Believe-type matrix verbs and their complements

Corpus-based investigations of their functions in discourse

A collection of articles

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Introduction

0. Preamble

This volume is a collection of eight articles (with one exception, all written versions of conference papers or talks) that, at the point of writing this introduction, have either already been published or have been accepted for publication. They are not merely thematically related, but subsequent papers build on previous ones. As a result, and because they were written so that they could be read independently of each other, there is a fair amount of overlap between them, especially in their introductions. So as not to add to this overlap, and to avoid making all the points made in the individual papers at the outset, this general introduction will be kept to a minimum.

These are the eight articles in their order of publication:

- 1997 ‘The choice between infinitives and that-clauses after believe.’ English Language and Linguistics 1, 2: 271-284.

This is not the order in which they were written, nor is it the sequence in which they will be presented as chapters of this volume. In section 5 of this introduction I will motivate their arrangement in chapters, justifying why this deviates from the chronology of their conception as well as their publication.
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Before I move on to this, however, I will first describe which very specific area of English grammar this collection zooms in on (section 1) and which questions it tries to answer with relation to it (section 2). I will also say something about the methodological approach which the problem areas dealt with seem to call for (section 3) and about the descriptive frameworks that appear most suited to provide sensible answers.

1. Research subject: believe-type matrix verbs and their complements

Believe-type verbs, as they are often called, are those members of the verbal lexicon that share a) the syntactic characteristic of displaying the alternation between a finite clausal complement and an NP+to-infinitival clausal complement, or a so-called accusative and infinitive, as illustrated in the construed sentences (1) and (2) below, and b) the semantic characteristic that their (active) subjects say, think, perceive or show something to be the case of the subject of the complement (though, as is made clear in chapters 6 and 7, such a semantic characterization often does not hold in cases like (2b) where there is no active subject).

(1) Mary believes that John is an alien.
(2) a. Mary believes John to be an alien.
   b. John is believed to be an alien.

So far I have been able to identify well over a hundred verbs that answer both parts of this description, both on the basis of lists provided by others (Francis, Hunston and Manning 1996; Hudson 1971; Levin 1993; Postal 1974; Rohdenburg 1993) as well as through my own detection work in the British National Corpus. They are listed in (3).

(3) accept, acknowledge, adjudge, adjudicate, admit, affirm, allege, announce, appreciate, argue, ascertain, assert, assume, assure, attest, avow, believe, calculate, certify, claim, compute, concede, conceive, conclude, confess, confirm, conjecture, consider, contend, credit, decide, declare, decree, deduce, deem, demonstrate, deny, determine, discern, disclose, discover, doubt, dream, emphasize, establish, estimate, expect, explain, expose, fancy, fear, feel, figure, find, gather, grant, guarantee, guess, hazard, hold, hope, hypothe-

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1 A good way to find ‘new’ ones, i.e. ones that others have not listed, is to use CD-ROM versions of dictionaries which include the facility to search the definitions. For instance, if we look up believe in the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, we find the definition ‘to have an opinion about what is true or what might happen, although there is no proof’. Starting from this definition we can look for verbs with a similar meaning, and possibly a similar syntax, by searching the definitions of the dictionary for words like opinion or true. The verbs that turn up in the search results can then be checked against a corpus to see if they allow both a that-clause and an accusative and infinitive. Members of the class I identified in this way are appreciate, assure, attest, conjecture, contend, credit, doubt, expect, expose, hazard, hope, indicate, profess, project, pronounce, purport, suggest, trust, witness.
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There are, of course, other verbs that take both a *that*-clause and an NP plus infinitive, for instance *advise, ask, beg, caution, command, direct, instruct, order*, ..., but these need a different semantic characterization. When these verbs alternate the finite with the infinitival complement, the subject of the matrix verb tries to get the (active) subject of the complement to do something. Such verbs are not considered in the investigations compiled here.

2. Research questions: their functions in discourse

The studies collected in this volume do not concern themselves with syntax in the narrow sense of the word. The reader will look in vain for syntactic tests or deep structures that distinguish *believe*-type verbs from other types of verbs. Nor shall we be concerned with modelling the language user’s intuitions about the relationship between the finite and infinitival complements of *believe*-type verbs, or with arguing questions like whether the subject of the infinitival verb is or is not also an object of the matrix verb. Perfectly legitimate as they may be, such worries are not very relevant when, like the present author, one is interested in the role these matrices and their complements play in discourse. The rich treatment *believe*-type verbs have received in the branch of linguistics usually called ‘formal/formalist’ or ‘generative/generativist’ will for that reason not be reviewed. Relevant ‘functional/functionalist’ work will, of course, be discussed where appropriate.

The eight studies in this volume are all concerned with either or both of two sets of ‘functional’ questions:

1. Given that language users have a choice between a finite and a non-finite complement after *believe*-type verbs, what determines their decision to use the one or the other? Is the choice semantically determined, i.e. do *believe*-type matrices plus infinitives convey a different meaning than *believe*-type matrices plus *that*-clauses? Or can both patterns be said to be synonymous and do other factors than semantic ones determine their use?

2. It is an empirical fact that the infinitival complement occurs much more often with a passive matrix (2b) than with an active one (2a). Why is this so? The passive is of course a useful device a) to rearrange the word order of a sentence so as to give it a contextually appropriate information/thematic structure, and b) to leave the ‘actor’ of

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2 For an overview of recent opinion in generative linguistics on the sentential complementation of *believe*-type verbs, amongst others, see Rooryck (1997).
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a process out of the picture, but that in itself does not explain why a normally marked choice should be the unmarked option in the case of matrices preceding accusative and infinitives. So can information/thematic structure be invoked to account for the high frequency of these passive matrices? And how could the possibility offered by the passive to leave a participant unmentioned contribute to its frequency in this case?

In the process of answering these questions about the why of this particular area of grammatical variation the investigations reported on will also add descriptive detail to our knowledge about various aspects of its range. Which members of the verbal lexicon can be classified as believe-type verbs? Which passive matrices are most often combined with infinitives? What is their distribution across different discourse genres? Have they always been equally popular?

3. Research methodology: corpora galore

Most treatments of clausal complementation within the ‘functionalist’ tradition in linguistics (some of them reviewed in chapter 1, others in chapter 4) have maintained that different kinds of complement always convey different meanings. These meanings are usually illustrated with a few well-chosen construed and decontextualized sentences, accompanied by a couple of starred sentences, i.e. by claims that the meanings of these complements preclude certain matrix verb-complement combinations. Readers are then expected to match these claims about meanings and predictions about what are and what are not possible sentences against their own intuitions and if there is no ensuing disagreement these claims and predictions are taken to be proven. That is to say, they are taken to be proven without having been checked against any kind of linguistic data (other than a couple of individuals’ intuitions, i.e. the linguist’s, and perhaps those of a few of her/his family and friends, and those of the readers referred to). Such studies typically do not include reports of any kind of systematic evidence gathering, either in the form of extensive and carefully organized informant testing, or in the form of thorough investigations of attested language use. Probably no other scientific discipline would take the kind of argumentation presented in these studies seriously, for relying on one’s readers’ intuitions for evidence is clearly a case of — to use a courtroom expression — “leading the witness”: you cannot get an unbiased opinion from readers when you have already told them (in print!) what to think. What is more, it is extremely doubtful that introspection is a reliable method to test either claims about meanings or predictions about the (im)possibility of certain sentences. The meanings that are proposed are usually couched in such vague and abstract terms that it is very difficult for the consumer of these linguistic writings to find fault with them. Grammaticality judgements, on the other hand, can be very idiosyncratic and often do not square with the linguistic reality revealed by corpus data.

A not untypical example of such an approach is to be found in Givón (1990, 1993), not reviewed in any of the chapters of this volume because Givón very strangely (conveniently? suspiciously?) keeps mum about believe-type accusative and infinitives in his chapter on “verbal complements”. Givón does not claim that different
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types of complement carry different meanings as such, but contends that there exists an “isomorphic relation” between the meaning of a main verb and the syntax of its complement clause, which he calls “one of the best examples of a correlation between form and function in grammar” (Givón 1993: 2). Both a main clause and a complement clause code events, and the stronger the “semantic bond” or “semantic integration” between the two events, “the more extensive will be the syntactic integration of the two propositions into a single clause” (Givón 1993: 2). This correlation between event integration and syntactic integration is illustrated in a table in which a representative sample of what Givón terms manipulative and P-C-U (or perception, cognition, and utterance) verbs are ranked according to their position on both scales, from high integration to low integration. This table (Givón 1993: 6) is reproduced here as (4).

(4) Semantic scale of verbs syntax of COMP-clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. She let go of the knife</th>
<th>CO-LEXICALIZED VERB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. She made him shave</td>
<td>BARE-STEM COMP VERB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. She let him go home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. She had him arrested</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. She caused him to switch jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. She told him to leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. She asked him to leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. She allowed him to leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. She wanted him to leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. She’d like him to leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. She’d like for him to leave</td>
<td>FOR-TO COMP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. She suggested that he should leave</td>
<td>MODAL-SUBJUNCTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. She wished that he would leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. She agreed that he could leave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o. She knew that he left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. She said that he might leave later</td>
<td>INDIRECT QUOTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q. She said: “he might leave later”</td>
<td>DIRECT QUOTE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So the semantic bond between, for instance, the main clause (telling) event and the complement clause (leaving) event in f. is stronger than, for instance, between the main clause (saying) event and the complement clause (leaving) event in p., and as a result the former complement (the NP plus to-infinitive) is more syntactically integrated in its main clause than the latter (the that-clause). A sign of this greater syntactic integration is that the subject of the former complement is marked as a direct object, whereas the latter is marked as a subject. The greater semantic integration is perhaps difficult to conceptualize as such, but Givón specifies a number of less abstract “semantic dimensions” which “underlie” it. One of these is “the degree of control, freedom of choice or independent action ceded to the subject-agent of the complement clause” (Givón 1993: 7), which is greater in p. than it is in f., and hence the events in p. are less integrated.
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One may find this suggestion about a parallelism between the semantics and the syntax of clausal complementation intuitively appealing and/or (or because?) one may be aesthetically pleased by it. Its truth value, however, depends on whether any independent observational correlates can be found for the semantic differences that are suggested to motivate the syntactic differences. I do not here want to evaluate the proposal in its entirety, only to have a brief look at the way Givón argues in favour of these differences, as an illustration of how one typically justifies semantic distinctions. Let’s have a look at the first example Givón elaborates himself, viz. the difference between b. and e. in the table above, or between a. and b. in (5).

(5)  
a. John made Mary quit her job  
b. John caused Mary to quit her job

There is a syntactic difference between a. and b., the complement in a. containing a bare infinitive, the one in b. a to-infinitive, and a. is higher on the syntactic integration scale than b. because a bare infinitive, says Givón (1993: 27), is more nominal — or less finite — than a to-infinitive. For the theory to be right there must now also be a semantic difference, in the sense that there must be more semantic integration between the main clause and complement clause events in a. than in b. The relevant semantic dimension is the one already referred to above, that of “intent, control and agentivity”. According to Givón (1993: 8), make is a verb of “intended manipulation”, while cause is much less so, which is “suggested from” the contrast between (6a,b) and (6c,d).

(6)  
a. ?Without intending to, she made him quit his job  
b. ?Inadvertently, she made him quit his job  
c. Without intending to, she caused him to quit his job  
d. Inadvertently, she caused him to quit his job

The more deliberate, controlling, agentive nature of the subject of make, says Givón (1993: 9), “is also evident in the reduced control ceded to the manipulee”, which is proven by the contrast between a. and b. in (7).

(7)  
a. *She made him deliberately quit his job and leave  
b. She caused him to deliberately quit his job and leave

In addition, again according to Givón (1993: 9), the more agentive nature of make is illustrated by the fact that its subject can only be an agent, whereas that of cause can be a “non-agent” or a nominalized clause:

(8)  
a. *John’s behavior made Mary quit her job  
b. *The political situation made Mary quit her job  
c. John’s behavior caused Mary to quit her job  
d. The political situation caused Mary to quit her job

And finally, though the manipulee-object of make has less control, it must still retain some agentiveness, which “is evident from the fact that only volitional-control verbs may appear in the complement of make”, whereas cause does not impose such re-
strictions, so that its complements can be either volitional or non-volitional” (Givón 1993: 9):

(9)  
a. Mary made John quit his job  
b. ?Mary made John lose his job  
c. Office politics caused John to quit his job  
d. Office politics caused John to lose his job  

Now, my problem with all this is not so much that this last point appears to be in opposition to the one made with the sentences in (7), or that I personally do not share Givón’s intuitions about the sentences he questions or rejects, but rather that I am not at all alone in thinking that make is not necessarily agentive, and that one does not have to look hard for corpus examples in which make seems to all intents and purposes completely synonymous with cause. Evidence that I am not alone in this is that in its entry for make, the Collins COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (3rd edition), a dictionary based on a large corpus of English texts, not only mentions a non-agentive definition (“If something makes you do something, it causes you to do it.”), but in fact offers it before an agentive one (“If you make someone do something, you force them to do it.”) — and note that the first definition actually makes use of the verb cause. A quick look at the British National Corpus confirms that examples of the non-agentive use are not very hard to come by:

(10) One of the going-steady girly types at her school told her boys thought she was cool and superior. This made her cry desperately. (AOL 277)  
(11) She handed me a glass of cider, others accepted a small glass of a clear liquid that made them wince as they swallowed it. (A61 1561)  

Also, though I did not find examples that would directly invalidate Givón’s judgements about (6a,b) and (7a), i.e. combinations of make and without intending to, inadvertently and deliberately — but then neither did I find such combinations with cause; that is, however big the corpus, the absence from it of very specific word combinations does not rule out their possible occurrence — examples such as (12) and (13) seem to bear out that, even with a human subject, make does not presuppose an intention to manipulate.

(12) John Delaney's face came into the dream. His interest in her had been obvious, and because of that she had discouraged it. Somehow he made her feel uneasy. There was something about Delaney, something indefinable, that worried her. (BPA 428)  
(13) The kitchen was to the left of the hall; Robyn could hear the bang of a cupboard door, smell the distinctive aroma of fresh coffee. She hesitated, pausing uncertainly outside the doorway, clasping her arms around her body, clutching the robe tightly at her neck in an effort to feel less vulnerable. “Well, are you going to stand there all night?” He made her jump. She stared into the angular face and wondered if that had been his intention. (HGT 299)  

Corpus examples (14) and (15) appear to contradict (9b).
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(14) The pain had made her lose her breath for a few seconds. (CR6 2254)
(15) “You've made me lose track of the story, silly, with your endless questions.” (GUX 372)

Givón’s intuitions about a semantic contrast between make and cause, adduced as evidence for a difference in semantic integration between these events and the events expressed in their complements, therefore appear not to hold water: these verbs can be synonyms. A problem for Givón’s theory then is that, when they are synonymous, the one still takes a bare infinitive and the other a to-infinitive. In other words, in spite of the apparent absence of a difference in semantic integration, there still is a difference in syntactic integration.

It also follows from the theory that there is a difference in semantic integration between (1) and (2), though, as said, Givón (1993) does not discuss this contrast in this context. Given the syntactic integration scale in (4), the infinitival complement of (2) is more integrated in its main clause than the finite complement of (1), but how should the stronger semantic integration that goes with it be conceptualized? Which of Givón’s semantic dimensions is at the bottom of it? Could “epistemic certainty/uncertainty” be relevant? Givón (1993: 19) uses this dimension to account for the contrasts between a. and b. in (16), (17) and (18), the “fully finite” complements of the b. sentences being less syntactically integrated in their matrices than the less finite — because of the reduction in tense marking — complements in the a. sentences (cf. Givón 1993: 26-27).

(16) a. She suggested that John may have left right away
    b. She suggested that John had left earlier
(17) a. She agreed that John may have left right away
    b. She agreed that John had left earlier
(18) a. He said/thought/knew that she might leave
    b. He said/thought/knew that she had left

The a. sentences express epistemic uncertainty, the b. sentences epistemic certainty, but how this difference is conceptually linked to a difference in semantic integration remains a mystery. However, others have indeed suggested that such a dimension is also involved in the purported semantic difference between (1) and (2) (e.g. Wierzbicka 1988, Verspoor 1990), but they make this case employing the same kind of “evidence” as Givón (1993), i.e. invented and — in the absence of any reports of systematic informant testing — probably untested starred and unstarrred decontextualized sentences for which, as I argue in chapter 4, no empirical justification is to be found in corpora.

The main point I want to make here, therefore, is that introspection is a very unreliable source of evidence in the area of clausal complementation: it is so easy to let one’s theory blind one for certain facts, or — if that is too cynical a judgement of what is going on here — one can simply be very easily misguided about what the facts are. Corpus research is therefore an indispensable part of any research making claims about distributional differences between verbs and their complements. In fact,
Givón (1993: 43) himself almost recognizes this in so many words, for in a footnote to the examples I have reproduced as (6) he writes:

Contrasts such as those between [(6a,b)] and [(6c,d)] are not universally applicable, since they depend heavily on the type of verb in the complement clause. A much better test would be a detailed quantified study of the use of ‘cause’ and ‘make’ in natural text.

A second illustration of a semantic claim about complementation for which distributional evidence is adduced which is not checked against the proper kind of data is one that was originally suggested by Bolinger (1967/1977) and later taken up by Rohdenburg (1993). This claim specifically addresses accusative and infinitives and runs to the effect that the acceptability of such clauses is increased if they can be reduced to common verb plus NP collocations, which Bolinger terms “apparent constituents”. The nearest Bolinger himself gets to a formulation of the principle involved is the following:

[I]f the string believe + NP when taken as a constituent in its own right has a meaning compatible with that of the sentence as a whole and more or less suggesting it, this becomes a factor in improving the degree of acceptability [of the infinitival complement] (Bolinger 1977: 126)

Rohdenburg (1993: 250) formulates it like this:


This makes *I believe the report to be true*, *I believe the man to be honest* and *I believe their intentions to be honorable* (Bolinger’s examples (12), (13) and (14)) perfectly acceptable because they can be reduced to *I believe the report*, *I believe the man* and *I believe their intentions*, respectively. *I believe the lights to be on* and *I believe George to be ready* (Bolinger’s examples (15) and (16)) are less acceptable, says Bolinger (1977: 126), because they cannot be reduced to *I believe the lights* and *I believe George*, respectively. Bolinger makes no mention of any kind of informant testing or corpus research, however, so that one must assume his approach to be a purely intuitional one. My own intuitions — which are informed by having looked at a great many corpus examples of the construction — tell me there is little wrong with the sentences Bolinger finds less acceptable, and it is not very difficult to find corpus examples like the following that do not answer to Bolinger’s principle.

(19) What should a hotel receptionist do if he or she believes a guest to be dishonest? (EA9 3164)

(20) Rechem also agreed to drop its request for a judicial review into Torfaen’s monitoring of contamination supposedly caused by the firm, and of its publication of the results. […] Rechem believes the results to be unscientific, and
under the new agreement will be able to append its own commentary to the council's existing document, especially if it is to form part of a submission to the European Commission. (A2A 555)

(21) Another sharp prod came from the Bishop of Durham, Dr David Jenkins, who said women should not be the victims of “political voting” by members who cared more about church divisions than justice for women. He said such voting “makes women bear the burden of a political judgment. I believe this to be indecent and to add to the already indecent burden women are having to bear.” (A7W 645)

When you believe a guest to be dishonest, test results to be unscientific, or a political act to be indecent, you do not believe the guest, the results, or the act. Whether or not instances that do answer to Bolinger’s rule are more typical than those that do not, only a detailed investigation of a representative sample of real occurrences can reveal. This Bolinger did not do. I myself have so far refrained from doing so as well, for the simple reason that there is no objective measure to separate those that do from those that do not. All I can say is that, having looked at quite a few examples, it is not a hypothesis that would naturally spring to mind.

Rohdenburg (1993), who further elaborates Bolinger’s principle, illustrating it with examples containing less frequent believe-type verbs and applying the principle to a few other constructions, does not report on any systematic informant testing or corpus research either, though his paper contains a host of contrasts like those in (22), (23) and (24) — Rohdenburg’s (1993: 252) examples (4), (10) and (11), respectively.

(22) a. While conceding this point to be well argued, he still maintains that…
   b. * While conceding this point to be misguided, …
   c. * While conceding this article to be well written, …

(23) a. They claimed the money to be theirs.
   b. * They claimed the money to be Peter’s / to be stolen.

(24) a. While asserting his rights to be inviolable, he still conceded that…
   b. * While asserting his rights to be disputed, …
   c. * While asserting this book to be important, …

In fact, Rohdenburg (1993: 252-253) explicitly tells us these are not observational data:

Das Rezept zur Entdeckung zulässiger AcI-Konstruktionen läßt sich demnach wie folgt beschreiben: Man nehme eine möglichst geläufige S-V-O-Kollokation (wie z. B. concede this point in [22a]) und suche zu dem Objekt eine (prädikative) Struktur, die als naheliegende Interpretation des ersten Teilsatzes gelten kann. Dabei ist es von Vorteil, wenn die mit dem Objektausdruck verknüpfte prädikative Struktur ebenfalls eine geläufige Wendung (wie his rights are inviolable in [24a]) darstellt.

In other words, these data are constructed following the principle they are supposed to be evidence of. Rohdenburg’s point of departure is not a set of observations, but a hunch of Bolinger’s which he finds intuitively appealing. Instead of checking
whether these intuitions are to be trusted by looking for evidence for them, either in actual language use or through informant testing under strictly controlled laboratory conditions, the intuitions themselves are then treated as facts that need to be accounted for. This, of course, is an approach that was current practice for quite a long time in the mainstream of modern linguistics, but it is a highly problematical one because, as I have already indicated in this introduction and will argue more extensively in chapter 4, there is often an enormous mismatch between what people (linguists) think to be the facts of English clausal complementation and what corpora reveal to be the facts.

Since Rohdenburg’s examples contain verbs which are not very frequently complemented by accusative and infinitives — “Ausgesucht wurden solche Verben, die in der Sekundärliteratur selten oder gar nicht als Acl-fähig eingestuft werden. (Rohdenburg 1993: 252) — it is less easy to confront them with corpus examples. In fact, I did not find any instances in the BNC of an active form of concede plus an infinitival complement. The corpus examples in (25) and (26) can, however, be compared with (23) and (24) respectively.

(25) a. The attitude of many older musicians and critics to science and technology is nothing more, of course, than the stale residue of the romantic, fin de siècle aesthetic that, in the phrase of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, claims science to be “the religion of the suburbs”. (ADP 318)

b. Stendhal, on his return to his adopted city after an absence of two years, claimed La Scala to be the most important opera in the world, since which time no one has felt the need, or had the temerity, to fault his judgement. (ANB 646)

c. We cannot claim these life stories to be “representative” in the strict social scientific sense, but we do believe them to be “valid”. (AP7 284)

(26) a. Readers will find a central concern about the factors that influence social welfare a characteristic of many writings on social policy. Indeed, some of the British contributions to the study of this topic assert theirs to be a distinctive academic subject, “social administration”, which has this concern as its hallmark. (FS7 35)

b. Indicia are signs which create a certain presumption (proof). Menghi, however, asserts such presumption to be semiplina rather than plena (sufficient). (G02 364)

c. Over fifty years ago Dorothy George contested the views of writers like the Webbs and the Hammonds that [the Combination Acts of] 1799 and 1800 amounted to “the most unqualified surrender of the State to the discretion of a class in the History of England”. She denied they were in any sense a new departure and asserted them to be “a very negligible instrument of oppression”. (HXC 1442)

For Rohdenburg, to claim money to be yours (23a) is grammatical because it has the same meaning as the collocation to claim money, and to claim money to be stolen (23b) is ungrammatical (not just less acceptable) because it cannot be reduced to this collocation. But there are no collocations the attested sentences in (25) can be re-
duced to, and though the collocation *to claim money* is well-represented in the BNC, there are no instances similar to *to claim money to be yours*. So combinations of *claim* with an accusative and infinitive that can be reduced to this collocation can hardly be said to be more typical than those that cannot. It is equally hard to see which collocations the matrices and complements in (26) should be reduced to to account for their acceptability. So what reality is Rohdenburg (or Bolinger for that matter) describing?

In an area like that of clausal complementation, and unless one is content with describing one’s own idiosyncratic grammar, it is therefore best to first ascertain what the facts are that need to be described and explained by looking for and collecting a great many attested examples and their contexts. Short, made-up, decontextualized sentences like those in (1) and (2) have a certain indexical value — they are a useful and economical means for linguists to make clear what they are talking about — but that is also where their usefulness ends. They are not necessarily the most typical examples of the constructions they are meant to illustrate, and possibly do not even have any “real world” correlates, which can only result in flawed or pointless descriptions. In addition, their lack of context is likely to preclude a sound description and explanation of their functions and makes it impossible to offer a verifiable observational basis for the proposed descriptions and explanations.

The research reported on in the next chapters is therefore thoroughly corpus-based. Three types of corpora are used. A large monolingual corpus of present-day English, the British National Corpus, is used to make well-founded distributional statements (especially to reject other people’s claims that certain verb-complement combinations are impossible) and to find corroborative or disconfirming evidence for claims about the different meanings or functions of different verb-complement combinations. Every attempt is made to translate semantic or pragmatic claims in observational terms. A monolingual corpus, however, does not always supply sufficient distributional evidence for hypothesized meanings. Which is when a second type of corpus comes in handy, the bilingual corpus. Since translators’ choices can be treated as informants’ judgements, collections of source texts and their translations are a potential font of evidence for semantics that has so far remained virtually untapped in modern linguistics. The bilingual corpus that will be used (in chapter 7) is the online parallel English-(Canadian) French Canadian Hansard corpus. A third kind of corpus, finally, consisting of sets of texts of different types produced in consecutive time periods, will allow us to provide evidence of the spread of certain verb-complement combinations through time and across genres, which may support claims about a change in meaning of these combinations. The only corpus existing to date which makes this possible for the period leading up to today is the ARCHER corpus.

In other words, since it is so easy to be deceived (by oneself and others) both about the (im)possibility of certain verb-complement combinations and about the functions of different kinds of complement, in the studies reported on in the following chapters as little as possible will be left to intuition alone, and every effort will be made to substantiate claims with the solid empirical evidence provided by attested language use.
Introduction

4. Descriptive and explanatory frameworks: discourse pragmatics and grammaticalization

The main problem with semantic explications of the difference between (1) and (2) is either that they are often so vague that it is difficult to translate them in observational terms, i.e. to construct formal correlates for them which can then be systematically searched for in corpora, or that in cases when distributional correlates are suggested, such suggestions simply do not stand the test of corpora. Proposals about a different semantics must therefore be mistrusted for lack of evidence. There is a second strand of research, however, which does not situate the difference between (1) and (2) in the semantic sphere, but in a discourse analytical pragmatic one. This is also the approach I am taking. Oddly enough, we can again refer to Givón (1990, 1993) by way of illustration, though the tradition does not start with him — others belonging to it are Bolinger (1974), Borkin (1974, 1984), Davison (1984), Mair (1990) and Langacker (1995), though “tradition” is perhaps not the best word because its members — myself included — do not always build on each other’s work.3 Again for reasons of complementarity, I will here restrict myself to a summary of Givón’s suggestions to characterize the discourse-pragmatic approach — they are not discussed in any of the following chapters simply because their author was unaware of them when they were written.

3 Langacker (1995), moreover, would not agree that his suggestions are pragmatic rather than semantic in nature (see chapter 4).

4 To the extent that they also invoke an information packaging notion in their treatment of believe-type verbs, generativists like Postal (1974) and Rooryck (1997) could also be added to this list. They hold ‘Focus’ to be a relevant concept (Postal 1974 only implicitly, though), but note that this discourse-pragmatic notion differs from the one or ones the people listed above and myself appeal to since it involves new and/or contrasted rather than given and/or thematic information. Postal (1974: 298) claims that left dislocation, heavy NP shift to the right and Wh-movement make the accusative and infinitive acceptable after a subset of believe-type verbs which are claimed not to allow the construction if the subject of the infinitive remains in its canonical subject position:

(i) Bill’s dinosaur, I estimate to be 175 feet long
(ii) I estimated to be over 175 feet long all the dinosaurs which we caught yesterday in Central Park
(iii) Which dinosaur did you estimate to be 175 feet long?
(iv) *They estimated Bill’s dinosaur to be 175 feet long

Corpus data reveal, however, that there is nothing wrong with the pattern in (iv) (see Table 1 in chapter 5), and one could question the naturalness, and therefore the relevance, of the other sentences. Rooryck (1997), on the other hand, does not seem to bring up Focus to account for a perceived difference in meaning or use between finite and infinitival complements (“It is not immediately clear what the semantic difference is in terms of Focus between the tensed ‘unfocused’ sentential complement […] and the ‘focused’ ECM sentential complement […].” (Rooryck 1997: 15-16)), but presents the mind-boggling argument that the inclusion of +/- Focus in their descriptions explains differences in Neg-raising.
Introduction

As said in the previous section, Givón (1990, 1993) leaves accusatives and infinitives of the type illustrated in (2) completely unmentioned in his chapters on “verbal complements”. Nor does he mention there that he does treat them in a later chapter — the chapter entitled “Marked-topic constructions” in Givón (1990), and the one entitled “Topicalizing constructions” in Givón (1993). There he talks about the difference between (1) and (2) using the terminology of the generative tradition, i.e. in terms of “raising” — “raising to object” in the case of (2a) and “raising to subject” in (2b). However, he rejects the (early) assumption of this tradition that raised and un-raised structures are merely stylistic variants of each other (because transformations could not involve a change in meaning), but suggests instead that

(a) The raised or “promoted” referents are more topical than their un-raised or “unpromoted” counterparts. And
(b) Referents raised or “promoted” to subject are more topical than those raised or “promoted” only to object. (Givón 1993: 229)

Referents are topical if the information presented in a sentence is “about them” (Givón 1993: 201). So sentence (2a) is more “about” John than (1), and (2b) even more so.

There are two sides to this “aboutness”:

[T]he topicality of clausal arguments in connected discourse involves two distinct aspects of referential coherence, one anaphoric, the other cataphoric:
(a) Anaphoric: The referent’s accessibility
(b) Cataphoric: The referent’s thematic importance
By ‘anaphoric’ we mean accessibility or identifiability of the referent somewhere in the hearer’s previously stored knowledge. By ‘cataphoric’ we mean the assignment of the referent’s importance in the (yet-to-be-produced) subsequent discourse. (Givón 1993: 202)

In other words, Givón’s topicality is more or less a combination of what is kept apart in the systemic-functional tradition: information structure (the distinction between ‘given’ and ‘new’ information) and thematic structure (the distinction between the ‘theme’ and the ‘rhemé’ of a sentence) — see, for instance, Halliday (1970). The difference in “aboutness” between (1) and (2) could therefore be paraphrased like this: John in (2) is both more “given” and more thematic than John in (1), and more so in (2b) than in (2a). I myself have independently suggested that both dimensions are indeed very relevant (see especially chapters 1 and 5) to the discussion of the functional difference between (1) and (2), but my own suggestions are slightly more subtle than Givón’s in two ways. First, they specify how “more topical” in the last quote but one had best be interpreted, at least as far as anaphoric topicality is concerned, i.e. in terms of a certain probability rather than in terms of degree: the subject of an infinitive is not necessarily more ‘given’ than the subject of a finite complement, but infinitival complements are much more likely to have ‘given’ subjects than their finite counterparts. Second, my own research would suggest that since the subjects of infinitives preceded by active matrices are almost always ‘given’, there is
unlikely to be much difference in anaphoric topicality between the subjects of infinitives preceded by active matrices and those preceded by passive matrices. Cataphoric topicality or ‘theme’, on the other hand, does seem to be an important parameter in the choice between these two patterns (see especially chapter 5).

Givón (1993) does not support his claim about raised referents with the kind of detailed quantitative analysis he presented in Givón (1983), but restricts himself to three arguments. First of all, raising seems to select definite or generic referents, and to reject referring indefinites (Givón 1993: 229). This is not something I feel in need of questioning, but sadly it is only claimed, and illustrated with a few starred and unstarred sentences (none of them of the type we are dealing with here, however, so I will not repeat them), rather than supported by real data. Second, it is normally only possible to raise an NP if it is the subject of the complement clause. This is illustrated in (27) and (28) (Givón’s (1993: 230) examples (65) and (66)):

(27) a. They report that John rejected Mary
    b. They report John to have rejected Mary
    c. John is reported to have rejected Mary
    d. *They reported Mary John to have rejected (her)
    e. *Mary is reported John to have rejected (her)

(28) a. They report that Mary was rejected by John
    b. They report Mary to have been rejected by John
    c. Mary is reported to have been rejected by John

In (27), where Mary is object in the complement clause, it cannot be raised to the matrix. In (28), it is subject, and consequently raising is possible. Givón (1993: 231) offers the following explanation:

The subject-only restriction on raising is commonly interpreted as a purely syntactic restriction. While this interpretation describes the facts, it does not go far in explaining them. A likely explanation of these syntactic facts is this: If raising is indeed a pragmatic operation that applies to highly topical NPs, then the restriction simply re-iterates the fact that the subject is the most topical grammatical role in the clause, and that it competes successfully with the less-topical direct object for further topicalization.

So this second argument can be constructed as follows: subjects of infinitives are more topical than subjects of finite complements because the former can be traced back to subjects of finite complements but not to objects and subjects are more topical than objects. It does not follow at all from the explanans, however, that there is a difference in topicality between the subjects of the two structures. If anything, it would explain identical topicality.

Givón’s (1993: 231) third argument pertains to “the use of raising in text”:

Not surprising, the best support for the idea that raising is a topicalizing device comes from observing the distribution of raising constructions in
text. Raising constructions are not common in spoken English, nor are they that frequent in fiction. Where one finds them in relative abundance is in the news section of newspapers. Raising to subject appears to be the predominant type found. Typically, a raised NP is either:
(a) Globally topical: It is mentioned in the headline as the main topic of the report; or
(b) Locally topical: It is mentioned as an important topic in the clauses preceding the raised construction; or both.

This he illustrates with a few examples selected from the 28 instances he found in two issues of a local paper and one issue of a national newspaper, 26 of them involving raising to object, only two of them involving raising to subject. These are not compared with examples of unraised constructions. Nor are the claims about distribution over different text types substantiated in any way. In other words, Givón (1993) is a bit short on evidence. In addition to slightly refining earlier suggestions about the discourse-pragmatic nature of the difference between (1) and (2), the main contribution of the studies in this volume is that they supply these suggestions with a sounder empirical basis.

A not unimportant refinement I have added is my claim that the typical information structure of infinitival complements with active matrices helps to explain their relative infrequency as compared to infinitival complements with passive matrices (see chapter 5). Not only does the givenness of both the subject of the active matrix and the subject of the infinitive result in more referential coherence than is strictly necessary, making the pattern with the active matrix a dispreferred one, but the givenness of the subject of the infinitive also allows it to compete successfully with the subject of the matrix for ‘theme’ status, and therefore for sentence-initial position. More often than not, however, there is no real competition between an active and a passive matrix, for when a passive is used it is usually impossible to find a referent in the text that could fill the subject of the active equivalent. The participant that is left unexpressed in the passive is not usually one that has been explicitly introduced in the text, its only reconstructible referent being something like ‘people in general’ or ‘people who should know’ (insiders, experts). In other words, very often instances of the type of (2b) are perhaps best not conceived as passive versions of sentences of the type of (2a) to start with, and perhaps these passive matrices have developed a special use of their own. They might even have stopped being matrices.

A first suggestion to this effect was made by Bolinger (1974: 82), who called them “one of many kinds of subordinating adverbializations, tending in the direction of auxiliary status”, which was later reiterated by Mair (1990: 115), who said they “outwardly resemble[s] the semi-auxiliary or catenative component within a complex verb phrase (cf., e.g., ‘She is bound to arrive’)” — see also Meyer (1997: 156-157) for a similar characterization. Of these three linguists, only Bolinger (1974: 81) provides some kind of evidence that we are indeed faced here with a “demotion of main verbs to the status of modifiers”. The test he proposes is that the complement rather than the matrix should serve as the answer to the question What happened next?, which seems to work alright for cases like Bolinger’s (1974: 83) own (context-less) example John is believed (supposed, said, known, alleged, reputed, thought) to have
blown the whistle on his cronies — the answer being John blew the whistle on his cronies rather than Someone believed something — but not for cases like (2b) in which nothing “happens” as such. In chapter 6 I will argue on the basis of statistical data that (at least some of) these matrices are grammaticalizing into auxiliary-like elements using criteria from grammaticalization theory. That is to say, I will make reference to the set of claims about grammaticalization phenomena (i.e. linguistic changes involving a decrease in lexical status and/or an increase in grammatical status) that has fairly recently come to be known as “grammaticalization theory”, and which could be said to have entered the linguistic canon in 1993 with the publication of an introduction to it in the Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics series (Hopper and Traugott 1993). As a theory (but not as a kind of linguistic change), grammaticalization has even more recently come under serious attack (see Campbell 2001a), the tenor of the criticism being that grammaticalization can be reduced to mechanisms of linguistic change like reanalysis and extension which have long been recognized in historical linguistics (Campbell 2001b). Be that as it may. My own concerns are descriptive rather than theoretical, and even the detractors of grammaticalization as a scientific paradigm agree that from a descriptive point of view it has certainly proved its usefulness. In the words of Campbell (2001b: 158):

While grammaticalization does not have the theoretical value that some have attributed to it, and while it lacks any status of its own independent of other kinds of linguistic changes and mechanisms of change, it does have heuristic value. The enthusiasm for grammaticalization has brought forth a range of examples (especially the lexical > grammatical, less grammatical > more grammatical sort) which is important for providing a broad and useful database and for focussing attention on a particular set of changes within the broader picture of linguistic change.

My very modest ambition is merely to argue that the current behaviour of a certain verb pattern can be described as the result of — or a stage in — a change that is part of this set.

5. A survey of the chapters

The different chapters of this collection therefore fall into two groups. The articles grouped in Part I all deal with the discourse pragmatics or information packaging side of the difference between (1) and (2a), on the one hand, and between (2a) and (2b), on the other. Those arranged in Part II are concerned with the hypothesized grammaticalization into auxiliary-like evidentials of passive matrices like the one in (2b). A recurring theme in every chapter, however, is a preoccupation with evidence: great effort is made to substantiate claims with observational data.

As a result of their thematic arrangement, not all articles are presented in the order in which they were written, and earlier chapters sometimes refer “back” to subsequent ones. This should not pose a problem, though, since they were all conceived as stand-alone texts. The following paragraphs are a sketch of their history and specify the contribution made by each of them.
Introduction

Chapter 1. The choice between infinitives and that-clauses after believe

As so much in life, the choice of the particular problems particular researchers get their teeth into is often decided by accident more than anything else. The present researcher’s interest in believe-type verbs was occasioned by his decision in the summer of 1996 to stand in for a colleague who had sent in an abstract for the Sixth International Valency Seminar organized in Odense, Denmark, in November 1996. The paper for that abstract, which wanted to make a theoretical point about different kinds of contextual influence on valency, never got written, because the data that would justify making the theoretical point had not been collected yet. The abstract, however, did mention infinitives and contained examples like We know her to be honest and Some insects have been found to live for several years without any water. From there to the alternation exemplified by (1) and (2) is a little step, and the paper that did get written first received the not very elegant title ‘The “meaning” of believe X to be vs. believe that X is’. It was published in 1997 in the first volume of the CUP journal English Language and Linguistics under the title ‘The choice between infinitives and that-clauses after believe’, and is reproduced here as chapter 1. The inverted commas in the original title were meant to challenge suggestions that the choice between a finite and an accusative and infinitive complement had anything to do with semantics. Concentrating on the verb believe itself, as an example of its class, the paper provides a first set of empirical data in support of intuitions formulated in the literature that this choice is discourse pragmatic in nature. In relation to subsequent chapters, this first one can be seen as a pilot study.

Chapter 2. The proof of the pudding: is prove to be/that like believe to be/that?

The second chapter was written in 1997 to honour Louis Goossens on the occasion of his early retirement in 1998. It explores whether what was found to be the case for believe also holds true for prove, and is therefore a first attempt to establish whether the conclusions of chapter 1 have any validity beyond the lexical item believe and pertain to an entire class of verbs. This turned out to be only partially the case. I suggested at the time that a lexical factor, i.e. a factor specific to prove, could be responsible. Two meanings can be distinguished for prove, and it was found that one meaning shows a preference for the infinitival complement and the other a slight preference for the that-clause. Proponents of the view that different complements carry different meanings might well feel vindicated by this, for what could account for this preference if not the meaning of the complement? But that would be jumping to conclusions. First of all, what we certainly do not have here is that each kind of complement is reserved for one of the meanings of prove; there is only a certain preference. And second, it is difficult to see how any of the suggestions about different meanings for different complements (see especially chapter 4) could be related to

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5 The abstract was printed in the sixth issue of Contragram: Quarterly Newsletter of the Contrastive Grammar Research Group of the University of Gent.
Introduction

these two meanings. Wierzbicka (1988), for instance, connects the infinitival complement with “subjectivity”, “private knowledge”, and “epistemological opinion”, which notions seem incompatible with any meaning of prove. Verspoor’s (1990) suggestions, on the other hand, would entail that a speaker using an infinitive after prove has more evidence than when s/he would use a finite complement, but if strength of evidence can be related to the two meanings of prove mentioned in chapter 2, then surely one would expect the preference of these meanings for one of the complements to be the other way round, for the meaning most connected with hard scientific evidence shows a slight preference for the that-clause.

What other reason could there be for this preference? The two meanings of prove whereof mention are illustrated in (29) to (32) with sentences that have non-human subjects (the possibility of which makes prove an untypical believe-type verb).

(29) With mono recordings, many experiments over the decades have attempted to prove that it is impossible to tell the difference between the original and a recording. (B2Y 884)

(30) Patinated metalwork is not just confined to Japan. Pliny describes a much sought-after metal called Corinthian bronze, an alloy of copper with gold and silver, which took on a purplish hue. It has been argued that this is a description of a patinated alloy. Analysis of a small Roman plaque with a black patina and gold inlays proved it to be largely copper with traces of silver, gold and arsenic, adding weight to the view that this patination technique was practised in the West as well as the East. (AC9 350)

(31) […] despite the known horrors of this dreadful war the British people have seemed oddly aloof to the suffering of the Bosnians. But this week's news that the Government has agreed to offer sanctuary to 4,000 victims proves that public opinion is turning. (CBC 735)

(32) Appended to the article was a proposed constitution. It is noteworthy that neither the article nor the constitution uses the expression ‘deaf and dumb’. […] Another feature of interest is that Maginn’s draft constitution provides that only deaf people were eligible for membership of the proposed Association. Eventually neither proposal found favour, but they prove Francis Maginn to have been a man of vision and ahead of his times in his thinking. (FTX 192)

(29) and (30) are examples of what is called the ‘true’ meaning in chapter 2, which can be paraphrased as “to argue or present evidence that something is definitely true” — the nouns experiments and analysis imply the collection of evidence. (31) and (32) exemplify the ‘show’ meaning: “to be evidence that”7 — the nouns news and

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6 This potential of prove for non-human subjects might help to explain the fact that with prove the infinitival complement is more often preceded by an active matrix than by a passive one, which also makes it untypical (see chapter 5).

7 This is not how this second meaning is glossed in chapter 2. The definition provided there is in fact more appropriate of the third meaning of prove distinguished below.
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proposal do not imply any evidence gathering. Note that the latter meaning is perhaps closer to a third meaning of prove, illustrated in (33) to (37), than the former.

(33) Winston Churchill, relieved of his responsibilities, travelled to the United States of America, in March 1945, where he made a speech in which he made a statement that was to prove profoundly true. (ALY 979)

(34) What follows is offered as a tentative approach, but one that has already proved useful to teachers. (EV4 897)

(35) Geochemical soil traverses and deep overburden drilling have proved useful exploration techniques. (E9X 350)

(36) These relatively complex experimental designs are certainly open to more than one interpretation. Unfortunately, the same has proved to be true of experiments using Lawrence's original design. (APH 1211)

(37) As I mentioned in the chapter describing the actual techniques of pressing (see pp. 36-45), it is essential to dismantle red roses, or any roses of the hybrid tea or floribunda varieties, and to press them as individual petals. You must also remember to press some of the other parts of the roses, such as the sepals and perhaps even the centres, as these will prove to be useful later on when you come to reassemble them into a design. (CE4 938)

In these sentences prove functions as a copula, meaning something like “to become clear after a time that something is true or has a particular quality”, or “there is evidence that something is the case”, i.e. here as well there is no implication of evidence gathering. Could this third use of prove help to account for the preference of accusative and infinitives for what is termed the ‘show’ meaning in chapter 2, i.e. could proximity in meaning bring about similarity in patterning? This third meaning is indeed not only compatible with an infinitive and incompatible with a that-clause, but it is also compatible with an accusative and infinitive, though only a special kind, viz. the kind in which the “accusative” is a reflexive pronoun. Examples are:

(38) Archbishop Romero, although thought to be a moderate when he took up the Archbishropic, proved himself to be a zealous proponent of Liberation Theology, broadcasting his masses, which included political messages, to the people throughout the country, by radio. (AN3 63)

(39) With this second novel, Amy Tan has again proved herself to be a first class writer, one who can write books which not only have enormous popular ap-

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8 Cf. Collins COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners s.v. prove, sense 1.
9 There is of course ample evidence for an associative link between syntactic patterning and meaning. The research of the Birmingham Corpus Linguistics Group, for instance, has revealed that this link reveals itself in two ways: a) different senses of words tend to be distinguished by different patterns, and b) particular patterns tend to be associated with lexical items that have particular meanings, though it is not the case that a single pattern occurs with words of a single meaning, and not all words sharing a meaning necessarily also share a pattern (see Hunston and Francis 2000: chapter 4).
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peal, but also teach us something new about the human condition. (G2V 1389)

It is possible, therefore, to find an explanation for why prove does not fully comply with the discourse pragmatics of the choice between accusative and infinitives established for believe in the first chapter and for additional believe-type verbs in the next chapter without hypothesizing different inherent meanings for different kinds of complement. A particular meaning of the verb may be preferentially expressed by a certain pattern as a result of analogy with a similar meaning which cannot be expressed by the alternative pattern.10

Chapter 3. Is claim a believe-type verb? Further proof of the pudding.

The third chapter, which started life as a guest lecture delivered in the spring of 1999 at the University of Antwerp, was written when my database of paragraph-length extracts from the BNC with either an accusative and infinitive or a finite complement included not just occurrences with believe and prove, but also with judge, show, think and claim. Over a thousand extracts in all. The import of the chapter goes beyond the modest focus suggested by its title, since it reports that what was proposed in chapter 1 on the basis of data with believe is confirmed by the data in the larger collection. The chapter puts the spotlight on claim, however, to make the extra descriptive point that this verb is a fully-fledged believe-type verb, though this is not always recognized, and sometimes even denied. Rohdenburg (1993: 252), for instance, as mentioned above in section 3, avers that it only allows the infinitival complement in sentences containing apparent constituents. The data presented in chapter 3 refute this.

Chapter 4. Is there semantics in all syntax? The case of accusative and infinitive constructions vs. that-clauses

Chapter 4 resulted from an invitation to contribute a paper to a symposium held in Paderborn in the summer of 2000 on ‘Determinants of grammatical variation in English’, and to subsequently write up the paper for the book bearing the same title, published by Mouton de Gruyter. It is the culmination of the chapters in part I of this collection that address the difference between (1) and (2a). The chapter re-presents the quantitative data already used in chapter 3, but that is not the say that it offers no new data. On the contrary, it provides corpus evidence in support of the descriptive point that the alternation illustrated in (1) and (2a) is part of the valency of a far greater part of the verbal lexicon than some have assumed. More specifically, evidence is provided in support of the novel claim that when perception verbs enter the patterns of this alternation, they do not necessarily turn into cognition verbs. This then helps to cast doubt on the presumption, rife in present-day linguistics, that all

10 For evidence of the role of analogy on patterning, see Hunston and Francis (2000: chapter 4).
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syntax is semantically relevant. The chapter is indeed the most ambitious one so far in that it collides head-on with a few proponents of such a relevance, arguing that the principle that there is semantics in all syntax can only be upheld when only a limited amount of data is taken into consideration (i.e. data generated by the linguist’s intuitions), or when semantics is given a very wide scope. With relation to the first of these conditions I hasten to add, however, that I do not wish to imply that some are consciously selective, i.e. deceiving, in their presentation of data. Instead my point is that the confrontation of intuitions about clausal complementation with attested usage makes it abundantly clear that such intuitions can be very deceptive.

Chapter 5. Infinitival copular complement clauses in English: explaining the predominance of passive matrix verbs

Written in the spring of 1998, the fifth chapter is chronologically positioned in between chapters 2 and 3. I have placed it at the end of part 1 of the collection, however, because whereas the previous chapters concentrated on the difference between finite complements and accusative and infinitives with active matrices (i.e. the difference between (1) and (2a)), this chapter focuses on the distinction between accusatives and infinitives with active matrices and those with passive matrices (i.e. the distinction between (2a) and (2b)). More particularly, it provides a first answer to the question of why such passives should occur much more frequently than the actives, and in that way it connects part 1 of the volume with part 2, which revolves around a second answer. The argument put forward in this final chapter of part 1 is that the relatively low frequency of accusative and infinitives with an active matrix could follow naturally from their typical information structure: discourse-pragmatically, accusative and infinitives with active matrices have nothing (or only very little) going for them.

Chapter 6. The passive matrices of English infinitival complement clauses: Evidentials on the road to auxiliarhood?

A first version of chapter 6 was conceived in the autumn of 1998, so that this chapter as well falls chronologically between chapters 2 and 3 (more precisely between chapters 5 and 3). It was written for publication in *Studies in Language* and for presentation at the ‘New reflections on grammaticalization’ symposium held in Potsdam in June 1999. After a very long wait for reviewers’ comments on the first version, and another even longer wait for comments on the revision, it finally joined the queue for publication in *SiL* halfway 2000 and was eventually published in the spring of 2001.

The chapter addresses a second reason for why accusative and infinitives more often have passive than active matrices: many of these passives are no longer passive pendants of actives, but have turned into something entirely different. Whereas (2a) is a bi-clausal sentence, (2b) is mono-clausal. The passive is no longer a main clause, but an auxiliary-like element carrying an evidential function. All *believe*-type verbs entering pattern (2b) can express an evidential meaning, but some are so much more
frequent than others and some enter the passive pattern so much more frequently than the active pattern, that surely some instances of the passive pattern must have developed a special use of their own. What is more, frequently used representatives of the passive pattern easily combine with all sorts of verbs, whereas active matrices do so less easily. There is reason enough to assume, therefore, that the choice of a particular “matrix” verb in sentences like (2b) is often quite a different kind of selection than the choice of a particular matrix verb in sentences like (2a). The latter is a lexical choice, the former often a grammatical one, and grammatical selections have a higher frequency than lexical ones (put differently: function words are more frequent than content words).

Chapter 7. Translations as evidence for semantics: an illustration

The rudiments of chapter 7 were thought up in the winter of 1998-1999 and were first presented under the title ‘English passive matrix clauses as evidentials: empirical contrastive support’ at the symposium ‘Contrastive Linguistics and Translation Studies: Empirical Approaches’, held in Louvain-la-Neuve in February 1999. Its first version therefore falls chronologically between chapters 6 and 3. A much matured and somewhat expanded version entitled ‘The translator as linguistic informant: an illustration’ was eventually sent to *Linguistics* for consideration in January 2002, after the editors, and/or their reviewers, of two other journals had chosen to sit on the versions they had received (one of these journals is now three years behind schedule and its editors have recently been replaced). The title eventually given to the chapter was suggested by the editor(s) of *Linguistics* because their two reviewers agreed that ‘The translator as linguistic informant’ could mislead the reader into thinking that the article was about translators acting as subjects in linguistic informant testing.

This indeed is not what the chapter is about. Quite the reverse, it suggests that translation corpora could provide a useful alternative to informant testing as a way of empirically justifying one’s assertions about meanings. Continuing the quest for evidence that the passive “matrices” of accusative and infinitives can be auxiliary-like evidentials, the chapter elaborates a suggestion put forward in chapter 6 to the effect that the linguistic choices translators make in their translations can provide substantiation for such a claim. In particular, I argue that matrices that are either unmatched in a translation corpus or which are matched in a certain non-literal way, either lexically or grammatically, can provide support for the hypothesized grammaticalization.

Chapter 8. The *be said to* construction in Late Modern English

In the case of chapter 8 there is no discrepancy between its positioning and its chronology: the final chapter is also the one that was written last. It was written for a Festschrift for a former colleague and is not very long as a result (the editors imposed a limit of 3,000 words). This does not, however, make the findings presented in it any less interesting.
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Since grammaticalization is a kind of language change, claims about grammaticalization must be backed up by historical evidence. If it is true that *be said to* and the like are turning into auxiliary-like elements, it must be possible to adduce diachronic evidence which shows that they now have some sort of usefulness which at one time they did not use to have. Proof of a rise in their frequency could be interpreted as such. To paraphrase Bybee and Hopper (2001: 19): grammaticalized items have a certain usefulness in discourse and this is reflected in their frequency. Chapter 8 investigates whether there is any evidence to be found in the recent history of English that our passive matrices have become more frequent. The chapter also probes whether their distribution across different genres can provide additional support for their hypothesized special usefulness.

Though it is the final chapter of this collection, chapter 8 cannot be said to be “conclusive”: it only represents a small first step in the investigation of the historical dimension of the grammaticalization affecting the passive matrices of accusatives and infinitives. What better finish, however, than an open ending that can spark off additional research.

Antwerp, November 2002.

References

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