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Deconstructing Meaning : a semiotactic approach to gerundival constructions in English

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Deconstructing Meaning

A semiotactic approach to gerundival constructions in English

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de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden
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ter verdediging op woensdag 30 januari 2019
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Dedicated to
Lisa van Vark
and
my parents

Preface

Before you lies the dissertation *Deconstructing meaning – A semiotactic approach to gerundival constructions in English*. In this work, I attempt to inventorise the various positions *-ing* forms can take in English sentences from a semiotactic perspective, focusing on the elusive semantics of the clausal gerund (e.g. *Reading books is fun*). It is hoped that this work will be a useful contribution to the active debate that still surrounds the clausal gerund, and that it will convince the reader of the versatility and usefulness of the semiotactic framework in analysing linguistic data.

The project was undertaken when Frits Kortlandt invited me to write a dissertation under his supervision. I am very grateful for the opportunity he has given me and I wish to express my special gratitude to him; I have learned most of what I know about the semiotactic framework from him.

The aim of this work was formulated under Frits Kortlandt's and Egbert Fortuin's supervision. After the expiration of Kortlandt's *ius promovendi*, the work proceeded under the supervision of Ton van Haaften and Egbert Fortuin. The central findings presented in this work were collected and formulated under their meticulous supervision.

I would like to thank my supervisors wholeheartedly for their support throughout the process. I am also grateful to my parents for supporting me in this endeavour and for their advice and help and to my girlfriend Lisa van Vark, who stuck with me through all the stressful moments that inevitably accompany a project such as this. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the friends that have helped me in some way in writing this dissertation, and for the support I have had from other people affiliated with the LUCL. In particular, I would like to thank Milan van Berlo and Joshua Koster for their help.

I hope you will enjoy reading this work.

Lennart van der Velden

Zeist, 3 September 2018

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List of examples

The underlined sentences refer to examples that are accompanied by a semiotactic notation. Some examples occur in multiple positions. In those cases, the first instance of that sentence will refer to the number of the second, which may be notated where the first was not.

Chapter 1: The semiotactic framework

- | | | |
|------|--|-------|
| (1) | <u>“Two glasses is good, but five is bad”</u>
(Ebeling 1978, p. 279). | p.12 |
| (2) | <u>The boy eats an apple.</u> | p. 13 |
| (3) | <u>The hungry boy eats an apple.</u> | p. 15 |
| (4) | <u>The very hungry boy eats an apple.</u> | p. 16 |
| (5) | <u>The very hungry boy quickly eats an apple.</u> | p. 16 |
| (6) | <u>I saw the man yesterday.</u> | p. 17 |
| (7) | <u>Yesterday I saw the man.</u> | p.17 |
| (8) | <u>The very hungry boy eats apples.</u> | p. 18 |
| (9) | <u>Totally clear water</u> | p. 19 |
| (10) | <u>Water totally clear</u> | p. 19 |
| (11) | <u>He works fast having drunk a cup of coffee.</u> | p. 20 |
| (12) | <u>An inkblot</u> | p. 22 |
| (13) | <u>A blue-black sky</u> | p. 22 |
| (14) | <u>Jack’s coat</u> | p. 23 |
| (15) | <u>Do I eat an apple?</u> | p. 24 |
| (16) | <u>the cat and the dog</u> | p. 26 |
| (17) | <u>Proposed notation for “a red and white dress” (Ebeling 1978, p. 220)</u> | p. 26 |
| (18) | <u>“the cat and the dog” (1978, p. 220) notated in the style of Ebeling (2006)</u> | p. 27 |
| (19) | <u>Notation of <i>urbs condita est</i> in Ebeling (1978, p. 241)</u> | p. 30 |
| (20) | <u>Notation of <i>urbs condita est</i> in Ebeling (1978, p. 240)</u> | p. 31 |
| (21) | I am reading in my room. See (24) | p. 35 |
| (22) | I will be reading in my room. See (25) | p. 35 |
| (23) | I will have been reading in my room (for hours). See (26) | p. 35 |
| (24) | <u>I am reading in my room.</u> | p. 39 |
| (25) | <u>I will be reading in my room.</u> | p. 39 |
| (26) | <u>I will have been reading in my room.</u> | p. 40 |
| (27) | <u>“She often cries” (Ebeling 1978, p. 372)</u> | p. 40 |
| (28) | <u>“She often cries” (Ebeling 1978, p. 372) alternatively notated</u> | p. 40 |
| (29) | <u>The train leaves tomorrow.</u> | p. 41 |

- (30) They checked out yesterday. p. 41
- (31) I haven't done anything like this in years. p. 42
- (32) We're having dinner at eight. p.42

Chapter 2: Gerundives in limitation relations and gerunds as entities

- (33) I like red roses. p. 47
- (34) A walking man p. 48
- (35) A man hunting is a sight to see. p. 48
- (36) A man who is hunting p. 49
- (37) Any man who was hunting between 10 and 12 will be arrested for disturbing the peace. p. 49
- (38) Any man hunting between 10 and 12 will be arrested for disturbing the peace. p. 50
- (39) A man walking in the streets. p. 50
- (40) A walking man in the street. p. 50
- (41) The woman driving the van is coming closer. p. 52
- (42) I believe it is an opportunity worth the risk. p. 52
- (43) The woman giving children candy p. 53
- (44) "Shielding his eyes, the man looked at the guest" p. 54
(Ebeling 1978, p. 354)
- (45) This is you driving your car. p. 54
- (46) I don't like the drinking you. p. 55
- (47) He is aggravating me. p. 56
- (48) That is aggravating. p. 56
- (49) "Anne was entertaining" (Brinton & Traugott 2005, p. 112) p. 57
(progressive)
- (50) "Anne was entertaining" (2005, p. 112) (property) p. 57
- (51) A hard-working man p. 58
- (52) A man working hard p. 58
- (53) This is breaking my heart. p. 60
- (54) This is heartbreaking. p. 60
- (55) This breaks my heart p. 60
- (56) The young works hard. p. 61
- (57) The young work hard. p. 61
- (58) The young worked hard. p. 61
- (59) The working are still poor. p. 62
- (60) The young at heart p. 62
- (61) The hard-working p. 62
- (62) The killing of a man takes time. p. 63

- (63) The building of a house takes time. p. 63
- (64) “Gang members who helped or even looked on as a killing takes place” (“Murder police”, 27 September 2009). p. 63
- (65) *A building of a house takes time. p. 63
- (66) I own a building in the city. p. 63
- (67) Illegal gun carrying p. 63

Chapter 3: Gerundives in gradation relations

- (68) That guy was *amazingly* funny. p. 67
- (69) *Amazingly*, the sprinter broke the record. p. 68
- (70) *A stunningly* red dress p. 68
- (71) “... I wear that, that *dazzlingly* confounds”
(Melville 1851/1980, p. 23, italics added). p. 68
- (72) We are progressing *frustratingly* slowly. p. 68
- (73) “The blinding red rays from the ruins snapped instantaneously out...” (Lovecraft 1926/2013, p. 151). p. 70
- (74) Piping hot soup p. 70
- (75) It was scorching hot. p. 71
- (76) All preventative measures notwithstanding, the dam broke under the weight. p. 71
- (77) The outrage following the scandal was justified. p. 71
- (78) He fled the country following the attacks. p. 72
- (79) “Considering none of those guys knew how to use cameras, it was pretty amazing when it started to come together”
(Helmore, 6 August 2011). p. 72
- (80) I still cry *thinking* about it. p. 73
- (81) I make my money *driving* cars. p. 73
- (82) “I framed my resolution and in heart *trembling* undertook to move it” (Ghandi 1929/1982, p. 436). p. 73
- (83) I left the hospital *examined*. p. 76
- (84) I believed the surgery would help, *having examined* many studies. p. 76
- (85) I was very anxious *being examined* for malaria. p. 77
- (86) I went home *having been partying* by myself all night. p. 78
- (87) I was relieved, *having been examined* for malaria. p. 79
- (88) I was bored, *having been being examined* for hours. p. 79

Chapter 4: The situational gerund

- (89) She sat *talking*. p. 83
- (90) She liked *talking*. p. 83

- (91) She stopped *talking*. p. 83
- (92) She avoided *talking (to him)*. p. 83
- (93) She continued *talking*. p. 83
- (94) “I caught *Kim mistreating my cat*”
(Huddleston & Pullum 2002, p. 1204, italics added). p. 84
- (95) “I resented *Kim mistreating my cat*”
(p. 1204, emphasis added). p. 84
- (96) “That way I avoided *her seeing the brand on my inner thigh*” (Swarovski, 2015). p. 84
- (97) John left *to work out*. p. 85
- (98) John likes *to work out*. p. 85
- (99) Stella killed Mickey *to send a message*. p. 85
- (100) Stella had counted on *Mickey to toe the line*. p. 85
- (101) “I saw the man jumping”
(Ebeling 1978, p. 308, italics removed). p. 86
- (102) “I saw the man jump” (p. 308, italics removed). p. 86
- (103) I saw a man *writing a book*. p. 87
- (104) I saw *a man write a book*. p. 87
- (105) *Being loud* is just *being young and dumb*. p. 88
- (106) “In the broad scheme of things, *kids being loud* is
just *kids being young and dumb*” (Beekissed, 2010). p. 88
- (107) She sat *talking*. p. 88
- (108) She sat. p. 88
- (109) She likes *talking*. p. 88
- (110) *She likes. p. 88
- (111) I caught her *mistreating my cat*. p. 89
- (112) *I caught *mistreating my cat*. p. 89
- (113) I resent *her mistreating my cat*. p. 89
- (114) I resent *mistreating my cat*. p. 89
- (115) *I resent. p. 89
- (116) Men *driven insane* (*is/)are dangerous. p. 89
- (117) *Men being driven insane* is a serious problem. p. 89
- (118) I found her *trapped in her room*. p. 89
- (119) I resent *her being trapped in her room*. p. 89
- (120) “I resent *Kim/Kim’s mistreating my cat*”
(Huddleston & Pullum 2002, p. 1204, emphasis added). p. 90
- (121) “I caught *Kim/*Kim’s mistreating my cat*”
(p. 1204, emphasis added). p. 90

- (122) “I can safely say that *to know him* was *to love him*, and *to love him* was *to know him*. Those who knew him loved him, while those who did not know him loved him from afar” p. 90
(Roddenberry et al. & Landau, 1989).
- (123) *To know the truth* is a burden. p. 90
- (124) John left *to work out*. p. 91
- (125) John left. p. 91
- (126) John likes *to work out*. p. 91
- (127) *John likes. p. 91
- (128) John brought the car *to pick her up*. p. 91
- (129) *John brought *to pick her up*. p. 91
- (130) John expected *Jim to see her*. p. 91
- (131) John expected *to see her*. p. 91
- (132) *John expected. p. 91
- (133) **The men drink beer* is/are a problem. p. 92
- (134) **The man jump* is impressive. p. 92
- (135) I saw *a man writing a book*. p. 92
- (136) I saw *a man write a book*. p. 92
- (137) I saw a man. p. 92
- (138) I hear *the doorbell ring*. p. 93
- (139) *I hear *ring*. p. 93
- (140) “*Living in fear of attack* is a terrible stress and one which GPs could do without” (Egan 2008, p. 133, emphasis added). See (211) p. 94
- (141) *To live in fear of attack* is a terrible stress and one which GPs could do without. See (212) p. 94
- (142) *Doing so* would have required 18,446,744,073,551,615 grains. See (213) p. 94
- (143) “*To do so* would have required 18,446,744,073,709,551,615 grains!” (Featherstone 1975, emphasis added). See (214) p. 94
- (144) *Washing the dishes* used to be a drag until I bought a dishwasher. See (215) p. 95
- (145) ?*To wash the dishes* used to be a drag until I bought a dishwasher. p. 95
- (146) *Working at the post office* is driving me crazy. See (216) p. 95
- (147) ?*To work at the post office* is driving me crazy. p. 95
- (148) *His not taking his medication* has killed him. See (217) p. 95
- (149) **For him not to take his medication* has killed him. p. 95

- (150) *To lie* is to sin. See (218) p. 96
- (151) **Lying* is to sin. p. 96
- (152) The senator fell off the stage *after giving his speech*. See (219) p. 97
- (153) *The senator fell off the stage *after to give his speech*. p. 97
- (154) I cleaned the floor *by scrubbing it*. See (220) p. 97
- (155) *I cleaned the floor *by to scrub it*. p. 97
- (156) The senator fell off the stage *while giving his speech*. See (221) p. 97
- (157) *The senator fell off the stage *while to give his speech*. p. 97
- (158) I hope I'm not sending the wrong message *in doing so*. See (222) p. 97
- (159) *I hope I'm not sending the wrong message *in to do so*. p. 97
- (160) The actor brushed his teeth *before going on stage*. See (223) p. 98
- (161) *The actor brushed his teeth *before to go on stage*. p. 98
- (162) "Patient works out in gym *to win back his strength*"
(Egan 2008, p. 102, emphasis added). See (224) p. 98
- (163) *Patient works out in gym *to winning back his strength*. p. 98
- (164) I went from washing cars *to selling them*. See (225) p. 98
- (165) *I went from washing cars *to sell them*. p. 98
- (166) "I remembered *locking up*" (p. 1243, emphasis added). See (226) p. 100
- (167) "I remembered *to lock up*"
(Huddleston & Pullum 2002, p. 1243, emphasis added). See (227) p. 100
- (168) "I hate *lying*" (Jespersen 1940, p. 193, emphasis added). See (228) p. 100
- (169) "I hate *to lie*" (p. 193, emphasis added). See (229) p. 101
- (170) "Mary began *hitting John*"
(Wierzbicka 1988, p. 85, emphasis added). See (230) p. 101
- (171) "Mary began *to hit John*" (p. 85, emphasis added). See (231) p. 101
- (172) He repented *having done so*. See (232) p. 101
- (173) He avoided *paying the damage to the other car*. See (233) p. 101
- (174) I celebrate *you saving our lives*. See (234) p. 102
- (175) I deplore *his insisting I do everything*. See (235) p. 102
- (176) I contemplated *intervening on his behalf*. See (236) p. 102
- (177) Forgive *my saying so*. See (237) p. 102
- (178) We prevented *them escalating the problem*. See (238) p. 102
- (179) The government has *prohibited our protesting the new bill*.
See (239) p. 102
- (180) This will only serve *to cause panic*. See (240) p. 103
- (181) He declined *to take up the challenge*. See (241) p. 103
- (182) I'm trying *to understand you*. See (242) p. 103
- (183) He seems *to be lying*. See (243) p. 104

- (184) He appears *to have a hidden agenda*. See (244) p. 104
- (185) “He asked *Pat to be interviewed*” p. 104
(Huddleston & Pullum 2002, p. 1230, emphasis added). See (245)
- (186) “He asked *for Pat to be interviewed*” (p. 1230, emphasis added). p. 104
See (246)
- (187) Pat asked *to be interviewed*. See (247) p. 104
- (188) Pat was asked *to be interviewed*. See (248) p. 104
- (189) “They are actually willing *him to do it*” p. 104
(Isherwood 1964, p. 11, emphasis added). See (249)
- (190) I expect you *to work harder*. See (250) p. 105
- (191) You are expected *to work harder*. See (251) p. 105
- (192) I counted on *Ed to bake the cookies*. See (252) p. 105
- (193) I counted on *the oven to work to bake the cookies*. See (253) p. 105
- (194) “I believe John to have liked Anselm” p. 106
(Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1971, p. 363). See (254)
- (195) *I believe *John having liked Anselm*. p. 106
- (196) I verified *him to be lying*. See (256) p. 106
- (197) *I verified him (*being*) *lying*. p. 106
- (198) “I saw the man jumping” p. 107
(Ebeling 1978, p. 308) (notation adapted to present style).
- (199) “He likes being rich” (1978, p. 307) p. 107
(notation adapted to present style).
- (200) “He likes to be rich” (1978, p. 307). p. 108
- (201) “I remember filing that article somewhere in the top p. 115
drawer of my filing cabinet” (Duffley 1999, p. 303).
- (202) “I remember filing that article somewhere in the top drawer of my p. 116
filing cabinet. The drawer was absolutely full, and I had to squeeze
it in at the back” (Egan 2008, p. 69).
- (203) “He wanted to open the window” (Duffley 2006, p. 30). p. 120
- (204) “He wanted to be home when she arrived” (p. 30). p. 120
- (205) To lock the door p. 135
- (206) Locking the door p. 135
- (207) “veter svalil berezu” (Ebeling 1978, p. 292). p. 136
- (208) “berezu valilo vetrom ‘the wind felled the birch’” p. 136
(1978, p. 337).
- (209) I hate *lying*. p. 140
- (210) I hate *to lie*. p. 140

- (211) “Living in fear of attack is a terrible stress and one which GPs could do without” (Egan 2008, p. 133, emphasis added). p. 142
- (212) To live in fear of attack is a terrible stress and one which GPs could do without. p. 142
- (213) Doing so would have required 18,446,744,073,551,615 grains. p. 142
- (214) “To do so would have required 18,446,744,073,709,551,615 grains!” (Featherstone 1975, emphasis added). p. 142
- (215) Washing the dishes used to be a drag until I bought a dishwasher. p. 143
- (216) Working at the post office is driving me crazy. p. 144
- (217) His not taking his medication has killed him. p. 145
- (218) To lie is to sin. p. 145
- (219) The senator fell off the stage after giving his speech. p. 146
- (220) I cleaned the floor by scrubbing it. p. 147
- (221) The senator fell off the stage while giving his speech. p. 147
- (222) I hope I’m not sending the wrong message in doing so. p. 147
- (223) The actor brushed his teeth before going on stage. p. 148
- (224) “Patient works out in gym to win back his strength” (Egan 2008, p. 102, emphasis added). p. 148
- (225) I went from washing cars to selling them. p. 148
- (226) “I remembered locking up” (Huddleston & Pullum 2002 p. 1243, emphasis added). p. 150
- (227) “I remembered to lock up” (p. 1243, emphasis added). p. 150
- (228) “I hate lying” (Jespersen 1940, p. 193, emphasis added). p. 152
- (229) “I hate to lie” (p. 193, emphasis added). p. 152
- (230) “Mary began hitting John” (Wierzbicka 1988, p. 85, emphasis added). p. 153
- (231) “Mary began to hit John” (p. 85, emphasis added). p. 153
- (232) He repented having done so. p. 155
- (233) He avoided paying the damage to the other car. p. 155
- (234) I celebrate you saving our lives. p. 156
- (235) I deplore his insisting I do everything. p. 156
- (236) I contemplated intervening on his behalf. p. 156
- (237) Forgive my saying so. p. 157
- (238) We prevented them escalating the problem. p. 157
- (239) The government has prohibited our protesting the new bill. p. 157
- (240) This will only serve to cause panic. p. 158
- (241) He declined to take up the challenge. p. 159

- (242) I'm trying to understand you. p. 159
- (243) He seems to be lying. p. 160
- (244) He appears to have a hidden agenda. p. 160
- (245) "He asked Pat to be interviewed" p. 161
 (Huddleston & Pullum 2002, p. 1230, emphasis added)
- (246) "He asked for Pat to be interviewed" p. 162
 (p. 1230, emphasis added).
- (247) Pat asked to be interviewed. p. 162
- (248) Pat was asked to be interviewed. p. 162
- (249) "They are actually willing him to do it" p. 163
 (Isherwood 1964, p. 11, emphasis added).
- (250) I expect you to work harder. p. 163
- (251) You are expected to work harder. p. 163
- (252) I counted on Ed to bake the cookies. p. 164
- (253) I counted on Ed to bake the cookies, alternative notation. p. 164
- (254) I counted on the oven to work to bake the cookies. p. 165
- (255) "I believe John to have liked Anselm" p. 166
 (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1971, p. 363)
- (256) I verified him to be lying. p. 166