Metonymy and Metaphor in the Construction of Meaning of English Continuative Verbs

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Abstract
This paper intends to provide a description of the four main continuative verbs in English, i.e. *continue, keep, proceed* and *resume*, in terms of the cognitive operations and pragmatic implications associated with some of their most common uses. Assuming that structural differences are the reflection of various conceptualisations of occurrences, the two main cognitive processes of metonymy and metaphor appear to interact with the prototypical semantic features of aspectual verbs and their complements, licensing or blocking some of the constructions in which these verbs occur. Metonymic and metaphoric mappings also appear to co-exist, thus producing conceptual complexes which eventually result in less canonical constructions.

Keywords: metonymy, metaphor, aspectual verbs, continuative verbs.

1. Introduction

The literature on aspectual verbs in English is vast but almost entirely confined to the examination of their syntactic-semantic features and of the type of complement clauses that they may or may not introduce. A lot of attention has been devoted to the analysis of *to-* and *-ing* infinitives (Brinton 1988; Wierzbicka 1988; Bailey 1993; Duffley 1999; Fukuda 2008; Mair 2009, to mention a few) and much less to other forms of complementation. In addition, past studies have typically focused on pairs of highly frequent and semantically related verbs, e.g. *start* and *begin*, *finish* and *end*, *keep* and *continue*, and have examined them in comparison and contrast with respect to their inherent temporal meanings (Freed 1979; Tobin 1993), without adequate attention to the fact that specific contextual requirements may coerce

lexical meanings. Furthermore, less common predicates, e.g. *commence*, *initiate*, *terminate*, etc., have often been neglected or only marginally touched upon.

Before the rise of cognitive studies, research on aspectual verbs remained confined to the observation and analysis of low-level structures, without relating their various configurations to higher level, extra-linguistic processes. It was only in the mid-1990s that linguists started to observe that structural representations are also motivated by cognitive forces, such as metonymy (Pustejovsky 1995; Pustejovsky and Bouillon 1995; Verspoor 1997). Subsequent studies on aspectual verbs (Egg 2003; Ziegeler 2007; Sweep 2010, 2011; Falkum 2011) only investigated metonymic structure, disregarding that metaphoric mappings also shape linguistic form and contribute to the construction of meaning.

For this reason, I decided to broaden the perspective of analysis and show that metaphor, sometimes in combination with metonymy, can also be responsible for the sub-categorisation frame of aspectual verbs, i.e. the number and type of constructions they participate in (Franceschi 2014, 2015), including less prototypical patterns. Ingressive verbs, for instance, may be coerced into the caused-motion construction (Goldberg 1995, 2006), e.g. *My mother's younger sister started me into natural science*, as a result of a metaphorical interpretation, whereby the ACTIVITY in question, which is only generically referred to by the verb, is viewed as an (EFFECTUAL) ACCOMPLISHMENT (Franceschi 2015: 118f). This cognitive operation is quite complex for it also presupposes viewing states as locations and changes of locations as changes of states (Lakoff 1993). We can argue that the use of the aspectual verb in the example above is licensed both by a GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy (i.e. 'start' is underspecified and possibly stands for 'start working' here) and by the metaphor CAUSING A CHANGE OF STATE IS CAUSING A CHANGE OF LOCATION, thus making it possible for the verb to enter the caused-motion construction through conceptual structure combination.

There are different types of cognitive operations underlying the various forms that aspectual verbs take and, consequently, not all the members of one subclass may felicitously enter one particular syntactic structure. While the caused-motion construction allows for the subsumption of all ingressive verbs, albeit with pragmatic

differences[1], only the egressive verb *stop* is possible, for example, in an intransitive construction such as *The Castle Hotel, where we stopped, was a very old inn*[2], because its semantics is associated with a sense of motion (Franceschi 2015: 131f). Such meaning component makes it possible to conceptualise 'stop' as 'stop moving', e.g. walking or driving, and then through further conceptual expansion to view such interruption of motion as a prolonged one, typically involving spending the night somewhere. Such interpretation is licensed by a double metonymic expansion, which may only "exploit" the semantic features of *stop*.

This analytical approach is followed in the present paper with specific reference to continuative predicates, which appear to have their own idiosyncrasies, if compared to the other aspectual verbs. Section 2 provides a general introduction to the workings of aspectual verbs in present-day English. Section 3 presents the theoretical foundations of the study and illustrates in particular the two main cognitive processes, namely metonymy and metaphor, which have been shown to play a fundamental role in determining the linguistic representations of aspectual verbs. Section 4 analyses, from a cognitive-pragmatic perspective, the four main continuative verbs in English, i.e. *continue*, *keep*, *proceed* and *resume*, and section 5 concludes the paper by summarising the results of the analysis.

2. Aspectual verbs

This class of verbs includes predicates that report the state of progression of a certain event. They may indicate the onset or beginning, the continuation and the conclusion or final endpoint of such event. Therefore, they have generally been classified into three main subcategories, i.e. ingressive verbs (*start*, *begin*, *commence*, *initiate*, etc.), continuative verbs (*continue*, *keep*, *proceed*, *resume*, etc.), and egressive verbs (*stop*, *end*, *finish*, *terminate*, etc.).

From a structural perspective, they share a number of common features, even though certain syntactic choices appear more natural with some verbs and less so with others. For example, apart from

[1] Cf. Franceschi (2015), chapter 4.
[2] Google Book search: Murphy, T. D. (2011), *British Highways and Byways from a Motor Car*, p. 31.

keep, *stop* and *end*, which are incompatible with the *to*-infinitive (**He kept/stopped/ended to talk*)[3] due to its "forward pointing" nature[4] and to the sense of "potentiality" rather than "performance" associated with it[5] (Freed 1979; Quirk et al. 1985), all the other verbs mentioned above allow this type of complementation. However, each aspectual verb has complementational preferences dictated by its intrinsic semantics, which affects the likelihood or frequency of its occurrence in a certain syntactic construction. While *resume*, for instance, may be followed, albeit rarely, by the *to*-infinitive (*Arthur turned to page 10 and resumed to read aloud to her*)[6], it more commonly combines with the gerund, because it best codifies the meaning of continuation associated with the verb.

Apart from the major temporal-semantic differences discussed at length in the linguistic literature[7], which determine and constrain the syntactic configurations of aspectual verbs, structural variations also appear to be due to minor differences, e.g. with respect to the degree of agentivity and inchoativity coded by each verb. In the case of ingressive predicates, for instance, *initiate* imposes more restrictions on its arguments because of its essentially transitive, non-inchoative nature. Unlike other verbs that can express the sense of an onset, *initiate* is thus not suitable for indicating the punctual event of 'coming into being' alone (#*A new era has initiated*; #*There initiated to take place […]*; #*Everywhere in the city initiated a counter attack*).

There is often a high degree of interchangeability among the members of one sub-category of aspectual verbs. This is the reason why they are typically treated as synonyms in dictionaries. However, despite many similarities at a strictly superficial level, as in the case of the caused-motion construction discussed above, the use of one verb rather than another is often not just a matter of personal style or

[3] *He stopped to talk* is acceptable only when the infinitive particle *to* has the meaning of "in order to" (infinitive of purpose) and if the verb it introduces is not conceptually related to *stop*.

[4] This feature obviously clashes with the semantics of *stop* and *end*, which mark the interruption and conclusion of a certain occurrence.

[5] Because *keep* introduces an actual on-going occurrence, it is incompatible with the idea of just a potential future action.

[6] Google Books search: Palek, T. (2007), *I Always Hear Music*, p. 189.

[7] Cf. chapter 2 in Franceschi (2015) for a review of the literature on the topic.

register, but may be dictated by pragmatic and/or discourse factors, too. Among egressive verbs, for instance, *terminate* (Franceschi 2015: 144-146; 158-159; 166) tends to implicitly refer to something permanent and official, typically regulated by law, as in the case of employment and contractual matters. However, while in some contexts it remains replaceable by its semantic counterparts (e.g. *I terminated/stopped/ended/finished my business*), the use of *terminate* may be fixed and not allow variation, as in *They'd have terminated me just to get rid of a nuisance*[8]. Its replacement with another egressive verb would result either in an infelicitous sentence (**They'd have ended me just to get rid of a nuisance*) or it would completely alter the meaning of the utterance (*They'd have stopped me just to get rid of a nuisance* = 'stop' stands for 'stop doing' something'; *They'd have finished me just to get rid of a nuisance* = 'finishing' is 'killing').

In short, we can argue that each aspectual verb activates specific meaning portions or "zones" (Langacker 1984) of the situation they implicitly or explicitly refer to. As for ingressive verbs (Franceschi 2015: 172), *start* perspectivises a sense of motion (*He started towards the door*)[9] and expresses potential, causative-resultative relations (*He started to climb the mountain*)[10]; *begin* refers to the actual performance of an occurrence (*He began the work that would last the rest of his life*)[11]; *commence* evokes the idea of an official beginning (*The meeting commenced at 11:55 am with prayers said by the Chairman, Pastor Olajide*)[12] and *initiate* may mean "admitting" (*I have initiated him into the "Secret Doctrine"*)[13], "pioneering" (*Gibbon initiated open heart surgeries using the heart-lung machine*)[14] or "being responsible for" some action (*Georgians claim that the Abkhaz initiated the hostilities*)[15]. Interestingly, it is possible to draw some parallels between certain ingressive and egressive verbs (Franceschi

[8] BNC: H9N, 1824.
[9] BNC: BMS, 3914.
[10] Google Books search: Baker, C. (2009), *Love Under Kenyan Skies*, p. 249.
[11] COCA: NEWS, 2005.
[12] GloWbE: NG, G.
[13] BNC: CB9, 512.
[14] Google Books search: Ionescu, M.I., Cohn, L.H. (1985), *Mitral Valve Disease: Diagnosis and Management*, p. 139.
[15] Google Books search: Van Hear, N., McDowell, C. (2006), *Catching Fire: Containing Forced Migration in a Volatile World*, p. 176.

2015: 173). *Start* and *stop* are both linked to the concept of motion, albeit from opposite viewpoints (*They stopped for lunch at a wayside trattoria*)[16]; *start* and *end* cannot refer to the nucleus of the situation they introduce (*Before the correspondence ended, she […]*)[17]; *finish* behaves like *begin* and is associated with actual processes (*I finished the dishes and retreated to my room*)[18]; *initiate* and *terminate* have a tendency to occur in formal contexts to indicate something taking place officially (*It was Japan's own actions […] which terminated the negotiations*)[19].

3. The theoretical framework: metonymy and metaphor

The theoretical approach followed for the analysis proposed here essentially draws upon Ruiz de Mendoza's model of meaning construction (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera 2014, and references therein), which reconciles functionalist studies investigating verbal projections onto syntax (Van Valin 1993, Van Valin and La Polla 1997, Van Valin 2005, Dik 1997a, 1997b), with broader analyses à la Goldberg (1995, 2006), aimed at showing that verbal structures may be subject to coercion and eventually produce constrained patterns and uses.

Such reconciliation is possible if we identify, on the one hand, the rules that regulate the integration of lexical items into constructions and if we motivate, on the other hand, the resulting form-meaning parings from a cognitive perspective, i.e. by examining the language-external factors which trigger them. The cognitive processes that most typically underlie language use consist in conceptual mapping operations often grounded in figurative thinking. Among figures of speech, metonymy and metaphor have been shown to be extremely ubiquitous in meaning construction processes. This is also the case for continuative verbs and for the constructions they appear in.

[16] BNC: JXT, 2576.
[17] COCA: FIC, 2001.
[18] COCA: FIC, 2006.
[19] Google Books search: International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (1999), Pleadings, Minutes of Public Sittings and Documents, Volume 4, p. 14.

3.1. Metonymy

A metonymy is produced when we use "one entity to refer to another that is related to it" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 35), thus creating a correspondence between "contiguous", i.e. related, conceptual domains. Metonymies have often been described in terms of "stand for" relations (A FOR B) (Kövecses and Radden 1998), as is the case with PART FOR WHOLE and WHOLE FOR PART types, e.g. *We have a lot of good heads in our company* (where 'heads' stands for 'people') and *Our department won an award* (where 'our department' stands for 'the people that work in our department'), CONTROLLED FOR CONTROLLER patterns, such as *The trains are on strike* (i.e. the staff that runs the trains are on strike), or when we mention AN OBJECT IN LIEU OF ITS BEARER, as in *The Crown has refused to take responsibility* ('the Crown' stands for a 'monarch'), or A PRODUCER FOR A PRODUCT, for example *I only use Apple* (i.e. Apple products) and so forth.

Ruiz de Mendoza and his collaborators have significantly improved and refined the contemporary theory of metonymy through an in-depth analysis of the cognitive operations they rely on. There are four main mechanisms regulating metonymic relations, namely expansion, reduction, parameterisation, and substitution. The process that makes it possible to understand 'heads' as 'people' in *We have a lot of good heads in our company*, for instance, involves expansion, i.e. viewing one body part as standing for the person with such body part. Conversely, the interpretation of *Our department won an award* requires conceptual reduction, so that the department is understood in terms of the people working there. Therefore, with expansion we go from specific to general, while with reduction we adjust a broad concept to the interpretive requirements of a specific communicative context (parametrisation). In both cases, however, there is a replacement of the conceptual structure evoked by lexical items (substitution) with the one that yields the most coherent interpretation of the utterance. As a matter of fact, the words *heads* and *department* in the two examples above are both underspecified and only work as cues for the activation of the relevant schemata. PART FOR WHOLE and WHOLE FOR PART mappings produce what have also been called source-in-target and target-in-source metonymies, respectively (Ruiz de Mendoza 2000).

3.2. Metaphor

Unlike metonymies, metaphors result from mapping operations between "discrete", i.e. unrelated, conceptual domains. A classic example of a metaphor is the statement *Love is a journey* (Lakoff 1993), whereby we compare a love relationship with the act of travelling to a certain destination. This is an instance of a complex metaphor, because a considerable imaginative leap is required in order to view lovers as travellers, the relationship itself as a vehicle, and the lovers' common targets, e.g. getting married, as destinations.

Metaphoric thinking typically presupposes the fusion of selected content from distinct mental spaces. Such integration is achieved through conceptual combination or enrichment (Peña 2003, Ruiz de Mendoza 2011), as in the case of the caused-motion construction exemplified in the introduction above. The compound preposition *into* in *My mother's younger sister started me into natural science* works as a cue for the activation of two image schemas, i.e. the container schema and the end-of-path segment of the path image schema evoked by *in* and *to*, respectively. Such schemas then need to be blended to sustain the metaphorical effect of the utterance, consisting in viewing the onset of an interest, i.e. a change in attitude, as a change of location.[20]

Abstraction is another cognitive operation also required to understand metaphoric expressions. When we use the adjective *narrow-minded* to describe somebody who is unwilling to consider new ideas, for example, we associate a physically narrow space with the mental condition of having no breadth of view. This association is based on resemblance and is feasible by abstracting away from the strictly spatial conceptualisation of 'narrowness' and by creating a cross-domain correspondence (A IS B), so that having a 'narrow mind' is understood as being intolerant of the beliefs and opinions of others. Such correlation is therefore grounded in our sensory experience of the world.

[20] With enrichment, instead, there is a convergence of image schemas into an expression. In the sentence *We're full of joy*, for instance, the basic schema involves the concept of 'fullness' and 'emptiness', which is then enriched with the verticality schema, thus triggering the figurative quantity-height correlation.

Source and target domains, however, may also be linked by comparison due to a resemblance between their features or functions. In this case, the metaphoric pattern is no longer A IS B but A IS LIKE B, as in the expression *She's like an umbrella*, for example, with which we refer to this person as protective and caring.[21]

4. Continuative verbs

This section analyses some of the most common syntactic configurations of continuative verbs in terms of the underlying metonymic and metaphoric mapping operations licensing them.[22] As in the case of ingressive and egressive predicates, there is a certain degree of interchangeability among continuative verbs, with differences being observed primarily at a pragmatic and/or discourse level. Generally speaking, it can be argued that *keep* and *continue* appear as the most common of the four predicates under investigation here, as is reflected in their highest frequencies of occurrence in the main corpora of English (Table 1). *Continue* entails the most basic and prototypical meaning of the four verbs, because it simply expresses the notion of existing, persisting or going on with a particular action over a period of time;[23] *resume* is conceptually more complex in that it presupposes continuation after an interruption; *proceed* typically encodes physical movement and also tends to highlight the concept of a succession or series of actions to be performed; *keep* is the most cognitively complex verb,

[21] Although *She's like an umbrella* is a simile and not a real metaphoric expression, because the comparison between the two conceptual domains is linguistically coded (*like*), the cognitive process that makes it possible to understand the expression is exactly the same as the one that would be required to interpret a strictly metaphoric sentence, such as *She's an umbrella.*

[22] This does not mean that all syntactic structures embedding continuative verbs result from processes involving metonymic and metaphoric thinking.

[23] This generic and, at the same time, broad semantic content of *continue* could appear to be in contradiction with the fact that it is less frequent than *keep*. However, genericity/prototypicality and high(er) frequency are not necessarily related, as also discussed in the latest developments of the theory of markedness (cf. Bybee 2010). The core semantics of *continue* is simply not subject to as many meaning extensions as that of *keep*, as can be easily observed in dictionaries, in that it remains more closely related to the original Latin sense of 'being (physically) uninterrupted/continuous' (*continere* or *continuare*). Cf. www.etymonline.com.

because its continuative meaning is variously "manipulated" in order to adapt it to a number of different contexts.

TABLE 1
Raw frequencies of occurrence of continuative verbs in corpora

	BNC	COCA	GloWbE
KEEP	26,546	178,382	743,590
CONTINUE	11,480	72,779	361,431
PROCEED	2,088	6,807	34,442
RESUME	692	5,933	26,579

Although all the four verbs allow infinitive clauses, the inherent semantics of *keep* makes it incompatible with *to* infinitives, whose ingressive meaning clashes with the sense of an on-going action associated with the verb (*He kept running/*to run*). With the only exception of *proceed*, continuative verbs are all implicative, i.e. they imply the successful realisation of the complement event they introduce, even when they are followed by a *to*-infinitive clause, which unlike the gerund is not a typical presupposition trigger. On the other hand, in a sentence like *He ignored the warning and proceeded to drink but before he could get water to his mouth he fell unconscious*[24] the verb *proceed* takes on the meaning of 'approach' and the event, action or condition it introduces may be negated (*He proceeded to drink, but he didn't drink*), thus becoming non-implicative.

4.1. Metonymic constructions

The metonymic constructions in which continuative verbs may appear are to a large extent licensed by three distinct types of A FOR B mapping operations, namely GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC, OBJECT FOR ACTION, and RESULT FOR ACTION metonymies (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez 2011).

The most common pattern is the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy, which makes it possible to use an underspecified item to gain access

[24] Google Books search: Sharma, D. R. (1999), *Saplings and roots: two facets of Hinduism*, p. 165.

to the relevant information provided by the linguistic expression and by the wider context of its occurrence. Such a cognitive process underlies different types of intransitive constructions, namely unergative and unaccusative.[25] In *Huxley continued as mayor of the newly united town*[26], for instance, the verb only partially codes the exact activity referred to, which may only be understood through an ad hoc adjustment of concepts. This cognitive operation consists in "cutting down" the quantity of conceptual material associated with *continue*, so that the verb will ultimately be interpreted as 'continue working'. This is a target-in-source metonymy requiring conceptual domain reduction.[27] In this specific context, *resume* and *proceed* would be allowed too, because their semantics might be exploited for the same cognitive operation. By contrast, the use of *keep* is blocked, in that it cannot remain underspecified. When it does, it must be interpreted metaphorically, as will be observed in section 4.2.

Proceed entails a prototypical sense of movement[28] and frequently occurs with space adverbials, e.g. *Patrick […] proceeded in the opposite direction*.[29] Since the exact type of motion event remains linguistically uncoded here, i.e., there is nothing in the sentence that explicitly tells us whether Patrick walked, ran or drove, we need to infer such information from our contextual knowledge and again perform a conceptual mapping operation enabling us to view the generic action of 'proceeding' as 'proceeded walking' or 'proceeded running' or whatever other specific scenario may be the case. Such metonymic transfer would allow the subsumption of *continue* and

[25] In the former the subject is agentive, while in the latter it is assigned the thematic role of patient or theme.

[26] Google Books search: Foster, F.L. & Griffith, A.G. (2001), *Bordering on Greatness*, p. 46.

[27] The mechanism behind the use of underspecified constructions relies on the principle of economy in language use. Of course it would be possible to say *Huxley continued to work/working as mayor […]*. However, we generally want to achieve as much as possible with the least possible effort both in production and comprehension. Cf. Sperber & Wilson (1995) for a detailed discussion of the functions associated with language economy.

[28] This is because it is derived from Latin *procedere*, i.e. "go forward, advance, make progress".

[29] BNC: APM, 3075.

resume as well, which unlike *keep* may also be implicitly associated with motion events. Differently from *proceed*, however, both *continue* and *resume* usually express non-intentionality and are more common in those contexts where strictly geographical descriptions are provided, e.g. *After Malmo, in the extreme south, the archipelago resumes in Blekinge province, in the far south-east, to continue all the way up the east coast to the northernmost point of the Gulf of Bothnia*.[30]

Underspecified transitive constructions, instead, emerge as a result of two different types of mapping operations, which are determined by the nature of the object itself. When the latter is a concrete, inanimate entity, it must be interpreted with respect to the activities typically associated with it. In *I continued/resumed the book*, for instance, we need to add new elements of meaning to the source domain (i.e. 'the book') in order to make sense of the sentence. In other words, we need to expand the conceptual material associated with the object and interpret it as 'reading/writing the book'.[31] Such cognitive operation is thus an OBJECT FOR ACTION metonymy. The fact that the NP *the book* does not just refer to a concrete, physical object, but to the performance of an action can be verified with a diagnostic test based on the use of anaphors and relative clauses (Godard and Jarez 1993): **I continued/resumed the book and didn't stop it for the whole day* and **I continued/resumed the book, which took me three months* are infelicitous, because the elements *it* and *which* can only refer back to explicitly formulated concepts, which is instead not the case here. The verb *proceed* is inherently intransitive and is thus ruled out. When continuative verbs are followed by abstract non-deverbal objects, e.g. *I continued/resumed/kept the family tradition*, the implicit action that these predicates evoke is

[30] Google Books search: Britten Austin, P. (1970), *The Swedes: how they live and work*, p. 13.

[31] One may wonder why the metonymic interpretation of *I continued/resumed the book* is triggered by the NP *the book* and not by the continuative verb itself, as in the case of *Huxley continued as mayor […]*. This can be explained in terms of cognitive salience (cf. Kecskes 2014: 177-178). It is the object that 'attracts' attention in the transitive clause, standing out as the most prominent relative to the neighbouring elements and determining the interpretation of the sentence. On the other hand, the focus in the intransitive clause is on the verbal element, which has the highest salience and therefore works as the metonymic trigger.

conceptualised as producing an outcome, i.e. the maintenance of the family tradition in this case. This construction type is therefore sustained by the RESULT FOR ACTION metonymy, which only licenses the use of predicates describing intentional acts.

4.2. Metaphoric constructions

The borderline between metonymy and metaphor is often not very clear-cut, as may be observed in the example above. The use of the abstract object *the family tradition* also triggers a cross-domain mapping, whereby both 'continue' and 'keep' are read as 'preserve'. Such cognitive operation is no longer based on a contingent relation between conceptual entities and is therefore metaphoric in nature.

The predicate that most typically enters metaphoric constructions is *keep* due to its inherent continuative meaning, which may then be adapted by extension to a number of different contexts.[32] The basic concept of physically 'holding' something or someone expressed by *keep* (e.g. *She had kept the baby in her lap*[33]), may be exploited to produce several figurative interpretations, evoked by the nature of the elements appearing in the sentence and often associated with specific lexical patterns. 'Keeping a family', for instance, as in *In a small, low-roofed house on the outskirts of the settlement he managed to keep a family of five children and his wife*[34], must be understood as 'supporting a family financially'. Such interpretation is possible through a conceptual mapping operation between originally unrelated domains. The source of the metaphor is the nuclear meaning of *keep*, i.e. having/holding/maintaining overtime, which has however come to refer to the idea of providing someone with money, food, shelter, and other things they need in order to live.

The semantics of *keep* is variously exploited to obtain different metaphorical interpretations and construction types. In transitive

[32] Listing the various meanings/senses of the verb *keep* takes up several pages in the Oxford English Dictionary.

[33] http://americanliterature.com/author/kate-chopin/short-story/a-visit-to-avoyelles.

[34] Google Books search: Lacy, A. & Valley Fox, A. (2012), *Stories from Hispano New Mexico*, p. 59.

patterns, in addition to 'supporting financially', the verb may also be read as 'lodging' (e.g. *Mrs Tingee keeps boarders at $3.50 a week*[35]), 'using' (e.g. *Nash lives in New York during the off-season and doesn't even keep a car there*[36]), 'sparing' (e.g. *My parents […] keep the best rooms for the boarders who pay best*[37]) or simply 'retaining' (e.g. *She kept her maiden name when she married*[38]). In this latter case, it may be replaced by *resume* (e.g. *She resumed her family name*) via a metaphoric mapping operation, whereby 'resuming' is 'regaining'. *Keep*, however, may generally not be substituted, because it is often the only suitable candidate for metaphoric manipulations.

More marginal, less frequent metaphoric constructions are also licensed only through the coercion of the semantics of *keep*. The middle construction, for instance, is possible because 'keeping' may be interpreted as 'remaining in an X condition' (e.g. *Your homemade convenience breakfast foods will keep well in the freezer*[39]), a possibility which is ruled out for the other continuative verbs (e.g. **Your homemade convenience breakfast foods will continue/resume/proceed well in the freezer*), because they cannot be viewed figuratively. The verb *keep* appears to function as a superordinate predicate, somehow embedding the other continuative verbs. This is clearly the case in the 'X *keep(s)* Y v-*ing*' construction (e.g. *Perpetual spending keeps the music playing*[40]), where the metaphoric meaning of *keep* emerges through the fusion of a residual sense of causativity with its basic continuative nature. Therefore, 'keeping' in the 'X *keep(s)* Y v-*ing*' construction needs to be understood as 'causing to continue'. The same causative meaning component is detectable when *keep* is used in the resultative construction, e.g.

[35] Google Books search: Whitehead, J. (2008), *Cooking for Profit: A New American Cookbook*, p. 161.
[36] http://www.cnet.com/news/nba-players-to-pimp-their-priuses/.
[37] Google Books search: Gide, A. (2012), *The Counterfeiters: A Novel*, p. 282.
[38] Google Books search: Kennedy, J. R. (2015), *Payback: A Delta Force Unleashed Thriller*.
[39] Google Books search: Chase, E. (2011), *The $5 Dinner Mom Breakfast and Lunch Cookbook*, p. 26.
[40] Google Books search: Draughon, D. (2007), *Financial Armageddon. The Corruption of Our Currency*, p. 224.

I keep my lawn mowed in the summer[41], where it is interpreted as 'cause to remain'.

5. Concluding remarks

This paper has attempted to motivate on cognitive grounds the main semantically underspecified constructions embedding four continuative verbs in English, i.e. *continue*, *keep*, *proceed* and *resume*. The analysis has focused on the metonymic and metaphoric mapping operations that license the use of the four predicates primarily in intransitive and transitive contexts, but quick reference has also been made to less common patterns, such as the middle and resultative construction.

It has been observed that *continue*, *proceed* and *resume* are conceptually less complex than *keep* and participate in metonymic constructions describing concrete actions and events, which may also be grounded in space. On the other hand, the meaning of *keep* has evolved out of its denotational semantics to evoke various abstract schemas, often resulting in what are now recognised as formulaic uses.

The aim here has been that of improving on existing investigations of aspectual predicates, which have traditionally remained confined to analysis of the links between semantics and syntax, thus disregarding the extra-linguistic, i.e. cognitive, factors that contribute to meaning and ultimately affect structural representation.

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