

**English posture verbs and evaluative content:
The influence of aspect vs. experiential associations**

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The posture verbs ‘sit’, ‘stand’, ‘lie’ change their meaning and function in a systematic way across languages. Namely, these “core” posture verbs grammaticalise from pure, lexical, posture predicates to locative or existence predicates, and finally to aspectual markers (Newman, 2002; Kuteva, 1999). In some West Germanic languages, the posture predicates are used as aspectual markers in periphrastic progressive constructions (see, e.g., Lemmens (2005) for Dutch, and Breed (2017b,a) for Afrikaans, Pots & Fraser 2018 for a comparison of Afrikaans and Dutch, and (Lødrup, 2002, 2017) for Norwegian). In English, however, the posture predicates can only be used to describe literal posture of animate subjects or as locational/existential predicates. The latter is possible with inanimate subjects as well (Fraser 2018), as seen in the naturally-occurring examples of (1), both from COCA (Davies, 2013).

- (1) a. The real issue Rockwell was subtly illustrating was not deadline pressure, but the challenges of parenting. Notice anything wrong with the scene? [...] **His brush handles are lying** in clumps of paint, his sketches are underfoot, his empty matchbook is on the floor behind him, [...]
- b. It’s sort of ironic that **the scotch is sitting** there unopened after two experiments, and we don’t know whether it would be a good idea to toast these results or not.

In both examples of (1), the inanimate subject is localised somewhere. In (1a) a horizontal orientation is encoded (i.e., the interpretation is not that the handles are vertically positioned in the paint clumps), whereas in (1b) a seated position would be impossible for a bottle. Interestingly, both examples carry an evaluative layer of meaning, to different degrees.

In this talk, I will discuss the two English posture verbs which can be used locationally and have an additional evaluative content (i.e., ‘sit’ and ‘lie’; cf. Fraser 2018), and, based on corpora data, patterns of their non-literal, locational uses. In particular, I will discuss how ‘sit’ is further grammaticalised than ‘lie’, as it does not encode the orientation of its subject. In addition, the realisation of evaluative content for ‘sit’ is constrained by aspect, whereas this aspectual constraint is absent for the less grammaticalised ‘lie’; instead the experiential associations of ‘lie’ (e.g., sickness, death, disorder; cf. Lemmens 2002) contribute to the evaluative content of the posture construction—while also encoding a horizontal orientation.