ASPECTS OF THE SEMANTICS
OF THE ENGLISH PARTICIPIAL CONSTRUCTION

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The present paper is concerned with aspects of the semantics of the participial construction in English. The argument developed is based on the assumption that the grammatical form is not semantically arbitrary, with its varied uses having a conceptual core running through them. The paper argues that the temporal relationship of simultaneity plays a crucial role in motivating the usage of the construction. The various ways the basic notion is interpreted or extended are shown to combine to produce a coherent semantic picture of a grammatical form known for its markedly diverse use.*

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1. Introduction

English has a grammatical construction with a non-finite participial clause adverbially subordinate to a main clause, as exemplified by the following:

(1) Walking down the street, I met an old friend of mine.
(2) Taking out a glass, he poured whisky into it.1

A well-known semantic feature of the two-fold grammatical form, which we will call the participial construction (PC for short), is the

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1 The examples to be presented in this paper fall into four categories: (i) found in the linguistic literature; (ii) found in dictionaries or in real contexts of use; (iii) adapted from real examples; and (iv) invented. For considerations of space, the source is given for examples of category (i) only.
wide range of uses with which it is traditionally associated.\(^2\) Sentences (1) and (2) may give us some sense of the variety involved: in the former, the event described by the matrix clause occurred in the process of the action referred to by the participial clause, while in the latter the two clauses are temporally connected in such a way that the event in the first clause obviously precedes that in the second one. The PC in (1) and (2) arguably describes the temporal relationships of simultaneity and successivity respectively, but these by no means exhaust the inter-clausal meaning possibilities encoded by the construction, as the following examples indicate:

(3) Desiring rest, I lay down in the shade.
(4) Turning to the right, you will find the place you are looking for.
(5) Admitting what you say, I still think that you are in the wrong.
(6) Walking on tiptoe, I approached the little window.

\(^{(3)-(6)}:\) Otsuka et al. eds. (1982: 833)

In these cases, labels such as “causal,” “conditional,” “concessional,” and “circumstantial” may be available for the characterization of the function served by the participial clause in the sentence.\(^3\) This point is illustrated by the general ability of the non-finite adverbial to be converted into a finite clause introduced by a subordinating conjunction:

(7) As I desired rest, I lay down in the shade.
(8) If you turn to the right, you will find the place you are looking for.
(9) Though I admit what you say, I still think that you are in the wrong.

\(^{(7)-(9)}:\) Otsuka et al. eds. (1982: 833)

While finite adverbial clauses of this kind, it is true, are quite helpful in exploring the semantic relationship that holds between the subordinate and matrix clauses in a PC sentence, analysis of the semantics of the construction exclusively in such terms is not entirely without problems. First, it is not always the case that the non-finite adverbial par-

\(^2\) The non-finite participial clause is variously called “converb” (Haspelmath (1995)), “free adjunct” (Kortmann (1995)), “supplementive” (Quirk et al. (1985), Declerck (1991), Biber et al. (1999)), etc.

\(^3\) See Otsuka et al. eds. (1982: 832-833) and also Declerck (1991: 457).
ticipial in the PC can be uniquely glossed by a finite subordinate clause, as the following example indicates:

(10) Singing ‘God save the Queen’ Mary was drying the clothes.  
(Dahl (1985: 25))

In this case, the subordinate and matrix clauses are likely to receive a simultaneous interpretation, but it is equally likely that the non-finite participial involved will be classed as “circumstantial,” with the situation it describes providing circumstances of the kind under which the event denoted by the finite clause occurred.\(^4\) This results in two different glosses for one and the same non-finite adverbial clause:

(11) When she was singing ‘God save the Queen’ ...
(12) While she was singing ‘God save the Queen’ ...\(^5\)

Secondly, the participial clause in the PC is sometimes resistant to association with any kind of finite adverbial clause introduced by a subordinator. This is shown by PC sentences like the following:

(13) The man introduced himself, saying that he was executive vice president of his company.

One should be convinced of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of changing the non-finite subordinate clause into a finite one, despite the transparency of the whole sentence.

The third problem for the conversion analysis is that, while it certainly helps to understand the diverse interclausal semantic relations expressed by PC sentences, the analysis tends to contribute to reducing the construction to nothing more than a multi-functional expressive device, with no semantic coherence of its own. It might be argued that what characterizes the grammatical form is its bafflingly diverse uses,

\(^4\) Throughout the discussion in the present paper, we will make crucial use of the notions of “situation” and “event.” A situation is defined as a combination of spatio-temporal entities and their relations corresponding to each of the clauses contained in a sentence. An event is to be generally understood to mean the same thing as a situation, but the term is sometimes applied specifically to a type of situation, one for a clause with a dynamic predicate.

\(^5\) Sentences (11) and (12) are intended to correspond to the simultaneous and circumstantial interpretations respectively. It should be noted, however, that the finite clause in the latter sentence, one introduced by the conjunction while, may not mean exactly the same thing as does its non-finite counterpart. See also Kortmann (1995: 217) on the difficulty of rephrasing circumstantial participials. This brings us to the second problem to be pointed out.
amenable to analysis in terms of conversion, but it is also arguable that
the seeming diversity does not really constitute the semantic center of
the construction; any formal regularity found in linguistic expressions
reflects in principle a corresponding regularity in meaning. It is in no
way pointless to try to bring to the fore what is behind the form, thus
challenging the pervasive view of its treatment as a matter of conver-
sion analysis of some sort.\textsuperscript{6}

The present paper is primarily concerned with semantic motivation of
PC sentences in English, an issue of some academic interest that has
not been fully addressed in the investigation of grammatical construc-
tions in the language. The assumption on which our approach to the
subject is based may be stated as follows: the varied uses associated
with the PC can be placed within an adequate semantic network, one
involving the conceptual core inherent in the construction that lends
coherence to the overall picture of its meaning. Our assumption is in
consonance with the following statements:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Grammar is not semantically arbitrary. On the contrary,
grammatical distinctions are motivated (in the synchronic
sense) by semantic distinctions; every grammatical construc-
tion is a vehicle of a certain semantic structure; and this is
its \textit{raison d'\'etre}, and the criterion determining its range of
use. \textsuperscript{(Wierzbicka (1988: 3))}
\item Grammatical structures do not constitute an autonomous for-
mal system or level of representation: they are claimed to be
inherently symbolic, providing for the structuring and con-
ventional symbolization of conceptual content. \textsuperscript{(Langacker (1991: 1))}\textsuperscript{7}
\end{enumerate}

The organization of the present paper is as follows. Section 2 sur-
veys some previous analyses of the PC, with particular reference to the
concept of simultaneity, which is often claimed to constitute the kind of
meaning basic to the construction. It is shown that various uses of the

\textsuperscript{6} This does not mean that the traditional analysis of the PC should be entirely
replaced by the kind of analysis to be developed in what follows in the present
paper, which, approaching the construction from a different angle, is intended to pro-
vide a promising complement to the tradition rather than a radical alternative to it.

\textsuperscript{7} This is to say that our approach is along the general lines of Cognitive Gram-
mar, a leading perspective in contemporary mainstream linguistics.
form are in essence connected with the basic meaning thus established. Section 3 centers around one type of usage that tends to be neglected in the treatment of the construction despite its fairly common occurrence. This is illustrated by sentence (13), which is known to be resistant to attempts at conversion analysis, as stated above. Further examples of the same type include:

(16) Music is a faithful friend, responding to my various moods.
(17) In Britain in those days a Japanese was a stranger, coming from distant shores.
(18) The roads were brightly lit, enabling people and traffic to move freely.

In Section 3, these apparently baffling cases are shown to represent a natural extension of the basic meaning associated with the PC, being fully motivated within a semantic network. Section 4 examines cases involving the notion of successivity, another type of use of the construction that might appear to be a deviation from the norm but is in fact to be accounted for by extending the system in a different way. Sentence (2) is treated as exemplifying this possibility, as are sentences like the following:

(19) Opening the closet, he took out a bottle of whisky.
(20) Reaching the river, we pitched camp for the night.
(21) Entering the house, he tripped over the welcome mat.

It is a contention of Section 4 that these cases can be generally brought into connection with the basic meaning established in Section 2. Section 5 summarizes the main points of what is argued in the previous sections, devoted to a grammatical construction which, in spite of the immense variety of its use, allows semantic motivation to a significant extent.

2. The Basic Meaning of the PC

2.1. A Survey

Most of the treatments of the PC seem to be in accord as to the implication with which the two-fold construction is basically used. The following are some of the claims made concerning the interclausal relationships implied by the use of the form:
(22) In all cases like *He came, carrying a heavy burden on his back, He comes, carrying a heavy burden on his back,* and *He will come, carrying a heavy burden on his back* we have a vague simultaneity with something else, rather than any definite reference to one particular time.

(cf. Jespersen (1909–42: vol. 4, 91))

(23) Nonfinite participial constructions in English, for example, involve relative rather than absolute tense. In the sentences (a) *when walking down the road, I often meet Harry* and (b) *when walking down the road, I often met Harry,* the present participle *walking* in both cases indicates a situation located simultaneous with the time of the main verb, irrespective of the tense of the main verb. (Comrie (1976: 2))

(24) When this participle (=the present participle) appears in a non-finite construction, ... it is said to have ‘relative present time meaning’, i.e. express simultaneity as its basic meaning. (Dahl (1985: 25))

(25) In such constructions, only the main verb clause carries absolute tense, and the tense indicated by the converb clause is always relative, with regard to the former. One characteristic of this construction is that the logical connection between the participial and the corresponding main clause is not overtly specified. The basic meaning in all converb systems is simultaneity or anteriority. A simultaneous converb can be paraphrased as ‘while VERB-ing’; an anterior one may be rendered as ‘having VERB-ed.’ (Hayase (1997: 37))

These statements point to one aspect of the construction in question: underlying PC sentences (other than those involving perfect participles) is a temporal relationship where the event in the subordinate clause is located simultaneous with that in the matrix clause.

Before looking at some examples to consider the validity of the

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8 It is not clear in this context what Hayase means by “anteriority” as an aspect of the basic meaning of the PC. It could be that it has something to do with the cases to be dealt with in our discussion later in Section 4.

9 Stump (1985: 41–44) discusses the following examples:

(i) Having unusually long arms, John can touch the ceiling.

(ii) Standing on a chair, John can touch the ceiling.
observation, it is as well to explore the motivational possibilities in terms of the constituency of the construction. The relevance of the notion of time to the PC seems to follow from the involvement of a participle, a form that is derived from a verb, an entity cognitively characterizable as having a temporal profile.\textsuperscript{10} The characteristic of simultaneity appears to be connected with the semantics of another construction known as the progressive, exemplified by the following:

\begin{align*}
\text{(26)} & \quad \text{Joan is writing a novel now.} \\
\text{(27)} & \quad \text{Mary was cooking dinner when the doorbell rang.}
\end{align*}

The core of the progressive construction is made up of two parts, a form of \textit{be} and a (present) participle. One way of capturing the semantic contributions made by these elements is to say that the non-participial element indicates the existence of the subject in a certain situation, which is fully described by the following participial element. Put another way, in the progressive construction the verb \textit{be} merely evokes an underspecified situation and the participle defines a specifying, concurrent situation.\textsuperscript{11} This view of the progressive, it will be noted, allows it to partly explain its two-clause analogue, the PC, with the matrix and participial clauses corresponding temporally to the progressive \textit{be} and participle respectively. The basic interclausal relationship claimed to be encoded by the PC is thus motivated in a somewhat

In subsequent parts of Stump (1985), this pair of PC sentences is claimed to illustrate a contrast between an individual-level predicate and a stage-level predicate, each with its own set of semantic and syntactic characteristics. Although admitting the significance of exploring the implications of the distinction for an overall picture of the construction, it does not seem to be unreasonable to treat both (i) and (ii) as expressing a simultaneous interclausal relationship: the participial clause in (i) designates a time-stable, permanent situation, generally ensuring its simultaneity with whatever situation the matrix denotes; the participial clause found in (ii), though certainly describing a temporally bounded episode, obviously allows the matrix-denoted situation to be coextensive with that episode, thus establishing the same general kind of temporal relationship as in the former example. This indicates that the nature of the simultaneity varies to a greater or lesser extent across the PC sentences to which the semantic property is generally ascribable.

\textsuperscript{10} See Langacker (1987: Ch. 7).

\textsuperscript{11} It will be noted that, although it has been developed quite independently, the view of the progressive, presented in this subsection, and of the perfect participial, presented later in 2.3, is close to, or essentially the same as, that advanced within the compositional theory of tense which adopts an Aux-as-main-verb hypothesis. For detailed discussion, see Wada (2001), for instance.
implicit way by a related construction.

2.2. The Basic Meaning and the Uses of the PC

We will now examine some cases of the PC to see how the semantic invariable suggested above for the construction can provide the basis of a variety of uses traditionally associated with it. Consider the following sentences:

(28) Driving to Chicago that night, I was struck by a sudden thought. (Quirk et al. (1985: 1121))
(29) Being very tired, I went to bed earlier than usual.
(30) Knowing he had no time to go home, he decided to do without lunch. (König (1995: 82))
(31) Not wishing to get involved with the police, I left the pub immediately after the fight started. (Declerck (1991: 456))
(33) So, in the end, despising herself ..., she settled upon saying ...
(34) She said good-bye, waving her hands.
(35) As Dunn framed each question, Charlie answered it in his own mind; smiling, frowning, and even prepared to shed a tear behind his hands. (Kortmann (1995: 217))

These PC sentences can be classified into several of the categories in terms of which the semantics of the construction is often analyzed. One possibility would be: “temporal” for (28); “causal” for (29)–(31); “conditional” for (32); “concessional” for (33); and “circumstantial” for (34) and (35). It should be noted, however, that although the descriptive labels assigned successfully capture the range of actual use exhibit-

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12 The diversity of interpretation displayed by the PC in actual use is attributable to a great extent to the conceptually unrestrictive character of the semantic invariable suggested for the construction. That is, there is in principle no restriction placed on the conceptual connection between the matrix and the subordinate clause involved in the construction, as long as the two clauses can be regarded as being in a temporal relationship of simultaneity. The interpretational possibilities of a PC sentence with simultaneously connected clauses depend crucially upon such matters as the aspectual character of the participial predicate, the polarity of the participial clause, the type of discourse in which the sentence is used, and various other semantic and pragmatic considerations. (Probing in some detail how these factors affect the interpretation of PC sentences may lead to a treatment, in a way that is entirely different from (and
ed by the form, the different readings they represent generally presuppose an underlying unity of meaning: the interclausal temporal relationship of simultaneity. This should be fairly obvious in (28), a PC sentence which purports to describe a situation of time inclusion and thus reflects in a direct way the basic meaning for the construction. It may be argued that examples (29)–(35) are also based, possibly less obviously, on the same temporal conception, in spite of the varied nature of the semantic notions applied to them. In (29)–(31), the participial clause, which describes the cause of the event reported by the main clause, may also be said to be a description of a situation that existed simultaneously at the time of the matrix event. This analysis of the temporal relationship between the main and subordinate clauses is applicable to (32)–(35): in (32), although the event of John’s putting on his new outfit may precede that of his fooling anyone (and this is related in a crucial way to the “conditional” reading of the sentence), it is most certainly true that he will be wearing the outfit when the fooling is actually performed; (33) depicts in its participial clause the mental state of the subject that simultaneously accompanied the performance of the matrix-reported act; in (34) and (35) it could even be argued that the label “circumstantial” applied to the participial is actually short for “simultaneously circumstantial,” as this is the normal (and possibly the only) way of interpreting the notion it expresses.

We may conclude that the discussion in the foregoing paragraph lends support to the claims presented in the preceding subsection concerning the interclausal relationships implied by the use of the PC. It is true that many examples of the construction lend themselves to interpretations that are capable of obscuring the schematic meaning, but that does not mean that it is something to be ignored or downplayed. The putative absence of the inherent semantic relationship between the clauses involved, an absence that turns out to be more apparent than real, is responsible, to a considerable degree, for the supposed accessibility of

possibly preferable to) the one to be suggested later in the present paper, of those varieties of the construction which are specifically concerned with situational ordering and temporal succession. The pursuit of this possibility will be left to future research.) See König (1995: Section 5), Kortmann (1995: Section 4), Quirk et al. (1985: 1124), and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1222). Also worth mentioning in this connection is Hayase (1997), who argues for some general cognitive principles as additional factors governing the interpretation of PC sentences of various types.
the construction to the kind of popular conversion analysis illustrated earlier.

2.3. The Perfect Participial

So far in the present section we have been concerned with PC sentences involving ordinary present participles, thus excluding from discussion another variety of the construction, one introduced by a participle of a perfect verb. The following exemplify this type of PC:

(36) Having eaten a hearty breakfast, we prepared for our long journey. (Quirk et al. (1985: 238))

(37) Having met Harry earlier, I don’t/didn’t need to see him again. (Comrie (1976: 2))

(38) Having stolen the jewels, the thief had to think of a means of smuggling them out of the building. (Declerck (1991: 448))

(39) This material is extremely light, having been invented to be used in spacecraft. (Declerck (1991: 448))

The widely accepted account of PC sentences of this type is that the participial clause expresses a sort of anteriority, with the event it denotes occurring prior to the time indicated in the matrix clause.13 For example, in (36) the event of our eating the hearty breakfast took place earlier than the time of our preparation for the journey.

While there could be nothing to argue against about analyses along this line, the standard view of the perfect participial as indicating anteriority seems to bear some rethinking. The issue to be addressed here is what is exactly denoted by the non-finite clause. Unlike non-perfect participials discussed earlier, clauses with a perfect participle as the head permit two different interpretations of the situation referred to, under one of which it is understood to be the event denoted by the past participle involved in the perfect form and under the other of which it is taken to be something that is denoted by the present participle (that is, having). It will be noted that, if the account presented above of example (36) is valid, it appears to follow that it is the former, rather than the latter, interpretation that is implicit in the analyses of sentences with a perfect participial. That is to say, it is not the present participle

13 See Quirk et al. (1985: 238) and Declerck (1991: 448).
having but the past participle following it that relates to what is located prior to the matrix time. This understanding of perfect participials, however, is inconsistent with the way their non-perfect counterparts are normally understood, in which it is the situation denoted by the present participle that is temporally located with respect to the matrix situation, as indicated by the following:

(40) Eating a hearty breakfast, we prepared for our long journey.  
(Quirk et al. (1985: 238))

If we insist on form-meaning regularity for PC sentences in general, then the alternative for us is taking the other view of the perfect participial: in a non-finite perfect participial clause, it is the participle having that defines the situation denoted by the clause, thus being located relative to the finite-clause time. The situation associated with the present participle may be defined, on a standard interpretation of the perfect aspect, as the state that is related to a preceding situation, which, obviously, is what is denoted by the past participle.\textsuperscript{14} It follows, then, that the non-finite perfect participial clause designates not the situation located anterior to the matrix-defined time but rather the state resulting from the prior situation, which, without question, may be viewed as simultaneous with the time indicated in the matrix. This analysis, it will be noted, allows perfect participials, along with their non-perfect counterparts, to have running through them the semantic core of the PC discussed earlier: the interclausal temporal relationship of simultaneity. The allegedly distinct variety of the construction can thus claim to require no special treatment, being capable of semantic motivation in an appropriate way.

3. An Extension: The Use of the PC for Situational Ordering

3.1. An Illustration

The preceding section has dealt with the basic meaning of the PC and its connection with various uses of the construction. Although covering a wide range of use associated with the form, the treatment thus far presents only part of the whole picture of a construction known

\textsuperscript{14} Comrie (1976: 52): “The perfect is rather different from these aspects, since it tells us nothing directly about the situation in itself, but rather relates some state to a preceding situation.”
for its marked semantic diversity. One type of PC usage that has been left untouched despite its frequency is illustrated by sentences like the following:

(41) The object was enormous, being the size of two aircraft carriers put together with many flashing lights.

(42) Cricket is more widespread than baseball, being played in many countries which used to be part of the British Empire.

(43) The Japanese writing system is extraordinarily complex, consisting of a mixture of Chinese characters and two sets of syllabaries.

(44) In Costa Rica, coffee is the most important cash crop, monopolizing almost all of the arable land in the central plateau.

(45) His mother discouraged him from joining the navy, saying that it was a hard life.

A notable characteristic of these PC sentences is that the non-finite adverbial involved is generally shown to resist conversion into a finite clause introduced by a subordinator. It might be objected that sentences like these also admit such a rephrasing, based on an inference of the semantic relationship between the matrix and subordinate clauses. For instance, sentence (41) might be rendered by means of a causal subordinator:

(46) The object was enormous, because it was the size of two aircraft carriers put together with many flashing lights.

However, in this case the causal relationship is in fact not so apparent in the participial clause in (41) as in the finite subordinate clause in (46). This may be confirmed by the fact that the non-finite clause in (41) could also be converted, possibly with as much plausibility, into a structure with a non-causal coordinating conjunction:

(47) The object was enormous, and it was the size of two aircraft carriers put together with many flashing lights.¹⁵

Furthermore, a rephrasing with a subordinator may be hardly available for other cases, such as (45):

(48) ?His mother discouraged him from joining the navy, because

¹⁵ Kortmann (1995: 217) suggests the possibility of rephrasing the non-finite participials in question by means of postposed clauses introduced by *i.e.*, *e.g.*, *in that*, *more exactly*, etc.
she said that it was a hard life.

One might conclude by observing that considerable indeterminacy marks the meanings of these sentences, but there is more to the semantics of the type of PC they represent, a point to be made in the following.

3.2. Situational Unity

The examples we have just seen seem to point to a limitation of the kind of conversion analysis with which the construction is conventionally associated. The alternative approach to be offered now, an approach which is non-conversional in character, is one based on the assumption that PC sentences in general can be accounted for by invoking and extending the basic intersituational temporal notion of simultaneity, with which we operated in the previous section.

We will go back to some of the examples presented above. A feature that is identifiable as common to the elusive (41)–(45) is that these sentences, seen from a referential point of view, can be said to relate to one and the same objective situation: (41), for instance, does not describe two distinct objective situations but rather constitutes a statement about the enormousness of one and the same object.\(^{16}\) Another way of characterizing the situation would be to say that each of the sentences in question “describes two aspects of one ‘event’ and is an instance of an instrumental or consequential interpretation (König (1995: 84)).”\(^{17}\) This distinguishes the type of PC in question from sentences of other types of the construction, sentences which may plausibly be interpreted as pertaining to two different objective situations:

(28) Driving to Chicago that night, I was struck by a sudden thought. (Quirk et al. (1985: 1121))

(29) Being very tired, I went to bed earlier than usual.

(30) Knowing he had no time to go home, he decided to do without lunch. (König (1995: 82))

\(^{16}\) The term “objective situation (or event)” (as opposed to the notion of the unmodified “situation (or event)” defined earlier) is to be understood here to refer to an extralinguistic state of affairs that is more or less independently identifiable for a PC sentence. The inevitable issue of how the identification is made possible remains to be resolved. As it stands, the process is based on nothing other than pure intuition.

\(^{17}\) The notion of “(one) event” as invoked in the quotation may be taken to be synonymous with “(one) objective event.”
It is likely that the situational nature of sentences instantiating the "instrumental or consequential" use is responsible for their relative inaccessibility to conversion analysis, as illustrated above. A formulation of a finite clause introduced by a subordinator may well be indicative of a distinct conceptualization of the situation it is intended to denote, a conceptualization that is incongruous with the notion of situational unity associated with the use of the construction in question.

The examination above of an intriguing situational aspect of a type of PC reveals an important fact about the interclausal temporal relationship involved in the type of the construction. Since the participial and matrix clauses describe two aspects of one objective event, it follows that they have to be located simultaneous with each other. This case of simultaneity, it will be noted, may also be interpreted as a little extension of prototypical cases of the temporal relationship, because in this case the relationship does not involve two objectively different situations—as it normally does—but rather a kind of situational unit. PC sentences of the type in question, marked by a somewhat peculiar situational nature, can nonetheless claim full semantic motivation, by associating themselves with the kind of temporality generally evoked by the construction.

3.3. Situational Ordering

The discussion above on one aspect of the PC has shown that the construction, consisting of a subordinate and a main clause, does not always describe two different objective situations; it is capable of involving situational unity, with the subordinate situation forming a unit with the matrix situation. The issue to be tackled now is how the matrix and participial situations are conceptually connected with each other, in an overall picture presented by the sentence.

Returning to the examples given earlier in the illustration, we find an inequality in status between the situations denoted by the clauses involved. For example, sentence (42), a description of a kind of sport originating in Britain, implies a situational relation such that of the two statements that follow only the second one is true:

(49) If cricket is more widespread than baseball, it follows that it is played in many countries which used to be part of the British Empire.

(50) If cricket is played in many countries which used to be part of the British Empire, it follows that it is more widespread
than baseball.

What this contrast shows is that in (42), the matrix and subordinate clauses are characterized by a definite implicational relation, the latter implying the former and not vice versa. Another way of capturing the fact would be to say that the matrix-denoted situation is connected with the subordinate-denoted one in such a way that the former is elaborated or specified by the latter.18 This indicates that PC sentences of this type involve a kind of situational ordering, with the less specific, hence higher-order, situation expressed by the main clause and the more specific, and thus lower-order, situation by the subordinate.

The point is further illustrated by the following examples, which display the same pattern:

(51) The car salesman was rather disingenuous, giving the impression that the car used very little fuel.

(52) Even when we turn off the bedside lamp and are fast asleep, electricity is working for us, driving our refrigerators, heating our water, or keeping our rooms air-conditioned.

(53) A noun indicates a categorization, identifying a kind which may be partly described in terms of features but which cannot be reduced to a set of features.

It is easy to see that in these sentences, as in those presented earlier, the higher- and lower-order situations correspond to the main and subordinate clauses respectively. This way of expressing ordered situations, however, is not the only pattern of encoding situational ordering exhibited by the construction, as the following examples indicate:

(54) The new machine will work twice as fast, thus greatly reducing costs.

(55) We increased the temperature of the solution by four degrees, thereby [thus] eliminating any danger of freezing.

(Petersen (1988: 176–177))

(56) The raindrops had frozen on the shop window, coating it with

18 Kortmann (1995: Section 4) uses the label “exemplification/specification” to describe the interclausal semantic relation in question. Halliday notes that the participial clause in this type of PC “does not introduce a new element into the picture but rather provides a further characterization of one that is already there, restating it, clarifying it, refining it, or adding a descriptive attribute or comment. (Halliday (1985: 203)).”
crystal pebbles that crazed the light and made it merrier.

(57) An Australian pop singer presented the compact disk of her new album to the leader of a Japanese political party, encouraging her to win the general election.

In these four sentences, it will be noted, the relation between the ordered situations and clauses is reversed, with the higher- and lower-order situations expressed by the subordinate and superordinate (i.e. matrix) clauses respectively. The optional use of adverbs like thus or thereby before the participial, as in (54) and (55), serves to make the ordering correspondence more explicit.19

We have seen so far how the PC, a construction based on a definite interclausal temporal relationship, is crucially concerned with encoding situational ordering. Now there are two points worth mentioning in connection with the significant linguistic function. The first concerns what is called deverbal prepositions, a subset of the word class that is known to have arisen from certain PC participials through a process of grammaticalization.20 This is illustrated by the following:

(58) Concerning the present state of the company, he asked several searching questions.
(59) Pertaining to the contract negotiations, there is nothing to report. (Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 610))

In these cases, the word at the head of the sentence is generally analyzed as a preposition, having no understood subject recoverable, but there seems to be good reason to argue that the form expresses a participial quality of the sort that evokes an involvement of two ordered situations. For example, in (58), it might reasonably be said that what is stated in the main part of the sentence (i.e. the fact of his asking those questions) occupies a position in a hierarchy of situational ordering vis-à-vis what is indicated in the prepositional phrase (i.e. the fact of his action concerning the present state of the company) in a way that allows the latter to be ordered higher than the former, given the impli-

19 The participial clause in a PC sentence involving situational ordering can be placed before the matrix clause:

Trying to please everyone, Don Roque served several tables simultaneously.
(König (1995: 82))

20 For an account of grammaticalization, see Kawakami ed. (1996: Ch. 5). For a discussion on deverbal prepositions, see Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 610–611).
cational relations suggested earlier. It may be that participles that get grammaticalized into prepositions do not lose their original status entirely; the degree of grammaticalization is in some way relative to the possibility of recognizing a function that the PC is endowed with.

The second point to be mentioned concerning the function of the construction is that some type of progressive in English is known to exhibit the kind of situational ordering that has been discussed so far. Consider the following sentences:

(60) If you tell someone he 'had better' do something, he may snap back at you. He will think you are treating him as a child. (Tomozawa (2002: 157))

(61) It is important to realize that, in opposing the Neo-grammarian view, Saussure was not denying the validity of historical explanation. (Tomozawa (2002: 157–158))

A descriptive label attached to the type of progressive illustrated is "interpretative," implying that the construction is specifically concerned with adding a sort of interpretation or comment to an action or statement introduced into the discourse. For example, (60) means that your act of telling someone he "had better" do something is interpreted to be equal to your treatment of him as a child. This semantic relationship, it will be noted, lends itself naturally to characterization within a framework of ordered situations, for which we have so far argued: the situation denoted by the progressive can be viewed as less specific, hence higher-ordered, than the one it is intended to interpret; the latter provides an object of interpretation for the former and not vice versa. The notion of situational ordering, therefore, is also shown to work when applied to a construction suggestive of an intriguing relatedness to

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21 See Tomozawa (2002) and also Hasegawa (2002). Also to be noted is König (1995), who applies the label "interpretative," along with those mentioned in 3.2, to the type of PC on the analysis of which the argument for situational ordering has been developed in the present paper (König (1995: 82–83)).

22 The fixed situational ordering in an interpretative progressive sentence is linked to a general semantic function associated with the construction. As Leech (1987: 21) explains, the progressive generally has the effect of surrounding a particular event or moment by what may be referred to as a "temporal frame." This is illustrated by the following example:

He was looking very ill when I last saw him. (Leech (1987: 21))

In this sentence, the progressive-denoted situation not only obtained at the time of
4. An Extension: The Use of the PC for Temporal Succession

4.1. An Illustration

The analysis of the PC developed above has been based on the inter-clausal temporal relationship of simultaneity, a notion which, as we have seen, is central to exploring some of the ways the construction is semantically motivated. Although our investigation has revealed much about the semantics of PC sentences, an account of the meaning of the grammatical form would not be complete without considering one important aspect of its use that has been left out of the discussion so far. This is illustrated by the following examples:

(62) Lifting the telephone, she asked for room 1410. (Kortmann (1995: 220))

(63) Leaping out of a dark opening at the right, it ran towards him. (Kortmann (1995: 220))

(64) Leaping to their feet, the spectators ran out onto the pitch. (Close (1975: 80))

(65) Leaping out of bed, he dressed so quickly that he put his boots on the wrong feet. (Sinclair ed. (1990: 371))

(66) Putting down my scissors, I stood up from my chair and answered the telephone. (Declerck (1991: 456))

(67) Turning on the radio, I noticed immediately that it was not working properly.

As will be noticed, these sentences seem to belong to a category different from the one focused on in the previous two sections: the event described by the participial clause occurs prior to, rather than simultane-
ous with, the matrix-denoted event. Also instantiating this category, to which the notion of successivity is thus applicable, are sentences like the following, where the event in the matrix clause is located anterior to that in the participial:

(68) She took off her coat and scarf, dumping them on the bed.  
    (Konig (1995: 74))

(69) He listened at the door of the office, hearing nothing.  
    (Konig (1995: 74))

(70) George majored in economics at the University of Washing- 
    ton, receiving a B.A. in 1931.

Kortmann (1995) presents a perceptive treatment of the successive read- 
ning of PC sentences. Among the conditions he points out for those 
cases where a temporal relationship of successivity is observed but not 
signalled by time adverbials in the participial, the following are worth 
mentioning here: telic, especially achievement, predicate in the participi-

23 See also Konig (1995: 74). For an account of the aspectual notion of telicity, 
see Declerck (1997: 191–194). A useful discussion is found in Dirven and Verspoor 
(1998: Ch. 1) on the principle of iconicity in language with reference to word order.

4.2. Successivity and Simultaneity

The illustration given above has hopefully opened a door to some 
aspects of PC sentences with a non-simultaneous interpretation, one cru-

23 See also König (1995: 74). For an account of the aspectual notion of telicity, 
see Declerck (1997: 191–194). A useful discussion is found in Dirven and Verspoor 
(1998: Ch. 1) on the principle of iconicity in language with reference to word order.
introduced by the second one. One general feature of the temporal relationship described by these sentences, it may be noticed, is that the time lapse separating the two events concerned is perceived as small enough to give the impression that they occur at about the same time: in (62), for instance, though it is quite true that her lifting the telephone preceded her act of asking for the room, there was probably little or no lapse of time between the two events. This temporal feature is correctly captured by Declerck (1991), who argues that “the tense forms expressing simultaneity can be used in cases where there is ‘sloppy’ rather than strict simultaneity (Declerck (1991: 132)).” He argues further that:

(71) In these cases the speaker disregards the fact that the two situations do not really overlap but concentrates on the fact that they follow each other closely and that there is some logical relation between them. (Declerck (1991: 132))

It should be obvious that the notion of sloppy simultaneity invoked here is an extension, quite a natural one, of the interclausal temporal relationship that has been claimed to be the semantic core of PC sentences.

The central concept of simultaneity, with its extended application, may also cover cases like the following, which without doubt defy any analysis in terms of the concept as it is strictly interpreted:

(72) The bus left at 9:00, arriving at the airport at 9:30.
(73) I’m going to Burgos ..., coming back on the twenty-ninth. (Kortmann (1995: 220))

(74) He went to university at the age of 17, graduating six years later as a civil engineer. (Declerck (1991: 458))

In each of these cases, there is an obvious lapse of time between the matrix and subordinate events. A simultaneous interpretation of these non-simultaneous cases brings us to the second issue to address: how sloppy could the concept of simultaneity be? Declerck (1991) argues, following the statement (71), that:

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24 Kortmann (1995: 221) uses the expression “immediate succession” to characterize the successive use of the non-perfect PC. By contrast, PC sentences involving perfect participials, he points out, cannot express this kind of temporal relationship, as a comparison of (62) with the following indicates:

Having lifted the telephone, she asked for room 1410. (Kortmann (1995: 221))
The use of a tense form expressing simultaneity then means that the speaker treats the two situations as belonging to the same ‘occasion’ and hence as falling within the same time interval. (Declerck (1991: 132))

That is to say, the two events involved can be regarded as sloppily simultaneous to the extent that they are viewed as sharing the same “occasion.” Another way of interpreting the situation is provided by Kortmann (1995), who, trying to define the conditions for the successive reading of PC sentences, suggests the following in addition to the two conditions mentioned earlier: indication of a path or itinerary in the complex sentence (Kortmann (1995: 221)). That is, the whole sentence in (72)–(74) may be interpreted as a description of a unitary itinerary or path of temporal succession, irrespective of the time interval between the events involved. It is to be noted that the notion of path unitarity, or sameness of path, is not resistant to treatment as a kind of extension of the notion of sameness of occasion: an occasion, which is an entity that is plausibly characterized as being limited in temporal extension, allows in one sense extension to a path (in the metaphorical sense in this context), an entity that can be viewed as more extended in time. The extension involved may thus be said to pertain to the temporal extendedness of the concepts involved in it. It is likely, it should be pointed out, that what may aptly characterize the type of PC under discussion, one crucially concerned with temporal succession, is something less of sameness of occasion than of path unitarity, a notion that can be related to the former one by the kind of extension described. This view gains support from the following example, where the use of the PC is judged odd under the normal circumstances:

(76) ?Getting home from school, I heard the news of the sudden death of my grandfather.

The sentence, although describing events that occur in immediate succession and belong to the same “occasion,” sounds unnatural because the events do not constitute a unitary path: the occurrence of the first event cannot be expected to lead naturally to the occurrence of the second one. In this case, the following finite structure could be substi-

25 The term “complex sentence” refers to a sentence consisting of a matrix and a subordinate (i.e. participial) clause.
tuted:

(77) As soon as I got home from school, I heard the news of the sudden death of my grandfather.\textsuperscript{26}

The relevance of the notion of path unitarity is corroborated by the following hardly acceptable example:

(78) ??Getting home from work, John failed to drink the coffee his wife made for him.

The intended meaning of this sentence is something like this: Although John usually drinks the coffee his wife makes for him when he gets home from work, he did not perform his habitual action this time, for some reason or other. The fact of the subject not doing what he is expected to do obviously militates against the formation of a unitary eventive path, a case that falls outside of the normal application of a PC sentence.

From the discussion so far, it follows that the successive use of the PC can be motivated in two ways: in one of the ways, it can generally be viewed as an extension of the basic meaning established earlier for the construction, which is defined as the interclausal temporal relationship of simultaneity; in the other, it can be characterized in terms of the notion of path unitarity, which may represent an extension of another kind, one that is made of the notion of sameness of occasion, the concept of simultaneity with its extended coverage. Underlying a PC sentence labeled as successive are semantic principles motivating its use at a level of schematicity, principles involving a temporal conception central to the construction.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} It might be claimed that sentence (76), with an intended meaning identifiable as (77), could be characterized by an interclausal temporal relationship of simultaneity, as can sentences like (28)-(35), presented earlier in the paper. Although appearing to share a similar temporality, the PC sentence in question is distinguished from those earlier examples by the fact that the group conjunction “as soon as” used in the paraphrase (77) is indicative of an interpretation that is non-simultaneous in nature: the subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction denotes an event that actually occurred slightly prior to, rather than strictly simultaneous with, the event denoted by the matrix clause.

\textsuperscript{27} For an exposition of the cognitive-grammar notion of schematicity, see, for example, Langacker (1987: 68–71, 74–75, 132–138).
5. Summary

In the present paper, we have explored aspects of the participial construction in English, with a view to discovering pieces of its semantic motivation. The PC is a construction conventionally associated with a sort of conversion analysis because of its apparent diversity of use. We have argued for a temporal relationship between the matrix and participial clauses as a basis of the meanings of PC sentences of various kinds. The central contention of the paper has been that, despite its often baffling variety, the semantics of the PC can claim to be motivated by invoking and extending in an appropriate way the basic temporal notion of simultaneity, applied interclausally to the construction. Among the main points that have been made in the paper are the following. In PC sentences, perfect participials introduced by having are often distinguished from their non-perfect counterparts, but the two forms are shown to be based on the same interclausal semantic relation, thus obviating special treatment of the former. One type of PC is specifically concerned with the function of situational ordering, a function that can be regarded as a manifestation of the basic interclausal temporal relationship established for the construction. Another usage of the PC involves encoding successivity, a notion that is relatable to the temporal notion forming the core of the construction, by way of two levels of its conceptual extension.

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