RESEARCH REPORT

## On constructions as a pragmatic category

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When a language provides multiple syntactic options for conveying the same semantic content, these options generally serve distinct discourse functions. In some cases, however, they serve the same discourse function while being in complementary distribution syntactically. This article argues that in these instances, the syntactic variants constitute ALLOFORMS of a single, more abstract construction. Pairs of such alloforms include inversion and long passives in English and two forms of postposing in Italian. Moreover, English inversion is argued to be an alloform of both preposing and postposing. This account explains the distributional difference between alloforms of a single construction and complex structures built up of multiple distinct constructions. Finally, the report considers the ramifications of this account for linguistic theory in general and the notion of a 'construction' in particular.*

*Keywords*: alloform, construction, information structure, inversion, passive, preposing, postposing

**1.** INTRODUCTION. A considerable body of research has been devoted to the mapping of discourse functions onto noncanonical syntactic structures. It is well accepted that many noncanonical-word-order sentences are truth-conditionally equivalent to their corresponding canonical-word-order variants but serve an information-structuring function, and that this function in turn constrains the contexts in which the noncanonical variants may felicitously appear. Less attention, however, has been paid to potential generalizations that may be made across noncanonical structures.

In this paper I argue that certain sets of these structures represent contextually conditioned variants of more abstract constructions, much as we speak of allophones or allomorphs as representing contextually conditioned variants of an abstract phoneme or morpheme. On analogy with allophones and allomorphs, I use the term ALLOFORMS for these syntactic variants. I argue that inversion and long passives in English constitute one such pair of alloforms, based on their sharing a functional constraint and being in complementary distribution syntactically. I likewise argue that two subject-postposing constructions in Italian constitute a pair of alloforms based on similar criteria; and I propose a new account of English inversion in which certain otherwise puzzling properties fall out naturally when we analyze individual uses of inversion as alloforms of either preposing or postposing. I contrast these constructional variants with compound constructions that are built up compositionally from their parts and show that the distribution of both construction types can be explained by this account. Finally, I discuss the ramifications of this analysis for the notion of a CONSTRUCTION both intralinguistically and crosslinguistically, comparing my approach with that of other authors, notably Lambrecht (1994), Prince (1996), and Cappelle (2006), who have proposed similar uses of an 'allo-' or shared-template concept with respect to syntactic constructions.

**2.** INVERSION AND PASSIVIZATION. In Birner 1996a, I argue that English inversion[1] and English long passives are subject to the same constraint, as illustrated in 1–2.

(1) a. 'We do get those from time to time, but they're rare,' the taxidermist said. *Above his head hung a massive seagull with its beak open*, and *next to him, on a tabletop, lounged a pair of hedgehogs*.

(David Sedaris, *The New Yorker*, 10/22/12)

   b. … A massive seagull with its beak open hung above his head, and a pair of hedgehogs lounged next to him, on a tabletop.

(2) a. The Low Speed Chase was of Australian design, 'a high-end racing boat, fast, a good boat,' said Andy Turpin, editor of Latitude 38, the sailing magazine in Sausalito. Boats like this would cost about $200,000, he said. *The boat was owned by James Bradford, a 41-year-old San Francisco investor.* (Carl Nolte, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 04/22/12; from COCA[2])

   b. … James Bradford, a 41-year-old San Francisco investor, owned the boat.

Example 1a contains two inversions, which are italicized. In each case some canonically postverbal constituent appears in subject position (*above his head* and *on a tabletop*), while the subject is placed after the verb. The canonical-word-order variants are given in 1b. The italicized sentence in 2a is a 'long' passive (i.e. a passive containing a *by*-phrase), and its canonical-word-order variant is given in 2b.[3]

In Birner 1996b, I argue that English inversion requires its preposed constituent to represent information that is at least as familiar within the discourse (in the sense of Prince 1992) as that represented by the postposed constituent. In that corpus study, 78% of the inversions had a preposed DISCOURSE-OLD constituent (that is, one that had already been evoked in the discourse) and a postposed DISCOURSE-NEW constituent (that is, one that had not been previously evoked); the two inversions in 1a above are of this type, where *his head* in the first inversion is discourse-old while the postposed *massive seagull* is discourse-new, and *him* in the second inversion is discourse-old while *a pair of hedgehogs* is discourse-new. The corpus also contained cases in which both constituents were discourse-old, as in 3, or discourse-new, as in 4.

(3) Tich made tea in a blackened billy and McPherson filled a telescopic cup he took from a pocket. Seated on a form, he helped himself to sugar and then proceeded to cut chips from a tobacco plug, the cold and empty pipe dangling from his lips against the full grey moustache. *Seated opposite him was Tich*, waiting for gossip, wondering, hoping.

(*No footprints in the bush*, by A. W. Upfield, 1940; Collier Books reprint, 1986, p. 76)

(4) The door shut with a faint whoosh. *Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas lay a larger reception area paved in thick lilac pile.* Dark paneled walls hung with a few pious prints created an atmosphere of heavy Victorian mourning. (*Burn marks*, by S. Paretsky, Delacorte Press, 1990, p. 247)

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[1] English inversion is also sometimes called FULL-VERB INVERSION to distinguish it from subject-auxiliary inversion, and it is sometimes called LOCATIVE INVERSION when the preposed constituent is a locative or directional PP.

[2] Corpus of Contemporary American English; https://corpus.byu.edu/coca/

[3] SHORT PASSIVES, in which no *by*-phrase appears (e.g. *The pie was eaten yesterday*), are not considered in this article, as their discourse function and information-structural constraints differ from those of long passives. This is necessarily so since, as shown below, the constraints on long passives concern the relative status of the subject and the *by*-phrase, and short passives have no *by*-phrase. Long passives are also sometimes called FULL PASSIVES or (misleadingly) AGENTIVE PASSIVES.

In 3, both Tich and McPherson are discourse-old, having been evoked in the immediately prior discourse, and the inversion is felicitous; in 4, both the small vestibule and the larger reception area are discourse-new, and again the inversion is felicitous.

What does not occur are instances with a preposed discourse-new constituent followed by a postposed discourse-old constituent, as in 5.

(5) The door to the reception area shut with a faint whoosh. #*Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas lay this reception area, paved in thick lilac pile.*

Birner 1996a shows the same results for passivization; that is, a corpus study uncovers felicitous instances of passivization in which both the subject NP and the NP in the *by*-phrase are discourse-old, and instances in which both are discourse-new, and, most often, instances in which the initial NP is discourse-old while the *by*-phrase NP is discourse-new, as in 6a–c, respectively, but no instances in which the initial NP is discourse-new while the *by*-phrase NP is discourse-old, as in 7.

(6) a. Rep. James Cotten of Weatherford insisted that a water development bill passed by the Texas House of Representatives was an effort by big cities like Dallas and Fort Worth to cover up places like Paradise, a Wise County hamlet of 250 people. When the shouting ended, the bill passed, 114 to 4, sending it to the Senate, where a similar proposal is being sponsored by Sen. George Parkhouse of Dallas. *Most of the fire was directed by Cotten against Dallas and Sen. Parkhouse.*                    (Brown Corpus)

   b. *A new element, the 117th, was discovered by a U.S.-Russian team of scientists* after they smashed calcium and berkelium atoms in a particle accelerator. Though recently discovered elements have been highly unstable, the 117th is an exception, and it points to 'an island of stability' of more usable elements.                    (COCA; discourse-initial)

   c. Employees of IRI, the Washington-based National Democratic Institute and Freedom House have been called in several times for questioning focused on foreign funding and the legality of their presence in Egypt. IRI said *it was told by Egyptian judicial officials that if the case goes to court, trials would begin next month*.                    (COCA)

(7) … #IRI said *Egyptian judicial officials were told by it that if the case goes to court, trials would begin next month*.

Just as with inversion, passives in which the initial constituent is discourse-new and the final constituent is discourse-old are infelicitous, while all other combinations are represented. Thus, I conclude that inversion and passivization are subject to the same discourse constraint—that is, that the preposed constituent not represent newer information within the discourse than that represented by the postposed constituent.

Interestingly, the two are also in complementary distribution syntactically. That is, there is no syntactic context in which inversion and the corresponding passivization are equally permissible. Passivization applies to transitives, and inversion applies to intransitives and copular clauses, as shown in 8–10, respectively.

(8) a. A new element, the 117th, was discovered by a U.S.-Russian team of scientists …                    [= 6b]

   b. *A new element, the 117th, discovered a U.S.-Russian team of scientists …                    (as inversion)

(9) a. Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas lay a larger reception area paved in thick lilac pile.                    [= 4]

   b. *Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas was lain by a larger reception area.

(10) a.  Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas was a larger reception area paved in thick lilac pile.
    b.  *Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas was been by a larger reception area paved in thick lilac pile.

In 8 we see that with a transitive verb (*discovered*), passivization occurs (as in 8a) but inversion does not (as in 8b).[4] In 9 we see that with an intransitive verb (*lay*), inversion occurs (as in 9a) but passivization does not (as in 9b). Finally, in 10 we see that with the copula, inversion occurs (as in 10a) but passivization does not (as in 10b).

Quotative verbs provide an interesting case; here we find inversion but not passivization, as shown in 11.

(11)  'Yes, we went to school in the sea, though you mayn't believe it—'
*'I never said I didn't!' interrupted Alice.*
*'You did,' said the Mock Turtle.*
*'Hold your tongue!' added the Gryphon*, before Alice could speak again.
<div align="right">(<em>Alice's adventures in wonderland</em>, by Lewis Carroll)</div>

Here the three italicized inversions are fully felicitous. Replaced with passive variants, however, they become unacceptable.

(12)  'Yes, we went to school in the sea, though you mayn't believe it—'
#'I never said I didn't!' was interrupted by Alice.
#'You did,' was said by the Mock Turtle.
#'Hold your tongue!' was added by the Gryphon, before Alice could speak again.

Notice that there is a reading in which, for example, *'Hold your tongue!' was added by the Gryphon* (as in 12) is acceptable—in a context, say, in which interlocutors are discussing which character in the story uttered which sentence, as in 13a below. This, however, would constitute a mention, rather than a use, of the sentence *Hold your tongue*—and, as complementary distribution would predict, on this reading inversion is disallowed, as seen in 13b.

(13) a.  A: I remember that in *Alice's adventures in wonderland*, Alice and the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon were talking, and one of them said 'You did,' and one of them said 'Hold your tongue,' but I can't remember which one said which.
      B: It was the Mock Turtle that said 'You did'; *'Hold your tongue' was added by the Gryphon*.
    b.  A: …
      B: It was the Mock Turtle that said 'You did'; #*'Hold your tongue' added the Gryphon*.

Thus we see again with quotative verbs that it is precisely when the inversion is acceptable that the passive is not, and vice versa.[5]

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[4] Note that in 8b there is an acceptable canonical-word-order reading in which the element discovered the scientists; that reading is of course not the one under discussion, and in fact the existence of that reading is likely one reason that inversion is not an option for transitive verbs, since it would result in transitive sentences being systematically ambiguous between canonical word order and inversion.

[5] Birner 1996b discounts quotatives as inversions, arguing that they are distinct syntactically (as the only type allowing a preposed clause or a transitive verb), semantically (by virtue of the quotative verb), intonationally (as the only type allowing the postposed constituent to be deaccented), and pragmatically (by not being subject to the same constraint as other inversions). But an examination of that corpus reveals that every one of the quotative inversions follows the same discourse pattern as all other inversions—that is, there are no quotative inversions in which the preposed quotation is discourse-new while the postposed NP is discourse-old. The number of tokens is relatively small, however, so further investigation is called for.

One might object that 14 is a counterexample to the claim that inversion and passivization are in complementary distribution.

(14) a. George Washington slept in this bed.
    b. In this bed slept George Washington.
    c. This bed was slept in by George Washington.

Here it appears that 14a is subject to either inversion, as in 14b, or passivization, as in 14c (what is sometimes called a prepositional passive or a pseudopassive). However, note that the preposed constituent differs in the two cases: in 14b, the prepositional phrase *in this bed* is preposed, whereas in 14c, the noun phrase *this bed* is preposed and the preposition is left in its canonical position. Thus, the passive in 14c is not the corresponding passive to the inversion in 14b, and the two are not variants of the same structure; the preposed PP cannot occur in a passivization (as in 15a), and the preposed NP cannot occur in an inversion (as in 15b).[6]

(15) a. #In this bed was slept by George Washington.
    b. #This bed slept in George Washington.

Indeed, the felicity of 14b and the corresponding infelicity of 15a confirm the status of inversion and passivization as being in complementary distribution; when the entire PP is preposed, the inversion (14b) is felicitous but the passive (15a) is not. Similarly, the felicity of 14c and the corresponding infelicity of 15b likewise confirm the status of inversion and passivization as being in complementary distribution; when only the NP is preposed, the passive (14c) is felicitous but the inversion (15b) is not.

Finally, we find grammatical sentences that incorporate both inversion and passivization, as in 16.

(16) Robert HOWARD had just bought the iron store lately occupied by Daniel SHAFER. It had a large and capacious cellar, and *in it had been placed, by David YEAKLE (a cooper living in a little west of town), tow* [sic] *or three hundred whisky barrels*, to be kept there until prices raised.
        (http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohbutler/cyc/106.htm; capitalization as in original)

But here, note that the passivization itself creates the syntactic context that allows the inversion.[7] Consider the simplified paradigm in 17.

(17) a. David Yeakle had placed two or three hundred whisky barrels in it.
    b. *In it had placed David Yeakle two or three hundred whisky barrels.
    c. *Two or three hundred whisky barrels had placed David Yeakle in it. [as an inversion]
    d. Two or three hundred whisky barrels had been placed in it by David Yeakle.
    e. In it had been placed by David Yeakle two or three hundred whisky barrels.

The canonical-word-order variant is given in 17a. This structure does not permit inversion of either the PP or the NP object of the verb, as illustrated in 17b–c, respectively. It does, however, permit passivization, as shown in 17d. This structure, in turn, permits inversion, as seen in 17e. Thus, although a single sentence may incorporate both passivization and inversion in turn, it remains true that no one syntactic structure is equally subject to either passivization or the corresponding inversion.

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[6] It is possible to get a preposed NP in an inversion, as in (i), but this occurs only with a copula.
    (i) Fred is a terrific dancer. *Also a great dancer is his wife Jamie.*
[7] See also Boas & Sag 2012:12 regarding constructional feeding relations.

In summary, passivization and inversion provide distinct means for performing the same function in distinct syntactic contexts. Because it is the syntactic context that determines which variant is available to serve the speaker's communicative purpose, I argue that inversion and long passives constitute contextually conditioned alloforms of a single abstract argument-reversing construction.

**3.** ITALIAN PRESENTATIONAL *ci* AND SUBJECT POSTPOSING. The second pair of constructions that I discuss are two postposing constructions in Italian: presentational *ci*-sentences and subject postposing. Presentational *ci* is illustrated in the first clause of 18.

(18) *C'è     un ponticello* dove  ogni anno, la  notte del    2 aprile appare  un
     there's a  bridge      where each year   the night of.the 2 April  appears a
        fantasma.
        ghost
      'There's a bridge where, each year on the night of April 2, a ghost
        appears.'                                          (Birner & Ward 1996, ex. 23)

As a copular construction, the Italian presentational *ci*-sentence is structurally similar to the English existential, yet its functional behavior is that of the English presentational (Birner & Ward 1996, Ward 1999). The two English constructions are exemplified in 19.

(19) a.  Each year, there is a ghost on the bridge.
     b.  Each year, there appears a ghost on the bridge.

The construction in 19a is an existential, defined by the presence of nonreferential *there* and a copula; 19b is a presentational, defined by the presence of nonreferential *there* and a noncopular verb. The two are distinguished by discourse function: whereas the presentational requires only that its postverbal NP be discourse-new (Birner & Ward 1996), the existential requires that it be (assumed by the speaker to be) hearer-new (Prince 1988, 1992).

Structurally, Italian *ci*-sentences are analogous to the English existential in that they contain a nonreferential subject and a copula. Like English presentational *there*, however, Italian presentational *ci* requires its postverbal NP to be discourse-new (Berruto 1986, Birner & Ward 1996). When this NP is discourse-old, the presentational is infelicitous, as shown in 20.

(20) A: Ho parlato       con la  Giulia oggi. Sta molto bene.
        (I) have.spoken with the Julia   today is   very   well
          'I talked to Julia today. She's doing very well.'
     B: Mi    fa      piacere. #A proposito, sai      che c'era      la  Giulia
        to.me makes happy     by.the.way   you.know that there.was the Julia
           alla    festa di Paolo ieri       sera?
           at.the party of Paul   yesterday evening
         'That's good. By the way, did you know that Julia was at Paul's party
           last night?'                                    (Birner & Ward 1996, ex. 27)

Here, A begins by introducing Julia, which renders Julia discourse-old. When B then attempts to postpose this discourse-old entity, infelicity results. Thus, Italian presentational-*ci* sentences share the discourse constraint of English presentational-*there* sentences.

Italian also has a second postposing construction, which has variously been termed SUBJECT INVERSION and SUBJECT POSTPOSING. Following Ward 1999, I use the term 'subject postposing' for this construction, on the grounds that only a single constituent is noncanonically positioned, as opposed to Italian inversion, which, like English inversion, has two noncanonically positioned constituents.

Subject postposing in Italian differs from presentational *ci*-sentences not only in lacking *ci*, but also in that it is restricted to verbs other than *be*.

(21) È arrivata stamattina    una lettera dall'    America.
    arrived    this.morning a    letter   from.the America
      'A letter from America arrived this morning.'

<div align="right">(adapted from Birner & Ward 1996, ex. 28; from Calabrese 1992)</div>

Birner & Ward 1996 shows that Italian subject postposing shares with presentational *ci*-sentences the constraint that the postposed subject must represent discourse-new information (cf. Calabrese 1992, Saccon 1993, and Pinto 1994, which propose similar constraints). Again, if the postposed subject represents discourse-old information, the subject postposing is infelicitous.

(22) [Context: A and B are sitting together on a bus.]
    A: Mi sono addormentato, ma mi    è sembrato di averti        sentito
       (I) fell  asleep        but to.me seemed      to.have.you heard
         parlare con  qualcuno.
         speak   with someone
      'I fell asleep, but I thought I heard you talking to someone.'
    B: Si,  infatti sono saliti tua   sorella e   tuo  fratello.
      yes in.fact boarded    your sister  and your brother
       'Yes, in fact your sister and brother got on [the bus].'
    A: È  dove sono        andati ora?
      and where (they.)are gone   now
       'And where have they gone now?'
  a. B: *È   scesa tua   sorella a  far spese     in centro.
      got off    your sister   to do shopping in center
       'Your sister got off to go shopping downtown.'
  b. B: Tua  sorella è   scesa a  far spese     in centro.
      your sister   got off    to do shopping in center
       'Your sister got off to go shopping downtown.'

<div align="right">(Ward 1999, ex. 16, adapted from Saccon 1993, ex. 104, with original judgments)</div>

Here, B's first utterance introduces the sister. This means that B's second utterance, as a postposing (in 22a), postposes a discourse-old entity and hence is infelicitous. In 22b, by contrast, the same information appears in canonical word order and the utterance is felicitous.

Both presentational *ci*-sentences and subject postposing allow the postposed constituent to represent hearer-old information, so long as it is discourse-new, as seen in 23.

(23) a. Oggi, c'è    il   sole.
      today there's the sun
       'Today, the sun is out.'          (Birner & Ward 1996, ex. 24b)
  b. Sull'autobus, era salita tua   sorella.
     on.the.bus      boarded  your sister
      'Your sister got on the bus.'

<div align="right">(Birner & Ward 1996, ex. 29c; adapted from Saccon 1993, ex. 104)</div>

In 23a, 'the sun' is hearer-old but discourse-new, and presentational *ci* is felicitous. Likewise, in 23b, 'your sister' is hearer-old but discourse-new, and the subject postposing is felicitous.

Thus, the two Italian postposing constructions share a single discourse constraint, requiring the postverbal subject to represent discourse-new information (Ward 1999). Moreover, they are syntactically in complementary distribution, with presentational *ci*

applying to copular sentences and subject postposing applying to noncopular sentences. Thus, I argue that here again we have a case of a single abstract construction manifesting itself as distinct contextually conditioned alloforms.

**4.** Inversion and preposing/postposing in english. I am now in a position to revisit the status of inversion in English. As noted above, in Birner 1996b I argued that the function of inversion is to place relatively familiar information earlier in the clause than relatively unfamiliar information. In that study, a discourse-new preposed constituent never preceded a discourse-old postposed constituent, although all other combinations were attested. So this would appear to be a straightforward case of using noncanonical word order to preserve a given/new ordering of information.

This is a rather odd constraint, however, both from an acquisition standpoint (requiring the learner to specifically note the absence of one of the four combinatorial possibilities) and in terms of communicative function. It seems clear why it would be useful for a language to have a noncanonical construction that places discourse-old information before discourse-new information, or to have a language-wide prohibition on discourse-new information preceding discourse-old information—but it is much less clear what the benefit is in providing a noncanonical means for reordering constituents of identical status. That is, why should inversion be felicitous in cases where the preposed and postposed constituents are both discourse-old, or where both are discourse-new?

What I propose is that inversion is not actually a distinct construction from preposing and postposing, but rather can be an alloform of either of these two constructions, in much the same way that a phonetic flap can serve as an allophone of either /t/ or /d/ in English (e.g. in the words *latter* and *ladder*, respectively).[8] One might formalize the two constructions and their variants roughly as follows, where XP in this example represents the PP, and S represents the subject.

(24) Preposing:
    $[XP_i \, V \, t_i]$              (Into the room ran)
       $\rightarrow [XP_i \, S \, V \, t_i]$        Into the room a dog ran.
       $\rightarrow [XP_i \, V \, t_i \, S]$        Into the room ran a dog.
(25) Postposing:
    $[V \, XP \, S]$              (ran into the room a dog)
       $\rightarrow [\textit{There} \, V \, XP \, S]$     There ran into the room a dog.
       $\rightarrow [XP_i \, V \, t_i \, S]$        Into the room ran a dog.

A couple of caveats are in order here. First, I mean these structures purely descriptively, with no commitment as to their syntactic derivation. (But see, for example, Deal 2009

[8] The terms preposing and postposing as the names of constructions are to be distinguished from preposed and postposed as descriptive terms for the noncanonical placement of certain constituents. There is a long tradition of referring to sentences like *Spaghetti she hates* and *There's a bat in the attic* as preposings and postposings, respectively, due to the noncanonical placement of a constituent in preverbal or postverbal position; and there is also a long tradition of referring to these noncanonically positioned constituents as having been preposed or postposed. There are other constructions, however, that contain such noncanonically positioned constituents, and in those constructions these constituents are also described as preposed and postposed, resulting in a certain amount of terminological confusion. Inversion has long been one such construction—that is, a construction that is taken to be neither a preposing nor a postposing, while nonetheless containing both preposed and postposed constituents. The terminological confusion is unfortunately multiplied in the current article, since I am arguing that inversion not only contains preposed and postposed constituents, but also in any given case is itself either a preposing or a postposing. For the sake of consistency with prior research, I continue to use these terms with their traditional meanings; but I apologize for the potential confusion, and I ask my readers' forbearance.

and Irwin 2018 for discussion.) Thus, the preposing construction template '[XP$_i$ V $t_i$]' can be instantiated with the subject (S) either in preverbal or postverbal position, as shown in the two alloform options after the arrows; and the postposing construction template can be instantiated with the initial position filled either by *there* or by the XP. What we see here is essentially two paths to the same final inversion structure, one as a preposing and one as a postposing.

Previous research suggests that preposing in English requires the preposed constituent to stand in a partially ordered set relationship with information evoked in the prior discourse (Ward 1988); this means that the preposed constituent must be discourse-old (Birner & Ward 1998), as seen in 26.

(26) a. What sorts of people characteristically have such attitudes? And how might you and I cultivate the traits and outlooks that make for joy? *To these questions, we now turn.*
(*The pursuit of happiness*, by David G. Myers, HarperCollins, 1992, p. 104)
   b. … #To productive uses of leisure time, we now turn.

Where the preposed constituent is discourse-old, as in 26a, the preposing is felicitous; where it is discourse-new, as in 26b, the preposing is infelicitous.

By contrast, postposing in English, as noted above, requires the postposed constituent to represent new information—hearer-new in the case of existentials (Prince 1988, 1992) and discourse-new in the case of presentationals (Birner & Ward 1996), as shown in 27 and 28, respectively.[9]

(27) a. I walked into the living room, which was across the hall from the room where the people were dancing, and I sat down on the sofa. *There was a girl sitting there already.* (*How to talk to girls at parties*, by Neil Gaiman; COCA)
   b. … #There was the sofa in the corner.
   c. … #There were the 49ers playing on TV.
(28) a. The old man was sitting in the corner by the demolished remains of the wedding cake, his arthritis-gnarled hands folded over his cane. He was wearing dark glasses. One bow had been mended with black electricians' tape. *Beside him there stood two empty bottles of beer and another that was half-full.* (*The dead zone*, by Stephen King, Penguin, 1980; accessed via Google Books)
   b. … #Beside him there sat the dark glasses.
   c. … Behind him there shone the sun.

In both 27a and 28a, the postposed constituent is both discourse-new and hearer-new, and the examples are felicitous; in both 27b and 28b, the postposed constituent is both discourse-old and hearer-old, and the examples are infelicitous; and in both 27c and 28c, the postposed constituent is discourse-new but hearer-old, and the existential in 27c is infelicitous while the presentational in 28c is felicitous.[10] Thus, the existential in 27 requires that the postposed constituent be hearer-new, whereas the presentational in 28 requires only that the postposed constituent be discourse-new, regardless of its hearer status.

Therefore, if an inversion is sometimes an alloform of preposing, it will in those cases require its preposed constituent to be discourse-old. And if it is sometimes an allo-

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[9] Recall that *there*-sentences with a copula are existentials, while those with an intransitive verb are presentationals.

[10] See Birner & Ward 1998, inter alia, for evidence that the infelicity in cases like those in 27–28 is due to the information status and not the definiteness of the postposed constituent.

form of postposing, it will in those cases require its postposed constituent to be discourse-new.[11] To see this, reconsider examples 3 and 4, repeated below as 29 and 30.

(29) Tich made tea in a blackened billy and McPherson filled a telescopic cup he took from a pocket. Seated on a form, he helped himself to sugar and then proceeded to cut chips from a tobacco plug, the cold and empty pipe dangling from his lips against the full grey moustache. *Seated opposite him was Tich*, waiting for gossip, wondering, hoping.

(30) The door shut with a faint whoosh. *Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas lay a larger reception area paved in thick lilac pile.* Dark paneled walls hung with a few pious prints created an atmosphere of heavy Victorian mourning.

In 29, both constituents are discourse-old. This inversion is an alloform of a preposing, and it satisfies the requirement that the preposed constituent be discourse-old. It cannot be a postposing, because it does not satisfy postposing's requirement that the postposed constituent be discourse-new. In 30, by contrast, both constituents are discourse-new. This inversion is an alloform of a postposing, for analogous reasons: it satisfies the requirement that the postposed constituent be discourse-new. It cannot be a preposing, because it does not satisfy preposing's requirement that the preposed constituent be discourse-old.

Now consider again the two inversions in 1a, repeated below as 31.

(31) 'We do get those from time to time, but they're rare,' the taxidermist said. *Above his head hung a massive seagull with its beak open,* and *next to him, on a tabletop, lounged a pair of hedgehogs.*

In each of the inversions in this example, the preposed constituent is discourse-old and the postposed constituent is discourse-new, and each is ambiguous between a preposing and a postposing, since it meets the discourse requirements for both constructions.

Under this account, the one context in which inversion would be infelicitous is that in which the preposed constituent is discourse-new and the postposed constituent is discourse-old, as in 32.

(32) The taxidermist pointed to a seagull with its beak open. *#Above a massive desk hung the seagull.*

Here neither construction's constraint is satisfied. This inversion cannot be a felicitous preposing because the preposed constituent is discourse-new, and it cannot be a felicitous postposing because the postposed constituent is discourse-old. In short, under this analysis the distribution of inversion falls out naturally from the constraints on preposing and postposing, with no need for an inversion-specific constraint.

This explains another otherwise puzzling distributional fact. As shown in Birner & Ward 1998, preposing and inversion share the property of generally requiring the presence of a salient open proposition, as illustrated in 33.

(33) a. At the end of the term I took my first schools; it was necessary to pass, if I was to stay at Oxford, *and pass I did*.          (Birner & Ward 1998, ex. 40c)
     b. Two CBS crewmen were wounded by shrapnel yesterday in Souk el Gharb during a Druse rocket attack on Lebanese troops.
         They were the 5th and 6th television-news crewmen to be wounded in Lebanon this month. One television reporter, Clark Todd of Canada, was

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[11] This assumes that it is more specifically an alloform of the presentational, which it turns out there is good reason to assume, as is shown below.

killed earlier this month. *Wounded yesterday were cameraman Alain Debos, 45, and soundman Nick Follows, 24.*            (Birner & Ward 1998, ex. 218)

An open proposition, or OP, is a proposition in which one or more elements is unspecified. The preposing in 33a is licensed by the salience of the OP 'I {did/didn't} pass', and in the inversion in 33b, the mention of crewmen being wounded gives rise to the OP 'X was wounded'. When these OPs are not salient, infelicity results, as shown in 34.

(34) a. I loved the time I spent as a student at Oxford. #And pass I did.
   b. Several CBS crewmen arrived in Souk el Gharb last week to cover the latest peace talks. #Wounded yesterday were cameraman Alain Debos, 45, and soundman Nick Follows, 24.            (Birner & Ward 1998, ex. 302)

However, in both preposing and inversion, this OP requirement is lifted when the preposed constituent is locative (Birner & Ward 1998), as in 35.

(35) a. In the VIP section of the commissary at 20th Century-Fox, the studio's elite gather for lunch and gossip. The prized table is reserved for Mel Brooks, *and from it he dispenses advice, jokes and invitations to passers-by*.            (Birner & Ward 1998, ex. 307a)
   b. There are three ways to look at East State Street Village, a low-income apartment complex in Camden. None of them are pretty views. *To the west of the 23 brightly colored buildings flows the Cooper River, a fetid waterway considered one of the most polluted in New Jersey.*
            (Birner & Ward 1998, ex. 308a)

In the preposing in 35a, the prior context does not make salient the proposition that Mel Brooks dispenses something from somewhere, and in the inversion in 35b the context does not make salient the proposition that something flows somewhere, yet both are felicitous. If the inversions and preposings in 33 through 35 are alloforms of a single construction, the fact that the two structures share both the OP constraint and the conditions under which it is lifted makes perfect sense.

   As noted above, when inversion serves as an alloform of postposing, it is specifically an alloform of the presentational (i.e. a postposing with a noncopular verb) as opposed to the existential (i.e. a postposing with a copula). This, as it turns out, precisely fits the distribution of these three sentence types in discourse. First, both presentationals and inversions are sensitive to the discourse status rather than the hearer status of their postposed constituents (Birner & Ward 1996, 1998). Second, this analysis accounts for the distribution of BRIDGING INFERRABLES (Haviland & Clark 1974, Clark 1977, Prince 1981). Bridging inferrables have the status discourse-old/hearer-new, by virtue of representing information that is new to the hearer yet inferentially related to the prior discourse (Birner 2006). If copular inversion served as an alloform of the existential, we would expect to find cases of postposed bridging inferrables in such inversions with preposed discourse-new information, because the existential's requirement of postposed hearer-new information would be satisfied; but in fact such inversions are infelicitous.

(36) I've bought tomorrow night's party supplies. *#In a cupboard are the plates.*

Here, because the cupboard is discourse-new and the plates are discourse-old (by virtue of standing in an inferential relationship to the previously mentioned party supplies), the inversion is infelicitous. The italicized sentence cannot be an alloform of a preposing, because the preposed constituent is discourse-new; and it cannot be an alloform of a presentational, because the postposed constituent is discourse-old. If inversion served as an alloform of existentials, we would expect 36 to be felicitous, because the postposed constituent is hearer-new and thus satisfies the constraint on existentials; thus,

the fact that inversion is not an alloform of the existential correctly predicts the infelicity of 36. Likewise, the study in Birner 1996b uncovered no such cases, although there were cases of inversions with discourse-new information in both positions—precisely the result we would predict if inversion is an alloform of a presentational but not of an existential. To put it another way: we have seen that when the preposed constituent is discourse-new, the structure must be a postposing; the fact that such cases are found only when the postposed constituent is discourse-new, but never when it is hearer-new/discourse-old, stands as additional evidence for the status of inversion as an alloform of the presentational.

**5.** NONCANONICAL WORD ORDER AND CONSTRUCTIONAL AMBIGUITY. One objection that could be raised against this account is that most inversions—78%, in the corpus study reported in Birner 1996b—have preposed discourse-old and postposed discourse-new information, and thus are ambiguous between being alloforms of preposing and alloforms of postposing. I argue, however, that this is the desired result. Consider for example 37.

> (37)  Last night I went out to buy **the picnic supplies**.
>     a.  I decided to get *beer* first.
>     b.  I decided to get *the beer* first.
>     c.  *Beer* I decided to get first.
>     d.  *The beer* I decided to get first.                          (Birner 2006, ex. 16)

As I argue in Birner 2006, 37a is ambiguous between a reading in which the beer was purchased before the picnic supplies (thus, the beer is not part of the picnic supplies) and one in which, of all the picnic supplies, beer was the first thing the speaker bought (thus, beer is part of the picnic supplies). On the first reading, the beer is discourse-new; on the second, the beer is discourse-old by virtue of standing in a set/subset relationship with the previously mentioned picnic supplies (Birner 1996b, Birner & Ward 1998). In the other three variants, however, no such ambiguity exists; the beer must be part of the picnic supplies. In 37b, the definite cues the hearer to make a backward inference relating the beer to the picnic supplies. In 37c, *beer* is preposed. Here, the hearer knows that preposing requires discourse-old status, and therefore knows that for 37c to be felicitous, the beer must stand in an inferential relationship with something in the prior discourse. Since the only plausible candidate is the picnic supplies, the use of a noncanonical syntactic construction compels the hearer to adopt a reading in which the beer is discourse-old and hence is part of the picnic supplies. Finally, 37d contains both a preposing and a definite, and therefore once again requires the hearer to adopt the reading in which the beer is part of the picnic supplies. Thus, the use of a noncanonical construction such as preposing can constitute evidence for the discourse-old status of the preposed constituent and send the addressee in search of an appropriate inferential link to the prior discourse.

In short, 37c provides an instance in which the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention behind the use of noncanonical word order contributes to the hearer's understanding of the utterance (cf. Grice 1975). Indeed, the comprehension of an utterance containing a bridging inferrable depends on the hearer's recognition of a bridging relationship between the inferrable and some element in the prior context; without this recognition, the hearer is licensed to simply construct a new discourse entity. It is crucial, then, that the discourse provide cues to the status of inferrables as inferrables.

In this sense, however, the constructional ambiguity of many inversions might seem problematic; if the inversion's status as a preposing is unclear, it would seem that one important cue to search for an inferential relationship has been lost. However, it is rare for

the status of the inversion as a preposing to be the only available clue to the status of an inferrable. First, as seen in 37, the inferrable element is frequently definite. Second, in cases where the postposed constituent is discourse-old, the possibility that the inversion is an alloform of a postposing is eliminated. Finally, when there is no alternative cue to tell the hearer whether a given inversion is serving as an alloform of a preposing or of a postposing in a given instance, that case may simply remain ambiguous; however, there is rarely any communicative loss in these cases. It has long been recognized that the purpose of placing relatively 'given' information before relatively 'new' information in a sentence is to facilitate the incorporation of the new information into the hearer's knowledge store (Firbas 1966, Halliday 1967, Halliday & Hasan 1976, Clark & Haviland 1977, inter alia), and the hearer's knowledge of this fact correlates with their knowledge that preposing and postposing facilitate this ordering. This is why 78% of inversions have this ordering, with discourse-old preceding discourse-new. The difference between the current account of inversion and the account in Birner 1996b is that, in that account, an additional constraint is required to ensure this ordering, whereas in the current account it falls out automatically from the constraints on preposing and postposing.

The new account also explains why the preponderance of inversions contain both preposed discourse-old information and postposed discourse-new information: when both constituents are of equal status, there is less often a reason to use either preposing or postposing. Nonetheless, those reasons do exist: when both the preposed and postposed constituent in an inversion are discourse-old, the more recently mentioned constituent appears in preposed position, whereas when both constituents are discourse-new, the postposed constituent constitutes the topic of the next clause (Birner 1996b). What matters in the cases of constructional ambiguity is not whether the inversion is serving as a preposing or a postposing, but rather the hearer's knowledge that the given/new contract (Clark & Haviland 1977) is being honored.

In short, the existence of inversion as an alloform of both preposing and postposing accounts for all of the distributional data while allowing these noncanonical structures to preserve a given-before-new ordering of information in a maximally efficient way, without the need to posit an additional construction with an additional discourse constraint on its use.

**6.** ALLOFORMS AND COMPOSITIONALITY. This analysis also accounts for certain differences in distribution between inversion and what I call PP + *THERE*. Consider the two variants in 38.

> (38) a. The old man was sitting in the corner by the demolished remains of the wedding cake, his arthritis-gnarled hands folded over his cane. He was wearing dark glasses. One bow had been mended with black electricians' tape. *Beside him there stood two empty bottles of beer and another that was half-full.*         [= 28a]
>
> b. The old man was sitting in the corner by the demolished remains of the wedding cake, his arthritis-gnarled hands folded over his cane. He was wearing dark glasses. One bow had been mended with black electricians' tape. *Beside him stood two empty bottles of beer and another that was half-full.*

In 38a, the PP *beside him* is preposed, while the rest of the clause constitutes a postposing—specifically, a presentational *there*-sentence. In 38b, by contrast, we have an inversion. Although the two look identical except for the presence or absence of *there*, I argue in Birner 1997 that a structure like that in 38a is a compound construction made

up of two noncanonical constructions and therefore subject to both constructions' discourse constraints, whereas a structure like that in 38b is a single construction subject to a single constraint.

First, note that in 38a–b, *him* in the preposed PP is discourse-old, while the postposed *two empty bottles of beer and another that was half-full* is discourse-new, and both examples are felicitous. However, when both constituents have the same discourse status, regardless of what that discourse status is, PP + *there* is infelicitous, as seen in 39.

(39) a. The old man was sitting in the corner by the demolished remains of the wedding cake, his arthritis-gnarled hands folded over his cane. He had with him a pair of dark glasses. One bow had been mended with black electricians' tape. *#Beside him there sat the dark glasses.*

b. The old man was sitting in the corner, his arthritis-gnarled hands folded over his cane. He had with him a pair of dark glasses. One bow had been mended with black electricians' tape. *#Beside a wedding cake there stood two empty bottles of beer.*

In 39a, both constituents are discourse-old and the utterance is infelicitous, while in 39b, both constituents are discourse-new and this utterance is likewise infelicitous. This is what we would predict if PP + *there* is composed of a preposing and a postposing; 39a is infelicitous because the postposed constituent is discourse-old, whereas 39b is infelicitous because the preposed constituent is discourse-new.

As we saw above, however, inversion allows cases in which both constituents have the same status.

(40) Tich made tea in a blackened billy and McPherson filled a telescopic cup he took from a pocket. Seated on a form, he helped himself to sugar and then proceeded to cut chips from a tobacco plug, the cold and empty pipe dangling from his lips against the full grey moustache. *Seated opposite him was Tich*, waiting for gossip, wondering, hoping.                              [= 3]

(41) The door shut with a faint whoosh. *Beyond a small vestibule with a place for coats and umbrellas lay a larger reception area paved in thick lilac pile.* Dark paneled walls hung with a few pious prints created an atmosphere of heavy Victorian mourning.                              [= 4]

In 40, both constituents are discourse-old, and in 41, both constituents are discourse-new; and both inversions are felicitous. The reason for this difference in distribution falls out from the account proposed here. PP + *there* is a combination of a preposing and a postposing, and as argued in Birner et al. 2007, functional constraints apply compositionally: in a structure composed of two noncanonical constructions, the constraints on both must be met. Thus, in the case of PP + *there*, the preposed constituent must always be discourse-old, and the postposed constituent must always be discourse-new.

With inversion, no such problem arises. An inversion in which both noncanonically positioned constituents are discourse-old is necessarily serving as an alloform of preposing. It cannot be a postposing, since postposing disallows postposed discourse-old information, but preposing places no constraints on the postposed constituent. Similarly, an inversion in which both constituents are discourse-new is necessarily serving as an alloform of postposing. It cannot be a preposing, since preposing disallows preposed discourse-new information, but postposing places no constraints on the preposed constituent. Because a given token of inversion serves as either a preposing or a postposing (but not both), it need only meet the constraint on that construction, whereas PP + *there* is an instance of both constructions simultaneously and therefore must satisfy both constraints.

**7.** DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS. Thus far, I have argued for the existence of abstract constructions that may be instantiated in different contexts by alloforms that differ structurally but serve the same discourse function. I have argued that inversion and long passives in English constitute one such pair of alloforms and that two subject-postposing constructions in Italian constitute another. I then presented a reconsideration of English inversion as an alloform of both preposing and postposing, and I distinguished such constructions from compound constructions that are compositionally subject to the constraints on their component constructions. In this section I briefly summarize the arguments in favor of this analysis, address possible objections, and discuss the implications of this account for pragmatic theory and the notion of a construction.

The account presented here explains a range of facts that are otherwise unaccounted for. The fact that inversion and passivization are alloforms of a single construction explains why they should have the same effect on the relative placement of two constituents while being subject to the same discourse-functional constraint, yet be in complementary distribution syntactically. It also explains why the constraint itself is otherwise so complex but falls out naturally from an account in which it is the result of two simpler constraints. Moreover, it explains why preposing and inversion share the same requirement of a salient open proposition, and also why, for both structures, the OP requirement is lifted when the preposed constituent is semantically locative.[12]

Inversions with preposed discourse-old information and postposed discourse-new information should be precisely the cases in which PP + *there* is equally available as a variant (given that the constraints of both preposing and postposing are satisfied), a prediction that awaits a corpus study comparing inversions with naturally occurring instances of PP + *there*. Thus far, however, the data show the predicted distribution: inversions may be felicitous when both the preposed and postposed constituents are discourse-old and also when they are both discourse-new, but PP + *there* is felicitous in neither case.

One obvious concern is that if inversion and long passives are alloforms, and inversion is also an alloform of either preposing or postposing in a given instance, this suggests that the long passive must also be an alloform of either preposing or postposing in a given instance. Although this seems counterintuitive, I believe it is the correct conclusion. Note that this correlates with the fact that not only are inversion and passivization in complementary distribution, but passivization and presentationals are in complementary distribution as well: passivization applies to transitives, while presentational postposing applies to intransitives, as seen in 42–43.

(42) a. John threw a ball.
    b. A ball was thrown by John.
    c. #There threw John a ball.
(43) a. A woman sat in a field.
    b. In a field there sat a woman.[13]
    c. #In a field was sat by a woman.

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[12] Although all of the nonlocative inversions in the inversion corpus appeared in the context of such an OP, we would expect inversions with both preposed and postposed discourse-new information, which are therefore necessarily alloforms of postposing, to be free of this constraint; and although the corpus contained insufficient data to make a final determination, this at least intuitively appears to be true. A news story, for example, may felicitously begin: *Arrested yesterday were three young women found to be possessing heroin*.

[13] Note that 43b retains the same felicity judgments regardless of whether *in a field* is preposed.

    (i) There sat a woman in a field.

Why, then, are inversion and presentationals not in complementary distribution? In fact, in most contexts they are: inversion but neither presentationals nor passives may occur with a copula; passivization but neither inversion nor presentationals may occur with a transitive verb; and either inversion or presentationals may occur with intransitive non-copular verbs—the latter being the one case in the paradigm that allows free variation. This account also has the advantage of unifying four English structures that are sensitive to discourse status—inversion, passivization, preposings, and presentationals—while correctly excluding existentials, which are sensitive instead to hearer status.[14]

The possibility of having contextually conditioned variants of an abstract construction also places such constructions solidly in line with the many other linguistic phenomena that instantiate a type/token distinction. There are obvious correlations with traditional approaches to phonology: if two structures are in complementary distribution syntactically but share a functional constraint, they are alloforms of a single construction, just as two phones appearing in complementary distribution but serving the same phonological function are allophones of a single phoneme. While it is true that a layperson is likely to think of the allophones of /t/ as all being in some sense the same sound but unlikely to think of passives and inversions as being the same construction, this may be due to the fact that laypersons seldom notice the subphonemic aspects of the sounds of their language (indeed, infants quickly learn to ignore nonphonemic distinctions between sounds), whereas the difference between two word orders is perceptible to all language users. It is an open question whether inversion and passivization (for example) occupy a single psychological category for the English speaker in precisely the same sense that the allophones of /t/ do.[15]

Nonetheless, there are a number of correlations to be noted. First, it appears that all levels of the grammar provide for abstract forms instantiated by variants that may be contextually conditioned. Second, a single form may be an alloform of more than one abstract category, as with the phonetic flap (as an allophone of /t/ in *latter* and /d/ in *ladder*) and inversion (as an alloform of both preposing and postposing). Third, we find minimal pairs—pairs of forms that differ only in a single nondecomposable feature that corresponds to a difference in their functional effect—at all levels as well, such as in the two types of English postposing, as illustrated in 44.

    (44) a.  The old man was sitting in the corner by the demolished remains of the wedding cake, his arthritis-gnarled hands folded over his cane. He was wearing dark glasses. One bow had been mended with black electricians' tape. *Beside him there stood two empty bottles of beer and another that was half-full.*      [= 28a]

         b.  … Beside him there were two empty bottles of beer and another that was half-full.

Here we see two sentences that differ only in the nature of the verb—an intransitive verb in 44a and a copula in 44b—and they appear to be otherwise indistinguishable in meaning. However, as discussed above, the two structures differ functionally, as seen in 45.

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[14] An alternative hypothesis would have copular inversion serving instead as an alloform of the existential, which differs structurally from the presentational in containing a copula rather than a noncopular verb; however, the existential also differs functionally from the presentational in being sensitive to hearer status rather than discourse status. Since existentials require postposed hearer-new information but allow postposed discourse-old information, if copular inversions were alloforms of the existential we would expect to find inversions with preposed discourse-new/hearer-new information in combination with postposed discourse-old/hearer-new information (i.e. bridging inferrables)—but as noted above, these cases do not in fact appear. (See Birner 1996b for corpus results, and Birner 2006 regarding inferrables as discourse-old/hearer-new information.)

[15] I am grateful to Arnold Zwicky for helpful discussion on this point.

(45) a. Famous men came—engineers, scientists, industrialists; and eventually, in
their turn, *there came Jimmy the Screwsman and Napoleon Bonaparte ...*
<div align="right">(Birner & Ward 1998, ex. 124b)</div>

   b. Famous men came—engineers, scientists, industrialists; and, eventually, in
their turn, #*there were Jimmy the Screwsman and Napoleon Bonaparte ...*

When the postverbal NP is discourse-new but hearer-old, the presentational in 45a is fe-
licitous, whereas the existential in 45b is not. This is because presentationals require the
postverbal NP to be discourse-new, while existentials require it to be hearer-new. The
word *there*, the postverbal positioning of the logical subject, and the intransitive verb
are three features that together define the presentational construction in English, as in
45a, whereas the word *there*, the postverbal positioning of the logical subject, and the
copula are three features that together define the existential construction in English, as
in 45b. Changing one of these features, as with the shift from an intransitive verb to a
copula in 45, changes the construction and therefore the function of the sentence, re-
sulting in the difference in felicity seen in 45a–b.

   Finally, these groupings of forms into constructions are language-specific. For exam-
ple, although the Italian *ci*-sentence is formally analogous to an English existential
*there*-sentence, in that both postpose the subject and contain the verb *be*, it behaves
functionally like the English presentational, in that both require their postposed con-
stituent to be discourse-new. Thus, the Italian *ci*-sentence is the formal analog of the
English existential but the functional analog of the English presentational, and the *ci*-
sentence groups with Italian subject postposing as alloforms of a single construction, al-
though the English existential and presentational do not serve as alloforms of a single
construction. In short, the grouping of forms into abstract categories varies by language.

   The approach taken here is broadly consistent with construction grammar (Fillmore
et al. 1988, Goldberg 1995, Kay 1997, Croft 2001, and Boas & Sag 2012, inter alia),
both in the parallelism among structures at different levels of the grammar and in view-
ing a construction as a form-function pairing. Indeed, Cappelle (2006) proposes the no-
tion of an ALLOSTRUCTION within the construction grammar framework and invokes it
to treat the two variant placements of a particle as allostructions of a more general verb-
particle construction. For Cappelle, the transitive verb-particle construction is essen-
tially a template with an underspecified word order, much as I have proposed above for
the two variants of preposing and the two variants of postposing. Goldberg (2015) of-
fers a similar account within construction grammar that does not make use of the al-
lostruction concept, but nonetheless appeals to an 'abstract phrasal verb *construction*,
with its word order underspecified' (emphasis in the original).

   In Cappelle's account, the two particle-ordering variants are not in complementary
distribution; instead, the choice is subject to a range of interacting factors, with free
variation also possible. He argues against accounts that would either view the two or-
ders as unrelated constructions or derive one from the other, and proposes the allostruc-
tion as a parsimonious way of taking the middle road; however, these arguments against
two extremes fail to present a strong positive argument for the middle ground. What I
have presented above offers a range of evidence specifically in favor of the alloform by
showing how it explains a number of otherwise curious distributional facts; and I have
remained neutral regarding a syntactic framework. Moreover, our proposals operate at
somewhat different levels: the sets of alloforms I describe above are defined by their
pragmatic function; that is, they share a function and vary based on the syntactic con-
text within which that function is to operate. Cappelle's pair, by contrast, vary based on
the functional constraints in play (including discourse-familiarity, weight, focality, ex-
pectedness, etc.). Nonetheless, the two proposals are similar in spirit.

Prince (1996) also takes an approach similar to that taken here, positing the existence of 'abstract *universal* Construction-template[s] which may be mapped onto one syntactic form in one language and to another syntactic form in another language or onto more than one syntactic form in a single language' (p. 3, emphasis in the original). For Prince, a construction is a template that may be realized differently in different languages, where the differences are due in part to independent syntactic requirements of the languages in question. She describes, for example, a range of ways in which relative clauses are realized in various languages, where the syntactic details differ but all are recognizable as relative clauses, and cases of pragmatic borrowing, in which 'speakers in a language contact situation appear to match up noncanonical syntactic forms in two languages on the basis of the string order of the major constituents, factoring out as irrelevant those differences in string order which are attributable to independently motivated syntactic differences between the two languages' (Prince 1996:18). Birner & Mahootian 1996 shows a similar mechanism at work in English and Farsi inversion, where both structures reverse the relative ordering of the subject and the PP complement, but because English is canonically SVO and Farsi is canonically SOV, the English inversion results in an OVS structure and the Farsi inversion results in an OSV structure. (Here, the 'O' is a PP complement rather than an NP complement.) In this case it is not the string order of the major constituents that determines the construction, as with Prince's pragmatic borrowing, but rather their relative order and their discourse function (which is the same for Farsi inversion as for English inversion).

Where I differ from Prince is that in her account, a construction template (CT) is not itself associated with a discourse function. Rather, a CT is realized in a particular language by a particular structure, which in turn may be associated with a discourse function; this pairing of a structural realization of a CT with a particular discourse function is, in turn, a construction. I have instead argued that at least within a particular language (and perhaps across languages) the CT itself is associated with a given function, which by definition is shared by its alloforms. Since Prince is concerned with crosslinguistic phenomena, our accounts are compatible to the extent that a CT can be realized by distinct structures both across languages and within a single language. For Prince, it is the individual form-function pairing that is language-specific, whereas I would argue that a discourse function is not attached to a particular string order but rather to an abstract construction within a given language; the structural realizations (or alloforms) inherit this function. While Prince shows how the abstract template is realized differently in different languages due to the independent structural requirements of those languages, I have gone further by showing how the abstract template may also be realized differently within a single language due to the independent structural properties of different syntactic contexts.

Prince (1996:3) states that construction grammar is compatible with her proposal, but argues that because it 'inextricably unites form and function and … is language-particular', it 'is not sufficient to account for all the relevant phenomena'. She also sees her notion of construction as differing from that of construction grammar in another way:

> Parenthetically, we can now see how the Fillmore/Zwicky/Goldberg Construction Grammar notion of 'construction', which is presumably language-specific and which combines form and function, can be seen as corresponding to the notion 'Construction' as defined here; the crucial difference is that here the notion is explicitly non-primitive, its component parts being separable, one of them traceable to a simpler and more abstract object of metalinguistic competence, the Construction-Template. (Prince 1996:20)

Note, however, that as argued by Kay and Michaelis (2013:2274), construction grammar and compositionality are not opposed to each other; they maintain that 'construction-based grammars are … compositional in a quite usual sense'. The account I have

presented here is consistent with both construction grammar and compositionality; as seen above, a single complex construction may be built up compositionally from multiple more basic constructions, inheriting those constructions' discourse functions; in other cases, multiple structures may serve as alloforms of a single more abstract construction, inheriting that construction's discourse function.

I should note that I have specifically avoided the use of the term ALLOSENTENCE, which is used by Lambrecht (1994), following Daneš (1966), in a slightly different way. For Lambrecht, allosentences are pairs of sentences that are 'semantically equivalent but formally and pragmatically divergent' (1994:35), as with active and passive variants, or canonical and clefted variants. For Lambrecht, as for Cappelle, the sets of variants are defined in terms of sharing their propositional content, whereas they vary pragmatically. Therefore, Lambrecht's allosentences are specific sentences that share semantic content but not pragmatic function, as in 46a–b.

(46) a. A statue was in the garden.
     b. In the garden was a statue.

In my account, as we have seen, the pragmatic function is inseparable from (and definitional for) the construction. Also, for me the alloforms of interest are not particular sentences but rather syntactic structures that constitute variants of more abstract constructions—and these constructions are defined not by propositional content (since constructions do not themselves have propositional content), but rather by shared discourse functions. This does not conflict with Lambrecht's proposal of semantically defined sets of allosentences; in fact, the two proposals taken together suggest more strongly that the type/token distinction exists at all levels of the grammar.[16]

In short, the work presented here is broadly consonant with not only construction grammar but also a number of specific proposals spanning the past several decades, all converging on the notion that the type/token distinction that plays out in morphemes and their allomorphs and phonemes and their allophones also is represented at the sentence or discourse level as construction types, of which groups of semantically and/or pragmatically equivalent forms constitute variants. I have attempted here to both motivate and flesh out this concept by presenting a number of specific examples of pragmatic alloforms, along with a wide range of evidence to support this proposal.

**8.** CONCLUSION. This research report has argued that certain sets of noncanonical syntactic structures constitute alloforms of more abstract constructions. Two pairs of such alloforms were presented: inversion and passivization in English, and presentational *ci*-sentences and subject postposing in Italian. The status of English inversion was then reexamined in light of this new proposal, and it was seen that a number of puzzles can be solved by considering inversion to be an alloform of both preposing and postposing, including its distribution in discourse, the fact that it shares both preposing's requirement of a salient OP and the conditions under which this requirement is lifted, and the distributional differences between inversion and PP + *there*. Finally, this report discussed the ramifications of this proposal for linguistic theory in general and for the notion of a construction in particular.

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[16] See also Marantz 2010, 2013 and Wood 2015 regarding ALLOSEMES—contextually determined denotations. Again, this notion is distinct both from alloforms as discussed here and from Lambrecht's notion of allosentences, in that what varies across sets of allosemes is not form (as with Lambrecht's allosentences and my alloforms) but rather meaning. What all three notions share, however, is the ability of contextual factors to affect certain aspects of form and/or interpretation. I am indebted to Tricia Irwin for bringing the work on allosemes to my attention.

There is still a great deal of research to be done. Questions yet to be answered include whether presentationals and passives share the OP constraint, and how the constraints on the abstract constructions, in combination with the syntactic constraints on various alloforms, give rise to free variation between alloforms in certain contexts. Prince's work, along with the correlation between Farsi inversion and English inversion, suggests further crosslinguistic work to be done on how word orders across languages are to be categorized as the same or different constructions. In addition, Ward 1999 shows that inversion in Italian shares the same constraint that has been found for inversion in English and Farsi, as well as for long passives in English. One question for further research, then, is whether inversion in Italian is also an alloform of both preposing and postposing, as I have argued for English inversion.[17] More generally, there is considerable work to be done to address the question of what pragmatic effects give rise to the sorts of abstract constructions we have been considering here. Prince (1992) has identified three classes of given/new distinction—discourse-old/new information, hearer-old/new information, and focus-presupposition; we have seen evidence herein that such statuses do inform the definition and use of noncanonical-word-order constructions. I have especially focused here on constructions that make reference to discourse status and hearer status; the distinction between focus and presupposition is an obvious next topic to investigate. Other potential pragmatic bases for constructions might include topicality, salience, referentiality (as variously defined), and formal weight. The questions to ask in general are: (i) what pragmatic factors might favor a particular word order, and (ii) to effect a particular pragmatically conditioned word order, what syntactic options are available and how are they decided among?

Additional corpus work would shed light on all of these questions. None of them, however, threatens to pose an insuperable obstacle to the account presented here. The existence of alloforms explains why certain structures that are in complementary distribution syntactically but have similar constituent-ordering effects should share identical discourse functions and be subject to identical constraints, and also makes possible a new account of English inversion under which its discourse distribution falls out from existing principles without the need to posit inversion-specific constraints.

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[17] The question is different, and more complicated, with respect to Farsi, since there cannot be preposing in Farsi that is syntactically distinct from inversion, due to its canonical SOV word order.

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