The Expression of Epistemic Contingency in the Use of the Present and the Past Progressive: A Comparative Study of Present-Day Spoken American, Australian and British English

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Introduction

The English progressive, *BE* + V-ing, is formally realized by the auxiliary *BE* followed by the present participle of a main verb. For many authors, this construction is associated with the notion of aspect, i.e., it has "to do with how the speaker wants to represent the internal temporal structure of a situation" (Declerck, Reed & Cappelle 2006: 28), and it exhibits different meanings that do not always have clear and straightforward relationships with each other. Generally, scholars distinguish between basic and special uses of the English progressive to account for its various uses (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 162-172, Leech 2004: 18-34, Smitterberg 2005: 207-237, Leech et al. 2009: 119-120).

While examples (1) and (3), taken from Leech (2004: 19) and Leech (2004: 22) respectively, are seen as basic uses of the present and of the past progressive, examples (2) and (4), taken from Leech (2004: 29) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 138) respectively, are generally treated as separate, special uses.

(1) 'Where's Joan?' 'She'***s cooking*** the dinner.'

(2) We'***re wondering*** if you have any suggestions

(3) This time last year I ***was travelling*** round the world.

(4) I was hoping to see the Manager.

It is possible, however to account for the semantics of the (present) progressive in a unified way and this is done by De Wit & Brisard (2009, 2014) and Brisard & De Wit (2013). Using the framework of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991) they show that all uses of the present progressive, including special ones, share a common schematic meaning, namely that of epistemic contingency.

In this paper, drawing on the insights provided by Cognitive Grammar and the work of De Wit & Brisard (2009, 2014) and Brisard & De Wit (2013), I attempt to use their classification of present progressive forms to study the use of the progressive in other varieties of English, notably spoken Australian English and spoken British English. I also attempt to broaden the research scope by analyzing progressive instances past contexts.

The paper is organized as follows. In Chapter 1, I review previous analyses of the English progressive and I introduce the framework of Cognitive Grammar. In Chapter 2, I review studies on the use of the progressive in American English, Australian English and British

English. Then, in Chapter 3, I detail the methodology that was used for the study. In Chapter 4, I compare the present progressive with its simple counter part, the simple present, and, in Chapter 5, I do the same thing for the past progressive and the simple past. Lastly, in Chapter 6, I present my conclusions.

1. Previous analyses of the English progressive and theoretical framework of the present paper

The progressive is often said to convey basic meanings of ongoingness and duration. It represents situations as in progress at a certain point in time (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 163, Leech 2004: 18, Leech et al. 2009: 119) and it is also used to indicate that a situation lasts over a period of time (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 165-166, Leech 2004: 19). The two notions are intricately linked: in order to be considered "in progress", a situation has to have a certain duration. In addition, Leech (2004: 19) states that another aspect of the meaning of the progressive is that it conveys limited duration, as it "*stretches* the time-span of an 'event verb', but *compresses* the time-span of a 'state verb'" (emphasis and quotation marks in the original). These uses are illustrated respectively by examples (5) and (6) taken from Leech (2004: 19).

(5) The house ***is falling down***.

(6) You'***re looking*** tired.

In example (5), instead of referring to the abrupt collapse of the house, which would be the idea if the simple present were used, the progressive signals that the house is gradually losing its components over a period of time. In this case, the progressive imparts a sense of duration to an otherwise punctual event and thereby stretches the time span of the event verb. Conversely, in example (6), the use of the progressive focuses on the person's current appearance. It compresses the time span of the state verb, as *tired* is understood to be a temporary characteristic of the person rather than a permanent one. In both examples, the progressive is used to express that the situations that are being referred to are temporary. In (5), the house will no longer be standing at some point and will consequently not be able to keep falling down and, in (6), the person will most likely look rested again in the future. Note, however, that not all authors agree that limited duration is actually one of the features of the meaning of the progressive. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 168), for instance, argue that limited duration is a strong implicature of the progressive rather than part of its meaning per se. They argue that the notion of limited duration arises out of the interplay between the meaning of the progressive and other factors; more specifically it arises when the construction is used to impose dynamicity on a state, as in (6), or when it is used to impose duration on a punctual situation, as in (5). Finally, although Huddleston & Pullum (2002) and Leech (2004) differ in their views of the progressive,

they all agree that, in many cases, the progressive creates a temporal frame around a reference point. (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 163-164, Leech 2004: 21-23). With the present progressive, the implied reference point is the moment of speaking (Leech 2004: 21-22). However, with non-present progressives, the reference point has to be given in the context (Leech 2004: 21-22). See, for instance, examples (7) and (8) taken from Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 163-164).

(7) His daughter ***is mowing*** the lawn.

(8) When he arrived she ***was phoning*** the police.

In example (7), the mowing of the lawn has started before the moment of speaking, which is the implied reference point around which the progressive creates a temporal frame, and will continue for a period of time after that. Contrasting this, in example (8) the reference point is explicitly given and corresponds to the moment when the he-person arrived. Prior to this moment, the other person had already started to phone the police and this action continued for some time after the arrival. In addition to creating a temporal frame in both situations, the progressive also indicates that the speakers in (7) and (8) view the situations at hand from within (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 163, Leech 2004: 18). As Comrie (1976: 24) points out, this particular feature is an identifying trait of imperfective constructions, and the English progressive is therefore categorized as such. This is also linked to the fact that the progressive is used to refer to situations that are not necessarily complete (Leech 2004: 19-21). Indeed, the progressive can be used to exclude the beginning and the end of the situation that is being referred to, viewing it from the inside rather than as a complete whole. The contrast between example (9) and (9a), taken from (Leech 2004: 20), illustrates this. Both examples are in the past tense and the difference between them is that (9) is in the past progressive, whereas (9a) is in the simple past.

(9) I ***was reading*** from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m.

(9a) I ***read*** from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m.

In example (9), the use of the progressive indicates that the person read for at least an hour between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. It does not exclude the possibility that the person started this activity before 10 p.m. and continued it after 11 p.m. In example (9a), however, the use of the simple past signals that the person only read for one hour. They started reading at 10 p.m. and they stopped at 11 p.m. With the simple past, the action is necessarily seen as complete, but this

is not the case with the progressive. Again, not all authors agree on this being one of the features of the meaning of the progressive. While Leech (2004: 19-21) shares this opinion, other scholars regard the fact that the situation does not have to be complete as an implication of its imperfectivity (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 164-165, Declerck, Reed & Cappelle 2006: 33).

As stated above, many authors consider that the progressive has special uses that do not have a clear link to the aspectual uses that have been presented so far. Some authors, such as Leech et al. (2009) or Smith & Leech (2013), use the term "special uses" to refer to these, while others use terms that directly point at that feature, such as Smitterberg (2005) who writes about the "not-solely-aspectual functions of the progressive". Others still, such as Huddleston & Pullum (2002), hold that the progressive has non-aspectual uses. Among these special uses, the ones that are most frequently mentioned are the use of the present progressive form to refer to future situations and the interpretive (also called interpretative by some authors) use of the progressive (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 165, Leech 2004: 33-34, Smitterberg 2005: 227, Leech et al. 2009: 131, Smith & Leech 2013: 90). An example of the progressive with future time reference is provided in (10) and an example of the interpretive use is given in (11). Example (10) is taken from Leech (2004: 61) and example (11) is taken from Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 165).

(10) We'***re having*** fish for dinner.

(11) When I said 'the boss' I ***was referring*** to you.

When the present progressive form refers to future situations – what will be referred to as its futurate use in this paper – the intended meaning is not that of ongoingness or duration. There is also no creation of a temporal frame around a reference point. Rather, the progressive is used to indicate a present plan or arrangement (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 171, Leech 2004: 61-63). Note that because of this the futurate use of the progressive is not seen as aspectual by Huddleston & Pullum (2002). The futurate use is illustrated by example (10), where the speaker informs someone of what has been planned for the evening meal. Moreover, because this use of the progressive involves the idea of planning, it is limited to situations that involve human agency (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 171, Leech 2004: 63). This can also be observed in example (10), where someone decided that they would eat fish that night rather than meat, for instance. Lastly, as it is the case in example (10), futurate uses of the progressive tend to be used for events in the relatively near future (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 171, Leech 2004: 62-63). Similar to the futurate use of the progressive, the interpretive use does not create a temporal

frame around a reference point. Instead, the clause that includes the progressive form is used to interpret or explain a situation that is either explicitly mentioned by the speaker or that can be inferred from the context (Leech et al. 2009: 134). In example (11), the clause that contains the progressive is used to clarify who the speaker meant when they uttered the phrase *the boss* and the speaker explicitly refers to that instance in the clause with the non-progressive form. When the progressive is used in this way, it does not create a temporal frame around a reference point because it presents the two instances as happening at the exact same time (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 165, Leech 2004: 22). In example (11), the speaker says *the boss* and simultaneously refers to the other person. Smitterberg (2005: 228) goes one step further in positing that when the progressive is used in this interpretive[1] manner, the two occurrences are not presented as simultaneous, but as identical. According to him, this shows that the interpretive use is subjective, as presenting the two instances as identical is a choice made by the speaker. The interpretive use of the progressive is also subjective in that it communicates the speaker's personal interpretation of a situation (Leech et al. 2009: 135, Smith & Leech 2013: 91). This is clear in example (12) taken from Leech (2004: 22).

(12) ***Were*** you ***lying*** when you said that?

In this example, the speaker has reasons to think that what the other person previously stated is a lie and the speaker asks a question to validate this hypothesis. Thinking that the other person may have lied is a highly subjective interpretation of the situation and it might very well turn out that the other person was indeed telling the truth.

So far, I have reviewed the predominant basic and special uses of the progressive that are outlined in the literature. I have also shown that there is not always a consensus among authors regarding which features of the progressive are actually part of its meaning and which are implicatures derived from these features. Furthermore, it is important to note that the authors who are mentioned above do not argue that one of the features of the progressive, such as ongoingness or duration, is inherently present in all of its uses. This explains why they distinguish basic uses of the progressive from special ones. As De Wit & Brisard (2009, 2014) and Brisard & De Wit (2013) point out, this is the case for many studies of the English progressive and, in contrast to this, they put forward "a unified analysis of the semantics of the present progressive in contemporary English" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 88). They propose that,

[1] He uses the term "interpretative" rather than "interpretive".

at the most schematic level, it is modal and indicates "epistemic contingency in the speaker's immediate reality" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 49). In their three publications, the authors conduct an analysis of the present progressive within the framework of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991) and they present a semantic network that shows how its different meanings are related to one another. They draw on spoken American corpus data in order to examine the specific uses of the English present progressive, which, they argue, has both temporal and modal uses, and they demonstrate that each specific use is linked to the present progressive's core meaning of epistemic contingency via cognitive principles.

Within the framework of Cognitive Grammar, tense is regarded as essentially epistemic in that tense markers reflect the way a speaker conceives of reality at the moment of speaking (Langacker 1991: 240-246). Langacker (1991: 242) argues that, at any given time, a conceptualizer considers that certain situations are real and others are not. This distinction is schematically rendered in his "basic epistemic model" (Langacker 1991: 242-243), which is given in Figure 1 below, where (C) represents the conceptualizer. Langacker differentiates between the conceptualizer's known reality, i.e., all the situations that they accept as real, and irreality, i.e., anything that is not part of the conceptualizer's known reality (Langacker 1991: 242-243). In Figure 1, reality is represented by a cylinder and, since it is in constant evolution, Langacker (1991: 242-243) states that this cylinder should thought of "as "growing" along the axis indicated by the arrow" (quotation marks in the original). Immediate reality constitutes the limit of the cylinder and corresponds to "reality at the latest stage of its evolution" (Langacker 1991: 243). The conceptualizer views situations from this point of view and only directly perceives things that are part of this region (Langacker 1991: 243). Irreality is represented as anything that is outside of the cylinder. Importantly, Langacker (1991: 243) points out that whether a situation belongs to reality or irreality is solely based on the conceptualizer's view of the situation and does not depend on what is objectively real.

In addition to indicating the reality status of states of affairs, tense markers are seen as grounding predications (Langacker 1991: 247-248) because they relate a profiled situation, i.e., "the focus of attention within a predication" (Langacker 1987: 187), to the ground, i.e., "the speech event, its participants, and its setting" (Langacker 1987: 126). The notion of ground is incorporated in an elaboration of the basic epistemic model, the time-line model (Langacker 1991: 243), which also incorporates the notion of time (t) and is given in Figure 2 below.

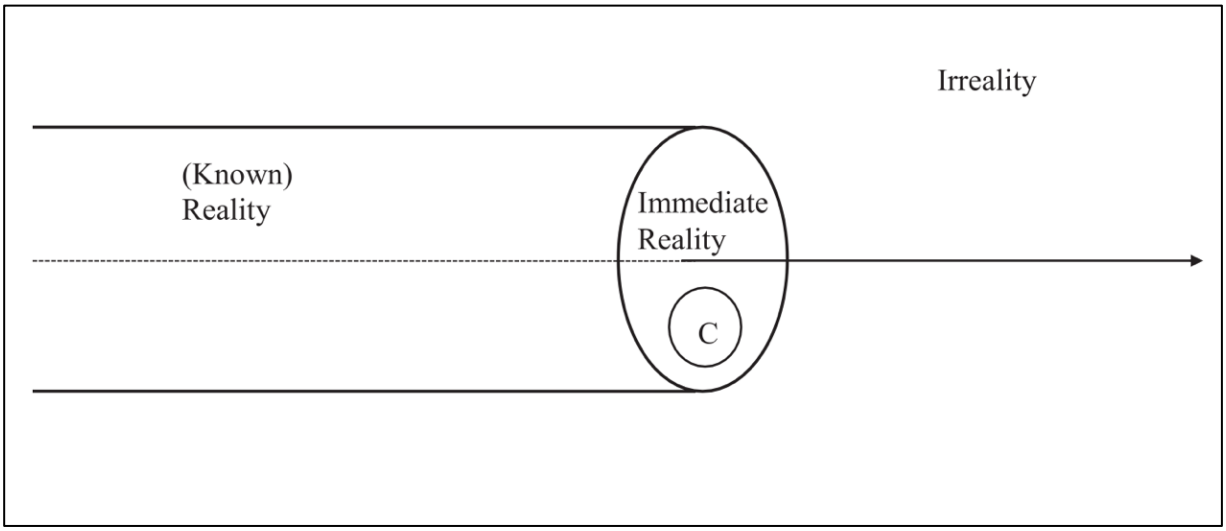

Figure 1: Basic epistemic model (Langacker 1991: 242, as reproduced in De Wit & Brisard 2014: 58)

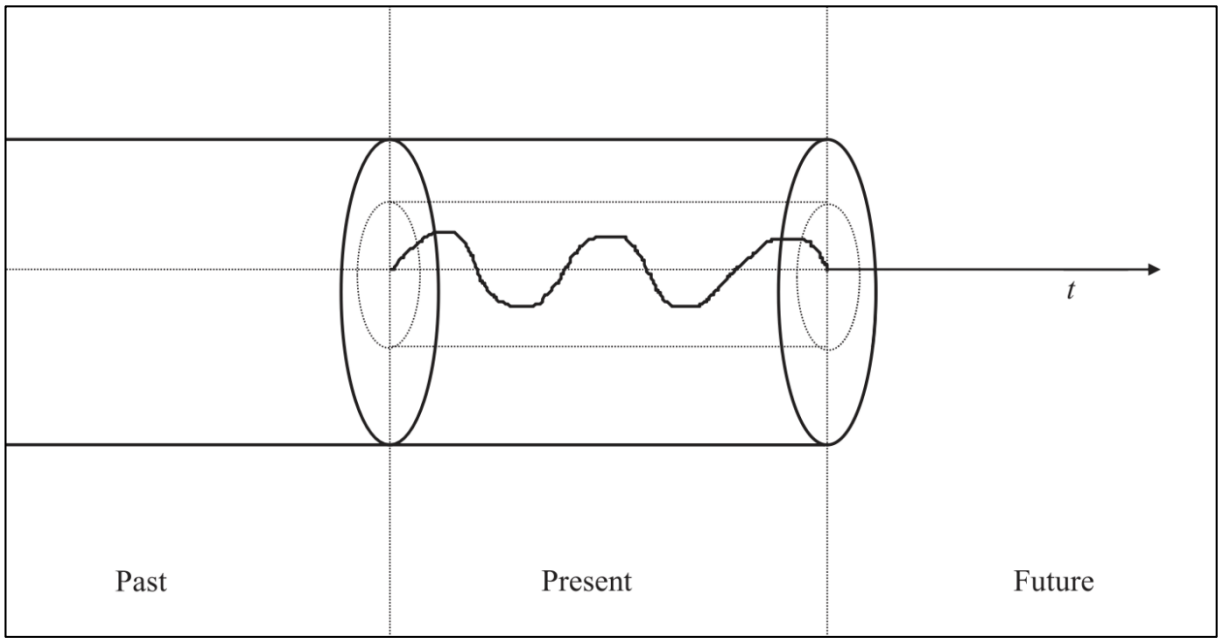

Figure 2: Time-line model (Langacker 1991: 244, as reproduced in De Wit & Brisard 2014: 58)

In Figure 2, the ground corresponds to the part of the cylinder that encapsulates a squiggly line, which represents a speech event, and the notion of time is represented as an "axis along which reality evolves" (Langacker 1991: 243). Importantly, speech events have a certain time depth, i.e., the time required to utter them (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 57), and, consequently, so do "the ground and the immediate reality associated with [them]" (Langacker 1991: 243). Based on this, time can be divided into past, present and future (Langacker 1991: 243). In Cognitive Grammar, the difference between the present tense and the past tense is seen as "a proximal/distal contrast in the epistemic sphere" (Langacker 1991: 245), where the present

tense conveys that the situation that is being referred to is immediate to the speaker, it is part of their ground, and the past tense indicates non-immediacy. Importantly, as is mentioned in Brisard & De Wit (2013: 203), the ground "does not only comprise situations that are actually going on at the time of speaking, but also part of the background knowledge of the speaker."

In their publications, De Wit & Brisard (2009, 2014) and Brisard & De Wit (2013) examine the precise contexts in which English speakers use the present progressive and they seek to explain why they choose to use it over the simple present. They analyzed a little over 300 present progressive occurrences from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English and classified them according to which use of the present progressive they instantiated (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 69). Based on the data that they obtained, they then created a semantic network that shows how the different uses of the present progressive are linked with one another (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 69). A schematic representation of the semantic network of the present progressive is given in Figure 3.

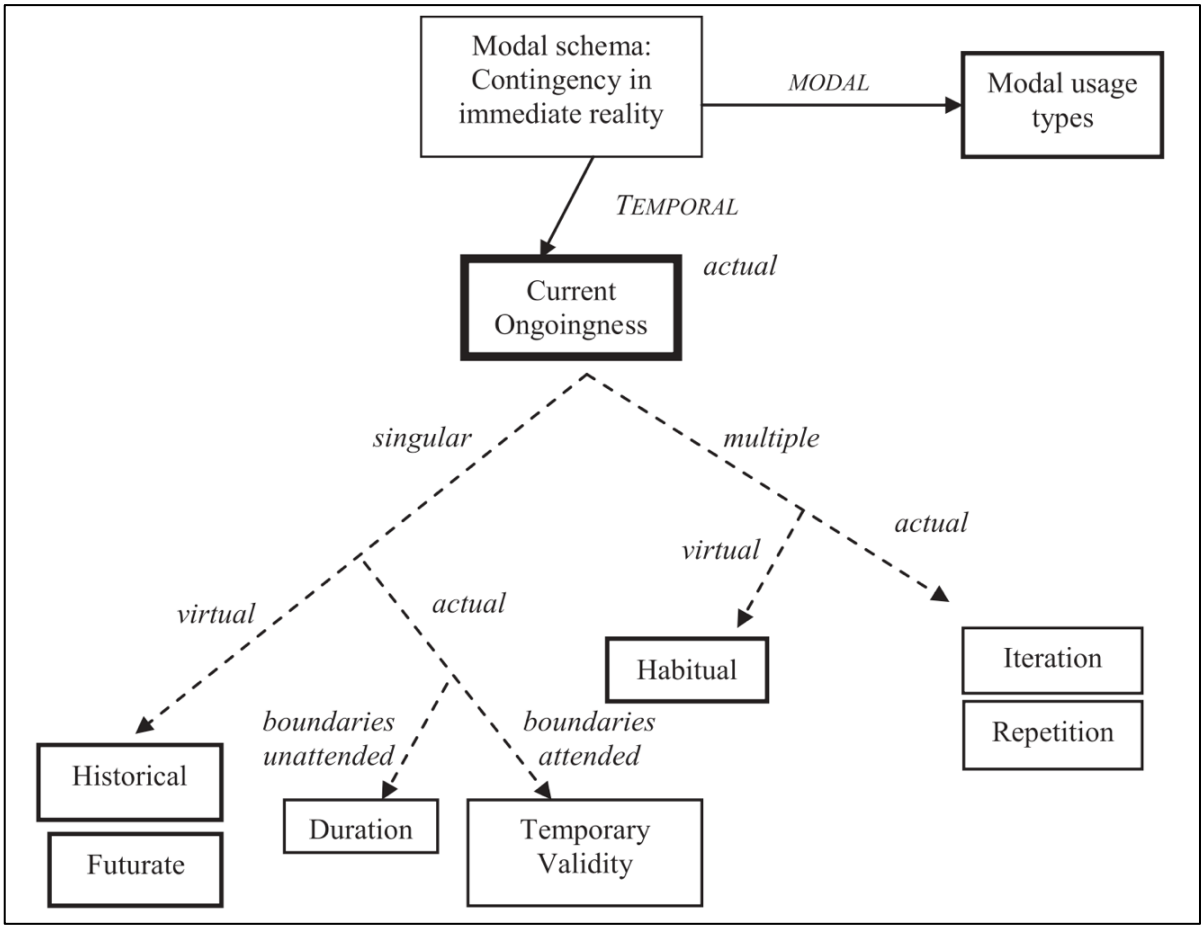

Figure 3: Semantic network of the English present progressive (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 87)

De Wit & Brisard (2014: 86-87) explain that the semantic network is structured by several conceptual branching principles (temporal vs. non temporal, actual vs. virtual, boundaries attended vs. boundaries unattended and singular vs. multiple) and that the construction's core meaning of epistemic contingency in the speaker's immediate reality is instantiated in temporal as well as in modal uses of the present progressive via two categorizing relationships, i.e., elaboration and extension. In a relation of elaboration, the fact that a more specific structure belongs to a certain category is fully sanctioned by a more schematic one (Langacker 1987: 66-68). On the other hand, if the structure is only partially sanctioned by the other one, then there is a relation of extension between the two (Langacker 1987: 68-71). With relations of extension, there is some conflict between the extended structure and the sanctioning one, but the extended structure is "nonetheless assimilated to the category on the basis of an association or perceived similarity" (Langacker 2013: 18). In Figure 3, full arrows indicate a relation of elaboration, whereas dashed arrows indicate a relation of extension (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 86). In an earlier article, De Wit & Brisard (2009: 6) explain that the construction's basic modal meaning is elaborated in both the temporal and the modal domains and that all the temporal uses can be seen as "instantiations of a basic epistemic meaning, applied to the temporal domain." Furthermore, in Figure 3, the thickness of the different boxes symbolizes the relative frequencies of each use of the present progressive in their data. Thicker boxes indicate higher relative frequencies (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 86-87). As is clear from Figure 3, the most frequent use of the progressive in the authors' data is that of current ongoingness. Because of this, but also because they see this meaning as the default one in neutral contexts, they propose that current ongoingness is the present progressive's prototypical use (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 87).

2. Previous studies on the use of the progressive in American English, Australian English and British English

Most accounts of the diachronic evolution of the progressive construction report that it started to grammaticalize as a marker of progressive aspect in the 16th century and became conventionalized as such by the 18th century (Leech et al 2009: 120, Collins & Yao 2014: 515). Previous research has also shown that the frequency of use of this construction has greatly increased since the 16th century. For instance, Elsness (1994: 11) found that progressive forms were used three times more frequently in the last sampling period of the Early Modern English part of the Helsinki diachronic corpus (i.e., between 1640 and 1710) than in the first one (i.e., between 1500-1570). For his part, in his study about the progressive in 19th century British English, Smitterberg (2005: 62) reports that, depending on the calculation methods that were used, the use of progressive forms increased by 71% or 81% between the first period in the CONCE (A Corpus of Ninetheenth-Century English) corpus (i.e., between 1800 and 1830) and the last period in the corpus (i.e., between 1870 and 1900). In addition, in a diachronic study that compares how different verb phrase categories have evolved over the course of the 19th and 20th century in American English, Australian English and British English in the genre of fiction, Collins & Yao (2014: 515-517) show a constant increase in the frequency of use of progressive forms between the first half of the 19th century and the second half of the 20th century in the three varieties.

Moreover, previous diachronic studies based on the written data available in the comparable corpora LOB/FLOB for British English and Brown/Frown for American English have shown that the progressive is still becoming increasingly frequent in these varieties. The data in the LOB and in the Brown corpora date from 1961 and the data in the FLOB and in the Frown corpora date from 1991-1992 (Mair & Hundt 1995: 111). Using these corpora, Mair & Hundt (1995) and Mair & Leech (2006) found that the frequency of use of progressive forms had increased significantly over the period of 30 years that separates the two sets of corpora and both articles explore why that might be the case. Potter (1975: 118-122), for instance, alleges that there is a tendency for statives verbs to be used increasingly with the progressive. However, Mair & Hundt (1995: 115) and Mair & Leech (2006: 324) reject the hypothesis that this would help to explain why progressive forms are becoming more frequent. Mair & Hundt (1995: 115) point out that, on the one hand, stative verbs that combine with the progressive are found in the older data from 1961 and in the newer data from 1991-1992, and that, on the other

hand, the frequency of these uses in the corpora is not high enough to have a meaningful statistical impact. Mair & Leech (2006: 324) also remark that there "is little sign of the progressive extending its territory by combination with 'non-progressive' verbs like the stative *know* and *wish*" (italics and quotation marks in the original). Mair & Hundt (1995: 116-118) suggest another explanation for the increasing frequency of use of the progressive: the fact that speakers increasingly tend to use the progressive in order to refer to future situations. However, they also note that their data sets do not allow them to confirm this because, in many cases, it is impossible to determine whether the speaker makes reference to the present or to the future when they use a present progressive form. Lastly, Mair & Hundt (1995: 118) put two hypotheses forward to explain the continuingly growing use of progressive forms in American English and in British English. Their first hypothesis is that the increased frequency of use of progressive forms is the result of a stylistic choice and is "a symptom of the "colloquialisation" of written English" (Mair & Hundt 1995: 118, quotation marks in the original). Their second hypothesis is that, when speakers have the choice between a progressive form and a non-progressive one, they tend to choose the progressive form. For their part, Mair & Leech (2006: 324) propose that the explanation for the increased frequency of use of progressive forms might be new developments in the use of the progressive, such as the interpretive use (recall example (11) in Chapter 1). They also hypothesize that the progressive could be in the process of establishing itself "in those few remaining niches of the verbal paradigm from which they were excluded up to the twentieth century" (Mair & Leech 2006: 325). They report, however, that the LOB/FLOB corpora and Brown/Frown corpora are not big enough to investigate this.

Leech et al. (2009) also compared the frequency of use of progressive forms in the LOB/FLOB corpora and in the Brown/ Frown corpora and they found that, in both varieties, the increase in the use of progressive forms is most significant in the present tense (Leech et al. 2009: 124). They also found that the present progressive in the active voice is the part of the progressive paradigm that is showing the most significant signs of change (Leech et al. 2009 127). Much like Mair & Hundt (1995) and Mair & Leech (2006), they reject the hypothesis that an increase in the use of the progressive with stative verbs is responsible for the fact that progressive forms are more frequent in both the FLOB and the Frown corpora (Leech et al. 2009: 129-130). They state that, even though there are slightly more stative verbs that combine with the progressive in the data from 1991-1992 than there are in the data from 1961, there is still not enough evidence to claim that this explains the higher frequency of use of progressive forms in the FLOB and in the Frown corpora (Leech et al. 2009: 130). Furthermore, they note

that, in the British English data, the frequency of use of non-progressive forms of stative verbs is also higher in FLOB than it is in LOB (Leech et al. 2009: 130).

In addition to studying written data from the LOB/FLOB corpora and the Brown/Frown corpora, Leech et al. (2009: 124-127) also look at written and spoken British English data from the ICE-GB corpus (the British component of the International Corpus of English) and at spoken British English data from the DCPSE (Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English) corpus in order see whether the changes that they have observed in the LOB/FLOB corpora and in the Brown/Frown corpora are also found in other registers of written and spoken English. Based on these additional data sets, they clearly show that progressive forms are much more frequent in relatively informal speech-based genres (e.g., phone calls or face-to-face conversations) and in speech-like genres (e.g., private, informal letters) (Leech et al. 2009: 125-126). This supports the findings of previous research that had also found a higher frequency of progressive forms in speech than in writing (Quirk et al. 1985: 198, Biber et al. 1999: 462-463). Moreover, active present progressive forms are also the most frequent in these genres (Leech et al. 2009: 124). This is seen as unsurprising by Leech et al. (2009: 124) and they remark that the present progressive "is appropriate to describing situations as they unfold." Additionally, comparing the patterns of development of progressive forms in written and spoken English, Leech et al. (2009: 142) conclude, like Mair & Hundt (1995), that the frequency of progressive forms in their written data seems to be moving closer to that of speech-based and speech-like genres in a process of colloquialization. On the other hand, like Mair & Leech (2006), they also hypothesize that the increase in the frequency of use of progressive forms in the data from the early 1990s could be the result of the interpretive use of the present progressive becoming more prevalent (Leech et al. 2009: 136). Nevertheless, they remain cautious in making this hypothesis, opposing that many occurrences in their data could not be classified as interpretive with certainty (Leech et al. 2009: 136).

The studies that have been reviewed so far have mainly focused on American and British English and have primarily relied on written English. Collins (2008) observed that this is the case for many studies concerning the progressive and he consequently studied how the progressive is used in 4 inner circle varieties of English (i.e., British English, American English, Australian English and New Zealand English) as well as in 5 outer circle varieties (i.e., Philippine English, Singapore English, Hong Kong English, Indian English and Kenyan English) using both written and spoken data. He defines inner circle varieties of English as "those where English is the first language for the majority of the population and virtually all public and private interaction takes place in English" (Collins 2008: 226). Outer circle varieties

of English, on the other hand, "are those where English may not be the first language for the majority of the population but has the status of an official language" (Collins 2008: 226). Because the present paper centers on Australian, American and British English, I mainly focus my review on a comparison of his findings for these varieties.

Collins (2008) found that progressive forms were more frequent in his Australian data set than in his American and his British data sets and that, for all three varieties, the number of progressive forms in speech was more than double that in writing (Collins 2008: 229-230). This is in line with Hundt (1998: 75), who also found a higher frequency of progressive forms in her Australian data than in her American and British data and concluded that Australian English seemed to be more advanced in the change toward using more progressive forms than American English, with British English taking an intermediate position between these two varieties (see also Collins (2009) for a study comparing the frequency and uses of the progressive in Australian English, New Zealand English, American English and British English that reported similar findings). In addition, the fact that there are many more progressives in speech than in writing holds true for most of the varieties that he studied, with the exception of New Zealand English and Singapore English, where progressive forms are still more common in speech than in writing, though slightly less than twice as frequent (Collins 2008: 229-230). These results, again, support the findings of previous studies that had also found a higher frequency of progressive forms in speech than in writing. Collins (2008: 231-234) also found that, in the three varieties, the overwhelming majority of progressive forms were present progressives or past progressives. He refers to these as "simple tense forms", as opposed to "complex tense forms" (Collins 2008: 233). The latter category subsumes combinations of the progressive with a perfect auxiliary, a modal auxiliary, a *to*-infinitive clause or the passive voice (Collins 2008: 233). In addition, in almost all the varieties that he studied, present progressive forms were significantly more frequent than past progressive forms (Collins 2008: 232). The only exception to this was New Zealand English, were there were almost as many present progressive forms as there were past ones (Collins 2008: 232). When accounting for the difference between speech and writing, Collins (2008: 233-234) found that the number of present progressive forms made up almost two thirds of all progressive forms in his spoken data and that, conversely, past progressive forms made up almost half of all progressive forms in writing. Interestingly, he also found a correlation between the overall frequency of progressive forms in inner circle varieties of English and the number of complex progressive forms found in each one of these varieties. The New Zealand English and Australian English data sets contained more complex progressive forms than the British English and the American English ones (Collins 2008: 233).

Using Biber et al.'s (1999: 360-364) classification of semantic domains for verbs (see Chapter 4 for more details on the classification), Collins (2008: 237) found that the majority of verbs in his data sets were activity verbs. He also found that communication verbs and mental verbs were more frequent in his American data set than in the data sets for the other inner circle varieties that he studied (Collins 2008: 237-238). Smith (2002: 323) had previously observed that these classes of verbs might show the most susceptibility to increase, reflecting a rise in interpretive uses of the progressive. Indeed, when he looked at the special uses of the progressive in his data sets, Collins (2008: 339-242) found that the two most frequent special uses across the nine varieties of English that he studied were the futurate use and the interpretive use. This is particularly the case in the American data set, where interpretive uses account for over half of the special uses and futurate uses a little under a third (Collins 2008: 241). Collins (2008: 239-242) also looked at other types of special uses. More specifically, he also looked at the attitudinal use of the progressive, the politeness use and the "matter of course" use. An example of each use is given in examples (13), (14) and (15) respectively. The examples for the attitudinal use and the politeness use are taken from Collins (2008: 239-240) and the example for the 'matter of course' use is taken from Collins (2008: 241).

(13) Our English teacher she used to study in England when she was small and then, she grew up there and studied in university and, and then now she came back to Hong Kong to teach in our school. And then she ***is*** always ***talking*** about England. She like it a lot and then always talking about the Royal Family and then all the slangs and then we're all sleepy and someone laughs so it's useless. She likes it very much and then, we we just think it's very boring

(14) I***'m wondering*** uh whether this this thing will be will happen

(15) They ***will be talking*** during the night

In its attitudinal use, the progressive is modified by a temporal adverbial such as *always*, as in example (13), *constantly* or *all the time* and the idea is that of situation that continually recurs (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 166-167, Smitterberg 2005: 210). In many instances, this use is accompanied by a negative overtone of irritation or disapproval (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 166-167, Smitterberg 2005: 210). This is the case in (13), where the student is annoyed by the fact that their English teacher mentions England regularly. In its politeness use, on the other hand, the progressive is used by the speaker to appear more tentative when expressing a wish or an attitude (Quirk et al. 1985: 2010, Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 170, Leech 2004: 29-30). Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 170) note that the link between the progressive and politeness is

unclear, but propose that the reason for this use might be that "polite formulations are often more complex than ordinary ones." They also suggest that the restricted duration feature of the progressive might play a role, as it allows the speaker to convey that they understand that their request or wish may not be fulfilled. Leech (2004: 29-30) has a similar explanation: the progressive is used by the speaker to show that they are not committed to the fulfilment of their request, thereby leaving more room to their interlocutor for a polite refusal. Lastly, in the "matter of course" use of the progressive, the auxiliary *will* is combined with the progressive and this use "suggests that the predicted happening will come to pass without the interference of the volition or intention of anyone concerned" (Leech 2004: 67). In Collins's (2008: 241-242) data, all the special uses that he considered are more frequent in speech than in writing, with the exception of the attitudinal use. He therefore hypothesizes that special uses are likely to influence the rise in the frequency of progressive forms in general, as written English is colloquializing progressively (Collins 2008: 241).

The last parameters that Collins (2008) took into account in his study were the grammatical environments in which the progressive forms in his data were found and whether these progressive forms were contracted (e.g., *I'm talking*, *he isn't eating*), as this last parameter is indicative of colloquialization. On the whole, the progressive forms in his data appeared in an overwhelming majority of affirmative clauses (Collins 2008: 242-243). In addition, in all the varieties that he studied, progressive forms appeared mainly in main clauses (Collins 2008: 243). In its early stages, the progressive occurred mainly in subordinate clauses and extended its use to main clauses later in the construction's development (Petré 2016, 2017). The shift toward more main clause uses of the progressive is probably still ongoing, as Smith (2002: 325-326), who compared written British English from the 1960s and written British English form the 1990s, found more progressive forms in main clauses in the newer data, and Collins (2008: 243-244) also found that the majority of progressive forms in his data appeared in main clauses. A comparison of his results for American English, Australian English and British English shows that the highest number of main clause uses of the progressives was found in the Australian data set and that the lowest number of main clauses uses was found in the British data set, with American English taking an intermediate position (Collins 2008: 244). There were also more main clause uses than subordinate clause uses in both speech and writing across all the varieties examined by Collins (2008), but the frequency of main clause uses of the progressive is higher in speech than in writing. Unsurprisingly, contracted forms, which are an "overt marker of colloquialization" (Collins 2008: 245), were also much more frequent in speech than in writing

and Collins (2008: 245-246) found that there were more contracted forms in his Australian English data set than in American English and British English ones.

The studies that have been reviewed in this chapter point to the fact that, in comparison to American English and British English, the use of the progressive seems to have advanced the furthest in Australian English. Indeed, it seems that it is in this variety that it is the most frequent and the higher frequency of complex progressive forms indicates that it might be less conservative than its American and British counterparts. On the other hand, the results of Collins's (2008) study indicate that, out of the three varieties, American English seems to be the most advanced in its use of progressive forms in combination with communication and mental verbs. His results also show that interpretive uses are more frequent in this variety. This suggests that modal uses of the progressive may be more frequent in American English. There are also trends, however, that transcend regional varieties, such as the fact that the progressive is much more common in speech than in writing, the fact that the majority of progressive forms are active present progressives and the fact that progressives mainly appear in main clauses.

Based on the findings of the studies that have been reviewed in this chapter, I hypothesize that I will encounter more modal uses of the progressive in the Australian and in the American data sets than in the British one. I also hypothesize that, in the three data sets, the majority of progressive instances will be active present progressive forms and that the majority of progressive forms will be found in main clauses.

3. Method and data retrieval

Following De Wit & Brisard (2014), I attempt to show in which contexts speakers of three varieties of English (British English, American English and Australian English) use progressive forms and what their motivations to use these over their simple counterparts might be. To do so, I use the minimal pair method, which is described in Section 3.1. In Section 3.2, I explain how the data for the study was collected.

3.1 Method

The method I used to carry out the present study is inspired by Petré (2017: 233-236) and De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020: 484-487), who created minimal pairs of occurrences in the present progressive and occurrences in the simple present in order to determine whether the progressive construction might have been used to express extravagance at the beginning of its grammaticalization (see Section 4.5 for more information). Following De Wit & Brisard (2014: 69), I chose to study spoken data because of the link that exists between the use of the progressive and the time of speaking. Moreover, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, the progressive is more frequent in spoken English than it is in written English.

As De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020: 485-486) point out, in order to try to uncover speakers' motivations for using a progressive form rather than a simple one, it is important to compare progressive forms with simple forms that are used in highly similar contexts. To do so, I matched each progressive instance in my data sets to a simple instance that matched in terms of clause type (i.e., main clause with main clause and subordinate clause with subordinate clause), in terms of animacy (i.e., human subject with human subject, animal subject with animal subject and inanimate subject with inanimate subject), in terms of tense (i.e., present tense with present tense and past tense with past tense) and in terms of voice (i.e., active voice with active voice and passive voice with passive voice). An example of a minimal pair is given in (16) and (16a).

(16) <M01/> <s> Okay so they normally perform with the directions given by the government so they're not going to erm charge you more than twelve per cent but ***they're wanting*** employment. </s><s> (WB, brspok)[2]

(16a) <F01/> <s> Quit. </s><s> ***Do you want*** a cushion FX? </s>
<F03/> <s> No I'm fine thank you. </s><s> You can have that one. </s> <M0X/> <s> Well I've got two here actually yes. </s> (WB, brspok)

As is clear from examples (16) and (16a), a declarative clause can be matched with an interrogative one. Provided that the conditions presented above were respected, I also matched some affirmative clauses with negative clauses, as in examples (17) and (17a). The grammatical persons can also differ in the two parts of the pair.

(17) <M01/> <s> Oh I mean I agree with you </s> <ZF1/> <s> I think bo </s> <ZF0/> <s> I think boxing's a ridiculous sport anyway. </s>
<M04/> <s> So do I. What's the point of two people knocking hell out of each other just for getting a bit of money. </s>
<M01/> <s> Yeah. </s>
<M04/> <s> What's it going to do for'em at the end of the day? </s>
<M01/> <s> I mean ***they're talking*** about quoting Frank Bruno at eight to one er of winning the outright undisputed world heavyweight championship. </s><s> (WB, brspok)

(17a) [in a conversation about unemployment and how much it is talked about in the media]
<M08/> <s> er and yet you know we're talking about er all we get is a situation where all this unemployment but ***we don't talk*** about the ninety-two per cent of the employed people that are working. </s> (WB, brspok)

When a progressive occurrence contained a polysemous verb, e.g., *think*, the verb in the simple counterpart had to have the same meaning as the one in the progressive occurrence. Example (18) and example (18a), for instance, were matched because the main verb has the same meaning, i.e., be of an opinion, in both occurrences. However, example (19) could not have been matched with example (19a), because, in (19) *you're still thinking* refers to the dynamic process of using one's mind, whereas the speaker in (19a) uses *I think* to communicate their opinion about a samba class sounding more fun than something else.

[2] At the end of each example, I add the reference of the (sub)corpus in which it is found using the labels given in Table 1 in Section 3.2. See Section 3.2 for more information on the data used in the study. For the examples that were extracted from the Griffith Corpus of Spoken Australian English (GCSAusE), I add the number of the files in which they are found. The transcription symbols used in the different (sub)corpora are given in Appendix 1.

(18) 315 L: =and so we'll probably just build sandcastles
316 for like three days, (0.5) but- uh:- ***I'm***
317 ***thinking*** two nights would be good like,
318 (0.3)
319 A: ((cough))
320 (0.2)
321 L: so three: (0.5) days. (0.4) two nights. (GCSAusE 20)

(18a) 189 S: yeah >I don't have confidence, I thinkh that's the problem.<=
190 (0.5)
191 M: yea:h ***you think*** you don'th but (.) you ha[ve lots of in
192 yourself you=
193 S: [.hhhhaa.hhhhh
194 hhhhhh
195 M: [=know. you we:re one of the best] in school.= (GCSAusE 35)

(19) 278 B: [but yeah] I don't think that it
279 should be in- (.) input anywhere else.
280 (0.7)
281 because it just drives you insane
282 (0.3)
283 'cause like your head your actual
284 head ***you're*** still ***thinking***? but you can't
285 (0.7)
286 you can't
287 do >anything with it?< so you'd just go
288 nuts going around there?
289 (1.6) (GCSAusE 8)

(19a) 112 T: [The- to the lat]in musi[c a]n::y[eah- >and i]t's
113 a< grea:t workout
114 M: [Ye-] [the samba]
115 M: °ye[a:-°]
116 S: [↑U:::]m: I wanna see how its like I dunno I need
117 to fi[rs' be in a room.]
118 M: [***I think*** it sounds mor]e fun:. [I feel i-] [yeah.] (GCSAusE 38)

As much as possible, I tried to create minimal pairs where the main verb was identical but this was not always possible for the Australian data, which was collected from a fairly small corpus (see Table 1 in Section 3.2 below). When a relevant simple occurrence of the same main verb was not available in the corpus, I used a near-synonym, as in examples (20) and (20a) where *we're not doing John's Gospel* is matched with *we study pragmatics*. Obviously, the surrounding co(n)text is crucial in determining whether two such occurrences can be matched in a minimal pair.

(20) 27 K: Are you still doing John's –
28 ↑Why: are you learning about abortions, if you're trying to
29 study John's ↑Gospel?
30 M: Oh we're just learning about like, sacred texts and stuff,
31 ***we're ↑not doing*** John's go:spel, we just only did a tiny bit of
32 John's go:spel. (GCSAusE 22)

(20a) [Speaker B is trying to explain to speaker T what pragmatics is and how it differs from semantics]
21 B: now (0.6) the pragmatics is the next
22 level. of uh::m, (1.0) but we yeah ***we***
23 ***don't study*** pragmatics so I don't
24 know. [>but you would yeah =
25 T: [*hhhhh ha ha ha hi hih*]
26 B: =THERE'S A THERE's ↑ANOTHER]
27 LEVEL↓ of meaning< a broader level
28 of meaning. (GCSAusE 11)

3.2 Data

The spoken British English and the spoken American English data sets for the present study were retrieved from the spoken British English and spoken American English subcorpora of Collins Wordbank*Online* (henceforth WB): brspok and usspok, respectively. The spoken Australian English data set was retrieved from the Griffith Corpus of Spoken Australian English (henceforth GCSAusE). Table 1 provides an overview of the (sub)corpora that were used for this paper as well as a brief description of their contents.

(Sub)corpora used	Total number of tokens	Description
brspok	41,403,450	Transcribed speech: British Spoken Corpus: Cobuild, BBC World Service
usspok	20,104,900	Transcribed speech: Voice of America
GCSAusE	32,142	Transcribed speech: 40 audio recordings of conversations between Australian speakers of English gathered by students and staff at Griffith University

Table 1: Spoken English (sub)corpora used

The data retrieval process for the progressive data from WB differed from the data retrieval process for the progressive data from GCSAusE because the former is tagged for parts

of speech, which can be queried directly in the WB search interface, whereas the latter is not and can only be searched using regular expressions. In WB, in each subcorpus, I took a random sample of 1000 instances using the following query: [lemma="be"][]{0,3}[tag="VVG"]. This query targets the lemma *BE* followed by a gerund or the present participle of any verb and allows for up to three words to intervene between *BE* and the gerund or present participle. This allows for negative clauses and interrogative clauses to be netted in. For the progressive data from GCSAusE, because the corpus is much smaller, I used a broader query so as to net in as many relevant instances as possible. Using a regular expression, I formulated the following query: [a-zA-Z]+ing. This query allowed me to retrieve any word ending in *-ing* in the corpus and I obtained a total of 810 hits. Then, I manually sorted the data from the three varieties of English, keeping only occurrences in the present progressive and in the past progressive. I removed all the instances that had been retrieved because they ended in *-ing* but were not present participles, e.g., *anything*, *morning*, *darling*, etc. If the same occurrence was extracted more than one time, I only kept one of the occurrences and excluded the rest. Occasionally, some annotations from the transcribers were retrieved along with the rest of the data. These instances were excluded from analysis and an example is given in (21). I also excluded all the instances that superficially look like progressives such as *BE* followed by a present participle used as an adjective, as in (22), and *BE* followed by a gerund, as in (23).

(21) 22 N: (haha) Yeah I didn't expect you to eat half of them
23 (.) ((***laughing***))
24 R: I didn't eat half of them you did last night.
25 (.) (GCSAusE 26)

(22) He's kind he's gentle he's considerate he***'s caring***. (WB, brspok)

(23) He said Washington will not abandon its approach, which ***is engaging*** North Korea's neighbors in the process rather than negotiating one-to-one with the North Koreans. (WB, usspok)

Some occurrences were retrieved because the auxiliary *BE* was used and a present participle was used within 3 words of it but they were not progressive forms. These were also removed. An example is given in (24) with a dangling participle and an example is given in (25) with a postnominal modifier.

(24) Even from this standpoint, though, Mr. Bush's speech ***was*** a disappointment, ***offering*** little in the way of concrete steps to reassure investors... (WB, usspok)

(25) But police said the fires ***were*** begun by separatists ***throwing*** grenades. (WB, brspok)

Because the present study focuses on the choice between a progressive form and a simple one in the present tense and in the past tense, I excluded complex progressive forms from analysis. Complex progressive forms are instances where a progressive form is used in combination with a modal verb, as in (26), where a progressive form is used in combination with the perfect aspect, as in (27), and where a progressive form occurs in a non-finite clause, as in (28).

(26) 8 K: Are you gonna (.) lecture of (0.5) event one (.) today?
9 B: Yes I ***will be going*** to that [I have a tute] beforehand so (GCSAusE 39)

(27) <M01/> <s> And I look at them and say to them Look my brain ***has been dying*** for twice as long as you've been alive now </s>
<F02/> <s> Mm. </s>
<M01/> <s> come on what are you doing with yours? </s> (WB, brspok)

(28) The measure must now go to the Senate where support appears ***to be growing***, as is debate in the press. (WB, usspok)

In one case, see example (29), the speaker abandoned what they were saying and chose to rephrase it in another way. This example was also excluded from analysis because it was incomplete. Other instances, such as example (30), were excluded from analysis because there was not enough context to analyze them properly. Sometimes, the speakers restarted their utterance and the progressive form was repeated. In such cases, I kept the first progressive form that I came across and excluded the other instances of the restarted occurrence. An example is given in (31).

(29) 267 A: so >you***'re getting***<- you are lost=
268 B: =Yeah
269 (1.0) (GCSAusE 8)

(30) 190 Al: =Yeah. (.) yeah. (1.3) um just mainly for
191 the- (.) just- Kevin's actually organising
192 the whole Meier thing this year, yeah.
193 Al: But um (.) No I***'m*** just ***doing*** just one of
194 the guys that ran it for the last couple o'
195 years I'm doing the guitar-i[ng side]of= (GCSAusE 34)

(31) 87 N: =and the whole thing with discourse I'm like now which
88 discourse are >we talking we talking about< you know
89 "post structuralist" [disc]ourse, which is=
90 J: [hehe]
91 =oh: ***you're gettin[g*** too (.) ***you're getting***
92 N: [over]
93 J: [too: (.) technical [for me hh↑hhhhh]h .hh (GCSAusE 18)

Futurate uses of the progressive, as in (32) were also excluded from analysis because, although the simple present can be used to refer to future situations (see Section 4.3.2), this use occurs in specific contexts of (quite rigidly) scheduled situations and this use therefore quite rare. Lastly, some occurrences were excluded because, although they are instances of the present progressives or of the past progressive, they do not have a simple counterpart. Progressives in existential clauses, as in (33), and instances of *BE going to* that refer to the future, as in (34), were therefore excluded from the study.

(32) Ray Crowley ***is speaking*** at the WORLDwrite Summit for Serious Development on 12 June at the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. (WB, brspok)

(33) 72 Al: [Oh there's a
73 twen'y four seven prayer event there, yeah.
74 (0.7) there***'s*** a few bands ***playing*** there,
75 cool bands just on the DL they (.) like (.)
76 >United Pursuit< they don't want people to
77 know about it but like, (.) (GCSAusE 34)

(34) And that means that relief workers more likely ***are going*** to become targets. (WB, usspok)

Once noise was removed from the extracted data, I created the minimal pairs for the study. In both the British data set and in the American data set, I took the first 250 relevant occurrences for which I could find a simple counterpart. The simple British data was retrieved from brspok and the simple American data was collected from usspok. Ideally, I would also have been able to collect 250 minimal pairs from GCSAusE, but as is clear from Table 1, there is a significant difference between the size of the three (sub)corpora and I was only able to create 47 minimal pairs with the Australian data. To create the minimal pairs, I used simple queries that targeted the infinitives in the progressive instances and selected the first simple occurrence that most closely matched according to the criteria presented in Section 3.1.

4. The present progressive and the simple present

In this chapter, I focus on the present examples in my data sets and I attempt to show which motivations underlie the use of the simple present and the use of the present progressive by speakers of American, Australian and British English. I first give an overview of the present progressive data in Section 4.1, then I move on to an account of the modal and temporal difference between the simple present and the present progressive in Section 4.2. In Section 4.3, I detail the usage types of the simple present that are found in the American, in the Australian and in the British data sets. I do the same thing for the usage types of the present progressive in Section 4.4. In Section 4.5, I explore the notion of extravagance as a source of motivation to use the progressive. Finally, Section 4.6 concludes the chapter.

4.1 Overview of the present progressive data

In this section, I give an overview of how often present progressive examples occur in the three datasets, the voice with which they combine, the clause types that are instantiated, and the semantic domains of the verbs. Note that the numbers discussed here are the same for simple present uses, but these will not be discussed as they were selected to match the present progressive examples based on the criteria presented above.

In the American English and in the British English data sets, present progressive forms are the most frequent. In the Australian English data set, on the other hand, there are almost as many present progressive forms as there are past ones. Table 2 below gives an overview of the absolute (n) and relative (%) frequencies of progressive forms in the past and in the present tense in the three data sets. Past progressive forms will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Progressive form	**American English**		**Australian English**		**British English**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Past	33	13.20	25	53.19	73	29.20
Present	217	86.80	22	46.81	177	70.80
Total	250	100.00	47	100.00	250	100.00

Table 2: Past and present progressive forms in the data sets

In Chapter 2, I reviewed a study by Collins (2008), who found that present progressives were significantly more frequent than past progressives in spoken data. My findings confirm this, at least for the American and the British data sets. On the other hand, the frequencies of past and present progressives in the Australian data seem to contradict Collins's (2008) findings, as past progressive forms are more frequent than present progressive ones in this data set. However, this is a consequence of the methodology that was used for the study. Indeed, I was only able to keep progressive forms for which I could find a present or past simple counterpart. Because of the small size of GCSAusE, many progressive examples did not have a simple counterpart and were therefore excluded from analysis. When taking those excluded examples into account, the frequencies of past and present progressive forms are more similar to the ones in the American and in the British data sets and confirm the findings of Collins (2008). 114 out of 191 examples are present progressives (59.69%) and 77 out of 191 examples are past progressives (40.31%).

Note that the frequency of present progressive forms in the American data set is higher than that in the British and in the Australian ones, even when taking the excluded Australian examples into account. This could be due to the genres that are represented in each corpus. The American data set consists exclusively of transcriptions of television and radio material, while the British one consists of transcriptions of more casual conversations as well as transcriptions of television and radio material. The Australian data set consists exclusively of transcriptions of casual conversations. However, it is not clear why there would be more present progressives in television and radio material than in casual conversation. Indeed, Biber et al. (1999: 462) found the same proportion of present and past progressive forms in conversations as in written news. Since television and radio material is often scripted and therefore closer to written language than spontaneous spoken language, one can expect that the frequencies of progressive forms in television and radio material should not be too different from those in written news. This, in turn, would mean that the difference in frequencies between the three data sets is not due to the genres that are represented in them. Another possibility is that the difference in frequencies is due to regional variation, but Collins (2008: 232) found that past progressives appeared as frequently in his American, Australian and British data sets. This comparison suggests that the difference in frequencies of present and past progressive forms in the three data sets is not due to regional variation either. Again, it is possible that the methodology used for the study is responsible for this difference.

4.1.1 Voice

In the three data sets, the present progressive forms are overwhelmingly in the active voice. An overview is given in Table 3 below.

Voice	American English		Australian English		British English	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Active	217	100.00	22	100.00	176	99.44
Passive	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.56
Total	217	100.00	22	100.00	177	100.00

Table 3: Active and passive voice with present progressives in the data sets

There is only one instance of the present progressive in the passive voice in the British data set and the example is given in (35). Passive progressives are not instantiated in the American data set or the Australian one.

(35) A recently diagnosed speech disorder - spasmodic dysphonia - ***is*** now ***being treated*** using injections of botulinus toxin. (WB, brspok)

The very low frequency of passive progressives is in line with previous studies, which found that passive progressives are much rarer than active ones. Indeed, Collins (2008: 232) found that they occurred less than 2% of the time in his American, Australian and British data sets. He also found that, overall, passive progressives are less frequent in speech than in writing (Collins 2008: 234). De Wit & Brisard (2014: 83), for their part, note that there are few instances of passive progressives in their data. Moreover, Leech et al. (2009: 142) remark that the progressive passive "does not have a close affinity with 'oral' or informal styles" (quotation marks in the original). They also observe that the construction is more frequent "in factually based, semi-formal genres such as newspaper editorials and broadcast discussions" (Leech et al. 2009: 142). While example (35) is not part of a discussion, it is notable that it comes from a news broadcast and not a casual conversation.

4.1.2 Clause types

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, previous studies have highlighted the fact that progressive forms appear more frequently in main clauses than in subordinate ones in present-day American, Australian and British English. Once again, my findings confirm this and an overview of the frequency of present progressives in each clause type is given in Table 4 below.

Clause type	American English		Australian English		British English	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Main clause	151	69.59	20	90.91	110	62.15
Subordinate clause	66	30.41	2	9.09	67	37.85
Total	217	100.00	22	100.00	177	100.00

Table 4: Clause types with present progressives in the data sets

Present progressives in main clauses are particularly frequent in the Australian data set and they are the least frequent in the British data set, with the frequency of main clause uses in the American data set taking an intermediate position between the first two regional varieties. This is in line with Collins's (2008) findings (see Chapter 2). However, it is once again difficult to determine whether the difference in frequency is due to genre or regional variety. Nevertheless, the fact that the frequencies of present progressives in main clauses in my data sets mirror those found by Collins (2008: 243-244) suggests that regional variety may be responsible for the difference.

4.1.3 Semantic domains of verbs

Following Smith (2002: 322-323) and Collins (2008: 234-239), I used Biber et al.'s (1999: 360-364) classification of semantic domains for verbs. In the taxonomy, verbs are divided into seven semantic domains: activity verbs, aspectual verbs, causative verbs, communication verbs, mental verbs, occurrence verbs and existence verbs. Activity verbs (e.g., *eat*, *give*, *run*) are those that "primarily denote actions and events that could be associated with choice, and so take a subject with the semantic role of agent" (Biber et al. 1999: 361). Communication verbs (e.g., *ask*, *say*, *write*) are "a special subcategory of activity verbs that involve communication activities (speaking and writing)" (Biber et al. 1999: 362). Verbs that "denote a wide range of

activities and states experienced by humans" (Biber et al. 1999: 362), are classified as mental verbs. These verbs do not denote physical actions and can be further subdivided into verbs that involve a cognitive or an emotional meaning (e.g., *think* and *love*, respectively). Other types of mental verbs have to do with perception (e.g., *see* and *taste)* or have to do with the receipt of communication (e.g., *read* or *hear*). Causative verbs (e.g., *cause*, *help*, *let*) "indicate that some person or inanimate entity brings about a new state of affairs" (Biber et al. 1999: 363). Occurrence verbs (e.g., *become*, *happen*, *increase*) "primarily report events (typically physical events) that occur apart from any volitional activity" (Biber et al. 1999: 364). Existence verbs "report a state that exists between entities" (Biber et al. 1999: 364). Some of these verbs are copular (e.g., *appear*, *be*, *seem*), some signal a state of existence (e.g., *exist*, *live*, *stay*) and some indicate a relationship between entities (e.g., *contain*, *involve*, *represent*). Lastly, aspectual verbs (e.g., *begin*, *continue*, *stop*) "characterize the stage of progress of some other event or activity" (Biber et al. 1999: 364). The absolute and relative frequencies of verbs from each semantic domain in the data sets is given in Table 5 below.

Semantic domain	**American English**		**Australian English**		**British English**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Activity verb	106	48.85	10	45.45	94	53.11
Aspectual verb	5	2.30	0	0.00	8	4.52
Causative verb	11	5.07	0	0.00	2	1.13
Communication verb	40	18.43	5	22.73	21	11.86
Mental verb	20	9.22	4	18.18	29	16.38
Occurrence verb	25	11.52	1	4.55	13	7.34
Existence verb	10	4.61	2	9.09	10	5.65
Total	217	100.00	22	100.00	177	100.00

Table 5: Semantic domains of verbs with present progressives in the data sets.

Biber et al. (1999: 365) remark that verbs are not distributed evenly across the semantic domains and that this reflects the topics that speakers of English talk and write about the most. As is clear from Table 5, in the three data sets, activity verbs are the most frequent by far, making up about half of all of the verbs in each data set. Communication verbs and mental verbs are also quite frequent, though occurrence verbs are more frequent than mental verbs in

the American data set. On the other hand, occurrence verbs are a little less frequent in the British data set than in the American one and they are relatively infrequent in the Australian data set. Existence verbs are relatively infrequent in the American and in the British data sets, but they are a little more frequent in the Australian one. Lastly, aspectual and causative verbs are quite rare in my data and they are even absent from the Australian data set.

On the whole, these results are in line with those of Collins (2008: 238). The most notable difference is that, in his data, the highest proportion of communication and mental verbs is found in the American data set. In my data, however, the American data set contains the smallest proportion of these verbs. The highest proportion of communication and mental verbs is actually found in the Australian data set. However, one should be cautious in drawing conclusions, as there are much fewer examples in the Australian data set than in the other two. This makes comparisons difficult and it is possible that, with a larger data set, the proportion of communication and mental verbs would be more similar to those in the American and the British data sets.

4.2 Modal and temporal difference between the simple present and the present progressive

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, epistemically, the present tense indicates that a situation is part of a speaker's immediate reality. De Wit & Brisard (2009: 3, 2014: 59) and Brisard & De Wit (2013: 203) point out that this is relevant for the two constructions that are part of the present tense paradigm, i.e., the simple present and the present progressive. In addition, the simple present and the present progressive both signal a grounding relation of epistemic immediacy and both are used to indicate that a situation is perceived as real by the speaker at the time of speaking (Brisard & De Wit 2013: 203, De Wit & Brisard 2014: 61-62). However, the authors argue that the two constructions "confer a subtly different modal status on the situation they profile" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 59). In their different papers, they show that the difference between the simple present and the present progressive is that the former "indicates that a situation constitutes a structural part of the speaker's conception of immediate reality" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 62), whereas the latter "construes a situation … as a contingent part of immediate reality" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 62). Basically, this means that the simple present signals that the speaker regards the situation at hand as normal or expected (i.e., it has a consolidated status in the speaker's immediate reality) and that the present progressive

indicates that there was no way for the speaker to predict the situation (i.e., it does not have a consolidated status in the speaker's immediate reality), even though it is clearly happening (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 62).

This difference explains why the simple present can be used to refer to a state, but (typically) not a single dynamic situation (see Section 4.3 below). Indeed, verbs can be classified as dynamic or stative[3] (Langacker 1987: 254-267) and this has important implications for their ability to combine with the simple present and the present progressive (Langacker 1987: 255-256; De Wit & Brisard 2014: 59-61). On the one hand, dynamic verbs signal a change of state through time, and, on the other hand, stative verbs do not (Langacker 1987: 254).

The notion of scope (Langacker 1987: 118-120) is also important to understand the difference between the two types of verbs. The scope of an expression corresponds to the "extent to which conceptual content is invoked by [the] expression" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 56) and this definition of scope can be further refined in terms of the maximal scope (MS) of the expression, i.e., "[t]he overall conceptual content covered by the expression" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 56), and its immediate scope (IS), i.e., the "portion of the maximal scope that is immediately relevant for a particular linguistic purpose" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 56). The immediate scope defines the profile of a predication and always contains it (Langacker 1987: 118; De Wit & Brisard 2014: 56). A schematic illustration of a dynamic (or perfective) verb and a stative (or imperfective) verb is given in Figure 4.

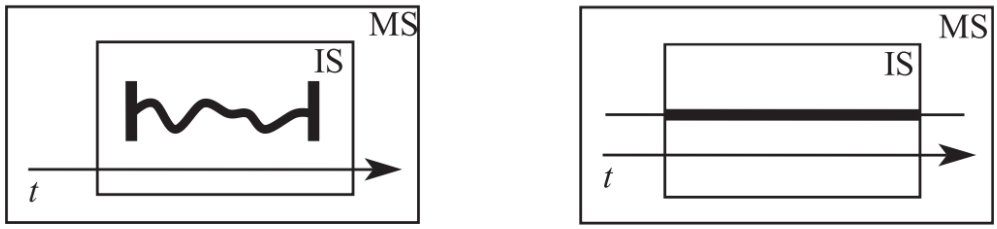

Figure 4: Dynamic verb (a) and stative verb (b) (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 60)

An important difference between dynamic and stative verbs is that the former are bounded within the expression's immediate scope (represented by the vertical lines in the immediate scope in Figure 4a), whereas the latter are unbounded within the immediate scope

[3] Langacker uses the terms "perfective" and "imperfective" to refer to dynamic verbs and stative verbs respectively. However, following De Wit & Brisard (2014), I use the terms dynamic and stative as these are the terms that are traditionally used to refer to lexical aspect.

(De Wit & Brisard 2014: 60). States therefore extend in the expression's maximal scope and what is profiled (the part in bold in Figure 4) when referring to a stative situation can "be regarded as a representative sample of a larger continuous situation" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 60).

States are naturally expressed in the simple present because speakers can predict "subsequent identical states based on previous observation or knowledge of a state" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 63). They are therefore consolidated parts of the speakers' conception of reality. Conversely, De Wit & Brisard (2014: 63) point out that single dynamic situations, because they are bounded and involve a change of state, are not compatible with the structural schematic meaning of the simple present. In fact, when the simple present is used with a dynamic verb, the situation that it refers to is understood as having a general validity (see Section 4.3) (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 63). Moreover, Leech (2004: 10) notes that when the simple present is used in this way, it "represents a series of individual *events* which as a whole make up a *state* stretching back into the past and forward into the future" (italics in the original).

Importantly, as De Wit & Brisard (2014: 63-64) point out, the fact that a situation is regarded as a structural part of a speaker's conception reality does not mean that the situation has to hold for all eternity; it only has to stay qualitatively the same for at least a (short) while. Similarly, Langacker (1987: 256) states that imperfective (stative) situations that are referred to with the simple present are not immutable and are construed as constant for (at least) the duration of the speech event.

At the temporal level, the present tense "indicates the occurrence of a full instantiation of the profiled process that precisely coincides with the time of speaking" (Langacker 1991: 250). That is, it imposes an immediate temporal scope (IS_T) that exactly as long as the speech event itself (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 65). This ties in with the fact that, in English, the simple present is perfective (see, among others, De Wit 2017: 67-68), i.e., it involves "a full view on and full knowledge of the development of a situation" (De Wit 2017: 67). This does not cause any problems with stative verbs, since, as mentioned above, a sample from a state can be seen as a representative part of the broader state. This is what is called the contractibility of states (Langacker 1987: 258-262; De Wit & Brisard 2014: 61). With states, the immediate temporal scope that is imposed on the situation delimitates "a segment that is, like any other sample of the state, representative of the overall stative situation" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 65). This is illustrated by Figure 5 below, where the broken line corresponds to the speaker's ground.

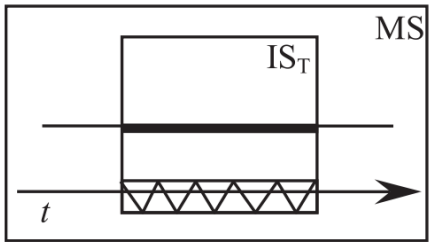

Figure 5: Present tense with stative verbs (Langacker 2001: 262, as reproduced in De Wit & Brisard 2014: 65).

With dynamic verbs, the use of the simple present poses both a durational and an epistemic problem (Langacker 2001: 263) because they are non-contractible (i.e., any segment of a dynamic situation is not representative of the complete situation (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 61)). The first problem is that "the length of an event is generally not equal to the length of a speech event describing it" (Langacker 2001: 263). The second problem is that the speaker would have to have "observe[d] an event and identif[ied] it prior to being able to report it" (Langacker 2001: 263). In order to solve these problems, with dynamic verbs, speakers have to use the present progressive, which is an imperfectivizing construction (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 66). Recall from Chapter 1 that imperfective constructions convey that the speaker views a situation from the inside. This, in turn, means that the boundaries of the situation are disregarded and relegated to the expression's maximal scope (Brisard 2013: 220; De Wit 2017: 67).

The progressive imposes two immediate scopes. The first one is an aspectual immediate scope (IS$_A$), which excludes the beginning and the end of the situation at hand (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 66). This turns the dynamic situation into something that is state-like, as it is unbounded within the immediate scope and "conceptually homogenized" (Brisard 2013: 220). The second immediate scope, imposed within IS$_A$, is temporal (IS$_T$) and relates the situation at hand to the ground (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 67). A schematic representation of the present progressive is given in Figure 6.

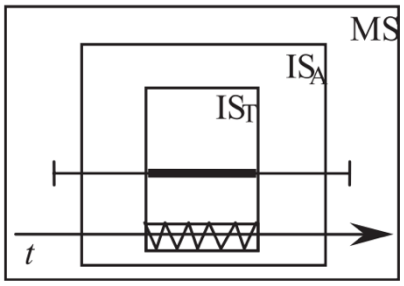

Figure 6: Present progressive (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 67)

As is clear from Figure 6, even though the dynamic situation is turned into a conceptual state, the progressive still signals that the situation that is being referred to is bounded in the expression's maximal scope (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 66). Also apparent in Figure 6 is the fact that the profile of the expression corresponds to a representative segment of the situation and coincides with the ground/speech event, much like is the case with states (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 67).

As De Wit & Brisard (2014: 68) point out, the modal meaning of contingency that is present in the uses of the present progressive comes from the internal perspective that is imposed by it and the backgrounded (but still present) boundaries of the situation in the expression's maximal scope. The speaker has an incomplete view of the situation and incomplete knowledge about it (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 68). Since the speaker cannot perceive the situation in its entirety, this situation cannot constitute a structural necessity in his conception of reality and it therefore contingent (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 68).

In the next two sections, I give an overview of the usage types of the simple present and the present progressive in each of the three data sets and I relate these to the basic modal meaning of each of these constructions.

4.3 Usage types of the simple present

In this section, I explain how the various uses of the simple present are connected to the construction's requirement that it indicate a full instantiation of the profiled process corresponding exactly to the time of speaking. As will be explained, some uses of the simple present refer to situations that are actually happening at the time of speaking (see Section 4.3.1), while others are virtually made to coincide with the speaker's ground (see Section 4.3.2).

4.3.1 Actual present-time reference with the simple present

One of the uses of the simple present with actual present-time reference, which was already mentioned in Section 4.2, is the use of the simple present to refer to states. In the data sets, the simple present is also used in this way in one instance with a performative verb (see below).

In the American data set, 32 examples out of the 217 simple present examples actually have present-time reference (14.75%), in the Australian data it is the case for 6 examples out of

22 (27.27%) and in the British data set it is the case for 32 out of 177 examples (18.08%). An overview of the usage types in the three data sets is given in Table 6 below.

Usage type	**American English**		**Australian English**		**British English**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Performative	1	3.13	0	0.00	0	0.00
State	31	96.88	6	100.00	32	100.00
Total	32	100.00	6	100.00	32	100.00

Table 6: Usage types of the simple present with actual present-time reference in the three data sets

As is clear from Table 6, the majority of uses of the simple present with actual present-time reference are found with states and this is true for all of the data sets. In Section 4.2, it was explained that this use of the simple present is made possible by a property of states: their contractibility. In example (36) below, the speaker is talking about where a classmate that they recorded for an assignment lives and they are able to use the simple present because the situation at hand is true during the speech event, the length of which coincides with a representative segment of the stative situation.

(36) 138 R: I recorded her a couple of times for assignments
139 N: Oh really, you went over there?
140 (0.4)
141 R: well, (.) she ***lives*** in that vicinity so I met her there
142 and then we walked up to Griffith (GCSAusE 26)

In (36), the living situation of the person may stay the same for a very long time, but the simple present can also be used to refer to states of shorter duration, as in example (37) taken from Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 127).

(37) She ***has*** a headache.

In (37), it is relatively safe to assume that the duration of the headache only spans a few hours or days and not the person's life time. As was already mentioned in Section 4.2, this is because the stative situations that are referred to with the simple present only have to hold for the

duration of the speech event and this does not preclude the state from no longer obtaining fairly soon after the time of speaking.

Aside from being used with state verbs, the simple present can also be used to refer to dynamic situations with actual present-time reference. However, there are constraints on these uses of the simple present. In the three data sets, there is only one example of this and it is with a performative verb. The example is given in (38) below.

(38) If there is an American company that wishes to serve the interests of Libya, we welcome that. </s><s> We ***ask*** them to come show us the way in agriculture and industry. (WB, usspok)

Performatives are special because they are "illocutionary acts [that] can be performed by uttering a sentence containing an expression that names the type of speech act" (Searle 1989: 536). They are perfective in nature and thus respect the requirement that the event being referred to and the speech event fully and exactly coincide because "the speech event and the profiled process are one and the same" (Langacker 2001: 263). In example (38), the speaker does the asking simply by uttering the sentence *We ask them to come show us the way in agriculture and industry*.

There are a few additional contexts in which the simple present can be used to refer to dynamic situations with actual present-time reference, but they are not present in any of the three data sets. The simple present is often found in sports commentaries and in the patter of conjurors or demonstrators (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 128; Leech 2004: 7). It is also found in full-verb inversions that are "characterized by a sentence-initial locative or directional adverbial (including *here* and *there*) and the post-verbal placement of the subject (if it is non-pronominal)" (De Wit 2017: 56, italics in the original). An example of each usage type is given in (39), (40) and (41) respectively. Examples (39) and (40) are taken from Leech (2004: 7) and example (41) is taken from De Wit (2017: 56).

(39) Adams ***intercepts***, ***plays*** it up-field.

(40) Look, I ***take*** this card from the pack and ***place*** it under the handkerchief – like this.

(41) Here ***comes*** the sun.

In examples (39) and (40), the events that are reported most likely do not fully and exactly coincide with the time of speaking and yet the simple present is used. This is because the actual

event is subjectively made to be simultaneous with the speech event (Huddleston & Pullum; Leech 2004: 7). Moreover, sports commentaries and demonstrations are both quite scripted and, therefore, are not really construed as contingent by speakers (Langacker 2001: 264-265; De Wit 2017: 74-75). During sporting events, commentators can fairly confidently predict what is going to happen at a given time and thus come close to describing what is happening as it is actually happening (Langacker 2001: 265). With demonstrations, on the other hand, the speaker is both following a sort of script and in control of what they are doing (Langacker 2001 264-265; De Wit 2017: 74-75). The situations that they refer to thus have a fairly consolidated status in their conception of reality.

In example (41), the use of the simple present can be explained by the fact that "the conceptualizer is anchored within or with respect to the location referred to by means of the proposed constituent" (De Wit 2017: 75). In such cases, the full-verb inversion imposes an "epistemically point-like – i.e., perfective – perspective" (De Wit 2017: 75) on the situation at hand and this entails that progressive forms cannot occur in this construction.

4.3.2 Virtual present-time reference with the simple present

The simple present can also be used in contexts where the situation that is being referred to is made to virtually coincide with the time of speaking. This is the case for the majority of the simple present uses in the data sets: in the American data set, 185 examples out of 217 have virtual present-time reference (85.25%), in the Australian data set it is the case for 16 examples out of 22 (72.73%) and in the British data set it is the case for 145 examples out of 177 (81.92%). Table 7 below gives an overview of the usage types that are found.

In the three data sets, the most frequent way that the simple present is used with virtual present-time reference is with situations that have a general validity. It is even the only other usage type of the simple present that is instantiated in the Australian data set aside from states. Recall from Section 4.1 that the majority of verbs in the data sets are dynamic and refer to activities or otherwise dynamic situations and, from Section 4.2, that when the simple present is used with a dynamic verb, the situation that is referred to is understood as having a general validity. It is therefore unsurprising that instances of this usage type are the most frequent across all the data sets.

Usage type	American English		Australian English		British English	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
General validity	156	84.32	16	100.00	126	86.90
Headline	1	0.54	0	0.00	1	0.69
Historical present	28	15.14	0	0.00	14	9.66
Interpretive	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.69
Non-counterfactual conditional	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	1.38
Report of performative verb	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.69
Total	185	100.00	16	100.00	145	100.00

Table 7: Usage types of the simple present with virtual present-time reference in the three data sets

Situations that have a general validity include habitual and generic contexts. Following De Wit (2017), I grouped habitual and generic situations under the label "general validity" because they both "involve a generalization of a set of individual situations that can, but need not, be taking place at the time of speaking" (De Wit 2017: 58). An example of a habitual expression is given in example (42) and an example of a generic situation is given in (43).

(42) <M01/> <s> Have you got a special place you go to for plants? </s>
<M02/> <s> No I just ***look around*** for bargains like cheapest place. </s> (WB, brspok)

(43) Occupation ***generates*** nothing but resistance. (WB, usspok)

In examples (42) and (43), the speakers make generalizations about situations. In (42), the speaker has been in the position of looking around for the cheapest place to buy plants enough times for them to generalize that this is what they do when they want to buy a plant. Similarly, in example (43), the speaker has witnessed multiple instances of occupation generating resistance and is therefore able to make a general statement about it using the simple present. The difference between example (42) and (43) is that the latter has a generic subject and the former has a specific one. According to Bybee et al. (1994: 151-152), this is the only difference between habituals and generics. Otherwise, as already mentioned in Section 4.2, both types of expressions are like states in that they remain identical over a period of time and they are

construed as unbounded (De Wit 2017: 26). This, in turns, explains why general-validity statements are expressed with the simple present.

The next most common usage type of the simple present with virtual present-time reference that is instantiated in the data sets is the historical use of the simple present. This usage type involves using a simple present form to refer to a past situation, as in narrative contexts. An example is given in (44).

(44) There were others that were mowing and chopping straight into trailers. </s><s> But the main emphasis is on baling, whereby the mower ***cuts*** and a round bailer ***follows up***, ***bales*** it. </s><s> Then another ***comes along***, ***picks*** it ***up***, ***takes*** it to a bale wrapper, ***places*** it on the platform. </s><s> (WB, brspok)

In (44), the speaker relates events that they have (or that someone has) witnessed in the past, but they use the simple present to do so. This seems to be motivated by the fact that speakers want to portray past events in a more vivid manner by presenting them as if happening in the present (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 130; Leech 2004: 11; De Wit 2017: 57). Moreover, when speakers use the simple present to refer to past events, they are already in possession of the knowledge about these events and can replay them whenever they want (De Wit 2017: 76). In such case, there is no durational or epistemic problem because this can be done "at the pace required for coincident linguistic encoding" (Langacker 2001: 269). Langacker (2001: 267-271) argues that, in contexts where the simple present is used with virtual present-time reference, the events that are referred to can be thought of as being part of a virtual script or document that is available to them at any time. In contexts where the historical simple present is used, this virtual document is a series of events that the speaker remembers (Langacker 2001: 269).

The same explanation applies to narrative-like contexts, such as summaries of books or reports of the content of an article, for instance. An example is given in (45). Note that, following De Wit (2017: 57) uses of the simple present in narrative-like contexts have been classified as instances of the historical use of the simple present.

(45) The TIMES ***takes*** a different approach, concentrating on Boris Yeltsin's campaign for the presidency of the Russian Federation. (WB, brspok)

In this case, there is a physical document (the copy of the Times in which the article appeared) that can be referred back to and there is a virtual document the content of which can be accessed by the speaker at any given time, allowing them to use the simple present.

The historical use of the simple present is also found in special contexts with communication verbs, as in example (46). In my view, such uses are also licensed by the fact that they can be replayed at will by speakers. This use, however, does not seem to be motivated by the speaker's desire to make what they say more vivid (De Wit 2017: 76).

(46) Mr. </s><s> Qanooni ***says***, if he does not accept a job in the transitional government, he might start his own political party. </s><s> (WB, usspok)

In example (46), Mr. Qanooni uttered his message in the past and it is then reported by the speaker, who uses the simple present rather than the simple past or the present perfect. Leech (2004: 12) notes that this is because, in such cases, the timing of the message is transferred to its receiving end, as the communication is still in force for the people who receive it. This, in turn, is what allows the simple present to be used in these contexts (Leech 2004: 12). Moreover, De Wit (2017: 76-77) remarks that, by using the simple present rather than a present perfect in such uses, speakers can distance themselves from the truth of the statements that they are uttering and present what they are saying as facts in order to obtain a reaction from their interlocutor.

In the data sets, the remaining uses of the simple present with virtual present-time reference that have been outlined in Table 7 are quite rare. The headline usage type is only instantiated once in the American data set and once in the British one. All the other usage types that have not been discussed yet are only rarely instantiated in the British data set. Examples of the headline usage type, the interpretive usage type, the report of performative verbs usage type and the non-counterfactual conditional usage type are given in (47), (48), (49) and (50), respectively.

(47) TOP STORIES Tunisia ***postpones*** the Arab League summit it was due to host on Monday because of differences on reforms and other issues. (WB, usspok)

(48) <F01/> <ZGY/> <s> You didn't row then. </s>
<F02/> <s> No I didn't that's what I ***say***. </s> (WB, brspok)

(49) At the Moscow summit, President Bush has announced that he ***proposes*** to grant the Soviet Union the status of a most-favoured trading nation. (WB, brspok)

(50) I th </s> <ZF0/> <s> I think </s> <tc text="sighs"/> <s> to have any sense of comradeship with people or connection with people if you see the person on the bench or in the shop </s> <ZF1/> <s> or or </s> <ZF0/> <s> or in behind the counter as a competitor who might take your job if you ***don't work*** hard enough. </s> (WB, brspok)

The use of the simple present in headlines, interpretive uses and reports of performatives also seems to stem from the fact that speakers are already in possession of the full knowledge needed to refer to the events that they want to talk about and are thus able to replay them virtually in a way that coincides with their ground. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 131) and Leech (2004: 13) note that the simple present is often used in headlines because it is shorter and more vivid than past or perfect verb forms. On the other hand, concerns of brevity and vividness do not appear to be a factor in interpretive uses of the simple present. As was already mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, interpretive uses are often seen as special uses of the present progressive and serve to interpret or clarify a situation. Example (48) shows that the simple present can also be used in an interpretive way. De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020: 505) make a similar observation and they remark that simple present interpretive uses seem to be more direct than interpretive uses with a progressive form.

Lastly, with non-counterfactual conditionals, contrary to the usage types that have been discussed so far, the situation that is referred to does not correspond to something that actually happens habitually or that actually happened in the past. In example (50), the *if*-clause does not refer to an actual instance of not working hard enough, but an imagined one. Because the situation that is referred to is entirely virtual and imagined by the speaker, they have full knowledge about it and there is therefore no epistemic problem (De Wit 2017: 78). Similarly, there is no durational problem because they are able to virtually make the situation that they are talking about coincide precisely with the time of speaking (De Wit 2017: 78).

There is an additional context in which the simple present can be used to refer to situations with virtual present-time reference, but it is not part of any of the data sets. In some cases, the simple present can be used to refer to future situations (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 131-134; Leech 2004: 65-66). In order for this to be possible, the speaker has to be very confident that what they are saying will happen and thus this usage type of the simple present is typical when talking about scheduled events (De Wit 2017: 77). An example is given in (51) taken from Leech (2004: 65).

(51) The train ***leaves*** at 7.30 this evening.

Langacker (2001: 267) proposes that such uses of the simple present evoke a virtual schedule that comprises mental representations of the expected events and that utterances such as the one in example (51) describe a virtual representation of the denoted event. The virtual scheduled is available for the speaker to metaphorically read from at any time and they are therefore able to

make the representation of the virtual event coincide with the time of speaking (Langacker 2001: 267-268).

4.4 Usage types of the present progressive

In this section, I present the usage types of the present progressive that are instantiated in the three data sets. Recall from Chapter 1 that De Wit & Brisard (2009, 2014) and Brisard & De Wit (2013) propose that the modal meaning of the present progressive is instantiated in its temporal as well as in its modal uses. In Section 4.4.1, I discuss the temporal usage types of the present progressive that occur in my data and in Section 4.4.2, I discuss the modal ones. First, however, Table 8 below gives an overview of all the usage types that are instantiated in the data sets.

Usage type	**American English**		**Australian English**		**British English**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Current ongoingness	114	52.53	9	40.91	91	51.41
Historical present progressive	25	11.52	0	0.00	6	3.39
Ongoingness at virtual reference point	2	0.92	0	0.00	5	2.82
Temporary validity	3	1.38	0	0.00	2	1.13
Duration	3	1.38	0	0.00	2	1.13
Repetition	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.56
Habitual	28	12.90	3	13.64	21	11.86
Modal	42	19.35	10	45.45	49	27.68
Total	217	100.00	22	100.00	177	100.00

Table 8: Usage types of the present progressive in the three data sets

On the whole, the frequencies of the usage types in the three data sets are in line with De Wit & Brisard's (2014) findings. The most frequent usage types are those that instantiate current ongoingness and those that are modally rather than aspecto-temporally motivated. The

habitual usage type of the present progressive is also fairly frequent in the three data sets. The least frequent usage types in De Wit & Brisard's (2014) data (i.e., temporary validity, duration, iteration and repetition) are also the least frequent ones in my data. In fact, there are no instances of the repetition usage type in the American and in the Australian data sets and the iteration usage type is absent from all the data sets. Moreover, many of the least frequent usage types in the American and in the British data sets are not instantiated in the Australian one. This is unsurprising given the small number of examples in that data set. It is remarkable, however, that there are almost as many modal uses of the present progressive as there are aspect-temporally motivated ones in it.

A notable difference between my analysis of present progressive forms and that of De Wit & Brisard (2014) is that I added the category of ongoingness at a virtual reference time to the analysis in order to account for examples that are not actually ongoing at the time of speaking and that do not fit in any of the other virtual categories (see Section 4.4.1 below for more information). Another difference between De Wit & Brisard's (2014) study and mine is that occurrences of the current ongoingness usage type are more frequent in my data than in theirs. This is in part due to the fact that futurate uses of the present progressive, which represent almost 13% of cases in De Wit & Brisard's (2014) data, were excluded from my analysis. Once again, it is also possible that the methodology that was used for the study played a role in that occurrences of other usage types had to be excluded because they did not have a simple counterpart.

4.4.1 Temporal usage types of the present progressive

Instances of the current ongoingness usage type involve "singular events that are actually ongoing at the time of speaking" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 70). As already mentioned in Chapter 1, De Wit & Brisard (2014: 87) propose that current ongoingness is the present progressive's prototypical use. This is because this is the most frequent use of the present progressive, but also because they argue that, compared to other categories, current ongoingness is neutral and needs no "further qualifications … in terms of special temporal or modal features of the profiled situation" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 70). An example of this usage type is given in (52) below.

(52) C-SPAN is busy celebrating its 25th year in broadcasting, and a lot of people ***are celebrating*** with it. (WB, usspok)

(52a) Americans celebrate the Fourth of July with family gatherings, parades, speeches and fireworks. </s><s> They also ***celebrate*** with patriotic music. </s><s> (WB, usspok)

In example (52), the progressive imperfectivizes the celebrating, relegating the boundaries of the event to the expression's maximal scope. There is thus full and exact coincidence between the time of speaking and a representative part of the event at hand. Moreover, this event is not construed as a structural part of the speaker's conception of reality. The fact that people are celebrating is not presented as a habit of theirs and contrasts with example (52a), where the speaker explains what Americans typically do when they celebrate and which thus constitutes a consolidated part of their conception of reality.

As De Wit & Brisard (2014: 71) point out, in some instances, the present progressive can be used to refer to a part of a situation that still lasts for a substantial amount of time after the time of speaking and still be instances of the current ongoingness usage type, as in example (53).

(53) The Soviet argument mirrors much of what ***is happening*** in the formerly communist economies of Eastern Europe. (WB, brspok)

(53a) <M02/> <s> Now you know what really the Chancellor has done is brought us that's the U K in line with what ***happens*** in other parts of Europe er where in Germany for example a B M W and a Mercedes is commonplace as a taxi or private hire vehicle. </s><s> (WB, brspok)

In example (53) the situation in Eastern Europe can be assumed to go on for quite some time after the moment of speaking, but in spite of large duration of the event, the situation is still construed as a non-consolidated part of the speaker's conception of reality. In example (53a), on the other hand, what happens in Europe is construed as a structural, consolidated, part of the speaker's conception of reality and they therefore use the simple present to refer to it. Importantly, whether something is construed as a contingent or structural depends on the speaker's subjective conception of reality. The simple present could be used in example (53), but the meaning that would arise would reflect a different construal of the event.

All the temporal usage types of the present progressive instantiate the prototypical meaning of current ongoingness in some way and are seen as extension of this particular category (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 70). Thus, although instances of the historical usage type of the present progressive do not refer to an actual event in progress at the time of speaking, they do refer to the "virtual representation of an event that is construed as coinciding with the time of speaking" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 72). In the case of the historical usage type, the speaker

makes an event that has actually happened in the past virtually coincide with their ground (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 72). An example of an instance of the historical usage type of the present progressive is given in (54).

(54) In the morning we would turn on the radio to find out what***'s going on***, and there would be music and the radio would say that oh, people are so happy … (WB, usspok)

Using the present progressive to refer to past events portrays those events in a more vivid manner because it is as though they were happening in the present (Leech 2004: 11). This explains that such uses of the present progressive are frequently found in narrative contexts (De Wit & Brisard 2014). In example (54), the speaker relates something that they used to do.

As is the case with historical uses of the simple present, the present progressive can be used with communication verbs. An example is given in (55) and contrasted with a similar example with a simple present in (55a).

(55) As Jonathan Birchall reports from Kuwait City, the Kuwaitis ***are accusing*** Iraq of failing to abide by the terms of the United Nations Gulf War ceasefire resolution … (WB, brspok)

(55a) Police in Northern Ireland want more compensation for officers forced from their homes by intimidation and bomb attacks. </s><s> Some officers say they've lost thousands of pounds. </s><s> They ***accuse*** their police authority of not caring. </s> (WB, brspok)

In both (55) and (55a), the accusations had to be made before the journalists could report them. The difference between the two is that, in (55a), the speaker views the situation in its entirety and has full knowledge about its development. In (55), however, the boundaries of the situation are relegated to the expression's maximal scope and this means that the speaker only has a partial view on the situation and partial knowledge about its development (De Wit 2017: 67). In example (55) the situation is thus presented as a contingent part of the speaker's conception of reality, whereas example (55a) the situation is presented as a consolidated part of it. This, in turn, has an influence on the stance that is adopted by the speakers. In (55a), the speaker presents the fact that the police officers are accusing their authority of not caring as a fact and in a more detached way than the speaker in (55) when they report the accusation made by the Kuwaitis. A similar observation on the use of the simple present to appear more factual and detached is made by De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020: 498).

The present progressive can also be used to refer to events that are not actually happening or that have actually happened, but rather to entirely virtual events. An example is given in (56).

(56) <F01/> <s> [when] he says to you What are you doing? </s><s> you say to him I***'m making*** arrangements. </s> (WB, brspok)

In example (56), the conversation that <F01> is talking about is entirely imaginary and might never take place. The speaker is quoting the characters in that imaginary discussion and uses the present progressive because this is how the people having the conversation would refer to non-consolidated parts of their immediate reality if they were actually having the conversation in the present. Notice that <F01> uses the simple present to introduce first quote of the virtual conversation. This is because, having imagined the conversation, the speaker is able to mentally align the situation and the time of speaking. Moreover, she also has full knowledge about the situation that she refers to.

The temporary validity usage type and the duration one are both used to refer to actual situations rather than virtual ones. These categories duration differ from the ones that have been presented so far, because of the importance of situational boundaries in both categories (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 76). Uses of the present progressive that belong to the category of temporary validity have very salient boundaries, which are clearly referred to in the context (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 76-77). Following De Wit & Brisard (2014: 77), I only analyzed examples as instance of the temporary validity usage type when there was a clear indication of temporariness in the context. An example is given in (57).

(57) The scenario is just one of the 36 law enforcement situations that officers from 11 states ***are experiencing*** this week during the Moundsville Mock Prison Riot. (WB, usspok)

In example (57), the speaker makes clear that the situation only holds true for a week. As mentioned above, using the progressive means that the boundaries of the situation are relegated to the expression's maximal scope. In instances of the temporary validity usage type these boundaries not profiled, but they are made highly prominent (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 76).

Conversely, uses that belong to the category of duration have boundaries that have a very low degree of salience and De Wit & Brisard (2014: 77) mention that it is possible to paraphrase such uses with the verb *keep on*. An example is given in (58).

(58) International health experts are warning the bird flu ***is*** still ***spreading***, and continues to poses a threat to humans. (WB, usspok)

In example (58), the boundaries of the situation are heavily downplayed, but they are still assumed to exist in the expression's maximal scope. That is, it is assumed that the flu will stop spreading at some point, but the speaker also conveys that that may not happen for a very long time. Because there is minimal emphasis placed on the boundaries of durative situations expressed in the progressive, occurrences that are part of this category are seen as closer to states in that "the designated event is also made relatively homogeneous" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 77). The difference with a real state is that states are structural parts of the speaker's reality, whereas durative uses of the present progressive are still construed as contingent (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 78).

The usage types that have been presented so far all involve singular events, but the present progressive can also be used to refer to multiple events. (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 78-81). In the data sets, two such usage types are instantiated: the repetition usage type of the present progressive and the habitual one. Both indicate that an event is repeated and this repetition generates a virtual higher-order construct that represents the event type that is then repeated (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 78). When the present progressive is used to refer to this event type, the progressive zooms in on the higher-order construct and this makes it possible to have a present-time reading (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 78). The iteration usage type of the present progressive, involving punctual events (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 80), also involves reference to multiple events, but there are no instances of this usage type in any of the three data sets.

The difference between the repetition usage type (as well as the iteration usage type) and the habitual one is that there is that, with the former, at least part of one of the repeated events coincide with the time of speaking (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 78). An example of an instance of the repetition usage type is given in (59).

(59) <F01/> <s> FX ***is complaining*** about her throat again. </s>
<M01/> <s> Sore? </s>
<F01/> <s> Yeah. </s> (WB, brspok)

With instance of the repetition usage type of the progressive, the events that are referred to need not be very close together, but they have to be linked to a specific occasion (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 80). In example (59), it is clear that FX has already complained about her throat and that

she is again doing so in the present. It is also possible that she might complain about it being sore several times after the speech event in (55), but the repetitions of her complaints do not form a habit that she as.

Habitual uses of the progressives involve a more generalized recurrence of events (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 80) and because of this, differ quite significantly from other aspecto-temporally motivated uses. Indeed, habits are usually structural parts of a person's conception of reality (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 80) and the notion of structural necessity is incompatible with the progressive. However, it is also possible for habits to be seen as contingent, in which case the habit is typically viewed as temporary and the present progressive is used to refer to it (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 81). Moreover, contrary to instances of the repetition usage type of the progressive, an occurrence of the habitual event can, but need not, be taking place at the time of speaking (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 81). An example of the habitual use of the present progressive is given in (60).

(60) [During a conversation about watching television]
<M02/> <s> I mean they***'re showing*** you things on there </s>
<M01/> <s> Yes. </s><s> Yes. </s>
<M02/> <s> what we never even thought of </s>
<M01/> <s> Yes. </s><s> Yes. </s>
<M02/> <s> What's really er </s> <ZF1/> <s> I </s> <ZF0/> <s> I enjoy an all </s>
<M01/> <s> Yes. </s>
<M02/> <s> the all these programmes these </s>
<M01/> <s> Yes. </s>
<M02/> <s> people go walk abouts and all this and taking us </s> <ZF1/> <s> to </s> <ZF0/> <s> to monasteries and all this business and all these er geographical these people in other countries what we never knew about </s> (WB, brspok)

(60a) I mean </s> <ZF1/> <s> they </s> <ZF0/> <s> they ***show*** you all this John that you know and they've got all this grain like in Russia. </s><s> (WB, brspok)

In example (60), the two people are talking about watching television, but they are not actually watching it and, therefore, they are not actually being shown anything. In order to be able to utter the sentence *they're showing you things on there*, the speaker needs to invoke a virtual higher-order construct of the repeated event and this is what allows the denoted situation to be made coincident with the time of speaking. This is similar to what happens with habituals expressed in the simple present, as in (60a). In (60a), nobody is showing the person anything at the time of speaking but the use of the simple present is allowed because the speaker is making a segment of the virtual generalization that they have made about the situation coincide with the moment of speaking. The difference between examples (60) and (60a) is that, in (60a), the

habit is presented as a structural part of the speaker's conception of reality, whereas the habit is construed a non-consolidated part of the speaker's conception of reality in (60).

Notice that the speaker in (60a) also seems a little more detached when referring to what is shown than the speaker in (60). Because the present progressive is used to refer to contingent situations, which can therefore not be expected, these situations are often associated with modal notions such as surprise, atypicality, irritation, tentativeness and intensification (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 82-84). In example (60), there is a sense of intensification. The speaker seems to marvel at all the things that, thanks to what is shown on television, they have access to and that they did not even know existed. This sense of intensity and wonder contributes to making the speaker in (60) less detached from what they are reporting than the speaker in example (60a).

4.4.2 Modal usage types of the present progressive

Modal uses of the present progressive are direct instances of the construction's core meaning and "are primarily epistemically, rather than temporally, motivated" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 84). These uses are found when the speaker expresses "a subjective evaluation of an objective state of affairs" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 84). This is illustrated in examples (61) and (62) below.

(61) <F03/> <s> I mean I mean </s> <ZF1/> <s> the g+ </s> <ZF0/> <s> the government that's in now. </s>
<M01/> <s> I know. </s><s> I know. </s>
<F03/> <s> 'Cos they're throwing it away now where for years they've been telling the kids we've not got this for education not got that for this and not for the National Health nothing and now it seems that everywhere everybody'***s getting*** millions. </s> (WB, brspok)

(62) [In a discussion about drug addiction] While we have a problem in our inner cities, and with our poor, we ***are*** also ***seeing*** this in our affluent suburban communities, and we have evidence it is getting into our small towns. (WB, brspok)

In examples (61) and (62), as in example (63) above, the situations that are denoted are not presented in a neutral way. Rather, there is a subjective, emotional, quality to the way that the speakers are reporting the situations. In (61), the speaker is clearly irritated by the fact that the government is now spending money after having said for long time that they could not afford to allocate more funds for education or for the healthcare system. Note that there is also a sense of intensity (*everywhere everybody*). In example (62), there is a sense that the speaker views

the fact that there are also drug addiction problems in affluent communities as surprising. In both examples, the situations that are referred to are seen as atypical and contrast with the speakers' expectations. They are therefore viewed as real, but they are not construed as consolidated parts of the speakers' conceptions of reality and this acts as a direct motivation for the use of the present progressive (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 86).

Recall from Chapters 1 and 2 that interpretive uses of the progressive have typically been classified as special uses in previous research. Following De Wit & Brisard (2014: 85-86), I have analyzed such uses of the present progressive as modal uses because the use of the progressive is not motivated by aspecto-temporal reasons, but rather by the fact that "the precise nature of the relevant speech event is not entirely obvious" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 65-86). An example is given in (63) below.

(63)
5 M: O:h my go:d, he just thinks he's so: ↑awesome he's just
6 like I dunno we were just talking about like abo:rtion and
7 stuff like that and he was just really annoying and then
8 every↑, like you ca:n't actually belie:ve you can't he doesn't
9 let you believe in what you wan't to belie:ve you have to
10 believe what he: believes?↑ if that makes any sense?=
11 K: =Well he's the teacher he has to guide you like in, I
12 don't know in a, certain wa:y.
13 M: Yeah but, I don't really think that's fai:r because he:'s like
14 teaching things that are:n't even like o:n that.
15 Catholic teacher [shouldn't really.
16 K: ↑[So he ***'s saying*** that it's, ri:ght to
17 have one?= (GCSAusE 22)

In example (63), speaker K is unsure of how to interpret what speaker M is explaining about their teacher and his views on abortion. In this case, the progressive is used in order to "re-classif[y] a situation that has occurred before" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 85) because the interpretation of the situation is not a consolidated part of the speaker's conception of reality. This, in turn, explains why the simple present often sounds anomalous in such contexts (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 86), though it can also be used in an interpretive way sometimes, as was shown in Section 4.3.2.

4.5 Extravagance as a motivation for the use of the present progressive

As was stated above, uses of the present progressive can be accompanied by modal connotations of surprise, intensification, irritation or tentativeness because it is used to refer to situations that do not have a consolidated status in speakers' conceptions of reality. These connotations are the reflection of the way that speakers feel toward what they are saying and Petré (2017: 229) notes that when speakers have a strong (emotional) connection to what they are referring to, they want to make their utterances stand out to their hearer. The progressive, because of its meaning of epistemic contingency, can be used to make statements stand out and signal that what speakers are saying is out of the ordinary (Petré 2017; De Wit, Petré & Brisard 2020). This brings us to the notion of extravagance, which De Wit, Pétré & Brisard (2020: 480) define as "a signaling mechanism that consists in the exploitation of a construction that is unexpected in a given context as a way for speakers to indicate that the situation they are reporting is somehow non-canonical or that the circumstances surrounding a conventional use of the construction do not pertain."

The term "extravagance" in the context of linguistic studies was coined by Haspelmath (1999: 1055) as a way to refer to one of Keller's (1994: 101) maxims of action, namely "talk in such a way that you are noticed" and this notion has been showed to be an important factor in the grammaticalization of certain constructions (Haspelmath 1999), notably in the grammaticalization of the progressive construction (Petré 2017; De Wit, Petré & Brisard 2020).

Indeed, in Old English and in Middle English, the *BE* + V-ing construction had a stative function and "the participle behaved like an adjective in both form and function" (Petré 2017: 230). The construction was used to indicate temporary states and, in Middle English, it often occurred in past subordinate clauses that provided a temporal and/or spatial background frame for a foregrounded event expressed in the main clause (Petré 2017: 230). Since the event in the main clause constituted the focus of the sentence, Petré (2017: 230) explains that the *BE* + V-ing construction was focalized by it and that this had the effect that the situation expressed in the subordinate clause was understood as "'in-progress' at a specific point in time" (Petré 2017: 230, quotation marks in the original). In Middle English, the use of subordinate clauses containing *BE* + V-ing the construction to give a background frame to an event in the main clause became more and more frequent and the main point of adding such subordinate clauses to one's sentence became to inform one's hearer of what was happening when something else happened (Petré 2017: 231). Petré (2017: 31) notes that the interpretation of ongoingness was semanticized after subordinate contexts became predominant and that this semanticization

enabled the *BE* V-ing construction to be used in new ways, notably with a dynamic reading. Later, at the beginning of the Modern English period, the *BE* + V-ing the construction was transferred from mainly past tense subordinate clauses to mainly present tense main clauses (Petré 2016: 49). Petré (2016: 49-50) explains this shift by the fact that, once the meaning of ongoingness had become part of the meaning of the *BE* + V-ing the construction, it could be used in past and present main clauses. Nevertheless, Petré 2017 (232-233) points out that, while the semanticization of ongoingness in past contexts was likely simply due to a reanalysis of the construction, its extension to present tense main clauses was not a given and that the shift toward present tense main clause uses was helped by speakers' desire to be extravagant. Indeed, the use of the construction in present tense main clauses was entirely new and therefore stood out (Petré 2017: 232-233).

Based on a comparison of present progressive forms and simple progressive forms used in highly similar conditions (see Section 3.1), Petré (2017) and De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020) were able to show that, at the beginning of their development, progressive forms were used by speakers to convey extravagance. This, in turn, helped the spread of the construction (De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020: 497) and paved the way for the situation in present-day English, where the progressive is obligatory when speakers want to talk about present ongoing dynamic situations. Interestingly, De Wit, Pétré & Brisard (2020) show that, even in present-day English, the progressive can be used to express extravagance and they claim that the progressive's meaning of epistemic contingency is what allows it to keep appearing in extravagant contexts.

In order to determine whether the progressive is used for reasons of extravagance, it is necessary to compare progressive forms to simple forms used in highly similar contexts, as it would be circular to assume that the presence of a progressive form is indicative of the presence of extravagance (Petré 2017: 233). This is why Petré (2017) and De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020) created minimal pairs of utterances in the simple present and in the present progressive and why I also chose to use this methodology (see Section 3.1). Petré (2017: 237-240) and De Wit, Petré & Brisard (2020: 484-485) propose that it is possible to identify utterances as extravagant on the basis of contextual cues and they outline three main criteria that can be used to determine whether an utterance is extravagant or not. The first criterion is the presence of emphatic markers in the co-text. These emphatic markers qualify the situation as extraordinary and can be adverbials, modifiers that indicate intensification, irritation or surprise (De Wit, Petré, Brisard 2020: 485). Focal constructions such as clefts are also subsumed under this criterion (De Wit, Petré, Brisard 2020: 485). The second criterion is that of speaker involvement because it is assumed that speakers want to make utterances that are important to them stand out (De

Wit, Petré, Brisard 2020: 485). The authors assigned involvement to utterances which designated situations in which the speaker was physically participating or which directly affected them (De Wit, Petré, Brisard 2020: 485). Lastly, the third criterion is the presence of adverbials of current time and place in the co-text because these "draw attention to the currency of the situation" (De Wit, Petré, Brisard 2020: 485).

Using these criteria, I was able to show that extravagance seems to be a motivation for the use of the present progressive in my three data sets. An overview is given in Table 9 below.

Degree of extravagance	**American English**		**Australian English**		**British English**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Progressive more extravagant	45	20.74	11	50.00	52	29.38
Same degree of extravagance	161	74.19	8	36.36	107	60.45
Simple more extravagant	11	5.07	3	13.64	18	10.17
Total	217	100.00	22	100.00	177	100.00

Table 9: Comparison between the extravagance degree of utterances in the simple present and utterances in the present progressive in the three data sets

As is clear from Table 9, in my data, in the majority of cases, except in the Australian data set, present progressive utterances are as extravagant as their simple counterpart. This is most likely due to the fact that the majority of progressives in the data sets are motivated by aspecto-temporal reasons which can, but need not to, be accompanied by modal connotations that signal the speaker's attitude toward what there are saying. Indeed, in my data, utterances were mostly analyzed as extravagant because of the presence of emphatic markers. This also explains why there is a comparatively very high frequency of more extravagant progressive forms in the Australian data set. Recall that a little under half of all the present progressive examples in that data set are modal uses of the present progressive and are thus motivated by the speaker's subjective evaluation of the situation that they are referring to. In the same vein, it is unsurprising that the lowest proportion of progressive uses that are more extravagant than their simple counterparts is found in the American data set. Indeed, as already mentioned previously, the utterances come from transcriptions of television and radio material and a large portion of them come from news broadcasts. It can thus reasonably be assumed that speakers in the American data set are more likely to portray things in a matter-of-fact way than to convey their

subjective attitude toward the situations that they are reporting. It can also be assumed that they are not talking about things that are especially important to them.

In all three data sets, there are considerably more pairs of utterances where the progressive is more extravagant than its simple counterpart than the reverse. This is in line with De Wit, Petré & Brisard's (2020) findings that progressive forms can still be used by speakers who wish to make their utterances stand out in present-day English. However, it is also clear that simple present forms are sometimes also found in extravagant contexts. An example is given in (64) below and contrasted with its progressive counterpart in (64a). Examples (60), (61) and (62) above were examples of the present progressive used for reasons of extravagance. Recall that examples (60) and (61) both featured a sense of intensity and that examples (61) and (62) featured a sense of irritation and a sense of surprise respectively. For convenience, example (61) is given again in (65) below and contrasted with its simple counterpart in (65a)

(64) [Talking about lecturers]
<F0X/> <s> They just go on and on. </s> <F0X/> <s> I just ***sit*** there thinking what a load of rubbish. </s> (WB, brspok)

(64a) And the servants who had nothing left to do ***are*** just ***sitting*** for the first time. (WB, brspok).

(65) <F03/> <s> I mean I mean </s> <ZF1/> <s> the g+ </s> <ZF0/> <s> the government that's in now. </s>
<M01/> <s> I know. </s><s> I know. </s>
<F03/> <s> 'Cos they're throwing it away now where for years they've been telling the kids we've not got this for education not got that for this and not for the National Health nothing and now it seems that everywhere everybody'***s getting*** millions. </s> (WB, brspok)

(65a) I do think that they ***get*** it on the cheap. (WB, brspok)

In example (64), there is a clear sense of irritation. The speaker is annoyed by the fact that lecturers talk for a long time and that what they say is *a load of rubbish*. In example (64a), conversely, the speaker is quite detached from the situation that they report and simply describes what people are doing. The opposite is true of the pair in examples (65) and (65a). As already stated above, example (65) features a sense of intensity and irritation. In example (65a), on the other hand, the speaker presents things in a more matter-of-fact and detached way.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that in my data, in line with previous research, present progressive forms seem to be more frequent than past progressive ones and that there does not appear to be significant differences between the American, the Australian and the British data sets in this regard. In terms of the voice with which present progressives combine, the clause types that are instantiated, and the semantic domains from which the verbs in the data sets stem, there also does not appear to be significant differences between the three data sets.

I have also shown that there are no significant differences between the three data sets in terms of the usage types of the simple present that are instantiated. In the three data sets, the simple present is most often found in reference to states or in reference to statements that have a general validity. Based on previous research, I have also shown how the usage types of the simple present that are instantiated in my data sets are connected to the requirement that it indicate a full instantiation of the profiled process corresponding exactly to the time of speaking.

Similarly, I have shown that there are no significant differences between the American and the British data sets in terms of the usage types of the present progressive that are instantiated in it. There is a significant difference between these data sets and the Australian data set, as modal uses of the present progressive are much more frequent in the latter. It is possible, however, that this is due to the low number of examples in the Australian data set and that there would not be such a stark contrast if all the data sets were of more similar sizes. Based on previous research, I have shown how the uses of the present progressive in the three data sets relate to its meaning of epistemic contingency.

Finally, in line with previous research, I have shown that the notion of extravagance is a source of motivation for the use of the present progressive.

In the next chapter, I give an account of the difference between the simple past and the past progressive based on the past examples in my three data sets. I also attempt to show how epistemic contingency is part of the meaning of the past progressive.

5. The past progressive and the simple past

In this chapter, I focus on the past examples in my data sets and I attempt to show which motivations underlie the use of the simple past and the use of the past progressive by speakers of American, Australian and British English. I first give an overview of the past progressive data in Section 5.1, then I move on to an account of the modal and temporal difference between the simple past and the past progressive in Section 5.2. In Section 5.3, I detail the usage types of the simple past that are found in the American, in the Australian and in the British data sets. I do the same thing for the usage types of the past progressive in Section 5.4. Finally, Section 5.5 concludes the chapter.

5.1 Overview of the past progressive data

In this section, I give an overview of how often past progressive examples occur in the three datasets, the voice with which they combine, the clause types that are instantiated, and the semantic domains of the verbs. As was the case in Section 4.1, the numbers discussed here are the same for simple past uses and will therefore not be discussed.

In Section 4.1, it was shown that past progressives are significantly less frequent in the three data sets than present ones. As a reminder, in the American data set, 33 out of 250 examples (13.20%) are past progressives, in the Australian data set this is the case for 25 out of 47 examples (53.19%) and in the British data set it is the case for 73 out of 250 (29.20%). This is in line with Collins's (2008) findings, as already explained in Section 4.1. Recall also that the high frequency of past progressives in the Australian data set was explained as a result of the methodology that has been chosen to conduct the present study.

5.1.1 Voice

In the three data sets, all instances of the past progressive are in the active voice. Once again, this is in line with the findings of Collins (2008), who found that past progressives in the passive voice were extremely rare in his data.

5.1.2 Clause type

As previously stated, in present-day English, progressive forms appear more frequently in main clauses than in subordinate ones. My findings confirm this, at least in the case of the Australian and the British data. An overview of the frequency of past progressives in each clause type is given in Table 10 below.

Clause type	American English		Australian English		British English	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Main clause	14	42.42	20	80.00	45	61.64
Subordinate clause	19	57.58	5	20.00	28	38.36
Total	33	100.00	25	100.00	73	100.00

Table 10: Clause types with past progressives in the data sets

As was the case with present progressives, past progressives are particularly frequent in the Australian data set. However, contrary to what was observed for present progressives, the lowest frequency of main clause uses with past progressives is found in the American data set and the frequency of main clause uses in the British data set takes an intermediate position between the other two regional varieties.

Once again, it is difficult to determine whether the observed difference is due to regional variation, the genres represented in each of the data sets or the methodology that was used for the study. Since my findings contradict those of Collins (2008) in the case of the American data, it might be that the difference is due to the fact that this data set only comprises television and radio material or that it stems from the methodology.

5.1.3 Semantic domain of verbs

As was the case for the present data, activity verbs are the most frequent in the data sets. An overview of the absolute and relative frequencies of verbs from each semantic domain in the data sets is given in Table 11 below.

Semantic domain	American English		Australian English		British English	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Activity verb	23	69.70	11	44.00	30	41.10
Aspectual verb	1	3.03	0	0.00	1	1.37
Causative verb	2	6.06	0	0.00	1	1.37
Communication verb	2	6.06	9	36.00	26	35.62
Mental verb	1	3.03	4	16.00	8	10.96
Occurrence verb	2	6.06	0	0.00	6	8.22
Existence verb	2	6.06	1	4.00	1	1.37
Total	33	100.00	25	100.00	73	100.00

Table 11: Semantic domains of verbs with past progressives in the data sets

The proportion of instances of each verb type with past progressives in the data sets is in line with previous research: the most frequent types of verbs are activity verbs, communication verbs and mental verbs (Biber et al. 1999: 365; Collins 2008: 238). Moreover, the frequency of instantiation of each verb type is relatively similar to what was found for the present progressive data in Section 4.1.3. As was the case for the present progressive data, the highest proportion of communication and mental verbs is found in the Australian data set and the lowest proportion of these verbs is found in the American data set. Once again, relatively small numbers of examples make it difficult to draw conclusions. However, in this case, the American data set and the Australian one are of relatively similar sizes. It might then be that the difference in frequencies that was observed in Section 4.1.3 was due to regional variation or genre.

5.2 Modal and temporal difference between the simple past and the past progressive

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, epistemically, the past tense indicates that a situation is distant from a speaker's immediate reality. Situations that have occurred in the past are considered as a part of reality, but they are anterior to the speaker's ground and do not coincide with it (Langacker 2001: 260; Brisard 2013: 215-216). This is relevant for the simple past as well as for the past progressive.

At the temporal level, the past tense "indicates the occurrence of a full instantiation of the profiled process prior to the time of speaking" (Langacker 1991: 250). Like the simple present, the simple past is thus perfective. Contrary to the present paradigm, however, this does not cause durational or epistemic problems with dynamic verbs (Brisard 2013: 219). Indeed, the denoted situations do not have to be coincident with the time of speaking and speakers have already identified the events that they want to report when they are reporting them. Therefore, in past contexts, speakers do not have to use the progressive in order to refer to dynamic situations and, as Brisard (2013: 222) points out, "the English progressive construction is far less central to the description of the past tense paradigm than it is in the present tense paradigm." Moreover, with past events expressed in the simple past, there is no need that the event be of short duration (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 137; Leech 2004: 13). This is because the immediate scope that is imposed on the situation that is being referred to "can always be made large enough to include a full instance of the profiled perfective process, regardless of its duration" (Langacker 2001: 262). With stative situations, the portion of the state that is delimited by the imposed immediate scope constitutes a full instance of the denoted situation before the time of speaking (Langacker 2001: 262). This is because, as mentioned previously, any segment of a state is a valid, representative, instance of that state. States can thus also be expressed in the simple past.

In the past tense, like in the present tense, the progressive imperfectivizes the denoted situations (Langacker 2001: 262-263). Recall that this done by the imposition of two different immediate scopes: the aspectual scope (IS_A), which relegates the boundaries of the situation to the expression's maximal scope, and the temporal scope (IS_T), which indicates the relation between the profiled process and the speaker's ground. Langacker (2001: 262) points out that there are two ways in which past progressives can be interpreted, depending on the context in which they are found. One contextual interpretation is that the whole progressive situation occurred before the time of speaking. This is the situation that is illustrated in Figure 7a below. The other contextual interpretation is that the progressive situation started prior to the speech event, but is not finished and extends through it. This is the situation illustrated in Figure 7b below.

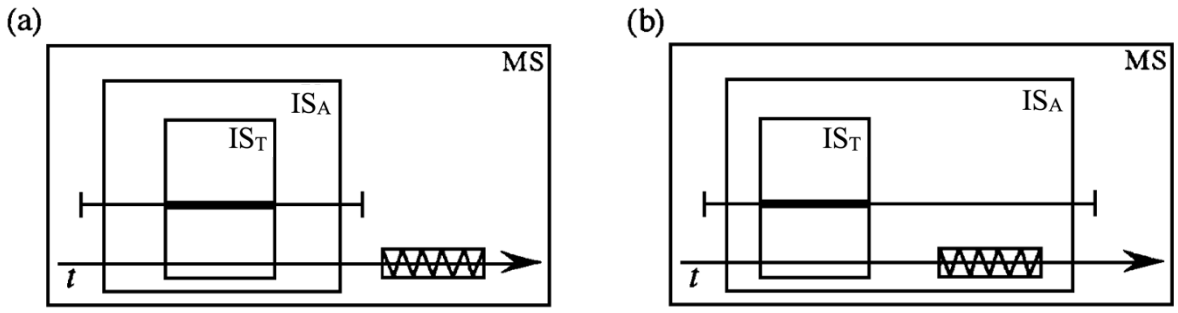

Figure 7: Past progressive (Langacker 2001: 262, with modifications)

Both of these configurations are possible because, while it is imperative that the temporal immediate scope be anterior to the speaker's ground, there is no specification of the position of speech event with respect to the aspectual immediate scope (Langacker 2001: 262).

Moreover, Brisard (2013: 222-223) remarks that the use of an imperfective past tense, since imperfectivity entails that the speaker views the situation at hand from the inside, appears to require a mental displacement. That is, "the past situation is virtually represented as if it were coinciding with the actual ground" (Brisard 2013: 223). This is also relevant for uses of the past progressive, since the progressive imposes an internal perspective. In addition, in the case of past progressives, the boundaries of the situation at hand are relegated to the expression's maximal scope and this entails that the speakers has an incomplete view of it (in situations of the type that is illustrated in Figure 7b above, it is even impossible for the speaker to view of the situation in its entirety).

In view of this, I propose that, as is the case for present progressives, epistemic contingency is also part of the meaning of past progressives. This is hinted at in De Wit & Brisard (2014), but not stated clearly. This will be demonstrated in Section 5.4. First, however, Section 5.3 presents the different usage types of the simple past that are found in the three data sets.

5.3 Usage types of the simple past

In this section, I present the usage types of the simple past that were instantiated in the three data sets. An overview of these is given in Table 12 below.

Usage type	American English		Australian English		British English	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Habitual	3	9,09	3	12,00	7	9,59
Past event	28	84,85	20	80,00	65	89,04
State	2	6,06	2	8,00	1	1,37
Total	33	100,00	25	100,00	73	100,00

Table 12: Usage types of the simple past in the three data sets

In Section 5.2 above it was stated that the aspectuality associated with the simple past is perfective. This entails that past events are seen in their entirety from the perspective of the moment of speaking. As is clear from Table 12, this is the case for the majority of simple past uses in the data sets. Examples are given in (66) and (67) below.

(66) 130 B: I know I'll be studying I'll have- I just gotta
131 get that (0.6) memorise the practice test that's
132 my- ah that's my strategy (1.2) >that's what I ***did***<
133 la:st time >it was< almost exactly the same (1.3)
134 so yeah [( ) (GCSAusE 9)

(67) <F0X/> <s> What's the time anyone know. </s>
<M0X/> <s> Seven o'clock. </s>
<F0X/> <s> Seven o'clock. </s>
<F0X/> <s> Seven o'clock. </s><s> FX said he'd be here by half past six. </s>
<F0X/> <s> Oh no. </s>
<F0X/> <s> I ***told*** you he'd be late tonight. </s> (WB, brspok)

Leech (2004: 13) states that an element of the meaning of the simple past is that the speaker references a specific time in the past, which is often explicitly given in the context. In example (66), Speaker B explicitly says that the point in time that they are referring to was before their last test and the use of the simple past signals that they are referring to a whole instance of studying by heart that happened in the past. In example (67), on the other hand, the speaker most likely knows very well what point in time they are referring when they say *I told you*, but they leave it implicit.

The second most frequent usage type of the simple past that is instantiated in the data sets is the habitual usage type. An example is given in (68).

(68) I ***did*** a lot of the interviews the first three months of the year with various displaced workers in all kind of different industries form textile to garment to commercial aviation to software. (WB, usspok)

In example (68), contrary to examples (66) and (67), the speaker does not refer to a singular instance in the past, but to several instances that instances of the same type that took place before the time of speaking. However, similarly to what is the case in examples (66) and (67), the (temporary) habit is viewed in its entirety: it started in January and ended in March. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 137) remark that because singular dynamic events can be referred to by means of the simple past, unlike what is the case with the simple present, it is difficult to know whether to interpret a denoted situation as a single past occurrence or as a past habit in the absence of clear contextual indications of what is meant.

The last usage type of the simple past that is instantiated in the data sets is the use of the simple past to refer to states. An example is given in (69).

(69) 28 R: °nah° we just had chocolate on the cou:ch(0.2)(hh) that's like-
29 well it was actually a pretty bad movie night but the ↑nibblies
30 were good
31 S: mmm what mo[vie
32 R: yeah
33 J: [I ***though***t it would be heaps more ↓inte[resting
(GCSAusE 23)

In example (69), the speaker refers to a past state of thinking that the movie at issue would be interesting and it is clear that this state no longer obtains at the time of speaking. Leech (2004: 13-14) claims that the simple past "normally applies only to completed happenings, everything it refers to is in a sense an 'event', an episode seen as a complete entity" (quotation marks in the original) and example (69) certainly fits with this line of analysis. However, Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 137) show that, with states, there is actually no requirement that the denoted situation be fully in the past. Example (70), which is taken from Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 137) illustrates this.

(70) I already ***lived*** in Berlin at that time

In example (70), it is clear that the person still lives in Berlin. Such uses of the simple past are possible because with a state, due to its contractibility, only a segment of the stative situation

has to be profiled, but the denoted situation may very well still hold true at the time of speaking, as is the case in (70).

5.4 Usage types of the past progressive

In this section, I present the usage types of the past progressive that are instantiated in the three data sets. I also attempt to demonstrate that such uses all share a sense of epistemic contingency, as is the case with present progressives. As is the case with present progressives, I propose that there are both temporal and modal usage types of the past progressive. In Section 5.4.1 I discuss the aspecto-temporally motivated uses of the past progressive and I discuss the modal uses of the past progressive in Section 5.4.2. First, however, Table 13 below gives an overview of all the usage types that are instantiated in the data sets.

Usage type	**American English**		**Australian English**		**British English**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Past ongoingness	25	75.76	11	44.00	46	63.01
Temporary validity	4	12.12	0	0.00	1	1.37
Duration	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	1.37
Repetition	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	2.74
Habitual	4	12.12	5	20.00	14	19.18
Modal	0	0.00	9	36.00	9	12.33
Total	33	100.00	25	100.00	73	100.00

Table 13: Usage types of the past progressive in the three data sets

As is clear from Table 13, in the three data sets the past ongoingness usage type is the most frequent. This is similar to what has been observed for the present progressive uses, where current ongoingness is the most frequent usage type instantiated in the American and in the British data sets. In addition, as is the case for present progressives in the Australian data set, modal uses of the past progressive are markedly more frequent than in the other two data sets and certain usage types are not instantiated in that data set. Some usage types of the past progressive are also absent from the American data set, most likely due to the small number of past progressive examples in it.

5.4.1 Temporal usage types of the past progressive

The most frequent usage type of the past progressive in my data is that of past ongoingness. An example is given in (71).

(71) Police say the attack took place just before dawn Tuesday at a crowded pilgrim camp at Nunwan, about 100 kilometers southeast of the summer capital Srinagar. </s><s> Hundreds of pilgrims were asleep, others ***were preparing*** to leave on their journey. </s><s> (WB, usspok)

Similar to current ongoingness, past ongoingness is fairly neutral and simply indicates that an event was ongoing at some point in time. Notice that, in example (71), the past progressive creates a temporal frame around a past reference point, i.e., the moment when the attack took place. As mentioned in Section 4.5 this use of the past progressive goes back to the early stages of the grammaticalization of the progressive. In example (71), the preparing event backgrounds the event of the attack. De Wit & Brisard (2014: 73) remark that backgrounded events are typically viewed as unconsolidated parts of the speaker's conception reality and are therefore naturally expressed by means of the progressive. This unconsolidated status is also present in uses of the past progressive.

Past progressives can also be used to refer to situations that had a temporary validity in the past. An example is given in (72).

(72) Tom Dunn says he ***was undergoing*** serious personal and professional difficulty during the trial and had even stolen money from another client. (WB, usspok)

In example (72), the progressive is not used to create a temporal frame around a past point in time. Rather, a situation of temporary validity is related to a period of time (see also Leech 2004: 22-23). In addition, as is the case with some uses of the present progressive, the example features a sense of intensification, a notion that, as already mentioned, is frequently associated with progressive uses and that "reflects the marked (qualified) status of the designated situations" (De Wit & Brisard 2014: 83).

Like present progressives, past progressives can be instances of the duration category. The only such example in the data sets is given in (73).

(73) One of the prisoners surrendered today and negotiations which ***were*** still ***going on*** this evening appeared to have no result. (WB, brspok)

In example (73) the situation designated by the progressive lies fully before the speech event, as is made clear by the specification that the negotiations had apparently no result. However, there is a clear sense of duration in this example. Moreover, recall that with durative uses, the boundaries of the designated situation have a very low degree of salience and that there is a sense that the denoted situation may go on for a very long time. It is possible that a speaker could refer to a durative situation by means of a past progressive form and that the designated situation kept on going and extended past the time of speaking. This is the situation that was illustrated in Figure 7b in Section 5.2. In such a configuration, it is clear that the speaker can only have a partial view and partial knowledge about the denoted situation. In turn, this means that this situation has an unconsolidated status in the speaker's conception of reality. The fact that such configurations are possible therefore strengthens the claim made in this paper that epistemic contingency is also part of the meaning of past progressives.

The last two temporally motivated usage types of the past progressive that are instantiated in the data sets are the repetition usage type and the habitual usage type. An example of each is given in (74) and (75) respectively.

(74) The idea of unification scarcely occurred to them. </s><s> But the crowds ***were*** soon ***shouting*** "We are one pople", and in the West Chancellor Helmut Kohl picked up the cry. (WB, brspok)

(75) Host: David Isby, how did it work in Afghanistan in terms of the rewards that were being offered to people who ***were helping*** with the hunt? </s><s>
Isby: Well, the key thing is you have to build the loyalty before the rewards work. </s><s> When the Soviets were fighting in Afghanistan, they offered very large rewards because they had very little legitimacy or credibility inside Afghanistan. (WB, usspok)

As is the case for the repetition usage type of the present progressive and its habitual usage type, instances of the repetition usage type and of the habitual usage type in the past progressive refer to multiple events. Recall from Section 4.4.1 that the difference between instances of the repetition usage type and instances of the habitual usage types is that the former involve repeated events in relation to a specific occasion. Habituals, on the other hand involve a repetition of events that is more generalized.

In example (74), notice that there is, once again, a sense of intensity associated with the use of the progressive. De Wit & Brisard (2014: 80) point out that in contexts such as the one in (74), the sense of intensification "reflects the elevated energy level required to maintain iteration, as opposed to what is required for a canonical one-time action." In example (75), on

the other hand, the progressive is used because there is something non-obvious to the speaker about who *the people who were helping with the hunt* were and how they were rewarded (notice also the passive past progressive *were being offered*).

5.4.2 Modal usage types of the past progressive

As with present progressives, modal uses of the past progressives are those where the speaker's subjective attitude is expressed and where the meaning of epistemic contingency, rather than aspecto-temporal reasons, is the direct motivation for the use of a progressive form. A comparison of Tables 8 and 13 above shows that it is clear that modal uses of the past progressive are less frequent than modal uses in the present progressive. Modal uses of the past progressive are even absent from the American data set. However, as was already hypothesized in Section 4.5, it is possible that this is due to the fact that many utterances in the American data set come from news broadcasts.

Example (76) illustrates how modal meaning of epistemic contingency of the progressive is instantiated with past progressives and is contrasted its simple counterpart in example (76a). Example (76a) repeats example (69) in Section 5.3.

(76) [Talking about an upcoming trip to Japan]
26 L: Do you wanna do any sightseeing while you're there?
27 D: Ah yea definitely, I ***was thinking*** maybe like Kyoto and stuff
28 like that but um lot of people said that Kyoto isn't that
29 (1.0) like people say that it's cool but actually not when
30 we get there

(76a) 28 R: °nah° we just had chocolate on the cou:ch(0.2)(hh) that's like-
29 well it was actually a pretty bad movie night but the ↑nibblies
30 were good
31 S: mmm what mo[vie
32 R: yeah
33 J: [I ***though***t it would be heaps more ↓inte[resting
(GCSAusE 23)

In example (76) the use of the progressive is not required for aspecto-temporal reasons. Rather, it conveys that the speaker is somehow unsure about what they are saying. The use of the progressive signals that the speaker has not decided anything yet and that what they are saying does not have a consolidated status in their conception of reality. Notice the adverb *maybe* directly after the past progressive form and the evasive *and stuff*. In addition, the use of the past

tense, which signals epistemic distance, downplays even more what the speaker is saying and reinforces the sense of tentativeness present in the example. In example (76a), on the other hand, there is no indication of tentativeness or that the speaker is somehow not committed to what they are saying.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that, in line with previous data, past progressive forms are less frequent than present progressive ones in the American, the Australian and the British data sets. I have also shown that there are no differences in terms of the voice with which past progressive in the data sets combine and that that was also in line with previous research. I have shown that there were more subordinate clauses in the American data set, which differs from the the situation in the Australian and the British data sets, but that due to the relatively small number of examples it was difficult to determine what might be the reason for this. In terms of the semantic domains from which the verbs in the data stem, I have shown that, once again, the highest proportion of communication and mental verbs is found in the Australian data set.

I have also shown that there are no significant differences between the three data sets in terms of the usage types of the simple past that are instantiated. In all the data sets, the majority of simple pasts are found in expressions of past events, but simple pasts can also occur in habitual contexts and they can also express states.

Lastly, I have shown that the meaning of epistemic contingency is also present in uses of the past progressive and that, as is the case with the present progressive, there are aspecto-temporally motivated uses of the past progressive. The most frequent temporal usage type is that of past ongoingness in all of the data sets. There are also modal uses of the past progressive and these are directly motivated by the progressive's meaning of epistemic contingency. Lastly as was the case for the present progressive data, the proportion of modal uses is much higher in the Australian data set than in the other two.

6. Conclusion

In the present paper, using pairs of simple and progressive utterances in the present and in the past tense used in highly similar contexts, I have shown how the meaning of epistemic contingency is instantiated in both present progressive forms and past progressive forms in spoken data gathered from American English, Australian English and British English. Previous research had already demonstrated that the meaning of epistemic contingency in the speaker's immediate reality is present in all uses, i.e., both temporal and modal, of the present progressive based on American spoken data. In this study, I have shown that this is also the case in two more regional varieties of English. I have also attempted to broaden the scope of research in analyzing past progressives and in trying to relate these uses to the epistemic meaning of contingency. As stated above, I was able to show that this meaning also seems to be relevant to the description of past progressive forms and that, as is the case for present progressive, past progressives can be separated into aspecto-temporally motivated uses and modal uses. The latter, as is the case for present progressives, directly instantiates the meaning of epistemic contingency and I have shown how this meaning and the meaning of epistemic distance that is also part of the past progressive's meaning can work in conjunction to allow speakers to subjectively qualify what they are saying when they use a past progressive form.

In line with previous research, I have also shown that the notion of extravagance continues to be a motivation for the use of the present progressive. This is true for the three data sets that were used for the present study. The data in theses data sets also reflected trends that had been identified in previous research, such as the fact that progressive forms appeared much more frequently in present contexts than in past ones. Based on previous research, I hypothesized that I would find more active present progressive forms in the three data sets and that the majority of them would be main clauses. This hypothesis was borne out. Conversely, I also hypothesized that I would find more modal uses in the Australian and in the American data sets than in the British one. This turned out to be the case for the Australian data set, but not for the American one.

This brings me to the limitations of the present study. The main limitation was that the samples that I was able to collect for present and past forms were of different sizes and this made comparisons difficult. In future research, it would be interesting to compare samples of similar sizes for both the present progressive and the past progressive. The same thing applies to the genre represented in each sample. Although all the data sets were made up of spoken

data, the genres that were instantiated were different and this, again, made comparisons between the regional varieties difficult. It would thus be interesting to try to compare spoken data from similar genres in different regional varieties in future research in order to confirm or to disprove the trends that have been outlined by the present study.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Transcription symbols

a) Transcription symbols in brspok (Cobuild)

The explanation of the symbols comes from Payne (1995: 206).

<F01>	first female speaker (number is used to distinguish between different female speakers)
<M01>	first male speaker (number is used to distinguish between different male speakers)
FX	replaces female name
MX	replaces male name
<ZF1> word <ZF0>	false start repetition
<ZG1> word <ZG0>	uncertain transcription
<ZZ1> word <ZZ0>	comment from transcriber
[word]	non-verbal speaker input
Word	beginning of functional sentence
.	end of functional sentence
?	end of functional question
“ ”	direct quotation from written source
’ (apostrophe)	used for contracted words and possessives

b) Transcription symbols in the Griffith Corpus of Spoken Australian English

The conversations in this corpus were transcribed using transcription symbols presented in Jefferson (2004: 24-31). They are given below.

[ ]	overlapping speech
=	no break or gap between turns or indicates that a speaker’s speech is broken up in the transcript, but that there is no actual break in the speaker’s speech, also used to indicate a lack of break within a single speaker’s turn
(0.0)	time elapsed by tenths of seconds
(.)	micropause of approximately one tenth of a second
word	stress (the longer the underscore, the heavier the stress)
WORD	very loud relative to the rest of the speech
°word°	quieter relative to the rest of the speech
wor-	cut-off word
wo(h)rd	plosiveness (with crying, laughter, breathlessness, etc.)
>word<	faster relative to the rest of the speech
<word>	slower relative to the rest of the speech
(word)	uncertain transcription

( )	indecipherable (the longer the space between the parentheses, the longer the ungotten speech)
((word))	transcriber's description
.hh	inbreath
hh	outbreath
:	prolongation of the sound immediately prior (the more colons there are, the longer the prolongation)
↑	sharp pitch rise
↓	sharp pitch fall
.	falling or final intonation
?	rising intonation
, (comma)	continuing intonation

Corpora

Griffith Corpus of Spoken Australian English (GCSAusE):
https://ca.talkbank.org/access/GCSAusE.html
WordBanksOnline (WB): Collins WordbanksOnline, HarperCollins.
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