

Mirative extensions of progressive constructions Evidence from English, Dutch and German

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

GRAMMATICALIZATION

MODAL USES

CONCLUSION

Which progressive constructions?

- E: **be** + V_{ing} : *She is reading a book.*
- D: **zijn** *aan het* V_{INF} : *Ze is een boek aan het lezen.*
 - no posture verb constructions (*liggen, zitten, staan, lopen, hangen te* + INF)
Ze zit/ligt/staat een boek te lezen.
 - no verbs of appearance / ACI-verbs / *blijven* (cf. Booij 2004)
Ze blijkt een boek aan het lezen.
We hoorden hem aan het rommelen.
- G: **sein** + *am* + V_{INF} : *Sie ist am Lesen.*
 - no *beim/im* + V_{INF}
Dieser Schwan ist noch beim Brüten.
Der Schauspieler ist im Kommen.

Typical definitions

Typical definitions of progressive in terms of ongoingness, duration, etc.

- purely aspectotemporal notions
- core: ongoing at a given reference time

e.g.

- | | |
|---|---|
| • ongoingness at a specific reference point | Comrie 1976; Bertinetto et al. 2000 |
| • ongoing activity | Dahl 1985 |
| • duration | Palmer 1989; Bertinetto et al. 2000 |
| • limited duration | Quirk et al. 1985; Leech 2004 |
| • incompleteness | Leech 2004 |
| • temporariness | Mindt 2000 |
| • internal perspective | Zifonun et al. 1997; Reimann 1998;
Krause 2002; Duden 2005; Declerck
et al. 2006; Behrens et al. 2013 |

Modal ‘mirative’ extensions?

But what about uses in which the progressive is NOT primarily used for conveying aspectotemporal meanings?

And_ the fish weren’t running this year, you know, it’s like everywhere. Nothing’s doing what it’s supposed to, anymore, anywhere.

Nu is dat zo al om vijf uur aan 't donker worden en ge denkt al direct dat 't zo laat is. Now it’s already getting dark at 5 o’clock and you think it’s really late already.

[...] anstatt daß ihr froh seid, daß man sich um euch kümmert, seid ihr nur am Jammern, [...] rather being grateful that they are concerned about you, you’re just whining

→ Some of these uses might be called **mirative**. (Stay tuned.)

Aims

The Dutch progressive is sandwiched between German and English if you only look at obligatoriness, general frequency and aspectotemporal uses (1); but the differences between German, Dutch and English are not outspoken in terms of modal uses (2).

(1) Why do these differences exist?

(2) Progressive meaning = modal meaning of contingency (?)

The presence of modal uses is not related to the degree of grammaticalization. A modal meaning of contingency (non-necessity) is therefore central to the progressive.

Corpora and methodology

- **Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English, Part 1** (Dubois et al. 2000)
→ corpus study of **339** attestations of the present progressive
See De Wit, Patard & Brisard (2013)
- **Corpus Gesproken Nederlands v2.0** (2006)
subcorpus a: spontaneous conversations
→ corpus study of **1069** attestations of the *aan-het*-progressive
- **Kleines Wörterbuch der Verlaufsformen im Deutschen** (Engelberg et al. 2013)
based on the German Reference Corpus (*DeReKo*, IDS)
→ corpus study of **419** attestations of the *am*-progressive
→ direct quotes ($\pm 10\%$)

See Anthonissen, De Wit & Mortelmans (submitted)

Grammaticalization

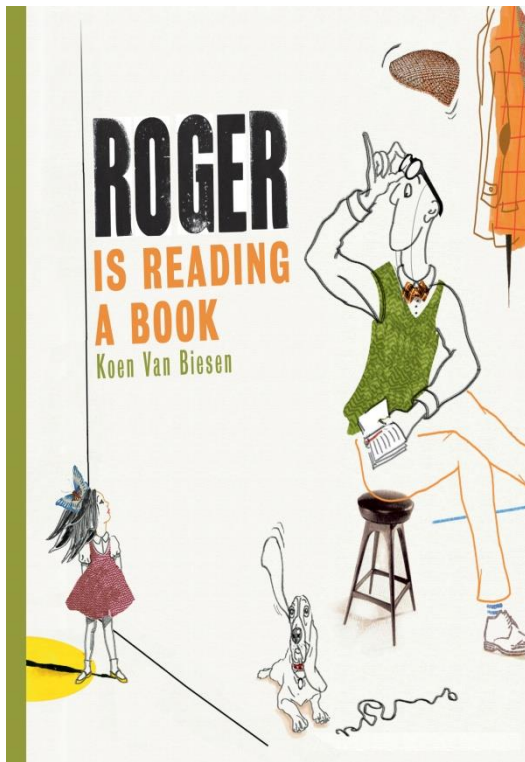
Grammaticalization

ENGLISH > DUTCH > GERMAN

1. **Obligatoriness**
2. **General frequency**
3. **Restrictions**
4. **Aspectotemporal usage types**

1. Obligatoriness

Only in English is the use of the progressive **obligatory** to report situations ongoing at reference point.



2. General frequency

Corpus	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
EN SBC part 1	339 / 50,000	339 / 50,000
NL CGN component a	1,069 / 2,626,172	20.35 / 50,000
DE DeReKo (Engelberg et al. 2013)	4,138 / \pm 3,500,000,000	0.05 / 50,000

3. Restrictions

ENGLISH

- Hardly any restrictions
- Coercion of stative verbs
You're being silly again.
I'm loving it.

DUTCH

- Stative verbs are rare
Hij is stout aan het zijn (Google)
- No passives
- 30% with objects

GERMAN

- Stative verbs are rare
- No passives
- No direct objects in our examples
(but 6 incorporated objects; and direct-object-clauses with *überlegen*)

4. Aspectotemporal usage types

VARIETY OF USES

- **ongoingness**
- **historical present** Two weeks ago I'm **watching** TV, and [...]
- **futurate** It looks like these people **aren't going** home alone tonight.
- **limited duration** Ich **bin** schon lange **am Überlegen** und **Planen** [...]
- **temporary validity** Seit dem 16. August **sind** wir nun **am Bauen** [...]
- **habitual**
- **iteration** Maar ik ben wel altijd de eerste die **aan 't schoonmaken is** ...
[...] ik **was** zo echt aan 't **aan 't stuiteren** gelijk een bal op en neer.

4. Aspectotemporal usage types

PRESENT PROGRESSIVES IN ENGLISH, DUTCH AND GERMAN

Categories	English		Dutch		German	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Current ongoingness	123	36.28	403	70.58	231	68.14
Habitual	43	12.68	67	11.73	32	9.44
Limited duration	16	4.72	36	6.30	51	15.04
Historical present	71	20.94	32	5.60	-	-
Temporary validity	23	6.78	17	2.98	10	2.95
Iteration	17	5.01	9	1.58	11	3.24
Futurate	46	13.57	7	1.23	4	1.18
Total	339	100	571	100	339	100

Evaluation

Why do these differences exist?

- ‘aspectual vacuum’ in English, less so in Dutch and German
- other factors, e.g. in German: *Verbalklammer* as an accounting factor for the rise of the progressive & the role of past tense (incompletion)
See Anthonissen, De Wit & Mortelmans (submitted)

The rise of the English progressive

OLD ENGLISH

- **synthetic** aspectual system inherited from Proto-Germanic:
formal marking of **perfectivity** by means of **prefixing** (*ge-*, *be-*, ...)
- ***beon/wesan + V-ende***: marks imperfectivity and duration
(no full-fledged aspect marker yet)
- loss of aspectual prefixes (end of OE period)
 - no formal distinction between perfective/imperfective verbs
 - prefixes disappeared from the grammar without substitution
 - **aspectual vacuum**

(De Wit forthcoming; Scheffer 1975; Wright 1994; Ziegeler 1999; Brinton 1988; Strang 1970; Núñez-Pertejo 2004; Kranich 2010; Michaelis 2004; McWhorter 2007)



The rise of the English progressive

OLD ENGLISH

- synthetic (prefix)
- beon/wesan V-ende
- aspectual vacuum

MODERN ENGLISH

- **analytic** aspectual system: formal marking of **imperfectivity**
- **be + V-ing**
- progressive ~ marker of imperfective aspect

(De Wit forthcoming; Scheffer 1975; Wright 1994; Ziegeler 1999; Brinton 1988; Strang 1970; Núñez-Pertejo 2004; Kranich 2010; Michaelis 2004; McWhorter 2007)



... as compared to Dutch and German

DUTCH / GERMAN

- **Prefix system** has remained relatively productive
(De Wit forthcoming; van Kemenade & Los 2003)

Compare:	Old English	<i>lætan / forlætan</i>
	PDE	<i>let / abandon</i>
	Dutch	<i>laten / verlaten</i>
	German	<i>lassen / verlassen</i>

- **Perfectivity** is still explicitly marked by prefixes, e.g. *ge-* (cf. also Leiss 1992)

Compare:	English	<i>done / come / made</i>
	Dutch	gedaan / gekomen / gemaakt
	German	getan / gekommen / gemacht

... as compared to Dutch and German

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DUTCH AND GERMAN

Less prefixal perfective marking in Dutch?

- **Perfective marking with *ge-***

Dutch

winnen

lukken

baren

wennen

(ge)raken

horen

German

gewinnen

glücken/gelingen

gebären

gewöhnen

gelangen/geraten

gehören

- **German prefix *zer-***
- **IPP-constructions: more frequent in Dutch**

Dutch

Ze is gaan zwemmen.

Hij heeft haar proberen te overtuigen.

Hij heeft haar doen lachen.

German

Sie ist schwimmen gegangen.

Er hat versucht, sie zu überzeugen.

Er hat sie lachen gemacht.

Modal uses of the English, Dutch and German progressive

Modal uses

1. Illustrations of modal uses

- surprise
- intensification
- irritation
- tentativeness/evasiveness
- interpretative

2. The concept of mirativity

3. Frequency of modal uses

4. The progressive's basic meaning



1. Illustrations

SURPRISE

Rickie: And then the whole time under here, he'd just look. I mean, he looked so hard that is was, like, burning. [...]

Rebecca: So then, and then, he sort of pulled the paper aside, and he's still **staring** at you?



1. Illustrations

INTENSIFICATION

En dan gewoon met z'n allen aapjes kijken en dat vonden die mensen ook echt niet tof die **waren** ook echt die **waren aan het vloeken** tegen ons.

And then we were all just watching them ('watching monkeys') and those people didn't like that at all, they **were** also, the **were** really **swearing** at us.

1. Illustrations

IRRITATION

Viele haben sich über die Fülle an Informationen beklagt, die von der Gesundheitsdirektion verlangt wurden. Überspitzt gesagt **waren** die Leute “nur noch **am Erheben** statt **am Arbeiten**”, wie sich ein Spitalvertreter ausdrückt.

Many have complained about the wealth of information that has been requested by the Health Department. Hyperbolically speaking, people were “merely collecting data instead of working”, as a hospital representative put it.

1. Illustrations

TENTATIVE / EVASIVE

‘k Denk dat dat toch vroeger veel minder was en 't is daarom geen anti-Belgisch uh Vlaams gevoel hè want dat **is** denk ik ook een beetje **aan het** aan het allee **aan 't minderen** eigenlijk.

I do think that that it used to be less present and this doesn't mean it's an anti-Belgian uh Flemish feeling, right, because I think that's also a bit, that's that's, well, that's decreasing in fact.

Anker [...] will sich [...] nicht in die Karten schauen lassen. “Wir sind **am Überlegen**”, so Schuster zurückhaltend.

Anker [...] is playing its cards close to its chest. “We are thinking about it”, said Schuster, aloof.

→ vagueness, lack of commitment

1. Illustrations

INTERPRETATIVE

[In a discussion between a professor and his students about the discourse of civil rights activist Jesse Jackson:] Well, he says minorities. He's smart, he talks about minorities. But he's really **talking** about African Americans.

“Der Konsum war schwer krank”, meinte am Freitag dessen früherer Generaldirektor Hermann Gerharter [...]. “Der Konsum **war** doch am **Ersticken!**”, korrigierte ihn Staatsanwalt Erich Müller. Gerharter beharrte darauf: “Wir haben versucht, ihn zu retten und wir haben Erfolge gehabt.”

“Consumption was seriously ill”, its former Director-General Hermann Gerharter said on Friday [...]. “The consumption was actually choking!” attorney Erich Müller corrected him. Gerharter insisted: “We tried to save it and we got ahead.”

Cf. Ljung 1980 on interpretative uses; Kranich 2010

2. The concept of mirativity

- **mirativity** = the grammatical expression of surprise (e.g. DeLancey 1997)
 - **dedicated mirative markers**
vs **mirative extensions** = constructions with other functions, such as aspectual constructions, are in addition used for the expression of mirative meanings
- This is what the progressive does in English, Dutch and German:
it can be used to construe situations as in a way divergent from what is canonical (surprising, irritating, worth emphasizing etc.)

3. Frequency of modal uses

PRESENT PROGRESSIVES IN ENGLISH, DUTCH AND GERMAN

Categories	English		Dutch		German	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Intensification	50	14.75	52	9.11	49	14.45
Irritation	36	10.62	66	11.56	30	8.85
Surprise	62	18.29	37	6.48	2	0.59
Tentativeness/evasiveness	11	3.24	46	8.06	60	17.70
Interpretative	28	8.26	13	2.28	1	0.29
Total of modal uses	187	55.16	214	37.48	142	41.89
Grand Total	339	100	571	100	339	100

3. Frequency of modal uses

The presence of modal uses is not related to the degree of grammaticalization

→ Could modal/mirative meaning be part of the basic meaning of the progressive?

Compare:

- attestation of modal uses in older varieties of English
(cf. Reimann 1998 on Old English; Wright 1994 on Modern English)
- earliest examples of *aan het + Inf.* are not primarily durative, but inchoative
(van der Horst 2005)
Ic naerstich aan twercken! (16th century)
Daer op weer de coetsier aen 't schreeuwen en aen 't sweeren (17th century)

4. The progressive's basic meaning

De Wit & Brisard (2014) on the English present progressive

- core meaning of **epistemic contingency** instantiated in *any* of its uses
- uniting aspectotemporal usage types and so-called 'non-canonical' uses of the progressive

Speaker's conception of reality

simple present
structural necessity

present progressive
epistemic contingency
/ non-necessity

dynamicity/boundedness of
events (stative verbs are coerced)
+ internal perspective



boundaries out of focus



less than complete view

4. The progressive's basic meaning

DUTCH AND GERMAN

- corpus findings provide corroborating evidence for De Wit & Brisard's hypothesis
- subjective use is easier to establish < progressive ≠ obligatory marker of ongoingness
→ simple present is aspectually ambiguous
vs progressive construal yields a less factual, more 'outstanding' presentation

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Conclusion

A Germanic sandwich?

Jein...

Grammaticalization

English > Dutch > German

Modal uses

English ~ Dutch ~ German



Meaning of contingency (non-necessity)
central to the progressive

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