

On some environmental factors affecting lexical aspect of english verbs

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Résumé

The research explores the cause-and-effect relationship between the lexical aspectual features of certain groups of English verbs and their inflectional environment, as well as their confluence with the overall sentential environment. Being an inherent part of their meaning (Comrie 1976), lexical aspectual properties (Aktionsart) such as durativity, stativity, and dynamicity are, according to specific types of verbs, expressed either non-progressively or progressively in sentential context. The main premise of this research is that the inflected forms of certain groups of English verbs may ascribe to their somewhat different meaning of the internal temporal structure of verb situations that they express. Applying the distributional and componential analysis methods reveals that the progressive use of stative verbs may change their inherent property of stativity into dynamicity and thus color the whole context in one of the three levels of meaning typical for the progressive form (Leech 2004). The items for the analysis are excerpted from contemporary British prose and the results indicate the considerable influence of the grammatical aspect on the lexical aspectual properties of particular groups of verbs.

Mots-Clés

[verb](#), [stative](#), [dynamic](#), [progressive](#), [aspect](#).

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Introduction

The progressive verb form represents a complex finite verb form that is recognized in the verb phrase based on the -ing participle of the main verb (e.g. is working, has been running, was lying, will be traveling). When we talk about its meaning, the most widely accepted view is that it is his verb form is predominantly. Within typological studies (Comrie 1976, Smith 1991) the progressive verb form is viewed as part imperfectiveness and durativity. Comrie (1976: 25) epitomizes the overall meaning of the verb phrases as being either perfective or imperfective. Perfective verb phrases can be habitual, while imperfective can be continuous. The continuousness can furthermore be expressed either non-progressively or progressively.

According to the same author, we can observe one verb situation either as a structure or as a whole verb situation is related to perfectiveness, while the characteristic of structure relates to imperfectiveness. Perfective verb situations express with the non-progressive form of the verb. On the other hand, imperfective situations can be expressed in both progressive and non-progressive form. Comrie further divided imperfection into habituality and durativity, and permanence into non-progressiveness and progressiveness.

Here it is important to point out the difference in the meaning of the concepts of durability and progressiveness. Unlike permanence, which implies the duration of either a stative or a dynamic verb situation, progressiveness always represents a combination of permanent and non-static meaning and a constant investment of energy when performing the verb situation. The above two terms, therefore, do not have the same meaning. Everything that

is progressive is permanent, but everything that is permanent is not always progressive. Secrecy would, therefore, in relation to progressiveness represented a higher-order term.

The main premise in this paper is that the sentential environmental factor affecting the denotation of certain parts of English verbs is the progressive verb form. Another premise in this paper is that the use of progressive form is most often associated with verbs with a dynamic meaning, but certain groups of verbs with a stative meaning can also be expressed progressively, most often with the change of certain semantic properties of the verb itself.

Levels of meaning of the English Progressive

Texte de l'article. [Appliquer le style « Normal »] In his study *Meaning and the English Verb* Leach lists three possible meanings of the progressive verb form:

- a. duration of the verb situation,
- b. limited duration of the verb situation and
- c. the fact that the verb situation expressed by this form "is not always completed" (Leech 2004:19)

The level of meaning related to the duration of the verb situation is illustrated by examples:

- 1) I raise my arm / I am raising my arm,
- 2) The house falls down / The house is falling down.

The first sentence in the pair would mean that the verb situation happens suddenly, while the second sentence expresses gradualness in the unfolding of the verb situation (Leech 2004:19). The difference between the limited and unlimited duration of the verb situation Leech illustrates with examples:

- 1) I live in Wimbledon, and
- 2) I am living in Wimbledon.

The first sentence would mean that Wimbledon is someone's permanent residence, and the second that someone lives there temporarily. The mentioned difference is also noticeable on examples with verbs that express states. For example, a sentence

- 1) My watch works perfectly expresses a permanent state (in the sense that

reliable watch), while the sentence

2) My watch is working perfectly would express the temporary state in which the watch is.

The level of meaning of the progressive form which refers to the fact that the situation expressed by that form is not always finished, the author illustrates the following examples:

1) The bus stops, and

2) The bus is stopping.

In the first example the real present (Instantaneous Present) was used with the aim of indicating that the verb situation is over, i.e. that the bus has come to a standstill, while the second example implies that the bus is slowing down arriving at wharf (Leech 1987:20).

This level of meaning of the progressive form yet is more noticeable in examples in the past tense:

1) The man was drowning, and

2) The man drowned.

From the second example, it can be concluded that it is verbal the situation is over (the man is no longer alive), while the first example does not inevitably imply this, but this implication can be canceled by a but I clause jumped and saved him, with the aim of indicating that the verb situation is interrupted (as unfinished, i.e. unfulfilled) (Leech 2004:20).

Progressiveness and dynamicity

Texte de l'article. [Appliquer le style « Normal »] In the basic classification of English verbs into verbs with stative meanings (stative verbs) and verbs with dynamic meanings (Leech 1987, 2004, Quirk et al. 1972), the progressive verb form is mostly associated with verbs with dynamic meaning. Such verbs usually imply development verb situations, investment of energy during its execution, the performer of the action, etc. Therefore, the possibility of using dynamic verbs in the progressive form is the greatest. The same author further singles out several groups of dynamic verbs, whose use in the progressive form can change the meaning of the context. Such are:

a. momentary verbs: hit, jump, kick, knock..,

b. transitional event verbs: arrive, leave, lose, stop..,

c. verbs denoting activities: drink, read, work.., and

d. verbs denoting processes: change, grow, widen, etc.

Momentary verbs express dynamic situations that are happening at one moment and for which it is difficult to even imagine that they have any duration (Leech 2004). These verbs can be used both progressive and non-progressive. However, their use in the progressive form context takes on a slightly different meaning. For example:

1) Sir Joseph hit the table with his fist. (LH 45)8

1a) Sir Joseph was hitting the table with his fist.

2) Hercule Poirot nodded thoughtfully. (LH 27)

2a) Hercule Poirot was nodding thoughtfully.

Examples in which current verbs are used progressively (1a, 2a) express verb situations that are no longer instantaneous or momentary but lasting over a certain period of time and therefore durative, with the characteristic of iterativeness, i.e. repetition of the verb situation. It could be said that these forms express permanent verb situations that consist of a series of current situations.

Transitional event verbs represent a group of verbs that, if used in the non-progressive form, indicate the transition of a dynamic situation to the stative. Their use in the progressive form would mean approaching the transition, rather than the transition itself (Leech 2004:24).

The aforementioned difference can be seen in the following examples:

1) The car stopped. (LH 55)

1a) The car was stopping.

2) At the same time you and Mr - er - Satterthwaite arrived from
the opposite direction. (MQ 53)

2a) At the same time you and Mr - er - Satterthwaite was arriving
from the opposite direction.

When it comes to verbs denoting activities, the very implication of activity implies a certain duration and investment of energy during the execution of the situation. Therefore, it is quite natural to use these verbs progressively:

- 1) She was speaking with a faint irritation in her golden voice. (MQ 46)
- 2) A new tenor, said to be a second Caruso, was singing that night. (MQ 217)

The verbs belonging to this group can certainly be used non-progressively, because in their basic meaning they contain the element of duration of the verbal situation. Also, some functional may appear in the context itself an element (most often a time adverbial) that additionally emphasizes that the situation is relatively permanent. A similar situation exists with the verbs that denote processes:

- 1) It was raining steadily. (MQ 278)
- 2) A light breeze was blowing and the sun shone through a thin tissue of cloud. (LJ 187)
- 3) It was just growing dark as he reached the hotel. (MQ 179).

Progressiveness and stativity

Texte de l'article. [Appliquer le style « Normal »] The semantic feature of stativeness is characteristic of verbs which denote states (stative verbs). Stative verbs express verbal situations that are, as a rule, permanent. Such verb situations cannot be immediate but temporary, and neither can they be stative verbs, with the aim of expressing a state, are not used in the progressive form. The very meaning of progressiveness (which represents a combination duration and investment of energy to carry out some verb situation) it is incompatible with the meaning of stativeness. However, Leech (Leech 2004:25-27) lists several groups of stative verbs that can be used in the progressive form, while some of these group can lead to a change in the semantic feature of the stative status of the verb u dynamism. Such verbs are classified in the following groups:

- a. Verbs of inert perception,
- b. Verbs of inert cognition,
- c. State verbs of having and being),
- d. Verbs of bodily sensation.

Verbs of passive perception are mostly used in the non-progressive form. Verb phrases containing these verbs can be replaced by the modal construction could + verb, in which case to some extent changes the meaning of such expressions. For example:

1) He heard the clinking of a plug-chain, then the swishing of tap water. (LJ 63)

1a) He could hear the clinking of a plug-chain, then the swishing of tap-water.

2) He saw that she was leaning forward and looking out of the window.

2a) He could see that she was leaning forward and looking out of the window. (LJ 145)

3) But I actually felt something - brushing by me in the darkness. (MQ 198)

3a) But I could actually feel something - brushing by me in the darkness.

The differences in the meaning of the given pairs of examples can be explained by permanence-immediateness criterion. Examples without modal construction refer to current verb situations. On the other hand, examples with modal indicate that someone is able to see, hear, feel something, and by himself they imply states as predominantly more permanent verb situations. The verbs see and hear can also be used progressively, where they would again express some states that are temporary, sometimes with the implication of experiencing hallucinations:

1) Was I hearing things? Was this the grassroots whimpering of an important social movement, or was it a small, deep madness? (GS 145)

2) I couldn't have told anyone about the things I was seeing that night before. (GS 198)

Some of the verbs from this group, such as hear and see (see) have their own lexical equivalents that denote the so-called active perception (Leech 2004:28), namely the verbs look at and listen to. The verbal situations like these would imply a conscious directing of the gaze in order to see, a conscious effort to hear, etc. These verbs they can be used both progressively and non-progressively, with minor differences in context meaning:

1) She listened to him patiently and attentively. (LH 69)

1a) She was listening to him patiently and attentively.

2) Mr Satterthwaite looked at him with real attention now. (MQ 152)

2a) Mr. Satterthwaite was looking at him with real attention now.

Verbs of inert cognition represent a group of stative verbs that mainly refer to some mental states (Leech 2004). In this sense, they are most often used non-progressively:

1) I knew he was thinking about it." (LH 59)

1a) Because of it, so he really believed, he had come again and again to the house. (MQ 344)

As a group of verbs of perception that would be even better suited to the name inert, Leach also mentions verbs that have a slightly different syntactic structure. This includes verbs whose subject is actually the object of perception (Leech 2004:28-29).

For example:

1) It sounds interesting. Please go on." (MQ 36).

20 Using his favourite metaphor of a drama, he hoped that he had spoken his few lines correctly. (MQ 181)

3) Twittering with excitement, Mr Satterthwaite hardly realised that the world might contain more than one man of that name. (MQ 67-68)

4) Welch recognized him almost at once. (LJ 171)

5) He remembered one of their quarrels. (MH 29)

6) Creswell clearly understood what she meant by it. (AP 338)

7) She thought it a huge joke. (MQ 144)

8) Mr Satterthwaite thought for a while. (MQ 85)

According to the increasingly pronounced tendency to use the progressive form with verbs of stative meaning in the English language, most verbs from it is therefore possible to use these groups progressively, whereby those verb expressions would again express states (often in some formal situations), but with an emphasis on the temporary nature of the verb situation. It is interesting that the verb think can express both stative (7) and dynamic (8) verb situations.

Within stative verbs of having and being central verbs are be and have. The verb be in the non-progressive form indicates a state. However, if used progressively, the mentioned verb no longer indicates a stative but a dynamic situation, with an emphasis on temporality:

1) She was an odious girl - inquisitive, always prying into letters and

locked drawers." (LH 111)

1a) She was being odious...

Like the verb be, the verb have in its non-progressive form expresses a state. The progressive can be used in verb expressions like have a breakfast, have a bath, etc., where it does not express a stative but a dynamic verb situation.

This group of verbs also includes regular verb expressions that in their denotation also contain the element of existence (being) or possession (having), such as: belong to, contain, consist of, cost, depend on, deserve, matter, own, resemble on someone/something) (Leech 2004:27). The mentioned expressions most often occur non-progressively and always refer to some conditions. For example:

1) He belonged to the law-abiding class; the police were his natural protectors. (MH 65)

2) He had in his possession, however, two pieces of information of which Margaret was ignorant. (LJ 91)

3) These friends consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Clayton, Mr. and Mrs. Spence, and a Commander McLaren. (AP 78)

4) The end of Christmas Day was like the end of most Christmas Days. (AP 47)

Verbs of bodily sensations can also be used in the progressive and in a non-progressive form, without changing the meaning of the context (Leech 2004). Within this group, the verb feel refers to some internal factor that causes a certain feeling, and as such has a different meaning than the meaning of passive or active perception (where some external factor causes experience) (Leech 2004):

1) He felt gracious. (MQ 76)

1a) He was feeling gracious.

2) Suddenly I felt ashamed of myself. (SR 57)

3) Wormold felt an enormous bewilderment. (MH 29)

3a) Wormold was feeling an enormous bewilderment.

Although both progressive and non-progressive examples express stative situations, progressive examples would express stative situations which are temporary. As stated by Comrie (Comrie 1976:50), states can be imperfective, but the form of the verb with a

perfective meaning that expresses the state then does not refer to the state itself, but to the dynamic segment of the stative situation that marks its beginning (inception) or termination (termination). Progressiveness and dynamicity.

Conclusion

Texte de l'article. [Appliquer le style « Normal »] The paper reviews some of the basic meanings of the English progressive form. The most characteristic groups of English verbs were analyzed from the point of view of the possibility of their use in this context, as well as the differences that may arise in their meaning. Finally, it can be said that the progressive verb form is the most common used with verbs of dynamic meaning, attributing to the verb situation one of its three meanings: the duration of the verb situation, the limited duration of the verb situation (temporary), or the fact that the verb situation is not always finished.

The assumption was confirmed that it is mostly possible to use the progressive form with verbs of stative meaning, where either the semantic characteristic of stativeness of the verb changes to dynamism, or the verb situation remains stative, with emphasized temporality. It is interesting that when using the non-progressive form with dynamic meaning verbs that imply a certain duration, it almost never occurs to the change of the semantic characteristic of dynamism to stativeness. In some further research would be interesting to examine the meaning of the progressive form in non-finite constructions and hypothetical meanings.

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