

Cowper, E. "Intervals and Schedules: the English Progressive," in *Proc. of the 1994 Annual Conf. of the Canadian Linguistic Assoc.*, P. Koskinen (ed.) 107-118.

Proceedings of the 1994  
Annual Conference of the  
Canadian Linguistic Association

*editor/rédacteur*

Päivi Koskinen

Actes du  
Congrès annuel de  
l'Association canadienne de linguistique  
1994

Toronto Working Papers in Linguistics  
Linguistic Graduate Course Union  
Department of Linguistics  
University of Toronto  
M5S 1A1  
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## INTERVALS AND SCHEDULES: THE ENGLISH PROGRESSIVE

Elizabeth A. Cowper  
University of Toronto

## 1. Introduction

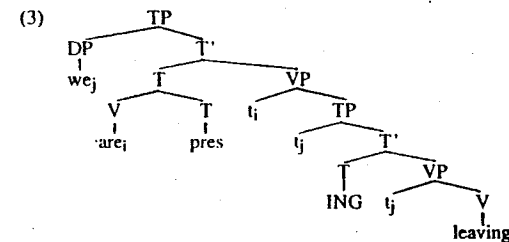
The English progressive construction is normally used to denote an event taking place over an interval of time, as shown in (1). With (1a), we understand that the event has begun but is not over yet. With (1b), we understand that the light is blinking repeatedly.

- (1) a. Marlene is washing her stockings now.  
b. The light is blinking now.

There is another sense of the progressive, however, in which the event need not take place over an interval. This is the so-called scheduled reading, illustrated in (2). In neither (2a) nor (2b) is it necessary for the event ultimately to take place, or to be currently expected to take place, over an interval of time.

- (2) a. We are leaving early next week.  
b. Your permit is expiring next Wednesday at noon.

In this paper I provide a compositional account of the complementarity of the interval and schedule readings of the English progressive. Following and updating earlier work (Cowper 1991, 1992b, 1994), I assume that progressive ING is an abstract element heading a non-finite tense phrase (TP), taking a VP as its complement. That VP must be headed by a verb bearing the affix *-ing*. At LF, the verb heading the VP raises to T and is checked against the abstract tense morpheme. The relevant structure at S-structure, or Spellout is shown in (3).



I have argued elsewhere (Cowper 1991, 1992a) that ING imposes a temporal selectional restriction on its VP, forcing it to be interpreted as extending over an interval. This selectional restriction never actually marks a sentence as ungrammatical, since any punctual event can be interpreted as extending over an interval. Following Jackendoff (1987), for example, a punctual event can be interpreted in a fine-grained way, so that the interval is measured in milliseconds.

Or, following Jackendoff (1990), an event can be taken as plural, giving an iterative reading. Both of these readings are available for (1b).

I adopt the working hypothesis that the same ING morpheme is present in (2) as in (1). This hypothesis follows Cowper (1989a, 1989b), and a proposal made by Alana Johns (1992), essentially that a single, monosemous lexical item should be assumed in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary. The problem presented by the data in (3) and (4) is, in essence, to show why the temporal selectional restriction imposed by ING is nullified in the schedule reading.

The paper is organized as follows. I show first that the schedule reading is correlated with a mismatch between a temporal adjunct, or some discourse-determined temporal reference point, and the tense of the sentence. I then argue, following Stuart (1992), that temporal adjuncts are adjoined to TP, not to VP. Third, within the compositional theory of tense first proposed in Cowper (1991), I show that temporal prepositions, like tense morphemes, are temporal connectors, relating two temporal structures on the time line. Turning finally to the question with which the paper begins, it is seen that the temporal adjunct and the matrix tense morpheme cause a contradiction in the interpretation of the sentences in (2). It is in the resolution of this contradiction that we find the explanation for the complementarity of the interval reading and the schedule reading of the English progressive.

## 2. The mismatch in the schedule reading

It should first be noted that many progressive sentences are ambiguous between an interval reading and a schedule reading. Consider, for example, the sentences in (4).

- (4) a. She's taking the children to school.  
b. Bella's going to Harvard.

Either of these sentences can refer to an ongoing event or process, or to an event which is expected to begin sometime in the near future. Pragmatic considerations will determine which reading is preferred in any given instance. Sentences such as those in (4) can be disambiguated by the addition of a temporal adjunct, as can be seen in (5).

- (5) a. She's taking the children to school at the moment/tomorrow.  
b. Bella's going to Harvard even as we speak/next year.

Both readings are also available in the past tense, as seen in (6).

- (6) a. I was cleaning the basement (when the telephone rang).  
b. I was leaving for Europe next month (but now it looks as though I'll have to wait a few more weeks).

The schedule reading is forced only when the temporal adjunct and the tense of the sentence refer to distinct segments of the time line. In (5), the adjuncts *tomorrow* and *next year* denote intervals later than the moment of speech, whereas the present tense of the sentence denotes the moment of speech. In (6b), the temporal adjunct *next month* denotes a future interval, while the tense of the

sentence (past) refers to a point prior to the moment of speech. In those cases where a schedule reading is pragmatically chosen, as in (4), there must be a discourse-determined temporal reference point which is distinct from the moment of speech.

## 3. Theoretical considerations

So far, we have merely noted the complementarity of the interval and schedule readings of the progressive. In order to explain this complementarity, we must make some assumptions, both about the syntactic structures involved, and about how temporal structures are computed. I turn first to the syntax of temporal adjuncts.

Steuart (1992, 1994) shows that temporal adjunct *-ing* clauses must be adjoined, not to VP, but rather to TP. Her arguments are based on the behaviour of controlled PRO in temporal adjuncts, as compared to its behaviour in non-temporal adjuncts. In temporal adjuncts, as shown in (7), only the surface subject of the host clause can control a PRO subject in the adjunct. In contrast to (7), PRO subjects in non-temporal adjuncts can be controlled by various arguments within the VP of the host clause, although each type of adjunct can place specific thematic constraints on which NP is chosen. This is illustrated in (8)-(10). Note that in some non-temporal adjuncts, such as the means adjunct in (9), both thematic and structural factors play a role. The crucial point here is that with temporal adjuncts, structural factors alone determine the controller of PRO.

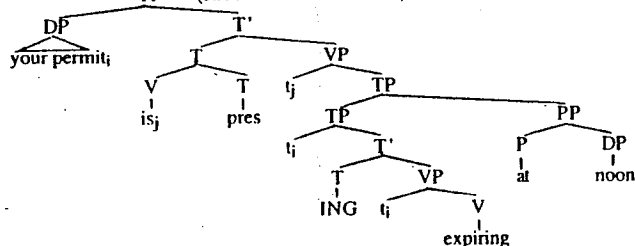
- (7) a. The cow<sub>i</sub> bumped the pig<sub>j</sub> before PRO<sub>i/∅j</sub> running away.  
b. The pig<sub>j</sub> was bumped by the cow<sub>i</sub> before PRO<sub>∅i/j</sub> running away.
- (8) a. The cow<sub>i</sub> bit the pig<sub>j</sub> for PRO<sub>∅i/j</sub> running away.  
b. The pig<sub>j</sub> was bitten by the cow<sub>i</sub> for PRO<sub>∅i/j</sub> running away.
- (9) a. The cow<sub>i</sub> frightened the pig<sub>j</sub> by PRO<sub>i/∅j</sub> running away.  
b. \*The pig<sub>j</sub> was frightened by the cow<sub>i</sub> by PRO<sub>∅i/∅j</sub> running away.
- (10) a. The cow<sub>i</sub> approached the pig<sub>j</sub> about PRO<sub>i/∅j/arb</sub> running away.  
b. The pig<sub>j</sub> was approached by the cow<sub>i</sub> about PRO<sub>i/∅j/arb</sub> running away.

Steuart claims that non-temporal adjuncts are adjoined to VP, while temporal adjuncts are adjoined to TP. She proposes that the controller of PRO must either theta-command or c-command PRO. The details of theta-command are not relevant here; essentially only elements within or adjoined to VP can be theta-commanded by arguments of that verb. Since temporal adjuncts are completely outside VP, PRO in a temporal adjunct cannot be controlled under theta-command, but only under c-command. This means first, that only that argument which has moved to spec/TP is eligible to control PRO in a temporal adjunct, and second, that thematic considerations cannot be relevant to control in temporal adjuncts.

I adopt Steuart's proposal, and assume that if temporal adjuncts containing PRO are adjoined to TP, then all temporal adjuncts are adjoined to TP. This gives a structure such as (12) for the sentence in (11). This is the structure from which the schedule reading must be derived.

(11) Your permit is expiring at noon.

(12) TP (structure at SPELLOUT)



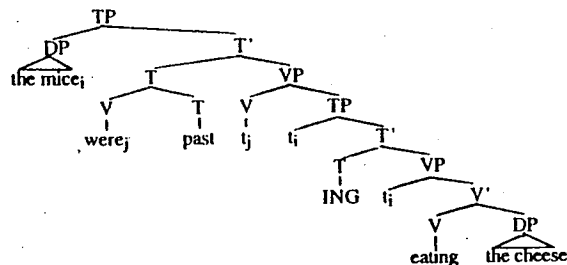
Now let us address the question of how the temporal interpretation of sentences like (11) is to be computed. Based on earlier work, with some revisions (Cowper 1991) I assume that the relevant English tense morphemes are lexically represented as in (13)<sup>1</sup>.

- (13) present: S=↓  
 past: S>↓  
 ING: ↑=↓

The first two entries in (13) are the finite tense morphemes. They locate their VP's on the time line with direct reference to the moment of speech<sup>2</sup>. The third entry is the non-finite, participial tense morpheme ING, which appears in the progressive construction. It locates its VP on the time line at the same time as the temporal structure that most closely c-commands it. In addition, it requires that its VP be interpreted as extending over an interval. We will first consider a straightforward progressive sentence such as the one in (14), whose structure is given in (15).

(14) The mice were eating the cheese.

(15)



<sup>1</sup> I have omitted all material not relevant to temporal interpretations, such as finiteness, ability to assign case, etc.

<sup>2</sup> In narrative contexts, the moment of speech can be replaced with a reference point, but that need not concern us here.

Here, ING forces the lower VP to extend over an interval, and places that interval at the same time as the nearest c-commanding temporal structure. That structure is the higher verb, which in turn is placed, by the past tense morpheme, prior to the moment of speech. As required, then, this sentence means that the eating event took place over an interval of time prior to the moment of speech.

Assuming that temporal adjuncts adjoin to TP, there are at least two places where a temporal adjunct could be placed in a progressive sentence. An adjunct could be adjoined to the matrix TP, or to the lower TP headed by ING. We will see that mismatched temporal adjuncts are adjoined to the lower of the two TP's, as was shown in (12). I assume, following Keyser (1968) that adverbs are transportable. In current terms, this effectively means that temporal adjuncts can appear at either the left or the right edge of the TP they modify, provided no other conditions are violated. Following and refining Pollock (1989), I assume that adverbs generally do not undergo further movement without specific consequences for the informational structure of the sentence. It follows from these assumptions that if a temporal adjunct appears at the beginning of an informationally unmarked sentence, then it must be adjoined to the matrix TP.

The sentences in (16) show that compatible temporal adjuncts can appear in either sentence-initial or sentence-final position in progressive sentences.

- (16) a. On Tuesday the carpenters were working on the roof.  
 b. The plumbers were installing the drainpipe before the electricians arrived.

Mismatched temporal adjuncts, which give rise to the schedule reading of the progressive, are best in sentence-final position, as shown by the sentences in (17).

- (17) a. ??Next Thursday the carpenters are arriving.  
 b. The carpenters are arriving next Thursday.  
 c. \*After dinner tomorrow I was taking my sister to the movies.  
 d. I was taking my sister to the movies after dinner tomorrow.

The grammaticality distinctions in (17) are extremely subtle, since with a slight shift in emphasis the sentences are perfectly acceptable. Another difference in the distribution of matched and mismatched temporal adjuncts is found in (18).

- (18) a. Last Thursday I think the teachers were marking the tests.  
 b. ??\*Next Thursday I think the teachers are marking the tests.

We see from (18a) that a compatible temporal adjunct can be taken to modify the complement of the clause it is adjoined to. An incompatible temporal adjunct is much worse in this context, as seen in (18b).

A third piece of evidence that a mismatched temporal adjunct is adjoined to the lower TP is that it can co-occur with another temporal adjunct which clearly has matrix scope. This is not possible with a compatible temporal adjunct. Consider the sentences in (19).

- (19) a. As of now, the guests are leaving tomorrow morning.  
 b. \*As of now, the guests left yesterday/are leaving even as we speak.

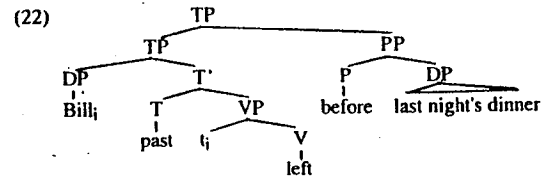
We have now established that temporal adjuncts adjoin to TP, and that mismatched temporal adjuncts in progressive sentences adjoin to the lower TP. Let us now consider what the temporal representation of a temporal adjunct might be. Temporal PP's are used as examples, in order to distinguish the temporal connectors from the temporal structures in the adjunct. In addition, the examples consistently contain DP's with an explicit reference to a particular point on the time line, in order to remove any ambiguity as to the temporal reference of the adjunct, such as we find in sentence pairs like (20).

- (20) a. The guests left after lunch.
- b. The guests are leaving after lunch.

In (20a), the lunch is pragmatically interpreted as having already taken place, while in (20b), the normal interpretation is that the lunch is to take place at some time in the near future. Every argument in the paper could be made using examples like these, but the discussion is simplified by eliminating the ambiguity.

Again, we begin with a simple case, such as the one shown in (21), whose structure is given in (22).

- (21) Bill left before last night's dinner.



I assume that the DP *last night's dinner* in (21) denotes an event rather than a quantity of food. This assumption is supported by the unacceptability of sentences like the ones in (23).

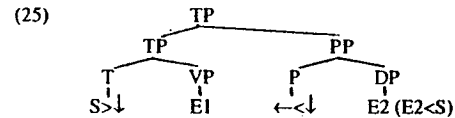
- (23) a. \*?We left after the dinner that Bill brought home from McDonald's.
- b. \*?The host started to cry during the lunch that the children threw on the floor.

Events correspond to temporal structures consisting of points and intervals of time. The role of the preposition in a temporal adjunct is to establish the temporal relation between the event in the adjunct and the event (or state) in the host TP. The preposition, like the tense morphemes, is therefore a temporal connector. I propose the temporal representations in (24) for the various temporal prepositions.

- (24) a. before            ← < ↓
- b. after           ← > ↓
- c. during         ← = ↓

The horizontal arrow is interpreted as referring to the constituent to which the PP is adjoined, that is, to the host TP. The down arrow refers, as before, to the constituent governed by the preposition, that is, to the DP in the PP.

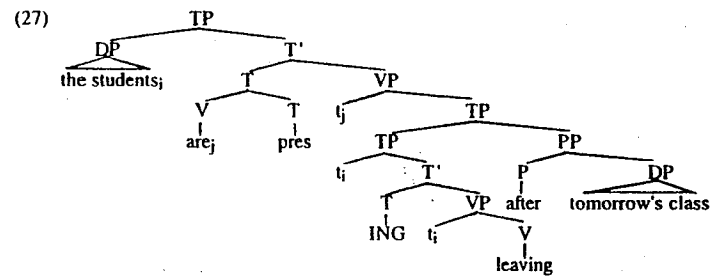
The structure in (22) can thus be viewed, from a temporal point of view, as in (25).



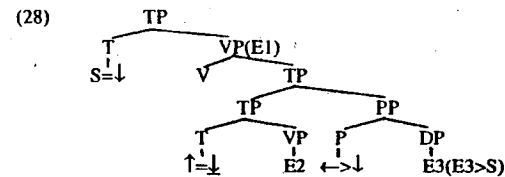
There are three temporal structures here: the moment of speech, the leaving event, and the dinner. Two binary temporal relationships are explicit in the structure: that the leaving event precede the moment of speech, and that the leaving event precede the dinner. Since the dinner is specified as *last night's dinner*, it is already connected to a particular point on the time line. The dinner must therefore precede the moment of speech. These relationships are mutually compatible, and the sentence can thus be given a coherent interpretation.

Now consider a case with a mismatched temporal adjunct. The sentence in (26) has the structure in (27).

- (26) The students are leaving after tomorrow's class.



Deleting all but the temporal information gives the structure in (28):



Here, there are three events/states. E3 is the event of tomorrow's class, which inherently follows the moment of speech. E2 is the leaving event, and E1 is

the event or state denoted by the whole sentence. There are three explicit temporal relationships as well. The preposition places the leaving event later than tomorrow's class, in other words after the moment of speech. The lower tense morpheme places its VP at the same time as the event/state denoted by the higher VP. The higher tense morpheme places that higher VP at the moment of speech. The result is a contradiction, since the leaving event cannot be both simultaneous with the moment of speech and after tomorrow's class.

In order to resolve the contradiction, we must have a clearer view of exactly how temporal relationships are computed. I have so far assumed the computation to be a straightforward bottom-up composition, based on the arrangement of constituents in D-structure. The temporal connectors, being heads of TP's, thus combined with their complements at the level of T. There are two problems with this approach, one theoretical and the other empirical.

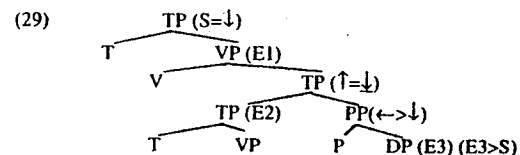
The theoretical problem is accentuated by the fact that there is no well-defined level of D-structure in current approaches to syntax. However, even in somewhat earlier approaches where D-structure was available as a level, it is counter-intuitive that temporal relationships should be computed on the basis of D-structure rather than on the basis of LF. There were two reasons for using D-structure: First, the subject appeared to play no special role in the temporal interpretation of the sentence, and only at D-structure was the subject still wholly within the VP. The second reason derived from earlier assumptions about the nature of inflectional morphology. If the actual suffix *-ing* were to be taken as a tense morpheme, heading a TP and governing a VP, the only point at which it had the entire VP in its scope was prior to affix lowering, namely at D-structure. This problem has disappeared with the more recent assumption, taken from Chomsky (1992), that verbs are inserted fully inflected and that functional heads are abstract bundles of features which are checked either at spellout or at LF. In such an analysis, the tense morpheme has the VP in its scope at all levels.

The empirical problem arises from the interaction of temporal adjuncts with the temporal effects of ING. Cowper (1992a) was forced to assume that temporal adjuncts were adjoined to VP in order that a temporally mismatched adjunct intervene between ING and its VP. Only in this way could an account be provided for the fact that a temporally mismatched adjunct removed the forced interval reading of the progressive. Given the work of Stuart, however, this analysis is no longer available. Temporal adjuncts are adjoined to TP and as such are higher in the structure than the position occupied by the head of TP.

These two problems force a somewhat different view of how temporal relationships are computed. Following a general principle inherent in X-bar theory since its inception and in the notion of projection found in Chomsky's recent work, I assume that any property of a head also be taken as a property of the maximal projection of that head. In particular, I assume that the temporal connector contained within the head of a TP connects, not the complement VP, but rather the entire TP, to some temporal structure outside that TP. Further assuming that adjuncts do not create independent projections, but rather extend the projection they are adjoined to, the temporal connector heading a TP will connect the entire TP, including any adjuncts, to some element outside the TP. Under this assumption, then, the temporal connector in the head of the TP is, in

the relevant sense, higher than the temporal connector in any constituent adjoined to the TP.

Let us now reconsider sentence (26), with the temporal connectors in their proper places. This is shown in (29).

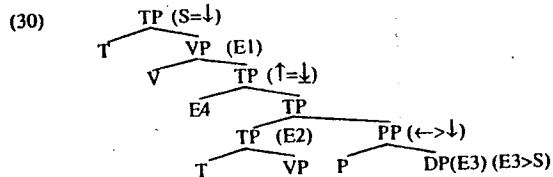


Again there are three events/states, and three explicit temporal relationships. E3, tomorrow's class, is an event which inherently follows the moment of speech. E2, the leaving event, is related to E3 by the temporal connector heading the PP. E2 thus occurs after tomorrow's class, and by transitivity, after the moment of speech. The entire embedded TP is thus an event which takes place after the moment of speech. However, that TP is headed by a temporal connector which places it at the moment of speech, and forces it to have an interval reading.

If the sentence were ungrammatical, then its ungrammaticality could be attributed to this contradiction; the derivation would crash at LF due to incoherence. However, this is not what happens. Instead, a repair strategy is invoked.

The repair strategy is reminiscent of a similar process found in some theories of phonology. In phonology, derivations sometimes produce structures which violate the phonotactics of a language. In other words, structures are produced which are uninterpretable at the PF interface. An example is the affixation of the plural suffix /z/ to a noun ending in a sibilant, such as *thrush*. Here, epenthesis applies to insert a schwa between the stem and the affix, giving *thrush[əz]*.

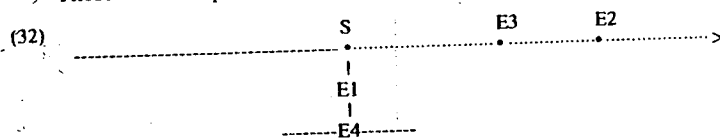
With mismatched temporal adjuncts, I claim, the situation is analogous. The structure contains a temporal contradiction and as such is uninterpretable at LF. The repair strategy here is very similar to epenthesis; a temporal element, presumably the least marked one, is inserted. The strategy itself need not specify where the element is to be inserted. There is only one place in the structure where the insertion of a temporal element will eliminate the contradiction and make the sentence interpretable at LF. The inserted element must intervene between the lower tense morpheme and the event it dominates, which is already located on the time line by the temporal adjunct. The repaired structure is therefore as shown in (30). The inserted temporal element is marked as E4.



Now, the TP headed by ING contains three events, two of which are explicitly related to each other and placed on the time line. The third, E4, is the only one available to be connected to the higher material by ING. Assuming that ING makes this connection, the relationships are as listed in (31).

- (31)  $S = E1 = E4$ , E4 an interval  
 $S < E3 < E2$

These can be represented on the time line as in (32).



It is now clear why the schedule reading of the progressive lacks the forced interval reading for the lower VP (in this case E2). The epenthetic temporal element whose insertion was triggered by the temporal contradiction intervenes between the temporal connector heading the lower TP and the contents of the TP. The inserted element itself satisfies the selectional restriction imposed by the tense morpheme, leaving the lower VP free to be interpreted either as a point or an interval, depending on the aspectual structure of the VP itself. The interval denoted by the inserted element then is interpreted as the interval during which the expectation, or the schedule, exists.

We have seen how the complementarity of the interval and schedule readings of the English progressive construction can be accounted for, while retaining a monosemous lexical entry both for the non-finite tense morpheme ING and for the finite present tense morpheme, and a strictly compositional semantics of tense. The schedule reading of the progressive follows straightforwardly from the structure itself. This represents an advance over earlier treatments of the construction. Dowty (1977), for example, proposes that the schedule reading involves a combination of the present progressive and a "tenseless future", while early transformational treatments, described by Binnick (1991), proposed a transformation of will-deletion. Hornstein (1990) claims that *was-ing* "doubles as the present-tense form of a modal," and provides quite different accounts of the present and past progressive with schedule readings.

We have also seen that repair strategies can be used to salvage uninterpretable structures, not just at the PF interface, but also at the LF interface. Interestingly and reassuringly, these repair strategies seem to involve

essentially the same processes at the two levels. At both levels the inserted element is unmarked, and its insertion is triggered, not by a specific structural description, but simply because the structure is uninterpretable.

This raises the question of whether the other repair strategy found at PF, namely deletion, can also be found at LF. While it is difficult to imagine substantive elements being deleted at the LF interface (the temporal adjunct would still be in the sentence, it would just be ignored as far as meaning goes), it has been proposed that some more grammatical elements, such as traces in spec/C and the complementizer *that*, may in fact delete at LF.

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