

Going forward as an adverb

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ABOUT THE TALK

This talk presents an exploratory study of an innovative future adverb construction, *going forward*, typically meaning 'in the future, from now on' (e.g. *What does this mean going forward?*). *Going forward* probably originated in the domain of business in or around the 1970s. In this study, the spread of *going forward* is examined on the basis of over 1,500 examples from six genres of the *Corpus of contemporary American English* (COCA), covering the years 1990–2019. The data is analysed in terms of four morphosyntactic variables, and the developments in the frequency of *going forward* are analysed using variability-based neighbour clustering. The results show that, in the 1990s, *going forward* had a modest rate of occurrence mainly in texts having to do with business and finance, but its frequency rose sharply in the 2000s and the 2010s. At the same time, the discourse contexts in which it appeared broadened from business and finance to other domains. The syntactic contexts of *going forward* show that it has become lexicalised as an adverb. The results highlight the need to incorporate social meanings such as domain preferences in the description of grammatical constructions. They also illustrate the need to consider constructional innovations at the lexical end of the grammar-lexicon continuum, in addition to highly grammaticalised constructions.

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