Progressive posture

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Introduction Typically, the progressive aspect is used to report the relevant event within a larger temporal frame (Filip 2012, Binnick 1991, a.o.). As stative verbs describe unchanging intervals over time, a stative verb in the progressive is usually infelicitous. However, as Comrie (1976) pointed out for English, the progressive can be utilised to describe a temporary state, often with a heightened emotion or evaluative attributed to the speaker; this can be seen in (1), where the interpretation is that usually the whisky-drinker drinks more than six whiskies before "seeing pink elephants".

(1)   I've only had six whiskies and already **I'm seeing** pink elephants!   (Comrie 1976: 37)

Using the progressive aspect to express an unusual—and undesirable or unexpected—state has also been reported for the periphrastic progressive in Germanic languages (Breed 2017, Biberauer & Vikner 2017), in particular when a posture or motion verb is used as the auxiliary marker. In English, posture verbs have only reached the grammaticalisation stage of locational predicates, i.e., are not used as aspectual markers, but there does appear to be an interaction with aspect and speaker evaluation. Based on corpus data, I argue not only that a speaker evaluation can accompany the locative use of posture verbs with the progressive, but also that the lexical semantics of the particular verbs influence the distribution of the evaluation. More specifically, this study investigates two core posture verbs in English (the distribution of the third, 'stand', is much different from the other two, and will not be discussed in this talk) when used as locative predicates like in (2).

(2)   a.   That same edition of **the newspaper was lying** on [her] breakfast table in Berkeley when her sons [...] walked in.
        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.
                        [Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA); edited for brevity]

The sentences in (2) both contain an inanimate subject and describe an idle state of that subject, which the speaker evaluates. Omitting the progressive posture in (2-a), does not result in infelicity, but it does change the reading: without it, there is no longer a salient interpretation that the speaker evaluates the idle state of this particular newspaper as undesirable. In turn, removing 'sit' from (2-b) returns an infelicitous utterance (#*It is sort of ironic that the scotch is there unopened ...*); interestingly, adding an aspectual particle such as *still* to (2-b) can "save" the evaluation.

Grammaticalised posture verbs In (3), both the posture and locative use illustrated with 'sit' (the same pattern is found with 'lie'): posture use is possible with animate subjects when they are the relevant posture (3-a). The locative use in (3-b) can be used with inanimate subjects and often have no spatial configuration restrictions like with the fork in (3-b).

(3)   *Encoding posture vs. location*   (4)   *(Non-)omissibility of location*
        a.   The man is sitting on the bench.   a.   The man is sitting.
        b.   **The fork is sitting in the sink.**   b. #The fork is sitting.

The sentences in (4) show a linguistic difference. Namely, the posture of the subject is salient when the location is omitted from the construction (**?**); inanimate subjects, e.g., in (4-b), cannot felicitously describe a salient posture. Based on the pattern in (4), I argue that this omissibility is one contextual criteria for disambiguating posture from locational uses. Similarly, it is infelicitous to say #*The man is.*; this suggests that the locational use of core posture verbs like 'lie' , 'sit' are semantically bleached. Considering the possibility of inanimate subjects and lack of posture saliency, I assume that these locational uses are grammaticalised posture predicates.

CORPUS STUDY This talk presents empirical evidence from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies 2006). After manually filtering out the examples with animate subjects, 83 '[be] sitting' and 60 '[be] lying' examples were analysed; as a comparison, the simple past forms of these verbs were also looked at. Because there are few instances of this construction in this corpus and because the present study is interested in fine-grained semantic meaning, the focus is not quantitative but qualitative. Research goals were (i) to explore the degree of grammaticalisation by looking at what kind of inanimate arguments appear, (ii) to test the above intuition that locational uses of posture verbs require a locative argument, and (iii) to investigate the interaction of aspect and evaluative content **To answer (i):** For 'lie' , the most common subject was 'dead body' (25% *lay*, 13% *lying*) and a horizontal orientation was salient for the other subjects; there were no dead bodies "sitting". The most common ontologies for 'sit' subjects were VEHICULE and BUILDING. **To answer (ii):** There were 5 '[be] sitting' (6%) & 24 'sat' (26%); 7 '[be] lying' (12%) & 75 'lay' (16%) sentences without a locative PP. Crucially, 100% of these location-less sentences (except for the 'lay' subset: 89%) included a secondary predicate (here: depictive predicates, e.g., *unopened* in (2-b) and temporal *for*-phrases) following the posture verb. Overall, the simple past forms contained more instances of secondary predicates (ca. 44%/62% for 'lie' /'sit' simple past vs. ca. 10% for both 'lie' /'sit' progressive).**To answer (iii):** 63% of 'sit' and 50% of 'lie' sentences were judged to be evaluative. At first glance, there seemed to be no interaction with aspect and evaluativity, but (60%) the simple past sentences judged as evaluative included a secondary predicate, in contrast to the evaluative progressive sentences, of which only one fifth included a secondary predicate.

PROPOSAL The naturally-occurring corpus data suggests that 'sit' is further grammaticalised than 'lie' , as the latter still described at least a horizontal orientation of its subject and also often combined with 'dead body' subjects (in the cognitive literature, it is acknowledged that the metaphorical extension of 'lie' is very negative— associated rather with death, sickness, negative occurrences; cf., e.g., Newman 2002, a.o.); this indicates it is less semantically bleached than 'sit' , which was found with a wider range of subject types. Recent work (Davis and Gutzmann 2015) proposes an interaction between grammaticalisation and pragmaticalisation of certain constructions. As 'lie' has a slightly lower frequency of evaluative sentences and seems to be slightly less semantically bleached than 'sit' , this study provides evidence in support of this interaction.

Those few sentences without a locative argument contained a secondary predicate, and overall, the simple past forms appeared with significantly more secondary predicates. Following **?**, secondary predicates spatially and temporally contextualise the main event, which means that they can fulfill the locative argument's function required for the locative use. The temporal contextualisation is a similar function to the progressive, as this aspect also contextualises the described event within a larger temporal frame. So, locative uses of posture verbs not only require a locative argument, but also are often temporally contextualised by either the progressive aspect or a secondary predicate. As to the evaluative component: because the evaluative simple past sentences for both verbs appeared with a secondary predicate three times more often than the progressive sentences, and because an aspectual particle like *still* can affect the felicity of sentences like (2-b), I propose that the temporal contextualisation function of the progressive can trigger an evaluation for locatively-used posture verbs; if this aspect is absent, a secondary predicate can fulfill this function. In summary, this proposal discusses the interaction of aspect and evaluativity a fine-grained way, contributing a novel perspective to the discussion on the progressive aspect.

SELECTED REFERENCES **Comrie**, B. (1976). *Aspect: an introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems.* CUP. **Newman**, J. (2002). A cross-linguistic overview of the posture verbs 'sit', 'stand' and 'lie'. In Newman, J., ed., *The Linguistics of Sitting, Standing, and Lying*, 1–24. John Benjamins. **Rothstein**, S. (2000). Secondary predication and aspectual structure. *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 17, 741–763.