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A semantic exploration across World Englishes*

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This corpus-based study focuses on the alternation between progressive and non-progressive constructions in native and non-native varieties. We adopt a quantitative-qualitative approach starting with a collostructional analysis of the two constructions to assess association strengths between lexical verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories on the one hand, and progressive and non-progressive constructions on the other hand. We then explore the constructions semantically and qualitatively. Overall, associations between the two constructions and Achievements and Accomplishments on the one hand, and semantic domains other than Activity or Existence on the other, do not unanimously influence writers' constructional choices. Further, there may not be one single core meaning of the progressive, but rather a complex of meanings activated by the use of the progressive construction. Ultimately, we paint a complex picture of the meanings of the progressive and show the benefit of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore constructional semantics across

Englishes.

1.   Introduction

Linguistic alternations have increasingly captured the attention of corpus linguists interested in variation across native (ENL) and non-native (ESL/EFL) Englishes.[1] For instance, using state-of-the-art corpus approaches, studies such as Heller, Szmrecsanyi, and Grafmiller (2017) and Gries and Bernaisch (2016) have paid due attention to the governing principles behind ENL and ESL speakers' choices of alternating dative and genitive constructions. However, those studies have mainly focused on the morpho-syntactic factors that influence English speakers' linguistic choices and they have stayed away from large-scale investigations of semantic factors. In this context, our study focuses on grammatical aspect and the alternation between progressive and non-progressive constructions across native and non-native varieties.[2] Specifically, we approach this alternation semantically and we investigate how the lexical verb, the semantic domain of the lexical verb, and the Aktionsart of the situation portrayed affect the choice of grammatical aspect in different varieties of English.

Our study is inspired by Smith (1991) in that we regard sentences as consisting of a number of different elements. For Smith (1991: 5), sentences contain two kinds of aspectual information: *situation type*[3] is signaled by the verb and its arguments, while *viewpoint* is expressed by grammatical morphemes attached to the verb (e.g. BE + V*ing*), and additional temporal information is provided by tense choices and the use of adverbials. The two main types of viewpoint, or grammatical aspect, are perfective and imperfective, which present the situation either as complete or incomplete, respectively. For Smith (1991:

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[1] ESL refers to second-language varieties of English spoken in countries such as India or Singapore, and EFL to foreign-language varieties spoken in countries such as France or Germany and mainly acquired in a classroom setting.

[2] Our use of the term *construction* is not theoretically loaded.

[3] We use the term *Aktionsart* (Vendler 1957) to refer to the same level of analysis, while Brinton (1988) uses the term *lexical aspect*.

12), aspect is subjective as it is the speaker who makes the decision on which grammatical aspect and Aktionsart they wish to portray. As such, progressive marking is considered to be a linguistic phenomenon prone to usage variation across ENLs and ESLs (e.g. Hundt and Vogel 2011; Rautionaho 2014).

Semantically, we consider the meaning of the progressive construction to be "more than just the sum of the meanings of its parts" (Lee 2007: 156), and we aim to uncover the meaning that a progressive construction adds, which cannot be derived from the meanings of the lexical items in the schematic slots within the construction. Thus, the auxiliary *be* or the present participle of the main verb alone do not express progressivity, but the construction as a whole does (ibid. p. 181). The properties of the lexical verb inserted into a construction, on the other hand, play a role in that, for instance, some verb types are expected to occur in a non-progressive construction rather than a progressive one. These restrictions arise from the underlying semantic properties of verbs and situations: the progressive construction is known to reject certain stative verbs, for instance, or punctual situations (e.g. Comrie 1976). In some such cases, the conflicting semantics of, for instance, a lexical verb and the progressive construction lead to coercion, a re-interpretation of the situation: a punctual verb such as *jump* is reinterpreted as repetitive when inserted into a progressive construction (e.g. *she was jumping*; see de Swart 1998). Our purpose, therefore, is to investigate what part dynamics, duration and telicity (i.e. Aktionsart), on the one hand, and the semantic domains of main verbs, on the other, play on writers' constructional choice between the progressive and the non-progressive construction.

We use a statistical technique recently shown to help explore progressive marking in non-native Englishes: Collostructional Analysis (Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003). This method helps assess degrees of association between (non)-progressive constructions on the one hand and lexical verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories on the other hand. While most existing ESL corpus-based studies on progressive marking have studied progressive constructions in isolation, our approach considers the non-progressive construction as our baseline, contrasting systematically the use of the progressive against the use of the non-progressive.

In what follows, Sections 2 and 3 survey previous research on the semantics of the progressive and the methods used, laying the rationale for the approach chosen in the present study. The data and statistical approach are introduced in Section 4, while the results of the analyses are presented in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 discusses the findings of the study.

2.   Taking stock of the meaning of the progressive construction

The core meaning of the progressive is to portray a situation as being in progress at the time of utterance, incomplete and/or temporary (e.g. Comrie 1976; Quirk et al. 1985; Kranich 2010). For instance, the non-progressive in (1a) indicates Joan's ability to sing in general, whereas the progressive in (1b) refers to a particular occasion of her singing, ongoing at the time of utterance:

(1)   a. Joan **sings** well.
        b. Joan **is singing** well.

Despite this consensus regarding the core meaning, non-aspectual and "extended" uses of the progressive still remain a source of debate. This applies particularly to the extension of the progressive to contexts where Standard English (StE) does not normally allow its use. Such "extended" uses of the progressive are cases where the progressive combines with non-delimited[4] stative and habitual situations (see e.g. Van Rooy 2006, 2014; Sharma 2009). While this extension has been considered as one potential explanation for the overall increasing use of the progressive (reported, among others, by Kranich 2010), the low frequency of the extended uses (see Rautionaho 2014) does not readily support their effect on the overall frequency. Nevertheless, extended uses of the progressive are considered a salient characteristic of ESLs, in particular (e.g. Hundt and Vogel 2011). Indian English (IndE), for instance, is often reported to extend the progressive to non-delimited stative situations, as IndE speakers reinterpret the progressive marker as a general imperfective marker due to substrate transfer from Hindi (Sharma 2009). Van Rooy (2014; see also Van Rooy and Piotrowska 2015) argues that rather than extending the use of the progressive to stative situations, ESLs have a distinct prototype which allows for wider use of the progressive with stative verbs; this prototype is "a straight-forward consequence of the semantics of extended, rather than limited, duration being profiled by the progressive form" (Van Rooy 2014: 170).

[4] Following Sharma (2009), non-delimited statives and habituals are not tied to a specific time-span, i.e. there are no explicit nor implied temporal delimiters (e.g. *these days*) present in the context. Non-delimited statives and habituals are thus considered non-standard with the progressive in StE.

The non-aspectual uses of the progressive, i.e. instances where the difference between the non-progressive and the progressive construction cannot be explained with the help of notions such as duration or dynamics, include the futurate use of the progressive (see Nesselhauf 2007) and subjective uses of the progressive, discussed in e.g. Kranich (2010) and Laitinen and Levin (2016). Subjective progressives may portray the speaker's (usually negative) attitude towards the unfolding situation, they may render an utterance more tentative or polite, or they may be used to catch the addressee's attention by rendering a situation more vivid (Kranich 2010). Further, subjective progressives may "interpret – or give meaning to – a situation with which the addressee is assumed to be familiar" (Leech et al. 2009: 134), as in (2) below (quoted from Kranich 2010: 70):

(2)   John shook his head at me. He **was warning** me.

Investigating the progressive in British English (BrE) ranging from the 17th century to the present day, Kranich (2010) states that the spread of the interpretive progressive may explain the increasing frequency of the progressive, along with the increase of the aspectual uses.

Importantly, what is similar in all of the above-mentioned studies is that they focus on the progressive alone, basing their semantic framework on previous literature on the progressive and on actual instances of the progressive retrieved from corpora. The present study builds on this existing work in two ways: first, by extending the analysis to the progressive versus non-progressive alternation (thereby recognizing that investigating into the progressive versus non-progressive paradigm provides valuable information (Rautionaho 2014)) and second, by assessing to what degree progressive and non-progressive constructions attract different semantic uses/domains across (non-native) Englishes. Our study therefore aims to contribute a finer degree of granularity to the semantic analysis of aspectual marking in ENL, ESL and EFL. However, to dig deeper into the semantics of progressive marking, we adopt a methodology that allows us to capture the complex principles at play in the use of progressive marking across Englishes.

3.   Methodological approaches to (the semantics of) the progressive

Existing work on progressive marking has unveiled some of the complexity involved in the use of grammatical aspect by English learners. For instance, studies such as Edwards (2016) and Rautionaho (2014) show how (i) a large range of morpho-syntactic and lexical features (e.g. tense, modal verbs, voice, semantic domains of progressive main verbs, etc.) influence the uses of the progressive differently across ESLs and (ii) combining those features with a progressive marking in a native-like fashion is not straightforward for learners. Specifically, Rautionaho (2014: 104, 107) finds that ESL speakers combine the progressive with present tense more often than ENL speakers (80 percent and 60 percent of all instances, respectively), and that the combination of the progressive with modal auxiliaries is by far most frequent in IndE.

Methodologically, those studies have remained relatively simple, investigating progressive marking largely based on frequency counts of progressive constructions, comparing the distribution of progressives with individual linguistic features across EFLs/ESLs. Although useful, this type of approach is limited in that "most linguistic phenomena are not distributed in a simple binary opposition of 'frequent' versus 'rare'. Rather, there is a continuous range of variation" (Biber 2012: 11). So, with the purpose of digging deeper into the complexities involved in L2 uses, studies such as Van Rooy (2006) and Deshors (2017) have adopted more sophisticated statistical techniques including correspondence and collostructional analysis.[5] Van Rooy (2006) adopts an exploratory multivariate approach and conducts a correspondence analysis to map similarities and differences between corpora in terms of two or more interacting factors such as corpus, verb types and uses.[6] This enables him to capture a new "persistitive" use of the progressive in Black South African English (BSAfE) by contrasting BSAfE with German and French learner Englishes based on a variety of verb types and semantic attributes. Building on Van Rooy (2006), Deshors (2017) develops a two-step methodology that combines a collostructional analysis (step 1) to identify specific semantic domains distinctively associated with the progressive construction across

[5] We acknowledge Stefanowitsch and Gries' (2003) collostructional analysis of progressive marking. Because the case study is exclusively based on native English, we do not include it for discussion in the present paper.

[6] Correspondence analysis (Greenacre 2007) is a bottom-up exploratory technique that helps identify frequency-based associations and capture systematic relations between variables.

ENL/ESL/EFL and a correspondence analysis (step 2) to explore how semantic properties of the progressive correlate with different written genres across varieties.

Broadly, collostructional analysis refers to a family of quantitative corpus-linguistic methods that measure the association strength between words and constructions, "determining what in psychological research has become known as one of the strongest determinants of prototype formation" (Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003: 237). It "provides the analyst with those expressions which are highly characteristic of the construction's semantics and which, therefore, are also relevant to the learner" (Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003: 237). The assumption is that "speakers subconsciously perform a statistical analysis of the input and that the statistical associations found in the data are reflected in psychological associations in the mind of the language user" (Stefanowitsch 2006: 258).

Under the umbrella of collostructional analysis, different techniques are available such as distinctive collexeme analysis (DCA). DCA computes association strengths within constructions, and allows the researcher to contrast two (or more) constructions in terms of the verbs occurring in them (i.e. slot 1). If a verb exhibits a significant preference for either construction, it is called a collexeme of that construction. Based on studies that have investigated a variety of alternation cases (e.g. dative alternation, active versus passive voice), DCA is accepted as a reliable and a flexible method to study alternation phenomena.

We adopt a mixed quantitative-qualitative methodology using collostructional analysis as our starting point. We use a DCA approach to integrate the progressive versus non-progressive alternation and to assess the degrees of association between lexical verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories on the one hand, and progressive and non-progressive constructions on the other.[7] Using our quantitative findings, we then offer qualitative insights into the progressive/non-progressive alternation by digging into the meanings of the two constructions. Specifically, we address the following research questions:

i. which lexical verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories significantly attract the progressive and the non-progressive, respectively?

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[7] See Deshors (2017) for an analysis of progressive marking using a different type of collostructional approach (co-varying collexeme analysis).

ii.   what are the degrees of association between those verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories and (non-)progressive constructions?

iii.   to what extent do those associations vary systematically across ENL, EFL and ESL?

iv.   what is the meaning of the progressive construction as opposed to the non-progressive construction?

4.   Data: Annotation and statistical approach

4.1   Corpora and data extraction

We investigated three ENLs, BrE, American English (AmE) and Irish English (IrE), three ESLs, IndE, Singapore English (SgE) and Nigerian English (NigE), and one EFL variety, Dutch English (NLE). ENL and ESL data come from the *International Corpus of English* (ICE, Greenbaum 1991) and the Dutch English data from the *Corpus of Dutch English* (NL-CE, Edwards 2016). Because NL-CE currently only includes written data, we exclusively focus on the written register in order to ensure comparability across all our subcorpora.[8] Data extraction was limited to a minimum of approximately 500 randomly chosen progressives and non-progressives, each, per subcorpus, due to the amount of manual annotation required. Table 1 presents an overview of the distribution of raw progressive and non-progressive constructions within individual investigated English.

Table 1. Overview of the distribution of (non-)progressive constructions within individual Englishes

[Insert Table 1 here]

At this point, we would like to reassure the skeptic reader who may wonder to what extent the distributional difference between the number of progressive and non-progressive constructions in Dutch English and the other varieties may affect our collostructional analysis, that the distributional difference across our construction samples are very unlikely to affect the rankings of our collexemes

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[8] NL-CE follows the design of the ICE corpora.

(Gries, p.c.). While the difference may have affected the total number of lemmata per construction and per variety, that is not an aspect that we are concerned with nor discuss in the present study. Regarding data extraction, the progressives were extracted from the NL-CE and the unannotated versions of ICE using a regular expression[9] in AntConc. The non-progressives were extracted (i) manually from NL-CE and (ii) automatically from the syntactically annotated (PoS-tagged and parsed) versions of ICE (see Schneider and Hundt 2012).[10] Because the NL-CE is not parsed, the extraction of non-progressive tokens in that corpus was done by manually opening each file and randomly selecting non-progressive tokens from the running text. With regard to extracting non-progressives from the syntactically annotated ICE corpora, the regular expression used[11] returns all verb forms requested, which will then have to be manually post-edited to weed out any unwanted tokens. We then manually excluded all instances resembling progressives only superficially (i.e. by including a form of BE and a present participle). Amongst those instances were nouns and adjectives, gerunds, appositively used participles, non-finite clauses and the future marker *be going to*. With regard to the non-progressive tokens, we followed the same criteria, where eligible, and additionally, excluded a number of constructions that are rare or inexistent in the progressive (e.g. BE *to V*, existential *there*-construction and imperatives).

4.2 Factors and semantic annotation

Each token extracted from the data was coded for seven factors summarized in Table 2. The factors AKTIONSART and SEMANTIC.DOMAIN are discussed in more detail further below. To ensure objective coding, the annotation of all of the factors was cross-checked by each author.

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[9] The progressives were collected for studies reported in Edwards (2016) and Deshors (2017) using the following regular expression: '(be| am|[Ii]'m|[A-Za-z]+'re| [Aa]re[n't]*| [Ii]s[n't]*|[A-Zaz]*'s|[Ww]as[n't]*|[Ww]ere[n't]*|been)\b\W*(\b[a-z]*\W*){0,3}?[a-z]*ing\b' (see Edwards 2016: 131fn).

[10] We acknowledge a Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) grant (IZK0Z1_149005) that enabled Paula Rautionaho to work on the syntactically annotated ICE corpora.

[11]   The   regular   expression   used   to   retrieve   non-progressives   was '_VBN|_VBD|_VBP|_VBZ|_VB '. The new versions of ICE have been annotated using the Penn Treebank tagset and the probabilistic dependency parser (Pro3Gres; see Schneider (2008)). We are grateful to Marianne Hundt and Hans-Martin Lehmann for access to the new versions of the ICE corpora.

Table 2.   Summary of the coding scheme

[Insert Table 2 here]

Each lexical verb in the (non-)progressive was annotated for 'semantic domain' according to Biber et al.'s (1999) seven-class taxonomy (also adopted in Collins [2008] and Edwards [2016], among others). The taxonomy includes Activity verbs (e.g. come, run), Aspectual verbs (e.g. START, CONTINUE), Causative verbs (e.g. CAUSE, HELP), Communication verbs (e.g. ASK, SAY), Existence verbs (e.g. BE, LIVE), Mental verbs (e.g. ACCEPT, THINK) and Occurrence verbs (e.g. BECOME, DIE). However, this classification is not without any limitation because its framework does not include a dedicated category for stative verbs, making it difficult to make claims about stativity on the lexical level given that most Existence and Mental verbs are stative and that they are not a coherent category (e.g. *hear* is a stative mental verb, while *listen* is a dynamic mental verb). Further, some domains may trigger the non-progressive rather than the progressive because of the semantic properties normally related to the progressive (e.g. this may be the case with Existence verbs due to their inherently stative nature).

With regard to Aktionsart, we used Vendler's (1957) original model of Aktionsart categories, or situation types, already adopted and modified by a number of scholars (see Quirk et al. 1985 and Brinton 1988). Aktionsart categories are made up of different combinations of three properties: dynamism (situations consist of either identical or different phases), durativity (situations either last for a period of time or have no duration) and telicity (situations may have a natural end-point after which the process cannot continue).[12] However, in the present study, we use the following categorization: States (more or less permanent situations which do not involve dynamism), Processes (dynamic, atelic), Accomplishments (dynamic, telic), and Achievements (dynamic, telic and punctual). Importantly, the Aktionsart category of a token is determined based on the lexical verb and its arguments, as well as by the presence of prepositional phrases or temporal adverbials, as these elements may affect the categorization; a Process becomes an Accomplishment when a countable object (*eat an apple*) or

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[12] Some models include more than these three parameters: Vendler's (1957) classification includes the parameter [±Voluntary], while Brinton (1988) added [±Homogeneity] and [±Multiplicity]. For our purposes, the three parameters draw an accurate enough picture.

a PrepP (*walk to school*)] is added. To avoid the Imperfective Paradox[13], we analyzed the Aktionsart category of a sentence based on the underlying 'unaspectual' form (e.g. [John draw a circle]). The semantic effect of grammatical aspect on the underlying base form is discussed in Section 5.2 below.

The difference between the two semantic classifications lies in their focus: Biber et al.'s (1999) semantic domains address the semantics of the lemma, while Vendler's (1957) Aktionsart categories account for the situation as a whole, including the lemma, its arguments and potential prepositional phrases or temporal adverbials. Adopting these two separate analyses thus provides a complementary view of the semantics of the progressive and the non-progressive at the level of lexical verbs and, additionally, at the level of the situation taking place. Importantly, Rautionaho and Deshors (2018) show that semantic domains are contextual features that influence writers' constructional choices regardless of their English variety and their written genre, whereas Aktionsart influences speakers' constructional choice only in certain contexts (e.g. in creative writing and academic texts, but not in correspondence).

4.3 Statistical approach: Distinctive Collexeme Analysis

To explore to what extent semantic domains and Aktionsart categories contribute to ENL/EFL/ESL constructional choices, we adopt a collostructional analysis approach. Specifically, we opt for the distinctive collexeme analysis (DCA). Technically, the computation of distinctive collexemes involves the following four different steps:

1. identifying and recording the frequency of all collexemes in each investigated construction;
2. identifying the frequency of each construction;
3. submitting those frequencies to a Fisher exact statistical test;
4. sorting the collexemes according to their distinctiveness value.

The statistical analysis is based on the frequencies presented in Table 3, which are subjected to Fisher-Yates tests.

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[13] The Imperfective Paradox (Dowty 1979) refers to the fact that the progressive aspect may affect the Aktionsart categorization value of a situation. In *John was drawing a circle*, the progressive does not entail that the natural end-point was ever reached, i.e. we do not know whether John actually finished drawing the circle.

Table 3. Table of the necessary frequencies for the computation of collexeme distinctiveness[14]

[Insert Table 3 here]

DCA involves the computation of a frequency table such as Table 3 for each individual collexeme. In turn, the results in this table contribute to the computation of additional input tables, one for each English variety and consisting of the raw frequencies of progressives and non-progressives with their respective lemmata, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories of occurrence. We used Gries' (2014) Coll.analysis 3.5 R program for the computation of the Fisher exact test. We hope that a DCA will help us unveil so far unexplored usage patterns of progressive and non-progressive constructions within and across ENL, ESL and EFL varieties. For that purpose, our approach consists of the following steps:

1. Collexeme analysis 1: association of individual lexical verbs with progressive or non-progressive constructions within individual English varieties,
2. Collexeme analysis 2: association of a semantic domain with progressive or non-progressive constructions within individual English varieties; and
3. Collexeme analysis 3: association of an Aktionsart category with progressive or non-progressive constructions within individual English varieties.

5. Results

Overall, our DCA results are promising. While bringing empirical support to usage patterns already identified in previous studies, they also allow us to contribute a finer level of granularity to the description of the progressive and offer more nuanced insights into the (dis)similarities within and across ENL, EFL and ESL varieties. In what follows, we first present the results for the three

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[14] The distinctiveness of collexemes is calculated based on their observed and expected frequencies of occurrence in a given construction.

separate collexeme analyses, and we then use the quantitative results as a basis for a qualitative analysis of the semantics of the progressive.

5.1 Collexeme analyses

5.1.1 *Collexeme analysis: collexemes for lemma per variety*[15]

Figures 1–7 in the Appendix present, for each English variety, a ranking of all the verbs whose use is significantly associated with the progressive or the non-progressive construction. Collostructional strengths were normalized and converted into percentages, which is why the figures include *y* axis that scale up to 100.[16] Looking at the specific verbs from the figures in the Appendix, the results are not totally surprising in that, across varieties, verbs expected to be used with one or the other construction do tend to be used with those constructions. Verbs associated with the non-progressive include stative verbs BE, KNOW and HAVE, but also dynamic verbs, such as SAY which is systematically found to associate with the non-progressive in four of the seven varieties (AmE, SgE, NigE and NLE). Interestingly, the use of SAY seems to be influenced by genre effects as the proportional frequency of SAY in the non-progressive is higher in popular, creative and newspaper writing than in the other genres. To verify this finding, it would be necessary to run, for instance, a mixed-effect logistic regression that would help assess whether individual lexical verbs do affect construction choices and if so, whether they do so differently across genres. However, such an analysis is beyond the scope of the present study. On the other hand, verbs associated with the progressive include a wider variety of individual lemmata, most of them dynamic verbs, such as WORK, DO and COME, but also verbs like LIVE, which despite its stative nature is significantly and systematically associated with the progressive construction in BrE, IndE and AmE. Possible differences in the meaning of stative verbs when they occur in the non-progressive or the progressive construction are discussed in Section 5.2.

Furthermore, the DCA results reveal how different populations of ENL and EFL/ESL writers associate specific lexical verbs with the (non-)progressive in

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[15] For each construction Pearson's *rho* coefficients were computed to ensure comparability of collexemes across sub-corpora. Pair-wise comparisons of all the sub-corpora yielded coefficients equal or higher than 0.90.

[16] Because of space constraints, we do not provide the full result table of significant collexemes. However, the table is available upon request.

different degrees. While KNOW and HAVE, for instance, are associated with the non-progressive in all three ENL varieties, they are not associated with either construction in the three ESLs. This result, which would go undetected in the more traditional approaches to the progressive, lends valuable support to the possible overextension of the progressive to stative verbs, often reported for ESLs such as IndE (see Hundt and Vogel 2011; Meriläinen, Paulasto, and Rautionaho 2017). However, a closer look at the actual tokens reveals that progressive instances of KNOW are only found in IndE, while the overall frequency of the verb in SgE and NigE is too low for the association to be statistically significant. On the other hand, HAVE occurs in both non-progressive and progressive constructions in all seven varieties, but it is the ESLs where the observed and expected frequencies are closer to one another, yielding statistically non-significant collostructional strengths. The fact that KNOW and HAVE are not statistically significantly associated with either construction in ESL suggests that there is more variation in their use in ESLs compared to ENL, which ultimately strongly supports earlier argumentations on the over-extension of the progressive in ESLs, particularly in IndE. With regard to EFL writers' constructional choices, KNOW and HAVE are associated with the non-progressive in NLE, indicating that EFL conforms to the ENL standard of the progressive construction being incompatible with stative verbs.

Considering that the individual lemmata associating with the progressive construction, in particular, vary to a great extent, it becomes evident that the lexical meaning of the main verb alone is not crucial to the constructional choice writers make, but rather the semantic properties that the lexical verb carries. Thus, to further explore progressive versus non-progressive constructional choices, let us take a look at the verb-construction associations from the standpoint of the semantic domains of the main verbs (Section 5.1.2) and Aktionsart categories (Section 5.1.3).

5.1.2   *Collexeme analysis: Collexemes for semantic domains per variety*
Regarding semantic domains and their associations with progressive versus non-progressive constructions, the results show that Existence verbs are associated with the non-progressive construction across all varieties (see Table 4). While this result is not surprising (given the semantic constraints of the progressive), our results emphasize the fact that Existence verbs emerge as the type of verbs that, by far, unanimously associate the most strongly with a particular construction. Despite this strong association, there is fluctuation, as our quantitative-qualitative approach reveals; most Existence verbs rarely occur in

the progressive in our data (e.g. BE), while other Existence verbs, such as LIVE (see Section 5.1.1) or STAY, are in fact drawn to the progressive. This fluctuation lends strong support to the widely acknowledged fact that stative and dynamic situations form a cline rather than a strict dichotomy (see e.g. Paulasto 2014). When Existence verbs[17] are interpreted as portraying the situation as temporary, the progressive construction is possible, as in (3); however, when they are used to portray a permanent, non-delimited, situation, they are incompatible with the progressive in StE (see also Edwards 2016). Extended uses of the progressive (see Sharma 2009; Van Rooy and Piotrowska 2015) are found in the present data in all three types of English (as shown in Examples 4 to 6), which conforms to the findings reported by Rautionaho (2014) and Edwards (2016), among others. Following Van Rooy's (2014) categorization of stative progressives, Examples 4 to 6 fall within the category of unlimited states, as there is no indication that the state will ever end. In (4), the reference is generic in nature (man's knowledge), and in (5) and (6), the function is to characterize a referent, i.e. to give a typical association.

(3)   Jessica **is staying** for 3 weeks... (ICE-IRE, W1B-003)

(4)   Since man **is knowing** about his surroundings or Environment... (ICE-IND, W1A-012)

(5)   Income is all the money that **is coming** in from earnings, Social Security benefits, maintenance payments and other sources. (ICE-GB, W2D-005)

(6)   For the first time since 1945 we are dealing with a political current of significant size (that besides – regardless of the formal coalition construction – **is being** part of the governing power)... (NL-CE, W2C-012)

Regarding the other types of verbs listed in Table 4, we observe a great deal of variation with regard to association to a particular construction and to the extent of the association across varieties. Generally, we find that Occurrence verbs (e.g BECOME, DIE) associate significantly with the progressive construction in all varieties but AmE and SgE. In most varieties, thus, the progressive is used to prolong the event depicted by an Occurrence verb and the focus is on the process of dying, for instance, rather than on the exact moment of passing.[18] In

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[17] Some Mental verbs also fall into the category of stative verbs (e.g. BELIEVE, KNOW, LIKE).

[18] This may be related to the concept of coercion: a punctual verb is coerced into a durative reinterpretation.

the case of Mental verbs (e.g. ACCEPT, THINK), while those verbs attract progressive constructions, this is only observed in IndE, SgE and AmE; in other Englishes, Mental verbs attract neither of the two constructions. This finding may be related to the fact that some Mental verbs are stative in nature and thus do not readily occur in the progressive. In the case of Causative verbs (e.g. CAUSE, HELP), while such verbs associate significantly with non-progressives, these associations only occur in NLE and SgE. With Causative verbs, then, there seems to be no need to indicate a prolonged process. Aspectual verbs (e.g. START, CONTINUE), on the other hand, attract the progressive construction in BrE and AmE. Finally, Communication verbs (e.g. ASK, SAY) are found to make the scales tip towards one construction or the other only in SgE (towards the progressive); in all other varieties in focus, writers' use of Communication verbs does not influence constructional choice. Within Communication verbs, there is a great deal of fluctuation with some Communication verbs favoring the progressive (e.g. TALK), and others favoring the non-progressive (e.g. SAY) (see Collins 2008: 234). Ultimately, the associations between semantic domains and the two constructions in different varieties could be affected by the selection of individual lemmata within the datasets and follow-up studies would need to look into this in further details as different topics, for instance, may result in different selections of lemmata, leading to deviant constructional frameworks in individual varieties.

Table 4. Significant collexemes for semantic domains per variety

[Insert Table 4 here]

5.1.3 *Collexeme analysis: Collexemes for Aktionsart per variety*
While previous studies such as Van Rooy (2006), Kranich (2010) and Rautionaho (2014) have shown the usefulness of exploring progressive marking through the lens of Aktionsart categories, the results in Table 5 indicate that, when the progressive versus non-progressive alternation is considered, (i) not all Aktionsart categories play a significant part in writers' constructional choices, and (ii) the categories that play a significant part are not necessarily the same across English varieties. In other words, different Aktionsart categories influence different writer populations differently. Overall, the results show, rather expectedly, that States are associated with the non-progressive construction throughout the varieties. In BrE, only States and Processes associate significantly

with the two constructions in focus: States associate with non-progressives and Processes associate with progressives. In terms of collostructional strength, both associations are very strong (28.8 and 31.9, respectively). Although our results indicate that this association is anchored in almost all English varieties in our data, SgE stands out in being the only variety where this is not the case. This suggests that, contrary to all the other Englishes in focus, in SgE, States do not play a significant role in writers' constructional choices. Rather, the patterns of constructional choice are not clear, and this is evident with SgE as a whole; the constructional choices regarding semantic domains deviate from other varieties in many respects (e.g. Causative verbs associate with the non-progressive only in SgE and NLE, Communication verbs arise as significant only in SgE), as they do with Aktionsart (States do not emerge as significant, Achievements are attracted to the non-progressive). On the whole, thus, the constructional patterns emerging in SgE are different from most other varieties. However, whether this is due to differences in the data or editorial practices[19], or whether SgE truly functions differently from other varieties with regard to the semantics of the progressive, reaches beyond the scope of the present study.

Where our results are most revealing, however, is in the less central categories where we find the greatest variation. Here, we specifically refer to the Achievement and Accomplishment categories. Based on our results, neither of those categories unanimously influence writers' constructional choices (unlike Processes), and both categories yield equally interesting, albeit different, usage patterns. Specifically, Achievements associate with non-progressive constructions, but only in NLE and SgE. Interestingly, because this association is rather expected (see Kranich 2010: 189) due to the punctual nature of Achievements, which is inherently incompatible with the progressive construction, the question why this association is limited to two subcorpora arises and should be further explored in follow-up studies. In the case of Accomplishment verbs, however, while those verbs yield significant associations in IndE, IrE and AmE, the patterns of associations differ between, on the one hand, IndE and AmE where Accomplishments attract non-progressive constructions and, on the other hand, IrE where Accomplishments attract progressive constructions. Overall, based on our results, adopting DCA is beneficial to explore the progressive versus non-progressive alternation and

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[19] Editorial practices may affect our results as some uses of the progressive may have been edited out by editors, or the authors themselves, as shibboleth features: awareness of the potential unacceptability of the stative progressive, for instance, may lead to such features being omitted (see Kruger and van Rooy 2017).

capture the Aktionsart categories that make the scales tip when writers come to choose between progressive and non-progressive constructions and what Aktionsart categories make the scales tip differently across Englishes.

Table 5. Significant collexemes Aktionsart per variety

[Insert Table 5 here]

5.1.4 *A qualitative look at the semantics of progressive marking*

While the DCA provides us with a wealth of fine-grained information on the alternation between the progressive and the non-progressive, a qualitative approach is necessary to reach the final step of our analysis – the semantics of progressive marking. So far, our analysis of Aktionsart and semantic domains has been based on the underlying non-aspectual form of a token, i.e. *I am fussy*, but it is now time to focus on the difference between the two possible outcomes when grammatical aspect is brought to the picture. Thus, the qualitative analysis reported in this section discusses the possibly different meaning that the underlying form takes when it is inserted into a non-progressive construction (as in 7a) or a progressive construction (as in 7b).

(7)   a. I **am** fussy.
         b. I **am being** fussy.

For the qualitative analysis, we analyzed all of the instances of the lemmata occurring in Appendix A, i.e. lemmata that showed a statistically significant association with either the non-progressive or the progressive construction. The aim of the analysis was to identify the meaning of each token, with special attention paid to the possible difference brought about by the choice between the two constructions. Thus, according to e.g. Quirk et al. (1985), the meaning of the non-progressive construction in (7a) above is to portray the "fussiness" as a permanent trait, whereas the meaning of the progressive in (7b) is to portray the "fussiness" as temporary, rather than permanent.

   A number of categorical differences arise from the qualitative analysis of progressive and non-progressive constructions in our data, which verify the core meaning of the progressive as portraying the situation or event in question as incomplete, prolonged in duration and/or temporary. The non-progressive, on the other hand, usually portrays the situation as completed or as habitual. In the

following, we comment on the differences arising from the analysis, and provide examples of both constructions to illustrate the findings.

i) Incompleteness

One of the most crucial effects of the progressive construction is the incompleteness of the process portrayed. In other words, a progressive construction renders the situation atelic, whereas a non-progressive construction renders the situation telic. This, in part, explains the fact that Accomplishments and Achievements are significantly associated with the non-progressive rather than the progressive, if any construction (see Table 5 above). Sentences (8a) and (8b) exemplify the difference regarding telicity: the situation in (8a) is already realized, i.e. is telic, whereas the process towards realization is still underway in (8b), i.e. it is atelic.

(8)   a. As a direct result of this initiative, interest in computer based learning (CBL) **became** widespread across the disciplines of the University. (ICE-IRE, W2D-001)

b. Today, this **is becoming** unaffordable for many Nigerians, especially the party-buffs who spend lots of money weekly to get a good designer Kampala dress. (ICE-NIG, W2B-011)

ii) Temporariness

The fact that situations portrayed by the progressive are considered temporary rather than permanent relates, in particular, to stative and habitual situations (see e.g. Quirk et al. 1985). The difference between sentences (7a) and (7b) above, for instance, culminates in the temporariness brought on by the progressive in (7b). Similarly, the difference between (9a) and (9b) below is the temporary nature of residence.

(9)   a.   He **lives** in Navan. (ICE-IRE, W1B-020)

b.   For those of you who don't know, the nine interns, plus the two single full-time staff ..., **are** all **living** together in one house and... (ICE-US, W2F-002)

In some cases, the temporary reading of the progressive is not explicitly supported, as in (10). This may explain the strong association LIVE has with the progressive construction, as it may well be that writers' constructional choice in this case is not governed by verb semantics, but by a strong subconscious association based on psychological associations in the writers' minds (Stefanowitsch 2006: 258).

(10)   It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who **are living** in the rural areas. (ICE-IND, W1A-010)

It must be noted that some verbs, such as WORK in (11a) and (11b) below, seem to be more or less interchangeable without a noticeable change in the meaning of the two constructions.

(11)   a.   I **work** daytime and study maths night time. (ICE-SIN, W1B-011)

       b.   Belinda Braithwaite **is working** in Magee s Chemist. (ICE-IRE, W1B-010)

iii) Prolonged duration

The progressive construction is said to stretch the time-span of an event (Leech 1987), so that a situation in the non-progressive is considered to take less time, although it is not necessarily punctual, as in (12a), while the progressive implies that the situation holds for a longer period of time, as in (12b).

(12)   a.   Well, something extraordinary **did happen** and we have been living with the consequences since. (ICE-IRE, W2E-006)

       b.   I was thoroughly distracted by what **was happening**. (ICE-SIN, W2F-006)

Furthermore, the progressive regularly makes reference to events or situations ongoing at the time of utterance or at reference time, as in the sentences above. Based on the examples provided above, we can conclude that instead of there being a single core meaning, the progressive construction brings about a number of semantic properties that portray the situation in question: more often than not, we find incompleteness, temporariness, prolonged duration and/or ongoingness at play, all at once. Prolongation of the duration is closely connected to the incompleteness meaning, in that focus is put on the fact that the realization of the goal takes time.

In addition to the aspectual meanings discussed above, there are instances that do not portray the core meaning. For instance, the futurate use of the progressive (see e.g. Nesselhauf 2007) is regarded as non-aspectual since it does not necessarily portray the future event as, for instance, having prolonged duration or as being temporary. The difference, as opposed to the non-progressive, is that the futurate progressive is typically used when a personal arrangement is involved, as in (13):

(13)   Tonight **I'm going** to the cinema for the first time in Brussels. (ICE-GB, W1B-002)

Different kinds of subjective uses of the progressive were also found in our data: attitudinal uses as in (14) and interpretive uses as in (15).

(14)   Well, I'm glad everyone else **is having** exciting lives for me to write about! (ICE-US, W1B-005)

(15)   Now, I **am not saying** it will be easy. (NL-CE, W2B-032)

Finally, the progressive seems to have become the regular choice in certain contexts, where the non-progressive would have an entirely different meaning. Thus the writers' constructional choice is not governed by how they want to portray the situation, but rather by the idiomaticity of the expressions, as in (16) and (17):

(16)   She **wasn't having** any of that. (ICE-US, W2F-006)

(17)   "How **are** you **doing**?" she asks. (ICE-US, W2F-001)

The qualitative analysis has revealed possible core meanings brought about by the progressive, together with examples of non-aspectual uses found in the data. Although those meanings need to be further explored based on a larger number of tokens, this analysis has brought invaluable additional insight to our quantitative analysis.

6.   Discussion

This study set out to investigate the alternation between progressive and non-progressive constructions across ENLs, ESLs and EFLs, focusing on how lexical verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart affect grammatical aspect across Englishes. We adopted a collostructional approach that helped us dig into the meanings of (non-)progressive constructions and identify semantic features that strongly characterize the two constructions under investigation, while weeding out less central occurrences of both constructions. Specifically, we have addressed four research questions: (i) which lexical verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories significantly attract the progressive and the non-progressive, respectively, (ii) what are the exact degrees of association between those verbs, semantic domains and Aktionsart categories and (non-)progressive constructions, (iii) to what extent do those associations vary systematically across ENL, EFL and ESL, and (iv) what is the meaning of the progressive construction as opposed to the non-progressive construction.

With regard to (i) and (ii), writers' constructional choices are governed by the following semantic patterns: Activity verbs or Process situations are likely to trigger the choice of a progressive construction, while Existence verbs or State situations are likely to trigger a non-progressive construction. Further, specific lexical verbs are statistically strongly associated with one or the other construction; e.g. BE, KNOW, HAVE and SAY are associated with the non-progressive, and WORK, DO, COME and LIVE with the progressive. The exact degrees of association are very strong for Existence verbs and the non-progressive, for States and the non-progressive, and for Processes and the progressive (see Tables 4 and 5), indicating that these associations are the most important ones when writers make their constructional choices. Our results show also that the associations between the two constructions and Achievements and Accomplishments, and on the other hand, semantic domains other than Activity or Existence, do not unanimously influence writers' constructional choices. Accomplishments, in particular, show deviating patterns in that while five varieties show no preference at all for Accomplishments, they are attracted to the non-progressive in two varieties (IndE and AmE) and to the progressive in one variety (IrE). This suggests that there may be subtle differences in the semantic frameworks within which writers of different Englishes function. Overall, our results support Römer's call for "an apparent need to question the existence of a purely grammatical progressive in favor of a lexical-grammatical one" (2005: 169; see also Wulff et al. 2009). Similarly to Römer (2005), our findings show that it is difficult to treat the progressive as a grammatical construction independent of lexis: the semantic domains that lexical verbs denote show clear preferences for either the progressive or the non-progressive.

Our third research question concerns the extent of systematic variation across ENL, ESL and EFL – on the whole, the associations of the (non-)progressive with the semantic features studied are rather uniform across the three types of English. Specifically, in most varieties, the progressive construction is associated with Process situations and Activity verbs, and the non-progressive with States and Existence verbs. Besides Activity verbs, Occurrence verbs associate with the progressive in two ENL, the one EFL and two ESLs, while Aspectual verbs were found to associate with the progressive only in two ENLs. In SgE, however, in contrast to the other Englishes, States do not emerge as a distinguishing factor between the two constructions, while Achievements are attracted to the non-progressive (unlike in other varieties expect for NLE). Overall, the patterns of constructional choice in SgE deviate from most other varieties – further research is necessary to discern what causes

these differences. As regards the association between individual lexical verbs and the (non-)progressive, we found evidence supporting the possible overextension of the progressive to non-delimited stative verbs in ESLs. The lemmata HAVE and KNOW do not associate with the non-progressive in IndE and SgE, while they do so in ENL and EFL. While a qualitative analysis showed that it is only in IndE that we found non-delimited progressive instances of KNOW, this finding nonetheless shows that there is more variation in the use of HAVE and KNOW in ESLs compared to ENL, which ultimately strongly supports earlier argumentations on the over-extension of the progressive in ESLs, particularly in IndE.

Finally, with regard to (iv), the qualitative analysis of the lemmata showing statistically significant association with either the progressive or the non-progressive construction led us to conclude that, as opposed to the non-progressive, the progressive construction portrays the situation as incomplete, temporary, having prolonged duration and/or ongoing. More often than not, we find more than one of these semantic properties at play simultaneously, indicating that there may not be one single core meaning of the progressive, but rather a complex of meanings activated by the use of the progressive construction. The qualitative analysis also revealed a small number of non-aspectual and extended uses of the progressive: a larger dataset representing speech as well as writing would more likely include more interpretive progressives, for instance.

Ultimately, these quantitative and qualitative results paint a complex picture of the semantics of the progressive. However, to draw an even more precise picture of the mechanics of progressive marking in ENL, ESL and EFL, it would be interesting to build on the present study by paying close attention to genre variation and the extent to which the usage patterns of (non-)progressive constructions vary depending on the type of writing they occur in. We admit that given the comparability of all our subcorpora in terms of corpus design and the range of genres they feature, it is a limitation of our study to not account for genre variation.[20] While, generally, our results bear important pedagogical implications for ESL and EFL users, they also urge us to conduct experimental follow-up research to assess (i) to what extent individual learners' knowledge of the various meanings of the progressive construction match the meanings we identified in our corpus data, (ii) to what extent ESL/EFL speakers' L1 interferes

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[20] However, see Rautionaho and Deshors (2018) for a logistic regression analysis of the (non-)progressive alternation based on a linguistic predictors and written genres.

with their knowledge of the meanings of the English progressive construction (i.e. whether their L1 influences them to use one particular meaning over another) and, as a result of (ii), (iii) to what extent individual ESL/EFL speakers vary in their mental representation of what constitutes the "prototypical" meaning(s) of the English progressive construction. Methodologically, these questions could translate into adopting a logistic regression modeling approach in which the meanings of the progressive could be used as a dependent variable and ESL/EFL Englishes as an independent variable along with other possible extra linguistic explanatory factors such as L2 proficiency and linguistic contexts of occurrence possibly including a variety of morpho-syntactic factors. Importantly, with this type of methodology, we will be able to identify the linguistic contexts in which individual meanings of the progressive construction are most highly predicted within and across individual ESL/EFL Englishes, and to what extent those particular semantic uses correlate with particular stages of English acquisition. Ultimately, this type of approach underscores the need to build bridges between sophisticated quantitative techniques and fine-grained qualitative analytical approaches to better understand the governing principles behind constructional semantics and the relevance of those principles for cross-variety variation.

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