord la Titinez* (Maher 1994 [n.p.])
 'godfather E.B. was coming on board the Titinez'
 (24) *sontait qui se battait* (*ibid.*)
 'they were fighting'

As the examples make clear, the progressive construction <*être qui* + finite verb> of St Barth *patois* is, syntactically speaking, a biclausal subordination structure that bears some remarkable structural similarity with cleft constructions; this becomes obvious when confronting (25a [= 23]) with its made-up cleft and pseudo-cleft counterparts:

- (25) a. *parrain Emile Bernier était qui venait à bord la Titinez*
 b. *c'était parrain Emile Bernier qui venait à bord la Titinez*
 c. *parrain Emile Bernier était celui qui venait à bord la Titinez*

However, it also becomes obvious that these three variants of cleft-type pseudo-subordination would receive different pragmatico-functional interpretations: whereas the pseudo-cleft (25c) is most naturally interpreted as a (contrastive) term focus construction, in accordance with the core function of clefting devices in French, the cleft (25b) oscillates between a similar term focus and a presentational reading, the latter also being compatible with the progressive construction of the original example (25a). We may therefore conclude that, in the case of St Barthian <*être qui* + finite verb>, one finds isomorphism of focalizing and aspectual morpho-syntax, combined with semantic and functional overlap, as in Güldemann's Bantu evidence cited at the beginning of this article.

The progressive in St Barth *patois* is one of a kind among the verbal periphrases of French¹² and problematic in more than one respect. First of all, its very categorial status is debatable. It does not conform with the most current definitions of 'verbal periphrases' (cf. Pusch / Wesch, in this volume) as it consists exclusively of finite verbal forms. To accommodate it within this category a scalar concept of 'periphrasticity' (cf. Bertinetto 1990; Squartini 1998: 20ss.; Montser-

¹¹ The transcription of the examples taken from Maher (1994; 1996) and Highfield (1979) has been modified in order to better match (Standard) French orthographic conventions, whereas the authors use a more phonological transcription. English translations of examples from Maher (1994; 1996) are Maher's.

¹² This statement may not be true, for Corne (1999: 71, with reference to earlier work by Robert Chaudenson) mentions that a similar construction, albeit only in past tense forms, is attested in the French-based Creole of Réunion.

rat, in this volume) has to be applied. Furthermore, its diachronic history remains to be revealed. However, even in view of the limited corpus of examples available for <*être qui* + finite verb>, one may venture the conclusion that this periphrasis fits well into recent analyses of progressives in Romance languages. Contrary to European French's <*être en train de* + inf.> and – *pace* Squartini – similar to American French's <*être après* + inf.>, <*être qui* + finite verb> does not seem to have specialized in the expression of (mono-)focalized progressivity, but allows also for pluri-focalized processes:

- (26) moment par moment la mère *était qui* voyait (Highfield 1979: 156)
 ‘at every moment, the mother was watching (them)’

Somehow more confusing are examples like (27), where the progressive structure appears in a backgrounded narrative context, which is not the most expectable site for a progressive to occur:

- (27) la lune *était qu'*allait lever, et Seko... il dit, “Un homme à la mer !”
 (Maher 1996: 404)
 ‘the moon was about to rise, and Seko... he said, “Man overboard!”’

More in line with expectations generated by previous findings is the fact that the complex combination of <*être qui* + finite verb> and the future periphrasis <*aller* + inf.> in (27) results in a kind of imminential or, according to Maher (1994), inchoative meaning. This effect may be explained with reference to the procedural / actional type that the intransitive verb *lever* belongs to. In the sense of ‘rising (of a celestial body)’, as relevant here, this verb is an achievement, rather than an activity, in Vendlerian terms (cf. Vendler 1957: 147). As mentioned before, achievements are “intrinsically non-durative” (Squartini 1998: 85s.) and therefore compatible with focalized progressivity only, but at the price of being interpreted as imminent and non-completed (cf. also Squartini *op. cit.*: 72). According to Maher (*op. cit.*), this interpretation prevails in all cases of the combined periphrasis <*être qui* + *aller* + inf.> and then would be independent from the situation type that the non-finite verb actionally belongs to, but this remains to be checked against a more extensive corpus of occurrences of the St Barthian progressive structure.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of the present contribution was to argue for the central role that focality plays in explaining progressive aspect in Romance (and other European) languages, thus giving support to Güldemann's (forth.) conclusions derived from Bantu data. Bertinetto's (1986; 1995; 2000) typological *gradatum* extending from focalized to durative progressivity is particularly useful and relevant in this respect. It helps to understand that focality may not only be associated with present progressives, in the sense of an inherent focus on the HIC-ET-NUNC of the lat-

ter, but that also prototypical progressives in past contexts, such as those corresponding to the incidence schema, are focalizing, i.e. they highlight a process or a situation as ongoing at a specific evaluation point. The focalizing quality of progressives in Romance, however, is generally not encoded morphologically or morphosyntactically, due to the generally low degree of morphologicalization or grammaticalization of aspectual distinctions in these languages. Contrary to the African data, where morphological isomorphism occurs, the Romance focality-aspectuality connection relies on the large context-dependent interpretative potential that characterizes many aspectual verbal periphrases in this language group.

Corpora

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