The role of discourse traditions in the decline of Romance verbal periphrases

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Following Koch (2008), the present contribution assumes a strong link between language change, i.e. the innovation, diffusion, but also the possible decline of a construction, and the code as well as the conceptualization of the discourse it is used in. In this view, so-called discourse traditions function as corridors of linguistic innovation and change. These are consolidated linguistic practices which are historically shaped and defined between the poles of written vs. spoken code as well as of communicative distance vs. immediacy, i.e. their conceptualization (cf. Koch/Oesterreicher 1985; Koch 1997; Oesterreicher 1997). In my contribution, I will analyze the role of these discourse traditions between conceptually written and spoken modalities in the (spread and) decline of a "failed" verbal periphrasis in French: *aller* + present participle. Research on the gradually evolving restrictions on this construction is mostly limited to explaining them with degrammaticalization processes (cf. Schøsler 2005; 2007), that is, language-internal factors. Contrary to this, it will be shown that its gradually growing restrictions are driven by very specific socio-pragmatic tendencies. This verbal periphrasis, which nowadays shows strong restrictions in its contexts of use, follows the assumed corridors of decline throughout certain discourse traditions having varying degrees of prestige. The analysis is based on a holistic corpus study using the *Frantext* corpus and focusing on the crucial period of decline from the 15th to the 18th century while taking into consideration different levels of context. By investigating "failed" diffusion, I contribute to the question on how genre and intended modality interact and how this may result in language variation and change.

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