

This item is the archived peer-reviewed author-version of:

The semantics of the simple tenses and full-verb inversion in English : a story of shared epistemic schemas

Reference:

De Wit Astrid.- The semantics of the simple tenses and full-verb inversion in English : a story of shared epistemic schemas
Constructions and frames - ISSN 1876-1933 - 10:2(2018), p. 210-233
Full text (Publisher's DOI): <https://doi.org/10.1075/cf.00019.wit>

Astrid De Wit

University of Antwerp, Department of Linguistics, Grammar and Pragmatics Research Center

Rodestraat 14, S.R.205

2000 Antwerp

Belgium

astrid.dewit@uantwerpen.be

The semantics of the simple tenses and full-verb inversion in English: A story of shared
epistemic schemas

Submission thematic issue *Asymmetries and mismatches in Construction Grammar*
forthcoming in *Constructions and Frames*

****NOTE****

This document contains a pre-final version of this paper. Please consult the published version
for precise referencing: *Constructions and Frames* 10(2): 210-233.

Abstract

This paper offers a fresh perspective on (restrictions on) aspectual coercion, thereby focusing on the essentially epistemic import of aspectual constructions. The case study that I will discuss is the unexpected use of the simple tenses for ongoing event reports in sentences involving full-verb inversion. I will argue that this attestation of the simple present/past in inverted sentences can be analyzed as a kind of aspectual mismatch between the higher-order construction and the embedded tenses. Yet at a more basic, epistemic level of analysis, there is no mismatch: the full-verb inversion construction and the embedded tenses are similar in the sense that both report events that are conceived of as fully and instantly identifiable.

The semantics of the simple tenses and full-verb inversion in English: A story of shared
epistemic schemas

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to offer a novel perspective on (restrictions on) aspectual coercion, thereby focusing on the essentially epistemic import of aspectual constructions (cf. De Wit 2017). The case study that I will be discussing is the peculiar use of the simple tenses in sentences involving full-verb inversion, as illustrated in (1)-(3):

(1) On the shelf **lies** a book.

(2) There **goes** my bus.

(3) Along **came** Debbie Downer.

Sentences (1) and (2) involve events that are ongoing at the time of speaking, yet they do not feature progressive aspect. This is remarkable since, in Present-Day English, the simple present cannot normally be used for ongoing event reports. It seems, in other words, that in inverted contexts such as (1) and (1)(2) the simple present takes on an aspectual function that it does not normally fulfill. The simple past is generally less restricted than its present counterpart as it can often be used interchangeably with the progressive for the expression of past ongoingness, as in (4).¹

¹ I thank the editors for suggesting this example.

(4) She sneaked a glance while Lucy **poured** tea (BNC)

However, from an aspectual perspective, (3) is equally remarkable as (1) and (2) – not because it features the simple past, but because it *cannot* feature the past progressive (**Along was coming Debbie Downer*). In this respect it crucially differs from examples such as (4). While this noteworthy relation between full-verb inversion and aspect has typically been overlooked, both in studies of full-verb inversion and in studies of aspect, it did attract the attention of Lakoff (1987), Chen (2003), and, most recently, De Wit (2016), who has fully documented and analyzed the aspectual properties of full-verb inversion in English. The current paper constitutes a follow-up study of these pioneering works, in that it addresses the implications of their findings for a Construction Grammar approach to aspectual mismatches.

The analysis that I will propose is built on an assumption that is central to conceptual-semantic approaches to language, viz. that the meaning of linguistic elements (including grammaticalized constructions) is complex and that it needs to be specified at various levels of precision (cf., among others, Langacker (1987: Chapter 2)). Assuming that constructions form symbolic units, consisting of a semantic pole and a phonological pole, the semantic pole of these constructions invokes multiple facets of meaning, some highly abstract and schematic, some more specific and concrete. These more specific, elaborate structures fully instantiate the underlying schematic meaning, which is in turn said to sanction the more elaborated usage types (Langacker 1987: 66–68). In this study, which focuses on the simple tenses and on full-verb inversion, I will argue that the schematic meanings of these constructions need to be sought in the realm of epistemicity (compare also Langacker's (1991) and Brisard's (2002) epistemic accounts of the English tense system). In other words, at the most abstract level of analysis, the

simple present and the full-verb inversion construction are used to reveal the modal status that a situation has within the speaker's conception of reality: they indicate to what extent the situation constitutes a part of the world as it should be or as the speaker expects it to be, and thus to what extent the further development of the situation can be predicted. These epistemic contours are more basic than the prototypical aspectual contours conferred by the constructions on the situations they designate, though of course these aspectual contours remain part and parcel of the constructions' semantics at a lower, more elaborate level of analysis.

As I will demonstrate for the simple present, the case of full-verb inversion is illustrative of a semantic conflict (i.e. a mismatch) at the more specific, aspectual level of analysis – i.e. a mismatch between the aspectual meaning of the higher-order construction (the full-verb inversion construction) and that of the embedded aspectotemporal construction (the simple present). The simple present takes on a meaning of dynamic ongoingness, but it only does so because it is being used in the full-verb-inversion construction. In other words, the latter construction overrules the prototypical aspectual meaning of the embedded simple tenses, which consequently undergo aspectual *coercion*. Yet a crucial tenet of my analysis will be to show that this type of coercion does not happen randomly: it is because full-verb inversion and the simple tenses share an epistemic meaning component at the most basic level of analysis that we find the simple tenses in inverted contexts in the first place. This also holds for the simple past, which is (almost) obligatorily used in the context of full-verb inversion (at the expense of the past progressive) as a result of its epistemic compatibility with the higher-order construction in which it is embedded. Thus, the current analysis does not only account for a notable grammatical feature of full-verb inversion (in line with De Wit (2016)), it also, more generally, proffers a fresh perspective on the constraints on coercion (see also Willems & Lauwers 2011), by pointing to the more basic epistemic convergence of the coerced and coercing constructions.

This paper is outlined as follows. Section 2 serves to briefly introduce two features of full-verb inversion that are central to this study: its role in the cognitive organization of discourse and the subjective viewpoint it entails. A summary overview of the aspectual characteristics of full-verb inversion is presented in Section 3. In Section 4, I further explain why I consider the use of the English simple tenses in full-verb inversion a case of aspectual mismatching. Next, I offer arguments in favor of the epistemic convergence of the simple tenses and full-verb inversion in Section 5, while Section 6 discusses the wider implications of this analysis for the study of aspectual coercion in Construction Grammar. My conclusions are submitted in Section 7.

2. Full-verb inversion in English: A brief introduction

Full-verb inversion basically involves the sentence-initial placement of a locative/directional adverbial or of *(t)here* which triggers an inverted sentence structure (i.e. verb-second word order) with non-pronominal subjects. It is to be distinguished from a much more common type of inversion, viz. the subject-auxiliary inversion typical of negative polarity contexts, in that it involves full lexical verbs rather than auxiliaries. A wide range of different sub-constructions instantiate the full-verb-inversion construction. The following list only contains those constructions that will prove relevant for the present purposes, which is to investigate the peculiar use of the simple tenses for ongoing event reports in inverted sentences, and the implications thereof for coercion. It thus excludes state reports, such as equative *be* (as in *Two problems are time and money*) or locative inversion with *be*, not because these state reports are

fundamentally different from other types of full-verb inversion, but simply because such stative construals require the simple present/past by definition.²

(5) Presentational (deictic) *there* + dynamic verb: *There/here comes my bus.*

(6) Locative inversion + dynamic verb: *On the shelf lies a book.*

(7) Directional inversion with a specified endpoint: *She was about to tell him when in again rolled the trolley, now with afternoon tea on it.* (Birner, 1523)³

(8) Directional inversion with a specified source: *From this trench were recovered sacrificial burials and offerings dating to the final days of the Aztec empire.* (Birner, 127)

(9) Directional inversion along an unbounded trajectory: *Across this arid desert drifted an occasional low cloud of red dust.* (Birner, 1093)

(10) Sentence-initial location/direction without inversion (with pronominal subjects): *Down we go!*

² This list also excludes two other sub-constructions, viz. quotative inversion (e.g., “*I love you*”, *said Harry*) and predicate inversion (e.g., *Losing the election was the main opposition party* (Birner & Ward 1992: 1)), because these constructions are syntactically and semantically quite divergent from the other constructions listed here (see De Wit (2016: 122, 124-125) for more details). On the differences between presentational inversion and existential *there*-constructions, see De Wit (2016: 110-111).

³ Examples that have been adopted from Betty Birner’s corpus of locative/directional inversion (see also Section 3) are referred to as ‘Birner’, followed by the number of the relevant corpus example.

It should be noted that these different types of full-verb inversion have been distinguished on the basis of semantic properties; cf. e.g. Kay & Michaelis (ms.) for a classification on the basis of syntactic properties.

Full-verb inversion has been studied from a variety of angles in book-length analyses such as Drubig (1988), Dorgeloh (1997), Birner & Ward (1998), and Chen (2003). A detailed discussion of these proposals would lead us too far astray, so I single out two main perspectives on inversion that have a direct bearing on the present study: the role of inversion in the cognitive organization of discourse, and the subjective viewpoint it entails. Birner (1994) and Birner & Ward (1998) argue that inversion in English is used to present discourse-old information (expressed by the preposed constituent) before discourse-new information (expressed by the postposed constituent), so as to connect this relatively new information with the previous context. Inversion is thus assumed to serve an information-packaging function. Chen (2003: 15–25) criticizes this discourse-oriented analysis by pointing to various examples in which the ‘discourse-old before discourse-new’ account runs into difficulties. As an alternative, he suggests a cognitive linguistic analysis of English inversion in terms of a ‘ground-before-figure organization’.⁴ In cognitive linguistics, it is assumed that spatial relations in language involve the location or motion of one entity (the figure) with respect to another entity, which constitutes the ground for that figure (Croft & Cruse 2004: 56–58). Chen (2003: 46–55) further argues that the ground is first anchored by means of a landmark, which directs the hearer’s attention to the ground. In (11), for instance, the ground (*below the wings*) is first situated by means of an explicit reference to the wings, i.e. the landmark, in previous discourse. The postverbal constituent is then located with respect to preposed ground.

⁴ This ‘ground-before-figure’ analysis was in fact first suggested by Drubig (1988), yet Chen’s account is more elaborate and comprehensive.

- (11) The huge engines were built into the wings. Below the wings **was** a pair of stubby sea-wings, which served to stabilize the aircraft when it was in the water. (Chen 2003: 60)

Despite the differences between Birner's discourse-pragmatic and Chen's cognitive approaches, they have in common that they both analyze the entity referred to in the preposed constituent as *given* in some way. In De Wit (2016), I have complemented Birner and Chen's important insights with those of others who focus more on the subjective viewpoint adopted in inverted constructions. Let me first point to the strong deictic character of presentational *there*-sentences (Lakoff 1987; Drubig 1988; Langacker 1993). By using these constructions the speaker predicates the presence, absence or (dis)appearance of a figure within the deictic center (i.e. the speech event and its immediate circumstances). Both Bolinger (1977) and Drubig (1988) identify a similar presentational function for locative and directional inversion, which Bolinger (1977: 93–94) refers to as *thereless* presentationals, which present 'something on our immediate stage'. As pointed out by, e.g., Drubig (1988: 86–88) and Kreyer (2006: 202-207), the use of inversion can trigger a 'displaced speech effect', inviting the addressee to conceptualize a given situation from the viewpoint 'designated by the referent of the NP in the fronted constituent' (Dorgeloh 1997: 103). This 'displaced speech effect' can be metaphorically conceived of in terms of a camera, which visualizes a situation from a certain vantage point, and which draws in viewers to conceive of that situation from this vantage point (Dorgeloh 1997: 103–5; Chen 2003: 65–6; Partee & Borschev 2007: 156). Consider the following example:

- (12) One night there was a tap on the window. Mrs. Rabbit peeped through the window. Outside **stood** a little angel. (Birner, 1638)

As a reader, we are invited to adopt Mrs. Rabbit's perspective on the angel, i.e. we are standing inside the house and looking at the angel standing outside. Drubig (1988: 88–90) goes on to argue that directional (as opposed to locative) inversion does not only trigger a 'displaced speech effect', but also a 'deictic effect' – a critical point which is largely ignored in subsequent analyses of inversion (though see also Dorgeloh (1997: 164-87) for similar arguments). The difference between the 'displaced speech effect' and the 'deictic effect' is that only in the latter case the conceptualizer's vantage point is anchored within the location designated by the preposed constituent (e.g., in (12) we, as readers/listeners, are not standing outside ourselves). Consider the following opposition, pointed out by Drubig (1988: 88):

- (13) He opened the bedroom door and the cat **walked in**.
- (14) He opened the bedroom door and **in walked** the cat.

While (13) is ambiguous with regard to the subject's and the cat's positions (e.g., it is unclear whether the subject and the cat end up being in the same room or not), there is no ambiguity in the case of (14): the subject is standing inside the bedroom, he conceives of the cat's walking into that bedroom from that perspective and it is this conception that we, as readers/listeners, are invited to adopt. An important modification proposed in De Wit (2016) is that directional inversion does not *necessarily* entail a deictic effect: e.g., in the case of directional inversion along an unbounded trajectory, as in (9), the conceptualizer's vantage

point does not have to lie within the location designated by the preposed constituent (the arid desert).

Bringing together the analyses of Drubig, Chen and De Wit (2016), we could claim that full-verb inversion in general involves a shift to a more privileged vantage point which is part of the landmark that serves to locate the ground. Whenever the deictic effect arises (i.e. with some cases of directional inversion), we are invited to conceptualize a situation from within the ground itself which functions as the (shifted) deictic center.⁵

3. The aspectual properties of full-verb inversion: Corpus data and native speaker elicitations

While the studies referred to in Section 2 are notably comprehensive, they pay little or no attention to the aspectual constructions used in inverted contexts. Those studies that do mention aspect (e.g. Dorgeloh 1997; Chen 2003; see also Lakoff (1987) on presentational *there*) note that progressive aspect is entirely excluded, even though Chen (2003: 180-183) does observe

⁵ The deictic center, which is the position of the discourse participants at the time of speaking, constitutes the ultimate background against which everything else takes place, and thus it also functions as a kind of ground. Yet since the notion ‘ground’ can refer to any element that serves to locate another one (the figure) in the conceptualization of a linguistic event, I use the more specific term ‘deictic center’ to refer to the most basic type of ground, i.e. ‘the speech event, its participants, and its setting’ (Langacker 1987: 126), and the term ‘ground’ with reference to any type of grounding that takes place on top of this basic grounding relation. Thus, while the arid desert in (9) functions as the ground for locating the cloud of red dust, it is not the deictic center: it is not the location from which the speaker conceives of the denoted event.

that his informants are not entirely adverse to constructed progressive examples of locative inversion.⁶ In De Wit (2016), I have investigated to what extent the presumed ban on the progressive actually holds, on the basis of a large number of corpus data and native-speaker elicitations.

The corpus data are based on corpus research in the Collins corpora of modern written and spoken text, the BROWN Corpus of Standard American English, and the OntoNotes Corpus, release 5.0. These data were further complemented by corpus material kindly provided to me by Betty Birner and Carlos Prado-Alonzo, who have collected large numbers of examples of full-verb inversion for their own research. In total, this led to 3609 tokens of full-verb inversion. Only four of these turned out to feature progressive aspect:

- (15) Out of the mouths of revolutionaries **are coming** words of moderation. (OntoNotes)
- (16) From the west **were rolling** pile after pile of fat, white, complicated clouds, and above the clouds was the clear and uncomplicated blue. (Birner, 1524)
- (17) They have a great big tank in the kitchen, and in the tank **are sitting** all of these pots. (Birner, 1561)

⁶ Chen (2003: 179-181) furthermore notes that another aspectual construction, viz. the perfect, does get used in full-verb inversion constructions. This observation ties in naturally with the analysis presented in this paper. As we will see in Section 5, full-verb inversion constructions involve a sense of full and instant identifiability – a meaning that is incompatible with the progressive, yet not with the perfect, which conveys a global perspective on a past situation (see De Wit (2016: 122-123) for more details).

(18) I'm sure you know that the Queen is standing beside the Duke of Edinburgh. In the middle and on her right **is standing** the Lord Mayor of London. She is wearing a lime green suit... (Prado-Alonso 2011: 133; pc.)

These figures provide ample evidence for the actual existence of the grammatical property of which this paper sets out to discuss the consequences, viz. the use of the simple tenses in full-verb inversion. Yet progressive aspect is not entirely excluded. Since this paper discusses the aspectual mismatch between full-verb inversion and the embedded tenses, we can of course not overlook these progressive examples (rare though they may be), where there does not seem to be a mismatch. In De Wit (2016: 118-120), I demonstrate on the basis of two native-speaker elicitation studies (with participants recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk) that progressive aspect is indeed considered acceptable, yet only with some types of inversion. First of all, the progressive is entirely barred with presentational inversion, as illustrated in (19), while locative inversion does generally allow progressive aspect (even if, again, it does not often feature the progressive in natural language), cf. (20):⁷

(19) *There **is going** my bus.

(20) On top of the square block **is lying** another block.

With directional inversion, the data seem more versatile. Just like locative inversion, directional inversion along an unbounded trajectory is not averse to progressive aspect:

⁷ The sentences given in (19)-(24) are adopted from the list of sentences of which MT participants needed to judge the acceptability.

(21) Along the riverside path **are walking** several tourists.

Some examples of directional inversion with a specified endpoint, like (22), or a specified source, as in (23), are also considered acceptable:

(22) Onto the stage **is stepping** a beautiful woman.

(23) From our neighbor's house **is coming** the sound of piano music.

Yet, examples such as (24), also involving a specified endpoint, are not acceptable.

(24) *In **is coming** the President.

The fact that (23) and (24) feature the same predicate makes it unlikely that the difference in acceptability is due to frequency effects associated with a specific predicate (e.g., *come* as opposed to *step*) (as was suggested by an anonymous reviewer). Rather, the crucial difference between (22) and (23), on the one hand, and (24), on the other hand, is that the latter involves a 'deictic effect', whereas the former do not; I will come back to this in Section 5. For now, the most important observation we draw from this data section is that the simple tenses are canonically used in inverted contexts. In the following section, I will discuss in what way this observation is suggestive of an aspectual mismatch.

4. Mismatch at the aspectual level

In De Wit (2017: Chapter 4), I analyzed the uses of the simple present as essentially perfective, in the sense that they involve events that can be conceived of in their entirety at the time of speaking. While I still subscribe to this idea, this definition of perfectivity and its application to the English simple present essentially reflects a modal (rather than a temporal) conception of aspect. In Section 5, I will zoom in on this modal meaning of the English simple tenses, which I consider more basic than their aspectotemporal meanings. Yet let us now exclusively look at the aspectotemporal properties that characterize the tenses and the construction involved at a more specific level of analysis.

In his analysis of the English present, Langacker (2001: 251; italics in the original) makes the poignant observation that the simple present appears to be used for “*anything but present-time reference*”. English differs in this respect from, e.g. French and Dutch, in which the simple present more naturally appears in ongoing event reports (Michaelis 2004) – an observation that has led Cooper (1986) to call the English simple present an “exotic” tense. There are some exceptional contexts in which the simple present does get used to refer to present-time events, apart from full-verb inversion: performatives, play-by-play sports broadcasts, and demonstrations (De Wit 2017: Chapter 4). As I will demonstrate in Section 5, these contexts share with full-verb inversion the property that they involve fully and instantly identifiable events. Given these observations about the restrictions on the use of the simple present for ongoing event reports in English, it is notable that it is used in sentences like (25)-(27):

(25) I **open** the door and in comes the cat.

(26) There **goes** my train.

(27) [Standing in the elevator:] Up we **go**!

One might plausibly argue that, in (25), we are dealing with a historical present – a context that does allow the simple present, as opposed to actual present-time contexts (cf. also the simple-present ‘open’ in (25)). Yet the sentences in (26) and (27) do clearly involve events that are actually happening at the time of speaking. That this simple present construal is only licensed by virtue of the full-verb inversion construction is further shown by the fact that the non-inverted versions of these sentences would not be grammatical (cf. also Lakoff 1987: 471):

(26') *My train **goes** there (right now).

(27') [Standing in the elevator:] *We **go** up!

The simple present thus takes on the aspectual meaning of ongoingness at a certain reference point – a meaning that they do not normally have – owing to full-verb inversion.

I interpret this pattern as a case of aspectual coercion. From a construction-based perspective, coercion can be defined as an inferential procedure whereby, if there is a semantic mismatch between a construction and an element embedded in that construction, the construction will overrule the embedded element, which will consequently take on the meaning of the structure in which it is embedded (cf. e.g. Michaelis 2004; 2011; Ziegeler 2007; Lauwers & Willems 2011). For example, *beer* is a mass noun, but in combination with an indefinite article (i.e. when it is taken up in the indefinite determination construction) it takes on a count-noun interpretation: *a beer*. More precisely, the noun *beer* is in the latter case coerced into a

count noun by virtue of the construction in which it is embedded. Typically, examples of such mismatches involve a *lexeme* embedded in a more abstract grammatical construction. This is the case for *beer*, but also, for instance, for Goldberg's famous example *She sneezed the napkin off the table* (Goldberg 1995), in which the verb lexeme *sneeze* takes a direct object and thus patterns as a transitive verb, as a result of being taken up in the Caused Motion Construction. Yet, in line with one of the basic tenets of cognitive linguistics, I believe that there is no strict dichotomy between what is (more) lexical and what is (more) grammatical. Hence, there is no reason why a more grammaticalized construction, such as the simple present, could not also undergo coercion when embedded in a higher-order construction, such as full-verb inversion, just like a lexeme (see also Petré (2017: 239) on the coercion of older-stage English progressives embedded in clauses with explicit focalizing points, such as *now*). Applying this conception of coercion to the present case, I argue that there is a semantic conflict between the prototypical aspectual semantics of the simple present and that of the full-verb inversion construction and that this mismatch is being resolved by means of coercion of the embedded simple present, which is "forced" to take on progressive readings. Yet it should be noted that the analysis that I am proposing here reflects a conception of coercion as a semantically motivated process rather than as some sort of miracle tool. First of all, as I will crucially argue in Section 5, this type of aspectual coercion is the result of epistemic synergies between the embedding and the embedded constructions. Secondly, the coercion effects do not cause a shift from impossible to possible semantic interpretations, but rather from improbable to obligatory ones. While the simple present and the full-verb inversion construction may share the same basic epistemic meaning, this meaning branches off into different specific usage types for each construction, and these usage types have different canonical aspectual profiles, depending on the construction. That is, barring the exceptional contexts mentioned above, the simple present prototypically indicates lack of current ongoingness. On the other hand, in the present, the range

of full-verb inversion constructions listed in (5)-(10) do typically express ongoingness. Thus, under pressure of the embedding construction, the simple present loses its most prototypical aspectual meaning. The full-verb inversion construction therefore does not necessarily *assign* a meaning to the simple present that it does not have, rather, it *excludes* all the other, far more entrenched meanings. Therefore, I believe it is warranted to analyze this interaction as a lower-level semantic mismatch.

The situation is slightly different for the past tense, since examples such as (3), repeated here in (28), are interpreted as completed rather than as ongoing at a certain reference point.

(28) Along **came** Debbie Downer.

In fact, from an aspectual perspective, (28) and its non-inverted counterpart (28'), are not so different: out of context, (28') will also be interpreted as completed:

(28') Debbie Downer **came** along.

It would therefore not be justified to say the simple past undergoes the same type of aspectual coercion as the simple present when embedded in the full-verb inversion construction. Yet as pointed out in the introduction, a crucial aspectual difference between examples such as (28) and (28') is that the former *obligatorily* feature the simple past. Thus, again, the embedding construction determines the type of aspectual construction selected. As I will argue, this observation can be entirely explained in terms of the epistemic semantics of full-verb inversion and the simple/progressive opposition.

5. The shared epistemic schemas of full-verb inversion and the simple tenses

5.1. The epistemic semantics of the simple tenses

As already mentioned in Section 4, the English simple present can only be used for present-time event reports in a very limited range of contexts: performatives, demonstrations, live sports broadcasts, and full-verb inversion. Apart from that, it is of course also used to refer to present-time states, habits and generic situations. I contend that in order to unify this diverse set of usage types of the simple present, we need to analyze this tense as indicating full and instant identifiability of the reported situation at the time of speaking (De Wit 2017: Chapter 4; De Wit et al. 2018). Or, in other words, situations reported by means of the simple present can be conceived of in their entirety at the time of speaking, either because they are predictable or because they fully and exactly coincide with the time of speaking (cf. also Langacker 2001). This analysis is very much in line with earlier proposals by, e.g., Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger (1982) who claim that the simple present indicates that a situation is structural (non-phenomenal) and Calver (1946: 323), who analyzes the simple present as the tense referring to “the constitution of things”. This modal account is readily applicable to the different usage types of the simple present. States, which do not change over time and which are construed as unbounded, have the contractibility property (Langacker 1987: 259-262), also called the subinterval property. That is, states are fully identifiable on the basis of any random sample, which is representative for the state as a whole. Thus, at the brief segment of time which is the present we have enough information to identify a state in its entirety. The same holds for habits, which are equally conceived of as unbounded and homogeneous, and thus as contractible. In

the case of performative expressions, the speech event and the reported event are one and the same – e.g., by saying *I promise*, you are effectively performing the act of promising (Austin 1962) – and this event is therefore by definition fully and instantly identifiable at the time of speaking. Play-by-play sports commentaries often involve situations that are actually just past at (or at least not exactly coincident with) the time when the speaker is reporting them, yet for reasons of vividness they are often construed as occurring in the present (Langacker 2011: 60). The events in sports announcements are normally fairly stereotypical and scripted (Langacker 2001: 265). Hence, the beginning, concise development and endpoint of these events can be fully conceptualized at the time of their report. A similar analysis can be proposed for running commentaries accompanying demonstrations, which are fully (epistemically) controlled by the speaker. In the case of the simple past, the epistemic account in terms of full and instant identifiability is more straightforward: as illustrated in Section 4 (cf. example (28')), the simple past canonically involves events that are completed, i.e. situations that can be conceived of in their entirety at the time of speaking.⁸ In the following section, I will demonstrate that this analysis of full and instant identifiability is equally applicable to the use of the simple tenses in full-verb inversion.

5.2. Full and instant identifiability and full-verb inversion

⁸ This holistic account even holds for examples such as (4), in which the simple past indicates an internal viewpoint. As aptly observed by an anonymous reviewer, a holistic perspective is by definition adopted when talking about past-time events, irrespective of whether an internal perspective is taken on or not.

Previous proposals to account for the restriction on progressives in full-verb inversion have been formulated by Lakoff (1987: 496) for presentational *there*-constructions and by Chen (2003: 180–183) for locative inversion. According to Lakoff (1987: 496), presentational *there*-constructions refer to *instantaneous* events: what is designated by the construction is not so much a process of motion or location, but rather the momentaneous attestation of that motion/location at reference time. With regard to locative/directional inversion, Chen (2003) argues that “[t]he progressive, which forces the hearer to pay much attention to the verbal process, could be a misfit for the GbF [ground-before-figure] model, for the GbF requires that attention be given to the ground and the figure” (181). Thus, when a certain ground is introduced, such as *Into the room*, the hearer will be concerned with *who* came into the room rather than with the way in which this animate entity came into the room. Using the progressive forces the addressee to linger on the process referred to by means of the verb, thus delaying the identification of whoever is coming in.⁹ In other words, in line with Lakoff’s analysis of presentational *there*, Chen believes that with locative/directional inversion it is the presence, absence or (dis)appearance of a figure in a ground that is profiled rather than the manner in which this figure is present or the movement that led to this presence.

While Lakoff’s and Chen’s proposals are pioneering in many ways, they do not explain why the progressive is nevertheless used or considered acceptable in some cases, nor do they (explicitly) acknowledge the epistemic import of the simple tenses. In De Wit (2016), I propose to fill this gap by focusing on the role of Drubig’s deictic effect and, in addition, Birner’s canonicity principle, which I will introduce below. What follows is a brief summary of this proposal.

⁹ On the function of the English progressive as a predicate highlighter, see, among others, Güldemann (2003), Petré (2017) and De Wit et al. (ms.).

To begin with, I contend that, whenever the deictic effect arises, full and instant identifiability is automatically entailed and progressive aspect is infelicitous. Recall, first, that presentational *there*-sentences by definition convey a deictic effect and, secondly, that I assume that not all instances of directional inversion trigger a deictic effect (*pace* Drubig 1988). In contexts in which the deictic effect does arrive we end up with a configuration in which the conceptualizer is anchored within a deictic center/ground, with respect to which, at the same time, a certain figure is located. The conceptualizer thus has a limited view: (s)he can note the presence, absence or (dis)appearance of a figure in this ground, but since her/his viewpoint is anchored within the same ground, (s)he cannot step out of it, so to speak, and zoom in on the process that leads to this presence, absence or (dis)appearance. Thus, whenever the deictic effect arises, (s)he can only adopt a global perspective, whereby the process at hand is instantly identified in its entirety (as if it were already completed), and progressive construals are excluded. In view of this configuration, it is not surprising that full-verb inversion in English often conveys a sense of *inevitability* with motion verbs, as illustrated in (29) to (32):¹⁰

(29) There **goes** the neighborhood.

(30) Then boom! Along **comes** the Internet. (Collins)

(31) Up we **go**!

(32) Now **comes** the good part.

¹⁰ Observe that, in cases such as (31), the relation between the vantage point and the ground is not one of inclusion, but rather of *opposition* (*Up we go* entails that, right now, we are down). Yet in such cases, too, the speaker's vantage point is *fixed* with respect to the ground.

If the conceptualizer ‘waits’ long enough in the location in question, metaphorically speaking, the figure will inevitably (dis)appear in each of these cases. As noted by Dorgeloh (1997: 76), the use of directional inversion is typically exploited to create a sense of tension. This sense of tension is naturally derived from the notion of inevitability: given a certain preposed ground, one can be sure that something is coming, without necessarily knowing what yet. Note, incidentally, that it is the fronting of the ground, rather than the postposition of a figure that yields this inevitability effect: as is illustrated in (31), the effect also arises in non-inverted sentences with pronominal subjects. This reflects my assumption that it is the anchoring/givenness of the conceptualizer’s vantage point that creates this effect.

In each of the examples listed in (29) to (32), the movement is construed as irrevocable, making it possible for the conceptualizer to fully and instantly identify the development and endpoint of these motions at reference time. I claim now that such full and instant knowledge is characteristic of all types of full-verb inversion, including locative inversion and directional inversion along a trajectory, which do not trigger a deictic effect. Consider for instance (1), repeated here in (33):

(33) On the shelf **lies** a book.

The only ways in which a book can normally be on a shelf (apart from general ‘being’) is by lying or standing. The relation between the book and the shelf is inferable on the basis of general knowledge about shelves and books (Birner 1995), and so there is a *canonical* relation between the figure and the ground. As extensively described by Birner (1995), locative inversion is restricted to verbs that are ‘informationally light’: they do not contribute any crucial information to the utterance, since the manner in which a figure is present in a ground can easily be inferred from the nature of the ground and of the figure. Note that it is not the presence or absence of a

figure within a ground as such that is canonical (cf. the frequently observed exploitation of full-verb inversion to create a sense of surprise). What *is* known, however, is the process (i.e. the situation designated by the verb) that relates the figure and the ground; one could claim that given a certain ground and a certain figure, the relation between them emerges naturally. Such canonical events typically trigger simple-tense reports, whereas the use of the progressive is linked to more phenomenal, incongruous and possibly surprising situations (Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger 1982; De Wit & Brisard 2014; see also Section 6). Yet while the use of the progressive is automatically barred in cases of full-verb inversion involving a deictic effect for the conceptual reasons explained above, the absence of progressive aspect in cases that are only characterized by canonicity and not by the deictic effect seems to be reflecting a soft constraint, i.e. a constraint that can be overridden. When there is no deictic effect, as with the examples locative inversion in (16)-(18) and (20), the conceptualizer *can* zoom in on the denoted event, and the use of the progressive is not entirely excluded. However, given the canonical information expressed by the locative (posture) verb, the use of the progressive remains highly rare. Lack of canonicity might account for the progressive occurrence in example (17), repeated here in (34):

- (34) They have a great big tank in the kitchen, and in the tank **are sitting** all of these pots.
(Birner, 1561)

Example (35), however, does involve a canonical relationship between the figure and the ground, yet it still features progressive marking:

(35) I'm sure you know that the Queen is standing beside the Duke of Edinburgh. In the middle and on her right **is standing** the Lord Mayor of London. She is wearing a lime green suit... (Prado-Alonso 2011: 133; pc.)

The use of the progressive may be motivated here by priming: since the speaker has used the progressive *is standing* in the first sentence, she naturally repeats it, despite the inverted sentence structure. The progressive is also found acceptable in examples of directional inversion that do not involve a deictic effect, such as (21) and (22). Although in the latter two cases the endpoint of the motion is explicitly referred to in the preposed constituent, the conceptualizer's vantage point is not anchored with respect to that ground. Consider also example (16), repeated here in (36):

(36) From the west **were rolling** pile after pile of fat, white, complicated clouds, and above the clouds was the clear and uncomplicated blue. (Birner, 1524)

The use of the progressive here is, in my view, motivated by the gradual motion of the clouds; the more an event is stretched in time, the more natural it becomes to devote more attention to this process, which is consequently construed as less canonical.

In (15), repeated here in (37), the denoted event does 'end', so to speak, in the conceptualizer's deictic center (cf. also the elicited sentence in (23)):

(37) Out of the mouths of revolutionaries **are coming** words of moderation. (OntoNotes)

Yet this is not an effect of the construction, but rather of the verb *come*, which by definition subjectively refers to the deictic center. The crucial difference between sentences such as (23)

and (37) and the ungrammatical sentences cited in (19) and (24) is that, in the latter cases, the deictic center coincides with the ground that serves to locate the figure. By contrast, in (23) and (37) the figure is located with respect to a ground that is *not* the deictic center. Consequently, the conceptualizer's viewpoint is not anchored within or with respect to this ground and there is no (constructionally induced) deictic effect. Therefore, the use of the progressive may be acceptable under specific circumstances: in (37), we are again dealing with events that are temporally extended, since the words are being uttered repeatedly, and thus progressive construals are licensed.

To sum up, although the progressive may be used in some cases of full-verb inversion, its use is highly rare and restricted to contexts that do not involve a deictic effect. As we have seen in this section, each of these aspectual facts is epistemically motivated: at the most schematic level of analysis, the full-verb inversion construction and the simple tenses share the same epistemic schemas and there is no need to posit a separate semantic account for the simple tenses in inverted (versus non-inverted) sentence structure. As such, the analysis proposed in this paper is more parsimonious than, for instance, the historical account proposed by Prado-Alonso (2016: 66-67), according to which the aspectotemporal semantics of the present tense in inverted contexts constitutes a remnant of older-stage present-tense uses. That is, before the use of the progressive became obligatory in ongoing present-time event reports (around the end of the 19th century), the simple present was aspectually ambiguous in that it could take on both perfective and imperfective readings, i.e. it was also used to designate ongoing events (Petré 2017). Similarly, full-verb inversion was more widely deployed in older varieties of English, where it functioned as a marker of narrative cohesion (Los & Starren 2012). The hypothesis put forward by Prado-Alonso is that the instances of full-verb inversion that survive in Present-Day English, themselves relics, have preserved their original tense forms, including the aspectotemporal semantics previously associated these forms. While I consider this hypothesis

quite plausible, and not necessarily incompatible with the semantic account proposed here, one may wonder why we would treat the observed aspectual characteristics of full-verb inversion as a quirk from the past if there exists a perfectly viable semantic explanation that unifies the various uses of the simple present. This reflects my more general assumption that recognizing constructional polysemy at specific levels of analysis – e.g., I have explicitly acknowledged the divergent array of meanings/uses of the English present tense – does not automatically entail that we should deny monosemy at a more basic level. I consider this unifying approach – which consists in the identification of a common underlying schema – as a kind of null hypothesis that needs to be rejected before we can assume that other scenarios (which presuppose radical polysemy) are more likely. Note, moreover, that my semantic analysis also allows us to account for the relative acceptability of the progressive in some cases – something that would perhaps be harder to do on the basis of a purely historical explanation. This being said, accepting the more comprehensive semantic unification story does not boil down to a rejection of the hypothesis formulated by Prado-Alonso (2016). In fact, it is not unlikely that the two explanations co-exist and reinforce one another, i.e. both epistemic convergence and the historical character of inverted constructions may be responsible for the retention of the present tense in the context of full-verb inversion. My crucial claim is only that we cannot refute the unifying semantic account only because a historical account is possible as well.

6. Constraints on aspectual coercion: An epistemic motivation

Section 5 has shown that, although there is an *aspectual* mismatch between full-verb inversion and the aspectual constructions it features, the choice for the simple tenses makes perfect sense from an epistemic perspective. This analysis could thus shed a new light on the analysis of aspectual mismatches and on coercion as a tool for resolving those mismatches: if a higher-

order construction coerces an embedded element into taking on a meaning that it does not normally have, this might entail that the construction and the embedded element (a grammatical or a lexical construction) do converge semantically at a more schematic level of analysis. Or, in other words, non-canonical meaning shifts need to make sense, semantically – a point that has also been made with regard to other (aspectual and non-aspectual) constructions by various authors, most notably Ziegeler (2007), who chalks up coercion to other processes of semantic change and pragmatic inferences (see Lauwers & Willems (2011: 1227-1229) for an overview of other analyses along these lines).¹¹ However, the focus on the shared epistemic schemas of the embedded and the embedding construction that is central to the present study is decidedly novel. Let me point to a couple of observations suggesting that this epistemic proposal is generalizable.

It is well known that the English progressive can coerce stative verbs into dynamic ones in certain contexts, such as (38), but not in, e.g., (39):

(38) I'm **having** a headache.

(39) * I'm **having** ten fingers.

Observations such as this raise the question what kind of constraints govern aspectual coercion. Motivations for and restrictions on aspectual coercion have received quite a bit of attention within formal-semantic accounts, such as de Swart (1998) and Bary (2009). A common trade within these accounts is their emphasis on “the prominent role of world knowledge in

¹¹ See also Pustejovsky & Bouillon (1995) and Rappaport Hovav & Levin (1998) for accounts for (restrictions on) coercion focusing on verb complementation.

interpretation phenomena” (Bary 2009: 71; see also de Swart 1998: 360). As Bary (2009) continues: “a mismatch in aspectual class indicates that reinterpretation is involved, but how the mismatch is resolved [...] is determined by world knowledge” (71-72). In other words, the interpretations resulting from coercion processes need to make sense: if a canonically stative verb receives a progressive construal, the representation of the situation reported by this verb as a “state of [a] process or event being in progress” (de Swart 1998: 354) has to be plausible given the nature of this situation. Yet these accounts, which first and foremost conceive of a construction like the progressive as an aspectual operator, exclusively locate the constraints on coercion in the realm of aspect, thus obscuring a more general observation. In line with De Wit & Brisard (2014), I assume that the English progressive indicates epistemic contingency at the most basic level of analysis, i.e., in contrast with the simple present, which involves fully and instantly identifiable events, the progressive is used to designate events that have an incidental, phenomenal status within the speaker’s conception of reality (see also Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger 1982). This means that, if verbs that canonically report stative situations receive a progressive construal, the denoted situation is represented as contingent, i.e., as more ephemeral and transient (see also De Smet & Heyvaert (2011) on the sense of temporariness associated with the progressive). This makes sense for a situation that is considered susceptible to change, such as (38), but obviously not for (39). The reason why (39) is not felicitous is therefore epistemic more than aspectual: in terms of ‘statehood’, (38) and (39) are actually not that different, in the sense that both involve situations that are relatively homogeneous and unbounded. In other words, just like in the case of full-verb inversion and the simple tenses, the coercion of state verbs by means of the progressive involves epistemic convergence between the higher-order construction – i.e. the progressive, indicating epistemic contingency – and the situation reported by the embedded (coerced) predicate – i.e. to have trouble understanding something, which is inherently bound to change. This epistemic account thus posits a more one-

on-one connection between the semantics of the progressive and the notion of world knowledge, since a progressive construal constitutes a direct reflection of the epistemic (i.e. knowledge based) status of a situation at hand, rather than of its aspectotemporal properties.

Another field of research in which the epistemic underpinnings of coercion appear evident is that of so-called ‘aspectual stacking’, or the combination of two aspectual constructions (cf. e.g. Altshuler 2016: 155-158). Often, aspectual stacking seems to go hand in hand with a meaning shift of (at least) one of the two constructions. This is for instance the case in Slavic, where perfective aspect construals can be derived from imperfective verb stems by means of prefixation. For example, in Russian, the perfective prefix *pere-* can be added to the imperfective verb stem *pisat’* (‘write’) to arrive at the perfective *perepisat’* (‘rewrite’). Yet by adding the suffix *-yvaj* to *perepisat’*, such that we get *perepisyvaj*, the derived perfective value of the construction is undone, so to speak, and the meaning becomes ‘being in the course of rewriting’. But aspectual stacking is also attested in languages that do not have derivational aspect marking, such as English. In English, the perfect and the progressive can combine into forming the perfect progressive construction – a complex aspectual construction that poses considerable challenges for compositional approaches to semantics. Within formal-semantic analyses, much attention has been devoted to the contribution of the perfect in the perfect progressive (cf. Altshuler (2016: 155-156) for more details), yet the shifting function of the progressive is remarkable as well. Compare, for instance, examples (40)-(42):

- (40) You **are smoking** again.
- (41) You’ve **smoked** again.
- (42) You’ve **been smoking** again.

Example (40) indicates ongoingness at the time of speaking, and (41) could naturally be interpreted as a resultative use of the present perfect (as in ‘*You’ve smoked again, and that’s why he broke up with you*’). While the same resultative reading could be attached to (42), there is, in my view, no difference in terms of ongoingness between (41) and (42): in both cases, the speaker concentrates on the (negative) consequences in the present of the subject’s smoking in the past, and nor the past event nor the present result are presented as being more ‘in progress’ in (42). In my view, the crucial difference between (41) and (42) is once more modal, in that the latter more clearly presents the smoking event(s) and its/their consequences as something unexpected and undesirable. In fact, an utterance like (41) sounds rather marked to my ears, precisely because smoking is generally negatively evaluated. Instead, in a more positive, non-evaluative utterance like (43), taken from the internet, the use of the present perfect seems more warranted:

(43) “On the darkest day of my 25 years at the Orlando Police Department, I wanted to take a moment to tell all of you how proud I am of the work you have done today and will do over the next days and weeks,” Mina told the department. “We **have trained** again and again for this type of situation,” he continued. “It’s unfortunate that we had to put those skills to use today. But because of that training and your professionalism, we saved dozens of lives this morning.”¹²

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2016/jun/12/florida-nightclub-shooting-terrorism-suspect-updates?page=with%3Ablock-575de2a2e4b064f52e5fa121> (16 May 2017).

De Wit & Brisard (2014) have extensively shown that the progressive can be exploited to convey interpretations of irritation, and that these interpretations constitute direct elaborations of the progressive's basic meaning of contingency: "with events that have an atypical status, the speaker potentially has more reason for irritation than with situations that she regards as typical, presumably partly because events, when presented as atypical, can be remedied in response to the friction they cause (it is, for example, of no use to try to prevent the sun from rising in the east, or to be irritated by it)" (De Wit & Brisard: 82-83). It seems, then, that the evaluative sense that is associated with the progressive as a direct consequence of its schematic meaning of contingency is preserved when the construction is embedded in the higher-order (present) perfect progressive.

Again, this account of aspectual stacking in terms of preservation of the most schematic meaning of the progressive can be considered evidence for the higher-order epistemic motivation for lower-level shifts. The aspectual meaning of the progressive – the meaning of ongoingness that is prototypically associated with non-perfect progressive uses such as (40) – is shed when the progressive combines with the perfect. One might claim, in fact, that the progressive is coerced when it is being used in a perfect progressive construction (see also de Swart (1998) and Bary (2009) for formal-semantic accounts of aspectual stacking in terms of aspectual coercion). Yet at the same time, the modal meaning of the progressive is maintained, as is reflected in the epistemic (evaluative) meaning differences between (42), on the one hand, and (41) and (43), on the other hand.

We can briefly note, finally, that an epistemic approach to coercion may also account for the loss of aspectual meaning of the progressive when it is embedded in a higher-order construction that is not normally analyzed in aspectual terms. A case in point is '*will* + progressive aspect', which only rarely conveys an interpretation in terms of ongoingness at

some future reference point, as in (44); much more frequent is the sense of futurity “as a matter of course”, as in (45) (Celle & Smith 2010: 240).

(44) Your car **will be waiting** for you when you arrive.

(45) This train **will be calling** at Preston, Chorley,...

As Celle & Smith (2010) point out the progressive preserves its original (non-aspectual) “interpretative” (Ljung 1980) function when used in combination with *will*, even in its “non-aspectual” uses, in that it serves to convey a subjective – again, evaluative – perspective on the denoted event.

To conclude, this section offers several observations suggesting that an epistemic account of aspectual coercion constraints could offer a fruitful and systematic framework for the analysis of the aspectual shifts that some aspectual constructions (and verb phrases) undergo when they are being used in specific contexts. In other words, what holds for the simple tenses in full-verb inversion is arguably relevant for other aspectual constructions in other contexts as well.

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed the notable aspectual characteristics of full-verb inversion in English. We have observed that there is a mismatch between the canonical aspectual semantics of the simple tenses and that of the full-verb construction in which they are embedded. By way of resolving this semantic conflict, the full-verb inversion construction coerces the simple

tenses into taking on a meaning of aspectual ongoingness that is normally/naturally preserved for the progressive. The main point of my study was to demonstrate that this mismatch and the way it is being resolved is essentially motivated by the epistemic convergence of the full-verb inversion construction and the embedded tenses: both confer a sense of full and instant identifiability on the situations they report. From this perspective, it is not surprising that the full-verb inversion construction should select simple tenses rather than progressive ones. The mismatch this causes at the more specific aspectual level can be considered collateral damage, so to speak, that calls for conflict resolution by way of coercion.

In Section 6, I have suggested that this emphasis on the epistemic import of constructions at the most basic level of semantic analysis could help accounting for other apparently non-aspectual uses of aspectual constructions and for aspectual coercion restrictions on verbs. Obviously, though, more systematic research is needed in this field, not only to provide more evidence from the domain of aspect, but also from other areas of the grammar where semantic mismatches and consequent coercion processes are attested.

References

- Altshuler, Daniel (2016). *Events, states and times: An essay on narrative discourse in English*. De Gruyter Open.
- Austin, John L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bary, Corien (2009). Aspect in Ancient Greek: A semantic analysis of the aorist and the imperfective. Phd Dissertation, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen.
- Birner, Betty J. & Gregory Ward (1992). On the interpretation of VP inversion in American English. *Journal of Linguistics* 28, 1–12.
- Birner, Betty J. (1994). Information status and word order: An analysis of English inversion. *Language* 70, 233–59.
- Birner, Betty J. (1995). Pragmatic constraints on the verb in English inversion. *Lingua* 97, 233–56.
- Birner, Betty J. & Gregory Ward (1998). *Information status and noncanonical word order in English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bolinger, Dwight (1977). *Meaning and form*. New York: Longman.
- Brisard, Frank (2002). The English present. In Frank Brisard (Ed.), *Grounding: The epistemic footing of deixis and reference* (pp. 251–97). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Calver, Edward (1946). The uses of the present tense forms in English. *Language* 22(4), 317–25.

- Celle, Agnès & Nicholas Smith (2010). Beyond aspect: *Will be -ing* and *shall be -ing*. *English Language and Linguistics* 14, 239-269.
- Chen, Rong (2003). *English inversion. A ground-before-figure construction*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Cooper, Robin (1986). Tense and discourse location in Situation Semantics. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 9, 17-36.
- Croft, William & Alan D. Cruse (2004). *Cognitive linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Smet, Hendrik & Liesbeth Heyvaert (2011). The meaning of the English present participle. *English Language and Linguistics* 15, 473–498.
- de Swart, Henriëtte (1998). Aspect shift and coercion. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 16, 347-385.
- De Wit, Astrid (2016). The relation between aspect and inversion in English. *English Language and Linguistics* 20(1): 107-128.
- De Wit, Astrid (2017). *The present perfective paradox across languages*. Oxford studies of time in language and thought. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- De Wit, Astrid & Frank Brisard (2014). A Cognitive Grammar account of the semantics of the English present progressive. *Journal of Linguistics* 50, 49-90.
- De Wit, Astrid, Frank Brisard & Michael Meeuwis (2018). The epistemic import of aspectual constructions: The case of performatives. *Language and Cognition*. First view online.
- De Wit, Astrid, Peter Petré & Frank Brisard (ms.). Standing out with the progressive.

- Dorgeloh, Heidrun (1997). *Inversion in Modern English: Form and function*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Dowty, David R. (1975). The stative in the progressive and other essence/accident contrasts. *Linguistic Inquiry* 6, 579–88.
- Drubig, Hans-Bernard (1988). On the discourse function of subject-verb inversion. In Josef Klegraf & Dietrich Nehls (Eds.), *Essays on the English language and applied linguistics on the occasion of Gerhard Nickel's 60th birthday* (pp. 83–95). Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag.
- Goldberg, Adele (1995). *Constructions: A Construction Grammar approach to argument structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goldsmith, John & Erich Friedrich Voisetschlaeger. 1982. The logic of the English progressive. *Linguistic Inquiry* 13, 79–89.
- Güldemann, Tom (2003). Present progressive vis-à-vis predication focus in Bantu: A verbal category between semantics and pragmatics. *Studies in Language* 27, 323-360.
- Kay, Paul & Laura A. Michaelis (ms.), Partial inversion in English.
- Kreyer, Rolf (2006). *Inversion in modern written English: Syntactic complexity, information status and the creative writer*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Lakoff, George (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things. What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Langacker, Ronald W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, vol. 1: *Theoretical prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Langacker, Ronald W. (1993). Nouns and verbs. *Language* 63, 53–94.
- Langacker, Ronald W. (2001). The English present tense. *English language and linguistics* 5, 251–73.

- Langacker, Ronald W. (2011). The English present. In Adeline Patard & Frank Brisard (Eds.), *Cognitive approaches to tense, aspect and epistemic modality* (pp. 45–86). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Lauwers, Peter & Dominique Willems (2011). Coercion: Definition and challenges, current approaches, and new trends. *Linguistics* 49, 1219–1235.
- Ljung, Magnus (1980). *Reflections on the English progressive*. Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Los, Bettelou & Marianne Starren (2012). A typological switch in early Modern English – and the beginning of one in Dutch? *Leuvense Bijdragen* 98, 98-126.
- Michaelis, Laura A. (2004). Type shifting in Construction Grammar: An integrated approach to aspectual coercion. *Cognitive linguistics* 15, 1–67.
- Michaelis, Laura A. (2011). Stative by construction. *Linguistics* 49, 1359-1399.
- Partee, Barbara & Vladimir Borschev (2007). Existential sentences, BE and the genitive of negation in Russian. In Klaus von Heusinger & Ileana Comorovski (Eds.), *Existence: Semantics and Syntax* (pp. 147–90). Berlin: Springer Verlag.
- Petré, Peter (2017). The extravagant progressive. An experimental corpus study on the grammaticalization history of [BE Ving]. *English Language and Linguistics* 21, 227–250.
- Prado-Alonso, Carlos (2016). A constructional analysis of obligatory XVS syntactic structures. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 51, 51-82.
- Pustejovsky, James & Pierrette Bouillon (1995). Aspectual coercion and logical polysemy. *Journal of Semantics* 12, 133-162.
- Rappaport Hovav, Malka & Beth Levin (1998). Building verb meanings. In Miriam Butt & Wilhelm Geuder (Eds.), *The projection of arguments: Lexical and compositional factors*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Ziegeler, Debra (2007). A word of caution on coercion. *Journal of Pragmatics* 39, 990-1028.