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# The Meaning of English Progressive Sentences at the Semantics-Pragmatics Interface

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# Abstract

# The Meaning of English Progressive Sentences at the Semantics-Pragmatics Interface

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Sentences containing the English progressive (*be* + V-*ing*) have been argued to yield a variety of readings that do not necessarily align with the basic meaning of expressing a situation in progress (Comrie, 1976; Quirk et al., 1985; Biber et al., 1999; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Kranich 2010, 2013; among others). The aim of this thesis is to account for these diverse readings by first, determining the conventional meaning of the progressive, and second, considering how additional meanings are derived when the form interacts with other linguistic elements in context.

Following the analyses of Dowty (1977, 1979), Portner (1998), De Wit and Brisard (2014), and other researchers who assume a modal meaning for the progressive, the semantics of the progressive will be shown to constitute both a

temporal and modal meaning. The aspectual usages of the progressive, namely rendering a situation as ongoing, incomplete, and having duration, will be explained in relation to its temporal semantics. The modal component, on the other hand, will be shown to allow other observed functions, such as yielding a future time reading, evoking politeness, and enabling the speaker to express a subjective interpretation towards a described event.

Aside from these, there are other readings of progressive sentences that will be accounted for by considering the progressive's interaction with tense, Aktionsart, and adverbials. It will be argued that the English present tense is responsible for the habitual reading of certain progressive sentences, as well as a necessary element for progressive sentences to bear a future time reading. Iterative and temporary readings will be discussed in terms of the Aktionsart of the verb phrase occurring with the progressive, and finally, attached adverbials will be shown to influence the interpretation of progressive sentences, in which the progressive has been argued to act as a device for emotional coloring.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aim and Scope of the Study

The English progressive, that is the grammatical form made up of the auxiliary *be* followed by the present participle of the main verb (*be* + V-*ing*), is generally taken to be an aspectual marker used to express an ongoing event, happening at the time denoted by the sentence's tense. The examples below illustrate the most basic distinction between a progressive sentence and its unmarked, simple-tensed counterpart. In (1a), the event of Alexis feeding the cat is interpreted to be **in progress** at some time in the past, whereas in (1b), the feeding event is viewed as **completed** at some past time.

    (1)   a.  Alexis **was feeding** the cat.

            b.  Alexis **fed** the cat.

When it comes to sentences occurring with the present tense, progressive sentences such as (2a), depict a **specific event** happening at the moment of the speaker's utterance. The non-progressive sentence, (2b), does not refer to a particular happening of the described event, and rather, is interpreted to be a statement of **general facts** about Daniel.

    (2)   a.  Daniel **is cooking**.

            b.  Daniel **cooks**.

In the literature, however, researchers have observed that sentences containing the progressive could yield multiple readings that deviate from this basic meaning of

expressing an event in progress.[1] Examples of such readings are provided below, alongside their non-progressive minimal pairs, to emphasize that the usage of the progressive in such instances do not serve to provide the same aspectual distinctions that were noted in (1) and (2) above.

Habitual Reading

(3)    a.   Julian **is working** from home these days.

        b.   Julian **works** from home these days.

Future Time Reading

(4)    a.   We **are leaving** Seoul tomorrow.

        b.   We **leave** Seoul tomorrow.

Conveying Temporariness

(5)    a.   Chris **is living** in Hong Kong.

        b.   Chris **lives** in Hong Kong.

Conveying Politeness

(6)    a.   I **am hoping** to hear from you soon.

        b.   I **hope** to hear from you soon.

Emotional Coloring

(7)    a.   He **is** always **siding** with her.

        b.   He always **sides** with her.

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[1] Kranich (2010, 2013) is among the researchers who attempt to explain how the progressive, a single grammatical form, has come to be used to express diverse meanings. She applies a functional layering framework, following Hopper (1991), to detail the diachronic development of the form, revealing that less grammaticalized usages have survived in certain contexts, alongside the more grammaticalized function of the progressive.

Speaker's Subjective Interpretation

(8)  a.  Julie says she is tired but she **is** really just **making** excuses.

   b.  ?Julie says she is tired but she really just **makes** excuses.

The progressive sentence in (3a) is not strictly referring to a specific event of Julian working from home, happening at the time of the speaker's utterance, but it has a habitual interpretation, that this is his status *these days*. As for (4a), the progressive sentence does not indicate a current ongoing event, but expresses one that is to take place at a future time. In (3) and (4), the minimal pairs are argued to have synonymous temporal interpretations.[2]

When comparing each pair in (5) to (8), the progressive sentences trigger several pragmatic inferences. Both (5a) and (5b) indicate that Chris resides in Hong Kong, but the progressive in (5a) implies that this is his temporary place of residence. With (6a), there is a further sense of politeness conveyed with the progressive *I am hoping*, when compared with the non-progressive *I hope* in (6b). When comparing (7a) and (7b), the progressive in (7a) is said to emphasize the speaker's emotion, i.e., disapproval or irritation, towards the individual that the subject denotes. Finally, in (8a), the progressive is used to contrast between a reported event, *Julie says she is tired* (speaker's observation), and the speaker's take on it, *she is really just making excuses* (speaker's evaluation). Note that when both clauses appear in simple tense, as in (8b), the overall sentence is deemed odd.

Considering the data above, it is no wonder why researchers have found it difficult to give a sole definition for the progressive, let alone provide a unified

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[2] The differences in meaning between the progressive and non-progressive sentences in (3) and (4) are detailed in §2.1.6 and §2.2.1, respectively.

analysis for it. This has led to the development of theories on the progressive that fall into two very distinct categories. First, there are monosemous accounts which focus on one, basic meaning of the progressive, and are concerned with establishing its truth-conditions within a formal semantics framework (Dowty, 1977, 1979; Landman, 1992; Portner, 1998; among others).[3] Due to this, the readings observed in (3) to (8) above, are rarely mentioned in studies that take on this approach. The other approach is assuming the progressive to be polysemous, and researchers who view the progressive as such, put their efforts into detailing the variety of contexts in which the progressive can felicitously occur (Comrie, 1976; Quirk et al., 1985; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; among others).

I will assume the semantics of the progressive to be made up of a TEMPORAL and MODAL COMPONENT, and explain how these allow for the readings above. I will also suggest that in the course of interpretation, the progressive interacts with other surrounding linguistic elements, particularly Aktionsart, tense, and adverbials, and this is what gives rise to several other meanings as well. Ultimately, the aim of this thesis is to determine the conventional semantics, that is, what constitutes the meaning proper, of the English progressive, and consider how additional meanings, or pragmatic inferences, are arrived at due to the progressive's interaction with other linguistic elements.

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[3] Within the realm of truth-conditional semantics, there are two contending theories for the progressive. The cited researchers here adopt an intensional approach, following Dowty's (1977) influential analysis of the progressive as a modal-temporal operator. The other approach treats the progressive as an extensional predicate modifier, and representatives of this view include Vlach (1981), Parsons (1990), and Forbes (2006).

## 1.2 Theoretical Background

Here, I briefly outline the theoretical background that will be used throughout the present study. First, as the progressive is widely considered to be an aspectual marker, there is a need to define clearly what aspect is. I follow Comrie's (1976, p. 3) definition of aspect as "different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation", with the progressive falling under the category of imperfective aspect. Imperfective aspect is then further understood as "viewing the situation from within" (ibid, p. 24), as opposed to perfective aspect which takes an external view. Following this contrast, imperfective aspect puts attention onto the internal structure of a situation, presenting the situation as ongoing, whereas the perfective views the situation as a whole, presenting it as completed.

However, aspect is not simply concerned with whether a situation is viewed internally or externally. Aspectual properties are also attributed to predicates, with three main temporal features, i.e., dynamicity, duration, and telicity, being the basis for distinguishing lexically-encoded aspect. The common point between these two distinct, yet often interacting, forms of aspect, is that they are concerned with temporality. Researchers have typically labeled the former as "grammatical/ viewpoint aspect", and the latter as "lexical/situation aspect", or more commonly these days, "Aktionsart" (Smith, 1983, 1991; Brinton, 1988; Bache, 1997; inter alia).[4]

As much of the discussion on the meaning of progressive sentences will be related to the Aktionsart of the predicate the progressive occurs with, I will assume

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[4] To put it simply, "grammatical aspect" refers to the way a situation is presented, and "Aktionsart" describes the type of situation in question.

Vendler's (1957) four classes of Aktionsart, i.e., states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. In addition, I will refer to a fifth class, i.e., semelfactives, that was proposed by Comrie (1976),[5] and later adapted by notable researchers, such as Smith (1991), Rothstein (2004), and more. The five-way classification is illustrated in Table 1 and their properties are further detailed below:

Table 1: Five-Way Classification of Aktionsart

|  | [dynamic] | [durative] | [telic] |
|---|---|---|---|
| State | - | + | - |
| Activity | + | + | - |
| Accomplishment | + | + | + |
| Achievement | + | - | + |
| Semelfactive | + | - | - |

(i) **State**: a durative event without a natural endpoint, that is internally homogenous (e.g., *be tall*, *know the answer*)

(ii) **Activity**: a durative event without a natural endpoint, involving change-of-states during the time the event holds (e.g., *walk*, *push a cart*)

(iii) **Accomplishment**: a durative event with a natural endpoint, involving change-of-states during the time the event holds (e.g., *build a house*, *eat an apple*)

(iv) **Achievement**: a punctual event with a natural endpoint, involving a change-of-state during the time the event is in transit (e.g., *arrive*, *notice the flag*)

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[5] Comrie (1976) proposes this fifth class of Aktionsart, semelfactives, to better capture the properties of punctual verbs, such as *cough* and *knock*, which are inherently repeatable, and thus telicity cannot be immediately assumed.

(v) **Semelfactive**: a punctual event, that is inherently repeatable, and thus without a natural endpoint, involving a change-of-state during the time the event is in transit (e.g., *blink, sneeze*)

The classifications above will be applied to whole predicates, following the view of Verkuyl (1972), Declerck (1979), Filip (1990), Dowty (1991), among others, that Aktionsart concerns not only verbs, but verb phrases, and even entire sentences. The argument is that the properties contributed by complements and adjuncts may override the standalone verb's lexical aspect, and similarly, the quantificational and referential properties of the subject may influence the properties of the verb phrase.

Finally, in order to explain the temporal meaning of the progressive, I will draw from Reichenbach's (1947) theory of tense and aspect, and make use of three temporal references that are essential for temporal interpretation. The three temporal references are detailed as following:

(i) **Utterance time (UT)**: time when the utterance is made

(ii) **Event time (ET)**: time when the described event(uality) holds

(iii) **Reference time (RT)**: contextually supplied time used to locate ET

As seen above, UT can be straightforwardly understood to be the present time when the sentence is uttered. RT is contextually determined, namely by temporal adverbials or sequences in discourse, and it serves as a reference to locate ET, the time when the described event takes place. The major contribution of Reichenbach's framework is being able to evaluate ET with respect to RT, as opposed to the more traditional tense logic in which ET is related directly to UT (Prior, 1957, 1967). In the subsequent chapters, the ET-RT relation will be shown to be a fundamental

component in capturing the meaning of the progressive, as well as drawing distinctions from non-progressive sentences.

## 1.3 Organization of the Study

The organization of the thesis is as follows: After this general introduction to the background of the study, Chapter 2 presents an outline of the various readings ascribed to progressive sentences. Chapter 3 will then review representative works on the English progressive, notably those that propose analyses that are relevant to the data in Chapter 2. In Chapter 4, I present my proposal, beginning with an analysis of whether certain meanings are authentically contributed by the progressive itself, or whether they owe to some other linguistic elements that cooccur with the progressive. These considerations are then brought back together to inform an analysis of the progressive that should account for the facts outlined in Chapter 2. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the limitations of the present study and offers suggestions for prospective research on the topic.

# 2. Observed Meanings of Progressive Sentences

In order to put forth an analysis of the progressive that can account for its claimed diverse meanings, it is important to consider the range of data in which the form appears. Drawing from theoretical and empirical studies, Chapter 2 provides an outline of the various meanings that have been ascribed to progressive sentences, and these meanings will be presented in two categories. Section 2.1 will detail progressive sentences which bear some sort of aspectual distinction, including the type of situation, and the way it is described, with their non-progressive counterparts. Section 2.2 will then discuss sentences in which the use of the progressive is not aspectually motivated, but rather, serves to express, or highlight, subjectivity.[6]

## 2.1 Aspectual Usages

Although there are researchers who assume the progressive to have multiple meanings, most would agree that its basic meaning is to express imperfective aspect (Comrie, 1976; Quirk et al., 1985; Biber et al., 1999; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Kranich, 2010, 2013; among others). In relation to this, Jespersen's (1932) view of the progressive to function as a TEMPORAL FRAME has been particularly influential,[7]

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[6] In the literature on the English progressive, "subjectivity" is used to describe the progressive functioning as a "linguistic expression of the speaker's personal interpretation and attitude towards situations" (Kranich, 2013, p. 10).

[7] Many researchers, including Comrie (1976), Lyons (1977), and Palmer (1988), have adopted Jespersen's (1932) view of the progressive. Furthermore, his descriptions which begin to detail the temporal relations in progressive sentences, serve as a starting point for semanticists who attempt to formalize the meaning of the progressive. Such researchers include Bennett and Partee (1972), Dowty (1977, 1979), Klein (1994), and more.

and his observations intuitively introduce the notion of temporal relation for the progressive.[8]

Subsequent works that develop on Jespersen's view adopt Reichenbach's framework (§1.2) to detail the meaning of the progressive in temporal terms. A basic temporal logic representation for the progressive is **RT $\subseteq$ ET**, which translates to: the time interval of the reference time is a subset of the time interval of the event time (Bennett & Partee, 1972; Kearns, 1991; Klein, 1994;[9] among others). This temporal inclusion relation leads to other functions and features of the progressive that will be discussed subsequently.

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[8] According to Jespersen (1932), the event expressed in the progressive temporally frames another event or a moment in time that is contextually supplied. In (i) below, the event of Henry arriving and the time six o'clock are temporally located within the event of Daniel cooking.

(i)  a.  Daniel was cooking when Henry arrived.
    b.  Daniel was cooking at six o'clock.

*Daniel cooking*

*Henry's arrival; six o'clock*
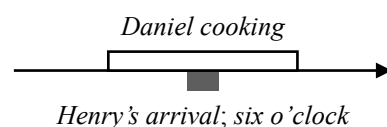
On the other hand, the cooking event in (ii), expressed in simple past tense, has a different temporal relation with the contextually supplied reference time. In both sentences below, Henry's arrival and six o'clock are interpreted to precede, or fall at the beginning of, the cooking event, thus the framing effect of the event does not hold.

(ii)  c.  Daniel cooked when Henry arrived.
     d.  Daniel cooked at six o'clock.

*Daniel cooking*

*Henry's arrival; six o'clock*
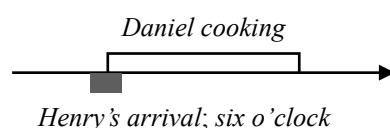
[9] In Klein's (1994) analysis, he uses the terms "topic time" (TT) and "time of situation" (TSit). The two terms correlate more or less to Reichenbach's (1947) RT and ET, respectively.

## 2.1.1 Ongoingness

The most common usage of the progressive form is to express an event or situation that is ONGOING (Comrie, 1976, p. 35; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 188; Biber et al., 1999, p. 470; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 117, 162; Kranich, 2013, p. 20; De Wit & Brisard, 2014, p. 70; among others). Bybee and Dahl's (1989, p. 55) definiti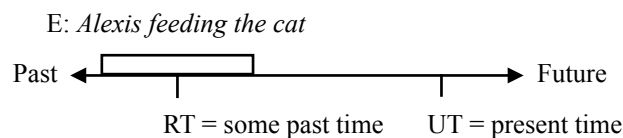on of the progressive to be indicating a situation in progress at reference time, captures the fundamental relation between the progressive aspect and Reichenbach's (1947) notion of RT.

Bringing back the example presented in (1), in (9a) below, the event of Alexis feeding the cat, E, is interpreted to be ongoing at an RT that precedes UT (RT < UT). In the case of (9b), the event is ongoing at the time when the speaker utters the sentence, in other words, the RT coincides with UT (RT = UT). To represent that event E is ongoing, E starts before and progresses past the RT, resulting in the temporal relations RT $\subseteq$ ET and ET < UT for (9a), and RT $\subseteq$ ET and ET = UT for (9b), respectively.

(9)   a.  Alexis was feeding the cat.       (RT $\subseteq$ ET and ET < UT)

E: *Alexis feeding the cat*

Past ← ———— → Future

RT = some past time    UT = present time

    b.  Alexis is feeding the cat.       (RT $\subseteq$ ET and ET = UT)

E: *Alexis feeding the cat*

Past ← ———— → Future

RT, UT = present time

11
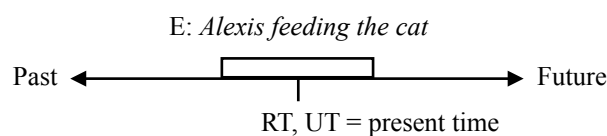
As the above diagrams show, ET must extend beyond, or at least hold throughout RT, for ongoingness to be expressed. This is analogous to Jespersen's (1932) idea that the progressive presents an event as a "temporal frame" around a contextually-supplied time. An alternative way to understand this relationship is that we are taken "inside" the event, bearing resonance to the the description of imperfective aspect that was previously discussed (§1.2).

## 2.1.2 Duration

Another feature that is drawn from the RT $\subseteq$ ET relation is that, for ET to be able to contain RT, it should be of greater duration than, or at least equal duration to RT. Furthermore, following Comrie's (1976) view, it is widely regarded that the progressive functions to take one inside the time interval of a described event, and according to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), for a situation to be considered "in progress", it must have duration, as a punctual situation cannot progress.

Due to the above claims, there have been researchers, like Mufwene (1984, p. 36) and Palmer (1988, p. 36), who argue that the basic meaning of the progressive is to draw attention to the fact that the event has DURATION. More commonly, researchers attribute "duration" to be a key feature of the progressive (e.g., Quirk et al., 1985, p. 188; Biber et al., 1999, p. 470; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 163; Kranich, 2013, p. 7).

When comparing progressive and non-progressive sentences, the stress on the duration of the described event becomes apparent, especially when achievement predicates are concerned (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 166). According to

Vendler's (1957) classification of Aktionsart, the achievement predicate *reached the summit* in (10b) is interpreted to be a punctual event, as strictly speaking, it only takes an instantaneous moment for the transition to the result state of reaching a destination to occur. However, when the same event is expressed in the progressive, the punctual predicate is transformed into a process that bears "duration",[10] as exemplified in (10a).

(10)  a.  We were reaching the summit.                    (in progress)

E: *reaching the summit*

RT = *some past time*
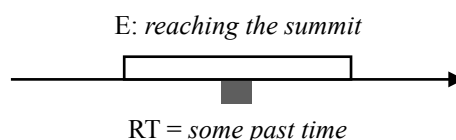
b.  We reached the summit.                              (punctual)

E: *reached the summit*

RT = *some past time*
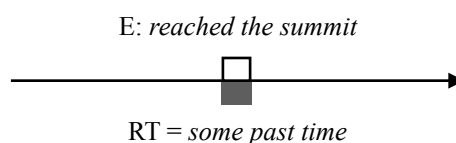
To further illustrate the non-punctual reading of (10a), consider the discourse context example below which makes salient the fact that the achievement predicate can be interpreted as an event in progress, thus, with "duration".

(11)  Context: When John was about 50m from reaching the summit, he got a

call from Mary. Mary asked where he was, and he said, "I am reaching

the summit."

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[10] Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 168) refer to this phenomena as "extended duration", which they assume to be an implicature that arises from the progressive's meaning of duration being applied to predicates that would otherwise be interpreted as punctual.

There are certain achievement predicates, however, such as *spotted the flag* in (12b), that reject the progressive as they arguably do not have long enough of a duration to be viewed as a process. Following the RT ⊆ ET relation, such instantaneous events would not be able to contain the RT (Kranich, 2010, p. 45), thus resulting in (12a) which cannot be uttered felicitously in the progressive form.

(12)  a.  #We were spotting the flag.                    (infelicitous)

  b.  We spotted the flag.                        (punctual)

Based on the above, the progressive is seen to highlight the fact that a described event has "duration". Moreover, as there are punctual predicates that are incompatible with the progressive, this suggests that "duration" is an inherent feature of the progressive.

## 2.1.3 Incompletion

Yet another feature that arises from the RT ⊆ ET relation is that ET is unbounded, thus, the start and end points of the described event cannot be assumed, unless stated explicitly. This contrasts with the default temporal relation of events, which are typically assumed to be contained within the RT, and expressed as ET ⊆ RT. This feature of the progressive comes across most clearly when it is used with achievement and accomplishment predicates, which are telic in nature.

Consider example (13) below, which involves the accomplishment predicate

*write a book.*[11] The completion of the book-writing cannot be inferred with the progressive sentence of (13a), whereas in (13b), it is interpreted that the book was finished the summer prior.

(13)  a.  She was writing a book last summer.          $(RT \subseteq ET)$

E: *writing a book*

RT = *last summer*

b.  She wrote a book last summer.          $(ET \subseteq RT)$

E: *writing a book*          or          E: *writing a book*
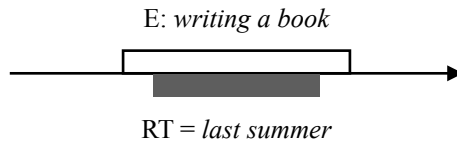
RT = *last summer*          RT = *last summer*
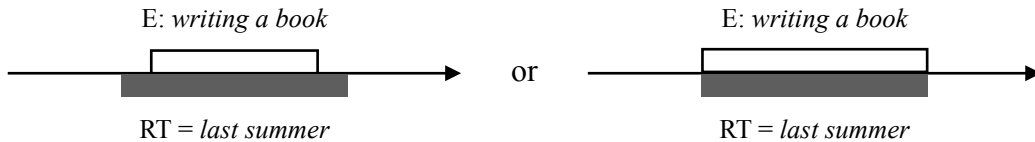
When atelic predicates are concerned, the meaning of INCOMPLETION still holds when the RT is a strictly bounded time interval, as illustrated in the example below. In (14a), one can only infer that she was at work between the stated time interval, but it does not define her actual start and finish time. (14b), on the other hand, clearly indicates that she started work at 9am and finished at 5pm.

(14)  a.  She was working from 9am to 5pm.          $(RT \subseteq ET)$

E: *working*

RT = *9am to 5pm*

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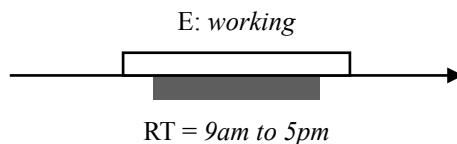
[11] The same inferencing applies to achievement predicates, where the culmination of the event cannot be automatically inferred with progressive sentences. For instance, in (10a) *We were reaching the summit.*, the group of climbers may not have made it all the way to the top, and such is the case if the situation unfolded as the following: *We were reaching the summit when Tommy hurt himself, so, we decided to head back down immediately for help.*

b. She worked from 9am to 5pm.                    (ET ⊆ RT)

E: *working*



RT = *9am to 5pm*
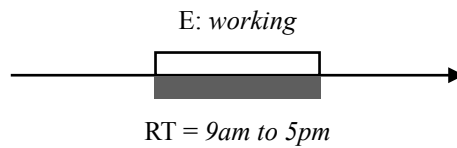
As seen from the examples above, the RT ⊆ ET temporal relation leaves the ET unbounded, and thus, the completion of the event cannot be assumed. This is especially made salient when the progressive occurs with predicates that would otherwise describe a telic event, and when the events are evaluated with respects to a bounded time interval.

## 2.1.4 Temporariness

Researchers as early as Comrie (1976, p. 37) have proposed that the progressive can be used to refer to "a more temporary state". Quirk et al. (1985, p. 199) further expand on this by stating that the progressive implies "temporariness rather than permanence" when it occurs with a stative verb. Examples (15a-b) below make this distinction clear, where in (15b), Seoul is assumed to be the city I generally live in, but in (15a), it is interpreted to be my current place of living but not one that is permanent.

(15)  a.  I am living in Seoul.      (salient reading: temporary place of living)

b.  I live in Seoul.            (salient reading: permanent place of living)

This notion of temporariness vs. permanence is further highlighted in the examples below, where it seems rather odd to have the adverbial *for five years*,

which implies temporal boundedness, attached to the non-progressive predicate in (16b). Note that this oddity is not present in the progressive sentence, (16a).

(16)  a.  I am living in Seoul for five years.

b.  #I live in Seoul for five years.

One may also note that situations which are more or less deemed permanent cannot occur with the progressive, such as in (17a) below. Based on common world knowledge, it is improbable to assume that the position of the city, New Orleans, in relation to the Mississippi River, can be understood as "temporary", thus resulting in an infelicitous sentence. The simple tensed version in (17b) poses no such problem.

(17)  a.  #New Orleans is lying at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

b.  New Orleans lies at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

(Dowty, 1975, p. 582)

Although progressive sentences which carry a meaning of TEMPORARINESS are often discussed in relation to stative predicates, there are researchers who suggest that the basic function of the progressive is to express "temporariness", and that this feature is present across all classes of Aktionsart (e.g., Joos, 1964; Leech, 2004). The argument is that the progressive indicates a temporary current activity (e.g., *Daniel is cooking now*), as opposed to the simple tense that indicates serial events, which are, in comparison, understood to be more or less permanent (e.g., *Daniel cooks in general*).

## 2.1.5 Dynamicity

Also related to the idea that the progressive conveys "temporariness", but looking at it from a different perspective, is that the progressive expresses DYNAMICITY. There are several researchers who advocate for this to be a key attribution of the progressive, citing that the application of the progressive to typically non-dynamic, i.e., static, events, converts it into a process that has a "dynamic" interpretation (Rydén, 1997, p. 426; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 167; Chilton, 2007, p. 110). Consider (18a-b) below, in which the stative predicate *be polite* is rendered dynamic when occurring in the progressive form.

(18)  a.  John is being polite.

b.  John is polite.

(Kranich, 2010, p. 50)

Example (18a) has a dynamic interpretation as it indicates an action controlled by the agent, John, and it is inferred that he is putting on a temporary act. Contrastingly, the simple tense sentence in (18b) implies that "politeness" is part of John's character, thus no action or dynamicity is inferred. The discourse examples below serve to highlight this distinction further.

(19)  A:  Does John always speak so gently?

B:  No, **he is being polite** to make a good first impression.

Wait until you get more acquainted with him…

(20)   A:   Does John always speak so gently?

     B:   Yes, **he is polite** but sometimes I wish he would speak up a little

        more.  It is as if he is too nice sometimes…

Due to instances like (18a), researchers have considered "agency" to be a necessary property of the subject, for the progressive to occur with a stative predicate, as agentive initiation often implies a dynamic situation (Dowty, 1975; Goosens, 1994; Biber et al., 1999). However, this claim is met with predicaments when considering sentences such as (21) and (22) below.

(21)   The clock is hanging on the wall.

(22)   John is lying dead on the floor.

(Kranich, 2010, p. 41)

Both *hang on the wall* and *lie dead* are stative predicates, in which agency cannot be assumed, with the clock being an inanimate object, and John being dead. Furthermore, it is difficult to interpret both events in (21) and (22) as dynamic, which raises the question whether all progressive sentences carry the meaning of "dynamicity".[12]

## 2.1.6 Habituality

In the introduction, it was briefly mentioned that the present progressive asserts that the described event is taking place at the time of utterance. In contrast,

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[12] Examples (21) and (22) will be referred to again in the analysis section of this thesis (§4.2.1.2), where it will be shown that such examples can be systematically accounted for by considering the speaker's evaluation towards event properties.

the simple present tense sentence has a habitual interpretation, and may not refer to any specific occurrence of the event. Examples (2a-b), which illustrate this observation, are repeated below as (23a-b).

(23) a. Daniel is cooking (now).                    (single event in progress)

b. Daniel cooks (in general).                    (habitual reading)

Habitual readings, however, are not exclusive to the simple tense, but in fact, progressive sentences have also been noted to be able to yield a HABITUAL READING. The distinction then, between a habitual event expressed in simple tense, and one expressed in the progressive form, is that the progressive refers to a habitual situation that holds only for a limited period (Comrie, 1976, p. 37; Quirk et al., 1985, p. 199; Kranich, 2013, p. 12; De Wit & Brisard, 2014, p. 81). In the literature on English verb meanings and class types, habits are regarded to be a series of events that constitute a state (e.g., Leech, 1971; Brinton, 1988). Thus, we see the feature of "temporariness" (§2.1.4) being made apparent here in progressive sentences that yield a habitual interpretation.

Consider examples (24a-b) below where in (24a), there is an implication that Usty is sleeping more than she usually does, perhaps due to feeling ill or being jet-lagged. Therefore, the habit of *sleeping a lot*, would only hold during the period of Usty's recovery. On the other hand, in (24b), the state *sleeps a lot* is interpreted to be a general habit of Usty's and not considered to be anything out of the ordinary. Discourse context examples are provided in (25) and (26) to illustrate these differences further.

(24)  a.  Usty is sleeping a lot.          (salient reading: temporary habit)

    b.  Usty sleeps a lot.          (salient reading: general habit)

(25)  A:  Is Usty still asleep? She went to bed early yesterday and now, it's

        almost noon!

    B:  Seems like the jet-lag still has a hold on her. She **is sleeping a lot**.

(26)  A:  Is Usty still asleep? She went to bed early yesterday and now, it's

        almost noon!

    B:  It's nothing to be surprised about. She **sleeps a lot**.

The examples above show that progressive sentences can indeed have a habitual reading, but, this is not usually the default interpretation. Other contextual clues, such as discourse evidence in (25) above, or the presence of a temporal adverbial in (27a) below, are required for the habitual reading to be made salient.

(27)  a.  Julian is working from home <u>these days</u>.          (temporary habit)

    b.  Julian is working from home (now).          (current happening)

This observation warrants further consideration regarding in what kind of context a progressive sentence would yield a habitual reading. This issue will be expanded upon in the analysis section of the thesis (§4.2.2.1), but already, along with the discussion on "dynamicity" in the previous section, we can see that there is a need to carefully consider whether these claimed meanings are truly contributed by the progressive itself.

## 2.1.7 Repetition

As seen above, the progressive is not only used to refer to a single occurrence, but also to a series of events that make up a habitual state. This is not the only way the progressive expresses a multiple-occurring event, but it can also describe an event that is being repeated simultaneously during the time that the event takes place. This usage type is labelled REPETITION (Mindt, 2000; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Römer, 2005; Kranich, 2010; De Wit & Brisard, 2014),[13] and it is usually implied when the progressive occurs with a semelfactive predicate such as *blink* in the examples below.

(28)  a.  Nikita was blinking.       (salient reading: multiple occurrence)

      b.  Nikita blinked.          (salient reading: single occurrence)

      c.  Nikita blinked <u>three times</u>.   (specified multiple occurrence)

Although semelfactives are inherently repeatable (Comrie, 1976), the non-progressive sentence in (28b) does not immediately suggest that Nikita blinked more than once. It is only with the presence of an adverbial, such as *three times* in (28c), that the multiple-occurrence reading is made apparent. However, in the case of the progressive sentence in (28a), the *blinking* event is automatically interpreted to be a case of iteration, even without the adverbial. We will see later in the analysis section (§4.2.1.3) that this is a rather limited use of the progressive, and thus, it will be difficult to attribute it as an inherent feature of the progressive.

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[13] This usage type is also referred to as ITERATION in the literature.

## 2.2 Subjective Usages

So far, the meanings of progressive sentences related to aspect have been discussed. The following section will bring to attention several other claimed usages of the progressive that have been argued to be non-aspectually motivated, rather, they appear to function as markers of subjectivity. The idea that the progressive can function as such, dates back to Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger's (1982) theory, in which they claim that the progressive is used to describe an event PHENOMENALLY, contrasting from the simple tense that refers to an event structurally.[14]

Many researchers have built upon Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger's claim, including De Wit and Brisard (2014), who refer to the "phenomenal/structural distinction" as "epistemic contingency" and "structural necessity", respectively. In their analysis, the progressive is taken to represent the epistemological status, or non-necessity, of a situation in the speaker's conception of reality. In line with De Wit and Brisard's view, the meanings of the progressive sentences that will be discussed hereafter will be shown to relate to the speaker's perception towards a described event, and not strictly referring to actual facts of the world.

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[14] The distinction that Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger (1982) propose, corresponds to two different types of perceptions, or types of knowledge of the world. Their argument develops from Whorf's (1956) theory on the "axis of being", and they argue that the progressive describes what happens in the world, whereas the perfective specifies the structure of the world, so that certain events may happen in it. The examples below illustrate this distinction, with (a) representing the "phenomenal" description of an event, and (b) reporting the "structure" of it.

(i)  a.  The engine isn't smoking anymore.        (phenomenal description)
     b.  The engine doesn't smoke anymore.        (structural report)
                                                   (Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger, 1982, p. 81)

## 2.2.1 Futurate Progressive

It is widely noted in the literature that progressive sentences may yield a FUTURE TIME READING (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Leech, 2004; Römer, 2005; De Wit & Brisard, 2014; inter alia). In such cases, the progressive does not indicate a current, ongoing event, but depicts one that is scheduled to take place in the future. The examples below are instances where the progressive sentences bear a future time reading, and are synonymous, in terms of temporal interpretation, with their simple tensed versions. The difference in meaning between the (a) and (b) pairs then has to do with the speaker's certainty towards the described eventuality. The progressive sentences are claimed to present future plans that appear less certain than when expressed in simple tense (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Leech, 2004).[15]

(29) a. We are leaving Seoul tomorrow.

b. We leave Seoul tomorrow.

(30) a. She is starting school again next year.

b. She starts school again next year.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 171) suggest that when it comes to expressing future eventualities, the progressive is restricted to instances in which human agency or intention is involved, citing the infelicity of examples such as (31a) below.

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[15] Further discussion on this claim will be provided in §2.2.3.

(31)  a.  #The sun is setting at five tomorrow.

     b.  The sun sets at five tomorrow.

(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 171)

This, however, contradicts with another example they provide to illustrate a different constraint for the futurate progressive. The data set below was intended to show that the progressive typically indicates an event that is scheduled to take place in the relatively near future, thus raising questions about the appropriateness of (32c).

(32)  a.  It is expiring tomorrow.

     b.  It expires tomorrow.

     c.  ?It is expiring in five years.

     d.  It expires in five years.

(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 171)

In (32), the subject *it* is most likely referring to an inanimate object, such as a product or license of some sort. If the progressive sentence in (32a) is accepted to be unproblematic, this would go against the argument that (31a) above is infelicitous due to the absence of human agency. These observations suggest that more have to be considered when determining the contexts in which progressives yielding a future time reading can appear felicitously.

## 2.2.2 Politeness

In certain contexts, the use of the progressive could result in an utterance that arguably bears more POLITENESS (Leech, 2004; Römer, 2005; Kranich, 2013; Gavrilović, 2019). The comparison between (6a) and (6b), repeated below as (33a) and (33b), is exemplar of this phenomenon. The progressive sentence in (33a) is argued to convey a more tentative expression of one's mental attitude, hence, coming across as more polite (Leech, 2004, p. 43).[16]

(33) a. I am hoping to hear from you soon.

b. I hope to hear from you soon.

Kranich (2013, p. 18) posits that the meaning of "tentativeness" is actually activated by the lexical verb *hope*, and what the progressive does, is that it emphasizes the "tentative" interpretation. Both Leech and Kranich do note that the meaning of "politeness" arising from progressive sentences, is restricted mostly to verbs of inert cognition (e.g., *think*, *wonder*) and verbs of attitude (e.g., *hope*, *want*).

These findings further support the aim of this thesis which is to determine in which contexts certain meanings of progressive sentences arise, and if the meanings are contributed by the progressive form itself, or by other factors such as the type of predicates the progressive occurs with.

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[16] More on Leech's account for the progressive being able to convey a further sense of politeness will also be discussed in the following subsection on "subject-to-change", which Leech (2004) regards to be a precondition for this usage type.

## 2.2.3 Subject to Change

The idea that the progressive refers to a situation that is SUBJECT TO CHANGE can be seen as an extension to the fact that the progressive is used to indicate a temporary state, as previously discussed in Section 2.1.4. Leech (2004, p. 31-32) considers the most salient function of the progressive to be referring to situations that bear "limited duration", which connotes that "the current happening or state of affairs does not have the prospect of continuing indefinitely" and is "subject to change".

This is how he accounts for the progressive being able to convey a sense of politeness (§2.2.2) as he argues that the use of the progressive implies that the speaker has not made a final commitment to the described event, e.g., in the case of the *hoping* in (33a) above. This, therefore, he states, adds a sense of "tentativeness" to the overall utterance.

Leech (2004, p. 84) also relates this notion of "limited duration" or "subject to change" to the futurate use of the progressive (§2.2.1). He proffers that in certain contexts, what sets a progressive and simple tensed sentence apart, when both yield a future time reading, is the speaker's certainty towards the unfolding of the described eventuality. His view is that the progressive presents a future plan that still has room for change, thus resulting in a statement with weaker force. On the other hand, the unmarked simple tense expresses a future happening that is regarded as unalterable.[17]

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[17] This could be a way of resolving Huddleston and Pullum's (2002, p. 171) claim towards "#*The sun is setting at five tomorrow.*" vs. "*The sun sets at five tomorrow.*" (see examples (31a-b)). Instead of attributing the infelicity of the progressive sentence to the lack of human agency, the unchangeability of the time the sun sets may serve as an explanation as to why the progressive sentence seems odd.

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He provides the examples below, in which he suggests that (34a) conveys that the subject has personally arranged to start that evening, whereas in (34b), the arrangement is felt to have been made by a committee or higher authority.

(34)  a.  I'm starting tonight.

b.  I start tonight.

(Leech, 2004, p. 84)

Leech's claims bear resonance to Williams' (2002, p. 87) theory, in which the latter summarizes that the progressive is used to imply that a situation may be "susceptible to change in some way". According to Williams, the core difference between the progressive and non-progressive is that when a sentence contains the progressive, the fact that the situation is not permanent is emphasized, whereas attention is not drawn to this when it is reported in simple tense.

## 2.2.4 Emotional Coloring

This subsection discusses how EMOTIONAL COLORING is realized with the use of the progressive form. This idea has been brought to attention as early as Jespersen (1954, p. 192), who states that "the combination of an expanded tense with *always*[18] and its synonyms very often gives an emotional coloring to the sentence".

Kranich (2013, p. 17) closely follows this claim by suggesting that when the progressive is used with an *always*-type adverbial (e.g., *always, continually, forever, all the time*), a "subjective speaker-evaluation, that is usually negative", is at work.

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[18] Unitalicized in original.

Other researchers such as Comrie (1976, p. 37) and Quirk et al. (1985, p. 199) have also presented similar accounts, in which they claim that the progressive can be used to add "greater emotive effect" or express "a subjective feeling of disapproval".

This phenomenon is highlighted in example (7), repeated below as (35), where in (35a), it is argued that there is a sense of negative feeling, particularly irritation, towards the subject *he* constantly taking sides. This sense of irritation is said to not come across as evidently in the simple tense report of (35b) (Kranich, 2013; Gavrilović, 2019).

(35)  a.  He is always siding with her.

       b.  He always sides with her.

Later in the analysis section, I will raise an issue with the above argument, and provide further examples to show why I do not agree with the claim that the progressive contributes a meaning of adding emotional emphasis to what is being described.

## 2.2.5 Subjective Interpretation

The final feature of the progressive that is to be discussed in this chapter is that the progressive has been observed to sometimes be used for "interpretive" or "explanatory" purposes (Ljung, 1980; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Kranich 2010, 2013; De Wit & Brisard, 2014), which again does not serve to express any aspectual distinction. Rather, it is used as a contrastive tool distinguishing between the report of an event and the speaker's SUBJECTIVE INTERPRETATION of it. Consider example

(8a), repeated below as (36a), where *says she is tired* is an unbiased report, and *making excuses* is an additional explanation the speaker offers to express his/her assessment of the previous clause. Kranich (2013) has also argued that when both clauses are expressed in simple tense, as is the case in (36b), this results in a marginally odd sentence.

(36)  a.  Julie says she is tired but she is really just making excuses.

   b.  ?Julie says she is tired but she really just makes excuses.

De Wit and Brisard (2014, p. 84) consider this usage type of the progressive to express a modal meaning. In their view, the use of the progressive is epistemically motivated, and the progressive is employed by the speaker to offer his/her "subjective evaluation of an objective state of affairs". This statement supports the view of the progressive having a modal component, and it will be shown later that modality is indeed responsible for several of the observed readings outlined in this section.

# 3. Previous Analyses of the Progressive

Various interpretations of English progressive sentences have been presented and discussed in the previous chapter. Chapter 3 will now review existing analyses that are relevant to accounting for the readings observed in Chapter 2. First, as modality will later be shown to be an essential factor that will explain for several of the readings, Dowty's (1977, 1979) modal theory of the progressive, alongside its descendants, will be discussed (§3.1). Next, analyses that introduce the idea that some of the observed meanings are not the meaning proper of the progressive, but rather, implicatures that arise in certain contexts (Kearns, 1991; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002), will be considered (§3.2). Finally, a more recent study by De Wit and Brisard (2014), who view the progressive as essentially modal and adopt a cognitive semantics framework to present their analysis of the progressive, will be reviewed (§3.3).

## 3.1 Dowty's Modal-Temporal Analysis

Dowty's (1977, 1979) analysis of the progressive centers around what he calls the IMPERFECTIVE PARADOX, that is when the progressive is combined with an accomplishment or achievement predicate, the progressive fails to entail the event described in simple tense. This is not the case with activity and stative predicates, which are used to describe atelic events, affirming that the progressive contributes a meaning of **incompletion** to the event description and therefore, an endpoint or

event completion cannot be inferred. Examples (37) to (40) below illustrate this entailment pattern.

(37) John was drawing a circle.

⊭John drew a circle. (Accomplishment)

(38) John was pushing a cart.

⊨ John pushed a cart. (Activity)

(Dowty, 1977, p. 45)

(39) John is deciding what to do.

⊭John has decided what to do. (Achievement)

(40) John is smiling.

⊨ John has smiled. (State)

(Portner, 2011)

The progressive sentences of (37) and (39), which contain an accomplishment and achievement predicate, respectively, fail to entail the same event described perfectively. The activity and stative predicates in (38) and (40), on the other hand, entail the perfective versions of the described event. Dowty's (1977) resolution to this entailment pattern phenomena is to consider the progressive as a MODAL-TEMPORAL operator quantifying over possible worlds, meaning that in (37), the existence of a circle is (only) a possible outcome of the event being described.

Dowty builds upon Bennett and Partee's (1972) analysis of the progressive which uses an interval semantics framework,[19] and incorporates modality to present his definition of the progressive as the following:

(41) [PROG Φ] is true at an interval $I$ and world $w$ iff there is an interval $I'$

such that $I$ is a non-final subinterval of $I'$, and for all $w' \in \text{INR}(\langle I,w \rangle)$,

Φ is true at $I'$ and $w'$.

(Dowty, 1979, p. 149)

In his analysis, Dowty treats the modal component as a necessity operator, meaning that it asserts the truth of the proposition under its scope, in each set of possible worlds. As seen in the formalization above, he introduces the INR function as an accessibility relation in his modal semantics; $\text{INR}(\langle I,w \rangle)$ selects the set of inertia worlds which are like world $w$ throughout interval $I$, and in which what is going on in $w$ throughout $I$ continues without interruption. In other words, Dowty (1979, p. 148) selects the set of worlds that "develop in ways most compatible with the past course of events" to be the inertia world that his analysis would work with. Turning back to the example of *John was drawing a circle*, Dowty's analysis predicts the truth of this proposition if the described event proceeds normally in all inertia worlds during the specified time interval, resulting in John completing his drawing of the circle.

Dowty's treatment of the progressive as such has been particularly influential as it not only provides an explanation of how the completion and non-completion

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[19] Bennett and Partee's (1972) analysis, which makes use of interval semantics, is one of the earliest attempts at formalizing the progressive. Their definition for the progressive is as below:

(i) [PROG Φ] is true at $I$ iff there exists an interval $I'$ such that $I \subseteq I'$, and $I$ is not a final subinterval of $I'$, and Φ is true at $I'$.

entailments noted in (37) to (40) above can be accounted for,[20] but also contributes to the growing discussion on the relationship between aspect and modality.[21] Crucially, the completion of the described event is evaluated to be a **possibility** iff what is going on in *w* throughout *I* continues as how one would normally expect it to. Thus, progressive sentences are said to involve the assessment of probability, much like modal auxiliary verbs and future-oriented constructions (Ogihara, 2011, p. 1481).

Subsequent researchers who take after Dowty's approach are primarily concerned with improving the modal theory by introducing new sets of constraints in order to determine the relevant worlds that their analysis would work with. Out of these, I take Portner's (1998) analysis that incorporates functions from Kratzer's (1977, 1981) ORDERING SEMANTICS, as well as a consideration of EVENT-BASED SEMANTICS, to be the most comprehensive. By adapting the MODAL BASE and ORDERING SOURCE functions developed by Kratzer, Portner's analysis is able to establish the set of possible worlds more sophisticatedly and accurately, through

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[20] The other contending formal theory of the progressive, that is the event-predicate theory, is unable to account for such entailment patterns. Consider Parson's (1990) logical forms for the examples below, where the only differing elements are the HOLD and CUL (culminate) operators:

(i)    John was crossing the street.
(i')   $\exists e \exists t[I < \text{now} \wedge t \in I \wedge \text{crossing }(e) \wedge \text{AGENT }(e, \text{John}) \wedge \text{THEME }(e, \text{the street}) \wedge$ HOLD $(e, t)]$
(ii)   John crossed the street.
(ii')  $\exists e \exists t[I < \text{now} \wedge t \in I \wedge \text{crossing }(e) \wedge \text{AGENT }(e, \text{John}) \wedge \text{THEME }(e, \text{the street}) \wedge$ CUL $(e, t)]$

Szabó (2008) brings to attention that the examples (i) and (ii) above bear different Aktionsart which results in the logical forms (i') and (ii') respectively. However, in the case of (iii) and (iv) below, both are activity predicates, yielding analogous logical forms.

(iii)  John was running.
(iii') $\exists e \exists t[I < \text{now} \wedge t \in I \wedge \text{running }(e) \wedge \text{AGENT }(e, \text{John}) \wedge \text{HOLD }(e, t)]$
(iv)   John ran.
(iv')  $\exists e \exists t[I < \text{now} \wedge t \in I \wedge \text{running }(e) \wedge \text{AGENT }(e, \text{John}) \wedge \text{HOLD }(e, t)]$

[21] Aspect has often been related to the viewpoint (or perspective) a speaker takes on an event (Smith, 1991; Portner, 1998, 2011). In this regard, aspect and modality bear similarity in their function of representing the speaker's evaluation towards the event being described.

contextually supplied parameters.[22]

This is an important development to the modal theory as a key argument against Dowty's analysis is that the inertia worlds are not sufficiently defined. Dowty takes the possible worlds *w'* to be exactly like the real world *w* up through a relevant interval *I*, and dismisses any circumstances that could result in the falsity of [PROG Φ]. Instead, he proffers that if an interrupting situation was to occur, another interval *I* that suggests this change-of-state would need to be introduced. Portner's analysis is able to resolve this matter more elegantly by directly setting context-driven constraints onto the set and ranking of accessible worlds, avoiding the reanalysis that is needed in Dowty's account.

Another improvement that Portner brings to the modal account is the consideration of not only the event under discussion, but specific properties of it, i.e., how the event is being described. His semantics for the progressive is defined as (42) below, in which the PROG operator has scope over an event *e* and the property of the event *p*, rather than the overall proposition.[23] According to Portner (1998, p. 782), if *e* is not met with interruptions, "it will become an event of the kind described by *p*".

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[22] These parameters are relabelled as *Circ* (circumstances) for the modal base, and *NI* (non-interruptions) for the ordering source, in Portner's (1998) analysis. Kratzer's (1977, 1981) introduction of these parameters has enabled a more comprehensive formalization of modality which will be further detailed in §4.1.2.

[23] Consider the logical forms below where (i) represents Portner's (1998) treatment of the PROG as a scope over *e* and *p*, whereas (ii) represents the more traditional way of viewing PROG as a scope over the proposition entirely.

    (i)    $\exists e$[PAST($e$) & PROG($e$, $^{\wedge}\lambda e$[DRAW($e$, John, a-circle)])]
    (ii)   $\exists e$[PAST($e$) & PROG($e$[DRAW(John, a-circle)])]

(42) [PROG ($e, p$)] is true at a world $w$ iff for all worlds $w'$ in BEST($Circ, NI,$ $e, p$), there is an event $e'$ which includes $e$ as a non-final subpart, such that $p(w')(e')$ is true.

(Portner, 1998, p. 782)

The benefit of this modification is that by introducing the notion of property of events, Portner (1998, 2011) is highlighting that PROG should be evaluated with respect to a perspective, that is the way the event is perceived. In light of this, other key accounts, such as those by Asher (1992), Landman (1992), and Bonomi (1997), all seek to improve the modal theory by deliberating on how to employ perspective into their analysis.[24]

Portner's analysis accounts for some of the shortcomings in Dowty's analysis but it does not resolve a fundamental issue that was also identified but not tackled in Dowty's (1977) article. This issue is later picked up by Bonomi (1997), who termed it as the MULTIPLE-CHOICE PARADOX,[25] and further discussed on by Szabó (2004). The essence of the problem is that the set of possible worlds adapted by modal theories may sometimes be too restrictive in cases such as what is illustrated in (43) below.

(43) Context: John has begun drawing but he has not yet decided whether it will be a drawing of a horse or a unicorn.

a. John is drawing a horse.

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[24] Portner (2011, §3.2.2) provides an overview on how the aforementioned researchers attempt to incorporate perspective into their modal analysis of the progressive.

[25] This phenomena is also referred to as the INDETERMINACY PROPERTY.

     b.  John is drawing a unicorn.

     c.  John is drawing either a horse or a unicorn.

Until John decides what he will draw and determines that his drawing is complete, (43c) is intuitively true, whereas (43a) and (43b) are not. However, either one of them has to be true in order for (43c) to hold as well. Dowty's primitive modal account predicts that both counterintuitive statements are true, whereas in Portner's analysis, the application of PROG onto event properties $p$ fail to allow a true reading of either (43a) or (43b).

Bonomi (1997) highlights another issue of the modal account, that is, presuppositions based on "reasonableness" could lead to false predictions of the truth conditionality of progressive sentences. Accounts developed by Asher (1992), Landman (1992), and Portner (1998), all rely on some sense of "reasonableness", "normality", or other similar notions in order to determine the set and ordering of possible worlds where [PROG Φ] would have a true value. Thus, it would be difficult to assert a sentence like (44) below as true, as unless there is a divine intervention, or Mary is an extraordinary superhero, there is no world in which Mary, one individual, can wipe out an entire army by herself.

(44)  Mary was wiping out the Roman army.

The above sentence is an extreme case, but assumptions on "reasonableness" often run into problems with sentences like (45) below. In order for (45) to be true, according to the existing modal-temporal analyses, there must exist an entity that can be found for the truth-conditions of the progressive sentence to hold. However, being a mythical spring, we would not assume any such fountain to be found, thus,

wrongly predicting the falsity of the statement regarding Ponce de Leon searching for such an entity.

(45)  Ponce de Leon was looking for the Fountain of Youth.

(Szabó, 2008, p. 500)

These false predictions, in (44) to (45), are issues that remain unresolved, at least to my knowledge, for any modal analysis of the progressive.

A final comment to make in this section, and one that was pointed out by Kranich (2010, p. 73), is that the so-called subjective usages of the progressive, i.e., for expressions of the speaker's subjective interpretation, attitude, or emotion, have not been touched upon in the truth-conditional analyses. This does not come as a surprise as subjective feelings cannot be treated within a formal framework due to the fact that such expressions cannot bear a truth value.

Dowty and his descendants' development on the modal-temporal analyses of the progressive have solved the issue of entailment when it comes to the progressive occurring with predicates of different properties; i.e., telic/atelic, and contributed great insight into the interaction between aspect and modality. From these, I will be adopting the view that the progressive is indeed a modal-temporal operator, but to overcome the issue of false predictions that arise from the application of "reasonableness", I will assume an EPISTEMIC modal base for the progressive.

This will give my analysis more flexibility to deal with the propositions that existing modal analyses have run into problems with, i.e., examples (43) to (45), as assuming an epistemic modal base will make my analysis relevant to what the speaker knows, instead of actual facts of the world. Another advantage of assuming

an epistemic modal base is that the subjective usages of the progressive can also begin to be accounted for, as will be discussed in the next chapter (§4.1.2).

## 3.2 Huddleston and Pullum's Account

Huddleston and Pullum's account for the English progressive is taken from their 2002 publication "*The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*". Being a comprehensive guide to English grammar, the information presented in their work touches upon the various readings identified in Chapter 2, much like other works that detail the progressive in such a manner (Quirk et al., 1985; Leech, 1987, 2004; etc.). One thing to note about their analysis is that they do not ultimately put out a unified analysis, rather, they try to subsume as many usage types as possible under the basic meaning they ascribe to the progressive, which is "the expression of progressive aspectuality" (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 162). As for usages that do not fall under this description, they are labeled as "specialized uses" (ibid, p. 163).

The significant difference between Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) work from other grammarians' is that they draw a distinction between what they consider to be truly part of the progressive's semantics, and what are considered to be implicatures. The list below shows the backbone of their analysis:

(i)     The situation is presented as in progress, ongoing, at/throughout $T_r$.

(ii)    The situation is viewed imperfectively.

(iii)   $T_r$ is a mid-interval within $T_{sit}$.[26]                    [implicature]

(iv)   The situation is presented as durative.

(v)   The situation is presented as dynamic.

(vi)   The situation is presented as having limited duration.        [implicature]

(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 163)

The first out of the two features which Huddleston and Pullum suggest to be implicatures, taking $T_r$, some reference time, to be a mid-interval within $T_{sit}$, the situation time, contradicts with Jespersen's view that the progressive functions as a temporal frame, as well as the RT $\subseteq$ ET inclusion relation.[27] Kearns (1991) also has a similar claim to Huddleston and Pullum's here, as she argues that the temporal frame reading is not an entailment of the progressive but rather, an implicature that arises when the described event can have a greater duration than the framed time (RT). Huddleston and Pullum (2002) develop this view by stating that the mid-interval is most prevalent with accomplishment predicates, which are telic and durative.

Furthermore, as this is an implicature that arises from the relationship between the ET and RT, the adjunct that defines the RT is also equally important to consider. For example, the mid-interval reading will not hold when the RT is defined by a *from* or *until* phrase, specifying the start or the end of the event.

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[26] $T_r$ and $T_{sit}$ correspond to Reichenbach's (1947) notion of RT and ET, respectively.

[27] One may note that Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) claim that "$T_r$ is a mid-interval within $T_{sit}$" is an implicature, rejects the RT $\subseteq$ ET meaning attributed to the progressive. I will attend to this issue again in §4.1.1, showing that the RT $\subseteq$ ET relation remains essential for mapping out the temporal meaning of the progressive, and that examples such as (46) and (47) can be accounted for by considering the meaning of temporal connectives.

(46)  <u>From the moment I arrived</u> he was trying to provoke me.

E: *trying to provoke*

RT = *moment of arrival*

(47)  He was watching TV <u>until the power went off</u>.
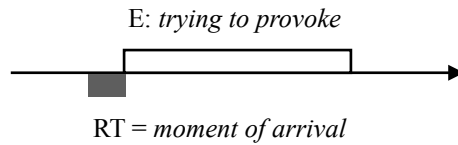
E: *watching TV*

RT = *moment the power went off*
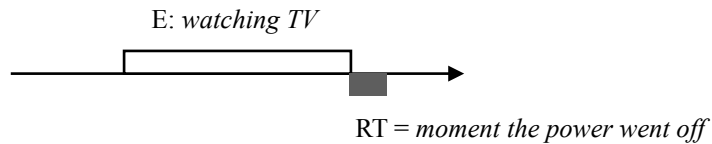
(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 165)

As the illustrations above show, the $T_r$, or RT, is not located as a mid-interval of the described event, supporting Kearns' and Huddleston and Pullum's view that it is not always the case where the contextually supplied RT is entailed to fall within ET.

Both Kearns and Huddleston and Pullum also note that the mid-interval reading is not necessarily present in sentences with adverbials denoting a time interval either.

(48)  John was playing the piano <u>from ten to eleven</u>.

(Kearns, 1991, p. 34)

For the mid-interval reading to hold, John's playing should begin at a time before ten, and continue to a time past eleven. The diagram below shows this temporal relation.

E: *playing the piano*

RT = *from ten to eleven*

41
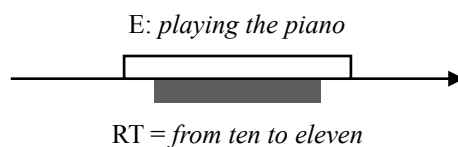
However, John could very well have started exactly at ten and ended precisely at eleven, cancelling the mid-interval reading.[28] Consider the following diagram that presents RT as simultaneous to ET, rather than being a mid-interval of ET.

E: *playing the piano*

RT = *from ten to eleven*

Furthermore, Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 165) note that the mid-interval reading is cancelled when subjective usages of the progressive are concerned. They provide the example below, and point out that the *saying* and *referring* are strictly simultaneous, so that the temporal relation is again, one where the RT equals to ET (RT = ET).
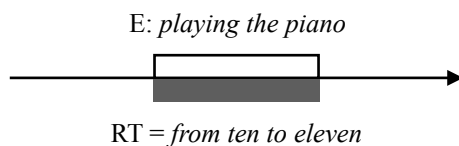
(49)   When I said 'the boss' I was referring to you.

E: *referring to 'you'*

RT = *moment of saying 'the boss'*
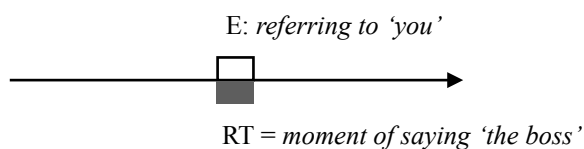
(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 165)

The next suggested implicature in Huddleston and Pullum's list is that the progressive presents an event as having limited duration. This is an important claim as other researchers, such as Quirk et al. (1985), and subsequently, Leech (1987, 2004), have specifically postulated limited duration to be a core meaning of the progressive. Huddleston and Pullum's (2002, p. 168) argument, however, is that limited duration, and in an opposite view, extended duration, which is conveyed in

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[28] A more detailed look into this example and the argument as to why the mid-interval reading should be seen as an implicature is presented in Kearns' (1991, p. 33-38) dissertation.

progressive sentences involving an achievement predicate (e.g., *The train was arriving.* vs. *The train arrived.*), are implicatures deriving from the progressive's interaction with verbs of different aspectual classes.[29]

They assume limited duration to arise when stative verbs are concerned, as dynamicity is imposed onto the described event. Conversely, extended duration arises when the progressive is used with punctual verbs, due to the progressive's meaning of duration (ibid, p. 168).[30] The reason why they assume these two features to be implicatures, instead of being part of the meaning proper of the progressive, is because of cases like (50) and (51) below, where limited duration cannot be assumed, yet the progressive sentences are perfectly acceptable.[31]

(50) The universe is forever expanding.

(Ljung, 1980, p. 28)

(51) Day by day we are getting nearer to death.

(Leech, 1987, p. 33)

Taking Huddleston and Pullum's view into consideration, several of the claimed meanings of the progressive can begin to be accounted for. We can see that there is a need to consider which meanings make up the conventional meaning of the progressive, and which ones can be explained for in terms of the progressive's interaction with other linguistic factors. Finally, another point worth mentioning is

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[29] A further detailing of how verbs of different classes are interpreted when interacting with the meaning(s) of the progressive is provided in §8.2 of Huddleston and Pullum's (2002, ch. 3) publication.

[30] Relevant examples on "extended duration" and "limited duration" can be found in §2.1.2 and §2.1.4-2.1.5 of the previous chapter, respectively.

[31] I will show later in §4.2.1.1 that "limited duration" or "temporariness" is not part of the meaning proper of the progressive, but a strong pragmatic inference when occurring with certain predicates. Examples (50) and (51) can be accounted for if the feature of epistemic modality is accepted for the progressive, as the propositions can be sensibly uttered based on general knowledge of the world.

that throughout their description of the meaning and functions of the progressive, Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 117) maintain that the choice between using the progressive and non-progressive, is dependent on how the speaker views the situation. They assert that the progressive is used to express "non-factuality" or "non-actuality", in other words, rendering the described event as "merely possible", "predicted", or "inferred rather than known". The non-progressive, on the other hand, is used to state facts. From this, it is clear that the progressive is indeed used to mark mood, and therefore, an analysis that integrates modality is needed for the progressive.

## 3.3 De Wit and Brisard's Cognitive Semantics Analysis

The final literature to review in Chapter 3 is De Wit and Brisard's (2014) article titled "*A Cognitive Grammar Account of the Semantics of the English Present Progressive*". Although they make use of a cognitive semantics framework, which is rather different from the other approaches discussed so far, there are some similarities in terms of the concepts employed, and most importantly, it is perhaps one of the most comprehensive unified semantic analysis that attempts to account for the various readings that progressive sentences could potentially yield.

Before proceeding further, it is important to note that De Wit and Brisard's analysis is concerned with the present progressive specifically. However, this provides insight when considering which readings in Chapter 2 truly arise from the use of the  progressive and not due to the semantics of the present tense.

The basic meaning that De Wit and Brisard (2014, p. 49, 50) attribute to the progressive is "epistemic contingency in the speaker's immediate reality", or in other words, the "speaker's conception of current reality". To provide some background on this, as this is related to how the present tense is integrated with the progressive, the present tense imposes an "immediate temporal scope" ($IS_T$) within the speaker's cognition, and this sets the clausal grounding to be the speaker's immediate reality. What the progressive truly offers, that distinguishes the present progressive from the simple present, is the element of modality. Whilst the simple present describes an event that is "structural" in the speaker's conception of immediate reality, the present progressive construes the situation to be "contingent" (De Wit & Brisard, 2014, p. 62).

De Wit and Brisard apply this framework to explain nine usage types of the present progressive which they identified through carrying out a corpus analysis.[32] The usage types are listed as below:[33]

 (i)  current ongoingness

 (ii)  historical present progressive

 (iii) futurate present progressive

 (iv) temporary validity

 (v)  duration

 (vi) iteration

 (vii) repetition

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[32] De Wit and Brisard (2014) draw their corpus data from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English.

[33] As many of these usage types overlap with the readings detailed in Chapter 2, further explanation will be withdrawn here. Detailed description of each usage type can be obtained from §5.1 and §5.2 of De Wit and Brisard's (2014) article.

(viii) habitual

(ix) modal

What is central to the description of each usage type of the present progressive, is that emphasis is put on the perception of the speaker. Therefore, the events being described, or the likelihood of the event coming to pass or being repeated (in the case of the futurate or habitual usage type), are considered to be non-structural, but an epistemological and subjective description based on the speaker's judgement.

De Wit and Brisard present a semantic network,[34] which employs conceptual branching principles, to explain how the different meanings of the English present progressive relate to one another. The first branching in the network distinguishes whether the meaning of the present progressive is to be interpreted in temporal or modal terms. Further branching extends from the temporal component to represent that events described by the present progressive could be interpreted as singular/ multiple, actual/virtual, and having an implicit/explicit temporal boundary.

Although this analysis accounts for the multiple claimed meanings, De Wit and Brisard (2014, p. 87) do allocate a prototypical meaning for the present progressive, that is "current ongoingness". This conclusion was made based on the use frequency of this meaning type, alongside the claim that this is the default meaning arrived at when the progressive is used at the most neutral of contexts.[35]

The key contribution of De Wit and Brisard's study is that they maintain the outlook that the progressive has a modal meaning, and by assigning "epistemic

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[34] The diagram of De Wit and Brisard's (2014) semantic network for the English present progressive can be found in §5.3 of their article (p. 87).

[35] Kranich (2013) also assumes the prototypical meaning of the progressive to be indicating an aspectual category. She postulates that the secondary, subjective meanings, are arrived at when the basic meaning cannot be inferred due to other contextual factors overriding it.

contingency" as the core meaning of the progressive, they are able to put forth an analysis that centers around the speaker's knowledge. This has allowed them to account for several of the subjective usage types of the progressive previously discussed in Section 2.2 of the present study. They do begin to consider the contexts in which certain readings of the progressive arise, but they do not go into detail with these. In the next chapter, I will attempt to pay more attention to what are the surrounding linguistic elements, or contextual factors, that give rise to the observed readings, as well as consider how to detail these interactions more systematically.

## 3.4 Summary

Three distinct approaches to analyzing the English progressive have been discussed in the present chapter. Starting with the treatment of the progressive as a modal-temporal operator within the framework of formal semantics (e.g., Dowty, 1977, 1979; Portner, 1998), researchers have shown that analyzing the progressive in modal terms allow for entailment issues, such as the "imperfective paradox", to be accounted for. Furthermore, aspect and modality share in common that they are concerned with the speaker's evaluation towards what is being described, and thus, this line of research not only supports, but have contributed insight into how these two grammatical categories formally interact with each other. The limitation of existing modal analyses lies in that they fail to address the full range of data relevant to the analysis of the progressive, including the issues that have to do with "indeterminacy" and "reasonableness", as well as the subjective usages that were outlined in the previous chapter (§2.2).

The next work that was reviewed was Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) descriptive study of the progressive, which distinguishes the features that are deemed inherent to the meaning of the progressive, and those that are considered to be implicatures. Their work suggest that not all interpretations of progressive sentences are solely due to the use of the progressive, but are a result of the progressive occurring with other factors that modify the sentence's overall meaning. Although their work has shed light onto several phenomena that reject previous views, for example, Leech's (2004) claim that the basic function of the progressive is to refer to a situation with "limited duration", they do not offer an analysis that can systematically account for such examples (i.e., (50)-(51)).

Finally, De Wit and Brisard's (2014) cognitive semantic analysis of the progressive was reviewed. The major difference between their analysis, which still attributed a modal meaning to the progressive, and those developed within the formal framework, is that they consider the progressive's modal meaning to be epistemic in flavor. By making their analysis of the progressive related to the speaker's evaluation, they were able to present a semantic network that unifies nine identified usages of the present progressive, which included some of the subjective usages previously discussed (i.e., "futurate progressive" and "subjective interpretation").

Drawing from the aforementioned studies, I will develop on Portner's (1998) semantics for the progressive (i.e., (42)), which I take to be the most comprehensive, compositionally speaking, not only in capturing the modal-temporal interaction, but also in its attempt of making the analysis relevant to the speaker's perspective. To this, I will incorporate De Wit and Brisard's (2014) view that the progressive has an

epistemic meaning, in order to allow my analysis to account for the issues that remain unresolved with Portner's proposal. Finally, I take after Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and attempt to investigate further which functions and features discussed in Chapter 2, are potentially pragmatic inferences that arise due to the progressive being used in certain contexts.

# 4. Proposed Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of the English progressive which attempts to account for the facts outlined in Chapter 2. Through a consideration of the progressive's interaction with other linguistic elements, namely, Aktionsart, tense, and adverbials, it will be shown that a sentence containing the progressive could yield various meanings, not because the progressive form is polysemous, but other factors give rise to these secondary meanings. Furthermore, I will assume that the progressive has a modal component, which will be shown to be responsible for several of the readings in Chapter 2.

Section 4.1 will first outline the meaning proper of the progressive, followed by Section 4.2, which will detail the effects of other elements in progressive sentences. Taking these information into consideration, Section 4.3 will present a summary and overview regarding how the progressive interacts with the surrounding elements to yield a variety of meanings.

## 4.1 Conventional Meaning of the English Progressive

In this section, the meaning proper of the progressive will be discussed in two parts: first, the temporal meaning (§4.1.1), and second, the modal meaning (§4.1.2). Readings observed in Chapter 2 which are directly related to the progressive's temporal and modal meanings will also be presented accordingly.

## 4.1.1 Temporal Component

In order to sketch the temporal meaning of the progressive, I will draw from Reichenbach's (1947) theory on tense and temporal referencing (§1.2), and make use of the three temporal references, UT, ET, and RT. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the temporal inclusion relation RT ⊆ ET, is a basic way of capturing the temporal meaning of the progressive, and I will also take this to be my starting point.

The relationship between RT and ET is integral to determining the meaning of the progressive, so much so that Boogaart (1999, 2007) refers to this as an "anaphoric temporal reference"[36] that is to be regarded as a semantic property of the progressive. Boogaart posits that an event, or situation, presented in the progressive form, always requires to be related to a reference time, that is independently provided by the discourse context, for the event to be interpreted as simultaneous, or holding at, the RT.

Similarly, the temporal relation inclusion RT ⊆ ET shows that ET contains, or at least holds throughout, RT. In other words, the event is happening at a time that includes the RT, and this inclusion relation is essential to draw out the fact that the event is **ongoing**. Consider examples (13a-b), repeated below as (52a-b), alongside

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[36] There are at least three usages of the term "temporal anaphora", according to Boogaart (1999, 2007) in the study of temporal semantics. In Boogaart's analysis, he makes it clear that he is referring to the third type in the list below.

1. The use of past tense in non-narrative discourse to present a definite situation in the past (Partee, 1973).
2. The use of past tense in narrative discourse to present a coherent sequence of events in the past (Kamp & Reyle, 1993).
3. A semantic property of imperfective aspect only: situations presented by means of imperfective forms always need to be linked to a reference time independently provided by the surrounding discourse; the situation is interpreted as simultaneous with, or holding at, the RT (Boogaart, 1999, 2007).

their temporal relation diagrams that show why RT $\subseteq$ ET can yield the meaning of ongoingness, but not the default ET $\subseteq$ RT.

(52)  a.  She was writing a book last summer.          (E not bound by RT)

E: *writing a book*
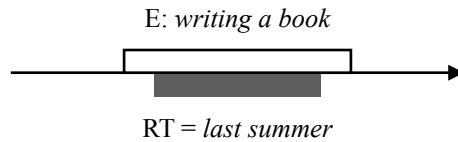
RT = *last summer*

b.  She wrote a book last summer.          (E bound by RT)

E: *writing a book*          E: *writing a book*

RT = *last summer*   or   RT = *last summer*
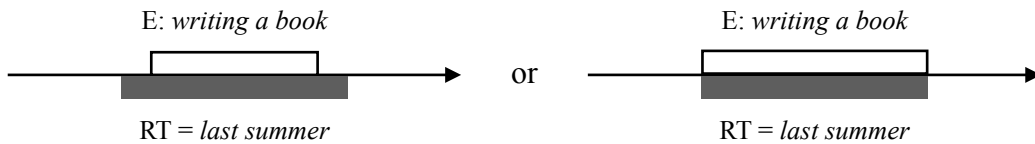
Due to the unboundedness of E in (52a), the event can be viewed as ongoing, whereas in (52b), E is contained within RT, and thus, the unfolding of E is understood to have terminated within RT as well.

Furthermore, in (52a), the **incompletion** of the described event is naturally derived, as the endpoint is not determined by the end of RT. With RT being contained within ET, there is no temporal constraint on ET, resulting in an atelic, or incomplete, interpretation of the described event. In (52b) however, the event is bounded by the RT, that is constrained by the past temporal adverbial *last summer*. This results in a telic interpretation of the described event. Thus, incompletion is a key feature that arises from the basic temporal meaning of the progressive.

An exception to this would be when the RT is introduced by the temporal connective *until*, as this explicitly terminates the described event. Example (47), repeated here as (53), illustrates this problem where the E in progress does not contain the RT of the *moment the power went off*.

(53)  He was watching TV <u>until the power went off</u>.

E: *watching TV*

RT = *moment the power went off*
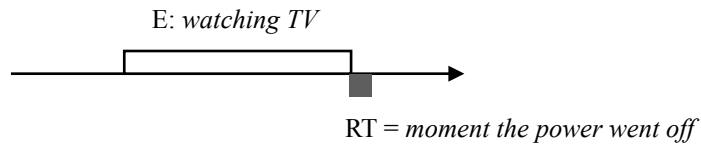
(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 165)

In order to account for such examples, I will consider RTs defined by *until* to not be the RT that the progressive E is evaluated with respect to, but it is a point that locates a significant change-of-state of E, i.e., its termination.[37] The RT that E should be related to in such cases, is the time *before* what is indicated by the *until-*phrase, that is, the time *before the power went off*, in the case of (53). The diagram in (54) serves to illustrate this relationship of ET (the time interval of watching TV) being evaluated with respect to $RT^1$ (the time before the power went off).[38]

(54)  He was watching TV until the power went off.          $(RT^1 \subseteq ET)$

E: *watching TV*

$RT^1$ = *time before the power went off*          $RT^2$ = *moment the power went off*

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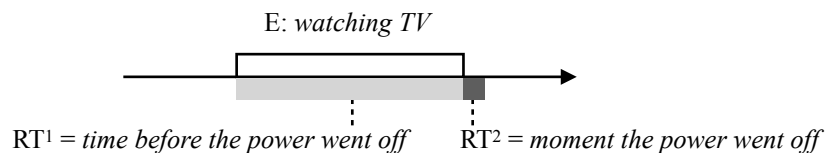
[37] The semantics of a temporal connective cannot be ignored in the temporal analysis of a sentence, and there are researchers who have looked into how certain temporal connectives influence the location of reference time (Dowty, 1982; Moens & Steedman, 1988; Hitzeman, 1991; inter alia). Below, I briefly sketch Hitzeman's (1991) analysis of *until*, in which she posits that *until* introduces an interval with a defined endpoint B. The verbal predicate of the sentence contributes a state A, which is then mapped onto the interval, terminating at B.

(i)          A
                     B
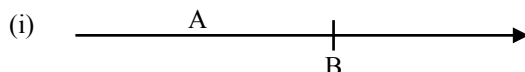
[38] The argument I make here is an attempt to account for the paradox that is raised by Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) analysis of the progressive (§3.2). They claim that the progressive presents a situation as ongoing at, or throughout, $T_r$, yet they suggest that $T_r$ being a mid-interval within $T_{sit}$ is an implicature. I maintain that the situation presented by the progressive always has to be evaluated with respect to a reference time that it contains, hence RT $\subseteq$ ET. However, what defines the RT is a topic that warrants further consideration, and in the case of (53) and (54), the semantics of *until* has to be incorporated into the temporal analysis of the overall sentence.

One last feature that I consider to be inherent to the temporal meaning of the progressive is **duration**. Taking the RT $\subseteq$ ET inclusion relation into account, the event is assumed to have at least enough duration to be able to contain the RT. To summarize what have been discussed so far, I regard three of the observed readings from Chapter 2 (§2.1.1, §2.1.2, §2.1.3) to be contributed by the temporal meaning of the progressive. In other words, the progressive independently carries these three meanings, and they are present in all cases in which the progressive is used aspectually.

    (i)    The progressive presents an event/situation as **ongoing**.

    (ii)    The progressive presents an event/situation as **incomplete**.

    (iii)    The progressive presents an event/situation as having **duration**.

In order to formally represent the temporal meaning of the progressive, I adopt the definition given by Bennett and Partee (1972), which has been adapted into most modal analyses, including Dowty's (1977, 1979) and Portner's (1998). In (55) below, the subinterval $I$ correlates to the RT that the event has to be evaluated with respect to, and the interval $I'$ denotes the ET, the time when the event takes place.

    (55)   [PROG $\Phi$] is true at $I$ iff there exists an interval $I'$ such that $I \subseteq I'$, and $I$

            is not a final subinterval of $I'$, and $\Phi$ is true at $I'$.

<div align="right">(Bennett & Partee, 1972, p. 13)</div>

For a proposition like *Alexis is feeding the cat*, the above is equivalent to Alexis feeding the cat is true at a time interval $I$, iff there is an interval $I'$, such that $I$ is a subset of $I'$, $I$ is not a final subinterval of $I'$, and Alexis feeding the cat is true at $I'$.

The formalization in (55) will be returned to after a discussion on the modal meaning of the progressive in the next section. It will be shown later how the two components combine to make up the semantics of the progressive.

## 4.1.2 Modal Component

As previously mentioned, the original treatment of the modal component of the progressive is taking it to be a necessity operator ($\Box P$), which asserts the truth of the proposition under its scope in the relevant possible worlds (Dowty, 1977, 1979). Researchers have found this definition to be too rigid, as there are many instances where a progressive sentence can be rightfully uttered, but the truth-conditions remain vague or contradictory.

The first modification I will suggest, therefore, is to weaken the modal force of the progressive to be expressing POSSIBILITY ($\Diamond P$), rather than necessity. Consider the examples below which bring out the difference in interpretation between regarding the progressive as a necessity vs. possibility operator.

(56)  *P*: John was drawing a circle.

Default: If all worlds proceed normally, *John drew a circle* becomes true.

a.  $\Box P$ = If all worlds proceed normally, there **must** exist a circle that John drew.

b.  $\Diamond P$ = If all worlds proceed normally, there **should** exist a circle that John drew.

55

The advantage of viewing the progressive as a possibility operator comes across more evidently when considering examples such as (57) below, provided by Portner (1998, p. 762). In (57), there is a 50/50 chance of the prejacent proposition 'the coin comes up heads' being either true or false, thus, it is more natural to assume the coin coming up heads as a possible outcome, rather than a necessary one.

(57)   *P*: The coin is coming up heads.

Default: If all worlds proceed normally, *the coin has came up heads* becomes true.

a.   $\Box P$ = If all worlds proceed normally, the coin **must** come up heads.

b.   $\Diamond P$ = If all worlds proceed normally, the coin **should** come up heads.

Another modification I will bring into the modal analyses of the progressive, is to regard the progressive as having an epistemic modal base, following the view of De Wit and Brisard (2014) who consider the progressive to indicate "epistemic contingency". I assume the modal flavor of the progressive to be epistemic, in which the speaker is not strictly committed to facts of the world, rather, to his or her knowledge of the world and how an event may unfold.

As observed in Chapter 3, many of the formal accounts run into issues when attempting to account for the progressive sentence's truth conditions in relation to the "reasonableness" or "normality" of the described event. If we take **epistemic modality** to constitute the meaning of the progressive, such issues would not hold, as the assessment of the sentence's truthfulness would be based on the speaker's perception, rather than actual facts of the world.

I will now briefly outline Kratzer's (1977, 1981) theory of modality[39] which introduces the tools needed to represent the modal base of the sentence. Kratzer's analysis makes use of two parameters in conversation, i.e., the modal base (MB) and ordering source (OS), which are used to determine the modal flavor of a sentence. MB is responsible for establishing the set of worlds relevant to the interpretation of the modal sentence, and OS ranks the relevant worlds determined by MB. There are two types of MBs, epistemic ($MB_{epis}$) and circumstantial ($MB_{circ}$), each correlating to yielding an epistemic modal reading and deontic modal reading, respectively. $MB_{epis}$ is said to contain a set of propositions known to the speaker, whereas $MB_{circ}$ is made up of propositions relevant to the event description. In relation, there are also two types of OSs, the stereotypical OS[40] works with $MB_{epis}$, and the deontic OS, with $MB_{circ}$.

Traditionally, modal-temporal analyses have treated the progressive to have a circumstantial modal base (Portner, 1998), containing facts relevant to whether E can be completed.[41] Consider the example below which illustrates Portner's generation of the modal base, tending to sentence (58) below. The propositions that make up the $MB_{circ}$ are the facts necessary for Mary to climb the mountain, including Mary's physical and mental states, the condition of the mountain trail, propositions regarding Mary's course of action, and more.

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[39] Kratzer's (1977, 1981) semantics for modality, also dubbed ORDERING SEMANTICS, has been particularly influential, as it allows one to formally account for the modal flavor of sentences.

[40] The stereotypical OS is also referred to as doxastic OS, relating it to the speaker's belief.

[41] Portner (1998) adopts a circumstantial modal base for his analyses on the progressive, but he acknowledges that he has made adjustments to the conventional idea of Kratzer's, by making it sensitive to event properties. His modal base is generated based on the set of facts relevant to whether E is completed as an event with the same properties of that described by the progressive sentence (ibid, p. 774).

(58)  Mary was climbing the mountain.

(59)  MB = {'Mary is in good physical condition', 'Mary does not give up

easily', 'The mountain trail is in good condition', 'The weather

condition is ideal for climbing', 'Mary is one third of the way up the

mountain trail', 'Mary is headed the right way on the trail', …}

(Portner, 1998, p. 772)

In terms of the ordering source, Portner assumes that the ranking of relevant worlds should be based on the consideration of in which worlds the event of Mary climbing the mountain does not get interrupted. Therefore, the OS for the progressive is the set of propositions which assert that event E is not interrupted (ibid, p. 774). Below is his representation of the OS for sentence (58).

(60)  OS = {'Mary does not get eaten by a bear', 'Mary does not slip and hurt

her ankle', 'A surprise summer blizzard does not start on the mountain',

'Mary does not get lost', …}

(Portner, 1998, p. 773)

Bringing (59) and (60) together, it is suggested that in all worlds compatible with all the propositions present in MB, i.e., 'Mary is in good physical condition' and so on — and where the event of Mary climbing the mountain proceeds without interruption, i.e., 'Mary does not get eaten by a bear' etc., the prejacent proposition 'Mary climbs the mountain' of the progressive sentence (58), is regarded as true. Portner introduces the BEST-operator, which functions to select the "best" worlds

with respect to MB($e, p$)[42] and OS($e, p$), and (61) below is the representation of the relevant worlds that his analysis would work with.

(61)  BEST(MB$_{circ}$, OS, $e, p$) = the set of worlds $w'$ in $\cap$MB$_{circ}$($e, p$) such that

there is no $w''$ in $\cap$MB$_{circ}$($e, p$) where $w'' <_{OS, e} w'$.

I will draw from the above framework, developed by Kratzer and Portner, but analyze the modal component of the progressive in terms of an epistemic modal base and stereotypical ordering source.[43] As seen in Chapter 2, the progressive appears to be able to represent a speaker's subjective belief towards an event (§2.2.5). Furthermore, it can carry connotations of the speaker's certainty towards a described event (§2.2.1, §2.2.2, §2.2.3) and even express the speaker's heightened emotions towards what is being described (§2.2.4). These atypical, but acceptable, readings of progressive sentences are what drove me to reconsider the modal meaning of the progressive, and the semantics that I am proposing for it, is given below in (62).

(62)  $\lambda P \lambda I \lambda w \exists w'[w' \in$ BEST(MB$_{epis}$, OS$_{stereo}$, $I, w$) $\wedge P(I', w')]$

According to (62), among the worlds which contain the set of propositions known by the speaker, the worlds most highly ranked based on the speaker's belief, are those in which the prejacent proposition $P$ of the progressive sentence would hold.

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[42] In Portner's (1998) analysis, $e$ represents events, and $p$ is the properties of the described event.

[43] Portner (1998) does not follow strictly Kratzer's definition of stereotypical or deontic OS. However, his version of the OS to be determining the order of worlds in which E is not interrupted, bears resonance to Kratzer's (1981) definition of stereotypical conversational backgrounds, i.e., the set of propositions such that it represents the normal course of events.

Table 2 highlights the modifications I have made to Portner's (1998) semantics for the progressive, alongside the reasons for incorporating such changes.

Table 2: Comparison of the Modal Analyses for the Progressive

|  | Modal Force | Modal Flavor |
|---|---|---|
| Portner (1998) | Necessity ($\Box$) | Circumstantial MB (*Circ*) with Non-interruption OS (*NI*) |
| Present study | Possibility ($\Diamond$) | Epistemic MB ($MB_{epis}$) with Stereotypical OS ($OS_{stereo}$) |
| Reason for modification | To weaken the modal force so that the progressive sentence is regarded as true iff there exists a world in which the prejacent proposition is **possibly** true. | To make the modal base relevant to the **speaker's knowledge**; i.e., the prejacent proposition is evaluated with respect to the **set of propositions known**, rather than actual facts of the world. |

Now that the modal meaning of the progressive is established, the semantics for the temporal component presented in (55) is brought back, and (63) below demonstrates how the two components are combined to generate the complete semantics for the progressive.

(63)  [PROG $\Phi$] is true at an interval *I* and world *w* iff there exists an interval

*I'* such that $I \subseteq I'$, and *I* is not a final subinterval of *I'*, and for all

$w' \in$ BEST($MB_{epis}$, $OS_{stereo}$, *I*, *w*), and $\Phi$ is possibly true at *I'* and *w'*.

To conclude this section, I list below the readings observed in Chapter 2, which I presume are made available due to the modal nature of the progressive.

(i)   Future time reading (§2.2.1)

(ii)   Politeness (§2.2.2)

(iii)   Subject to change (§2.2.3)

(iv)   Emotional coloring (§2.2.4)

(v)   Subjective Interpretation (§2.2.5)

However, it is important to note that these readings are not yielded simply because the progressive has a modal element. Other factors are responsible, too, for triggering such readings, and the modal nature of the progressive only allows for the readings to arise. The following section will discuss how the progressive's temporal and modal meanings interact with other linguistic elements to give rise to the readings that have not yet been accounted for in the discussion so far.

## 4.2 Effects of Various Elements in Progressive Sentences

As previously mentioned, I postulate that the interaction between the progressive and other elements that are present in the sentence, are what that leads to a variety of readings. Section 4.2 is firstly broken down into three subsections, each detailing the effects of the progressive's interaction with Aktionsart, tense, and adverbials, respectively. Despite the separate subsections, it is important to note that these elements are not mutually exclusive, and they do have effect on one another as well. Some of these relations will be made apparent throughout the discussion.

Following this, there will be a last subsection (§4.2.4) that discusses readings of the progressive that are not due to the aforementioned three elements, but it will be shown that they are pragmatic inferences that arise due to the progressive having a modal component.

## 4.2.1 Aktionsart

Several sections in Chapter 2 have already made reference to the aspectual class of the described event, which influences the interpretation of a sentence containing the progressive. In this subsection, a detailed account will be provided on how the properties of predicates impose restrictions, or generate new meanings, in the course of interpreting progressive sentences.

Vendler's (1957) four-way classification of Aktionsart, i.e., states, activities, achievements, and accomplishments, will be assumed here, alongside Comrie's (1976) additional fifth class of semelfactives to describe instantaneous events that are inherently repeatable (§1.2).

## 4.2.1.1 Temporariness

Several researchers have noted that the progressive can be used to refer to temporary states (Comrie, 1976; Quirk et al., 1985; Williams, 2002; Leech, 2004), and I take after Quirk et al.'s (1985) view that the progressive implies "temporariness" when it is combined with a stative predicate. This implication can be explained if we take into account that the progressive expresses **incompletion**, and if we considered further the properties of stative predicates.

Stative predicates are characterized as internally uniformed, due to their SUBINTERVAL PROPERTY (Taylor, 1977; Dowty, 1986), which makes it so that when a state holds during an interval of time *I*, the state also necessarily holds during any

subinterval of *I*.[44] This means that the events described by stative predicates do not involve change, thus, it is difficult to label such events as incomplete. To account for this, a stative event that is described in the progressive form should be understood to be non-final, or temporary, and a **change-of-state** property should be accessible at some point of the described event's progression.

This further explains why the progressive cannot occur felicitously with certain stative predicates, notably those that express a more or less permanent situation. In (64), *be tall* is an individual-level predicate (Carlson, 1977), which according to Condoravdi (1992), infers that the predicate will continue to be true of the individual unless stated otherwise.[45] In (65), it is difficult to assume that the location of an entire city can be moved, thus cancelling the change-of-state assumption, and rendering the progressive sentence infelicitous.

(64)  #John is being tall.

(65)  #New Orleans is lying at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

(Dowty, 1975, p. 582)

In summary, I do not consider "temporariness" to be a meaning contributed by the progressive, but a pragmatic inference that arises due to the progressive's meaning of **incompletion**. When the progressive is used with a stative predicate, due to the stative predicate's subinterval property, which denotes that a situation does not involve change, "temporariness" is yielded to emphasize that what is being described in the predicate is incomplete.

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[44] This is why stative predicates occurring in the progressive entail the occurrence of the described event, as in *John is smiling* entails *John has smiled* (Portner, 2011) (§3.1).

[45] The progressive *I* has no problem occurring with stage-level predicates (Carlson, 1977), which refer to transitory properties of the subject (e.g., *John is being silly.* or *John is sleeping.*).

## 4.2.1.2 Dynamicity

"Dynamicity" is very much related to the discussion in the preceding section regarding "temporariness". It can even be said that "dynamicity" and "temporariness" make up the two sides of a coin, when it comes to considering progressive sentences that occur with stative predicates. Examples (18a-b) are repeated below as (66) to show the correlation between the claims that the progressive renders a situation "dynamic", and that it highlights the "temporariness" of a state.

(66)  a.  John is being polite.

     b.  John is polite.

(Kranich, 2010, p. 50)

The progressive (66a) is understood to be a temporary attitude of John's, whereas (66b) conveys an inherent trait of his. In another view, (66a) is interpreted to be a dynamic event, initiated by the agent John. (66b) has no such indication, and remains to be interpreted as a typical state. Cases like this have resulted in claims that the use of the progressive "dynamicizes" a stative situation (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Chilton, 2007; among others).

A difference between "dynamicity" and "temporariness", is that "dynamicity" automatically arises in progressive sentences containing the other four types of predicates.[46] This has led some to mistakenly attribute "dynamicity" as a key feature of the progressive, when in fact, it is from the aspectual properties of the predicate the progressive occurs with.

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[46] The aspectual properties of activities, accomplishments, achievements, and semelfactives, include the feature [+ DYNAMIC] (§1.2).

I repeat two examples below which reject the meaning of "dynamicity" for the progressive. In both (67) and (68), "agency" cannot be assumed from the subject, and both predicates *hanging on the wall* and *lying dead on the floor*, do not involve change. Furthermore, it is difficult to deduce the meaning of "temporariness" from these sentences as well.

(67)   The clock is hanging on the wall.

(68)   John is lying dead on the floor.

(Kranich, 2010, p. 41)

In order to account for such examples, my argument is that the **change-of-state**[47] property is accessible in these predications. There is the potential for a change in location for both the clock in (67) and the dead body's position in (68). To draw a clear contrast, example (65) is repeated below as (69) to show how this change of location is not as easily inferred when it comes to the location of an entire city.

(69)   #New Orleans is lying at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

(Dowty, 1975, p. 582)

I consider my argument here to strengthen the claim that the description of an event in the progressive form is indeed dictated by the speaker's evaluation of the event and its properties. Based on world knowledge, if the described situation can undergo a change of state, even if it means involving an external factor to cause the change, the situation can most likely be described in progressive terms.

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[47] I had mentioned above that the change-of-state property follows from the progressive bearing the meaning of **incompletion**. For a situation to be deemed incomplete, some sort of change-of-state has to be accessible in the progression of the situation. If no change can be inferred, the situation is most likely incompatible with the progressive.

To conclude the discussion on "dynamicity", it is not to be regarded as a key feature of the progressive, but it is an implication that arises when the progressive occurs with certain stative predicates.

## 4.2.1.3 Repetition

It has been observed that there are events which are sometimes interpreted as repeated when occurring in the progressive form (Mindt, 2000; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; De Wit & Brisard, 2014; among others). Recall example (28), repeated here as (70), where (a) is interpreted to describe a series of repeated blinks, and the more salient reading of (b) would be a single occurrence of blinking.

(70) a. Nikita was blinking.  (salient reading: multiple occurrence)

b. Nikita blinked.  (salient reading: single occurrence)

This meaning of "repetition"[48] only comes through when the progressive is occurring with a predicate of the fifth class type, semelfactives, and not when predicates of the other four aspectual classes are concerned. As shown below, the examples are all referring to a single event (or situation) occurring in the past.

(71) She was smiling.  (*smile* : state)

(72) She was running.  (*run* : activity)

(73) She was winning the race.  (*win the race* : achievement)

(74) She was building a house.  (*build a house* : accomplishment)

---

[48] I specify here that "repetition" is used to refer to the interpretation of sentences denoting a repeated series of events in a single occasion. A sentences like *She was building houses for a long time.* will be analyzed as bearing a past habitual reading.

Based on this, I argue that it would be incorrect to attribute the meaning of "repetition" to the progressive, as this meaning only arises with semelfactives. In terms of why the semelfactive is interpreted as a series of repeated events, I postulate that it is due to the progressive's property of **duration**, that semelfactives which typically do not exhibit this feature, are interpreted as a series of repeated events, to be compatible with the progressive's meaning.

However, this postulation is also limited by context. Consider sentence (75) below, albeit imaginative, but useful for proving that *blinking* can be interpreted as a single occurrence when really zooming into a situation.

(75)  Nikita **was blinking** just as the shooting star zoomed past so she missed the spectacle in that split-second.

Furthermore, recall that *blinked* is also interpreted as an iterated event in the example *Nikita blinked three times* (28c). To make it even clearer that the function of "repetition" does not belong to the progressive, consider the data below.

(76)  A:  You lost the challenge since you *blinked*.

B:  I did not!

A:  Yes, you did. In fact, you *blinked* twice.

In A's first utterance, the event of B blinking that A wishes to express is a multiple-occurring one. This is not made salient until the attachment of adverbial *twice* in A's second utterance, but this still shows that the progressive is not needed to express the iteration. Thus, "repetition" is not a function of the progressive, but a strong pragmatic inference when the progressive is used with a semelfactive predicate due to the progressive's meaning of **duration**.

## 4.2.2 Tense

This section will look into the interaction between the progressive and present tense. The English present tense is well noted to be able to refer to habitual situations, in which what is considered "habitual" is not limited to a regularly occurring event, but can also be extended to events that happen from time to time (e.g., Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Leech, 2004). Consider (77) below, in which the simple present tense sentence has a serial state reading.

(77)  I do 'The Times' crossword.

   = 'I *habitually* do 'The Times' crossword.'

(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 128)

Furthermore, present tense sentences can have a future time reading, in the case where the event is somewhat pre-determined (e.g., Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Leech, 2004; Ogihara, 2007). Consider (31b), repeated below as (78), that expresses the futurate use of the present tense.

(78)  The sun sets at five tomorrow.

(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 171)

These facts will be considered in order to account for several other claimed meanings presented in Chapter 2. I will argue that some of these meanings have been misattributed to the progressive, when indeed they come from the present tense.

## 4.2.2.1 Habituality

As mentioned above, and noted in Chapter 2, with the example sentence *Daniel cooks*, the English present tense can yield a habitual reading, especially when used with verbs of action. Although progressive sentences can sometimes have a habitual reading, it is not the progressive that contributes this, but it is due to the present tense which also scopes over the predication, that carries through the meaning of habituality.

Several examples are repeated below to highlight the fact that the habitual reading holds in both the progressive and non-progressive pairs, affirming that the progressive is not responsible for contributing the meaning of habituality, but it is indeed the present tense, that is the common factor in all four sentences, that give rise to the habitual interpretation.

(79)  a.  Julian is working from home these days.

    b.  Julian works from home these days.

(80)  a.  Usty is sleeping a lot (lately).

    b.  Usty sleeps a lot (in general).

A more accurate description of the phenomena is that the progressive is not limited to describe a singular happening, but it is often interpreted as such if no salient temporal adverbial is present to define the reference time. Consider the conversation in (81) below where B probably understood A's first utterance to mean that Julian is working from home that particular day. With the adverbial *this week*

attached in A's second utterance, Julian's working from home is then understood to hold throughout the entire week.

(81)  A:  Julian is working from home.

B:  Oh, so I won't be able to see him in the office today?

A:  That's right. He is working from home all of this week.

To reiterate, habitual meanings are not generated from the use of the progressive, but they owe to the semantics of the present tense. In fact, the habitual interpretation derived from progressive sentences are regarded as marked uses. As (81) shows, contextual clues are needed for the habitual reading to be arrived at. This is also the case in (79a) and (80a), where the adverbials *these days*, and *lately*, are necessary to make the habitual reading evident.

I provide one more set of examples to further illustrate the point I am trying to make here.

(82)  a.  Daniel is cooking a lot of food.

b.  Daniel is cooking a lot of food tonight.

c.  Daniel is cooking a lot of food these days.

In (82a-c), all sentences contain present tense, which temporally locates RT at UT by default, which is the case with (82a). In (82b-c), the RT is further determined by the temporal adverbials *tonight* and *these days*. With (82a-b), the event of *cooking a lot of food* is interpreted to be a single cooking event, as the event of cooking can be assumed to have long enough of a duration to include the reference time *now* and *tonight*. This would not work with (82c), however. The event time has to be

extended to be able to encompass the RT *these days*, and following our common knowledge of how a cooking session unfolds, we can conclude that one session typically would only last for over a couple hours at most, and thus, the event has to be interpreted as a serial or habitual one. The habitual reading of the progressive sentence in (82c) can be said to arise from the interaction among tense, the temporal adverbial *these days*, and our world knowledge.

## 4.2.2.2 Futurate Progressive

Similar to the discussion on the habitual readings of certain progressive sentences, I maintain the view that referring to a future time event is not part of the progressive's semantics, but this is made available due to the use of present tense. Thus, only present progressive sentences may yield such temporal inferences. Example sentences from Section 2.2.1 are repeated below to illustrate this.

(83) a. We are leaving Seoul tomorrow.

b. We leave Seoul tomorrow.

(84) a. She is starting school again next year.

b. She starts school again next year.

The fact that all examples above constitute the present tense and have a future time reading proves that this reading is yielded from the semantics of present tense, and not the progressive that is only present in (83a) and (84a).

Also, I mentioned previously in Section 4.1.2 that the modal component of the progressive allows for the future time reading of progressive sentences. It has been

noted in the literature that any expression that indicates a described event as not having happened yet, but expected to happen in the future, is essentially modal (Abusch, 1997; Ogihara, 2007; among others). Consider the example below, taken from Ogihara (2007), that captures the basic definition of the "future" as a modal element.

(85) *Kim will leave tomorrow* is true in *w* at *t* iff in all worlds *w'* in which events and states develop in a way compatible with how they have been developing in *w* up until *t*, Kim leaves at some time within tomorrow.

(Ogihara, 2007, p. 403)

Immediately, similarities can be observed between the above definition with the definitions of the progressive within a modal-temporal framework (e.g., Dowty, 1977, 1979; Portner, 1998). Since the progressive is related to expressing the possibility of the described event coming to pass, the semantics of the progressive is compatible with a future time reading.

To summarize this subsection, I postulate that although the present tense gives rise to the future time reading, it is the modal nature of the progressive that allows for it to accept this kind of temporal reading. Again, this does not mean that the future time reading is due to the progressive, but the progressive allows for it due to its modal nature in combination with the present tense.

### 4.2.3 Adverbials

From the examples presented in (82), repeated below as (86) for reference, it can be seen that the presence of an adverbial is able to trigger certain inferences such as temporary habituality in (c).

(86)  a.  Daniel is cooking a lot of food.

        b.  Daniel is cooking a lot of food tonight.

        c.  Daniel is cooking a lot of food these days.

This section will further consider how adverbials affect the interpretation of progressive sentences and account for another claimed usage of the progressive, that is to act as a device of emphasizing emotion.

### 4.2.3.1 Emotional Coloring

In almost all theories that claim that one of the functions of the progressive is to emphasize the speaker's attitude towards the described event, it is also noted that the progressive appears alongside an *always*-type adverbial (e.g., Jespersen, 1954; Kranich 2013). In these cases, the *always*-type adverbial is seen to be used hyperbolically, and the examples provided below further highlight this.

(87)  a.  He is <u>always</u> siding with her.

        b.  He <u>always</u> sides with her.

(88)  a.  You're <u>forever</u> worrying about the smallest details.

        b.  You <u>forever</u> worry about the smallest details.

(89)  a.  I'm <u>constantly</u> misplacing my keys.

  b.  I <u>constantly</u> misplace my keys.

This is not a novel finding, but to my knowledge, this function of adding emotive effect is still claimed to belong to the progressive, when in fact, it is the hyperbolic use of the adverbials that gives rise to this emphasis. Consider the discourse context examples below, which shows that the simple tense utterance occurring with a hyperbolic use of the *always*-type adverbial, also upholds the speaker's emphasized attitude towards the described eventuality, just as is claimed for similar progressive sentences.

(90)  A:  John knows that Mary is being ridiculous right?

  B:  Yep… yet he **is** <u>always</u> **siding** with her…

(91)  A:  John knows that Mary is being ridiculous right?

  B:  Yep… yet he <u>always</u> **sides** with her…

To summarize, I do not consider the progressive to be responsible for adding any emotional emphasis, and that this pragmatic implication arises from the exaggerated use of *always*. However, I do take the modal nature of the progressive to allow for such expressions, as in this view, the progressive is not limited to describing an actual event happening, but is used to express the speaker's judgement and attitude towards a particular situation. In the case of (90), if speaker B perceives that John sides with Mary more often that deemed necessary, the progressive sentence can be felicitously uttered.

## 4.2.4 Other Pragmatic Inferences

There are a few more "subjective" usages of the progressive that have not been detailed explicitly. These are all readings that are accessible due to the modal nature of the progressive, but as mentioned before, the readings arise from interaction with some other linguistic factors, thus, only arising in very specific contexts. The claims that the progressive is used to highlight "susceptibility to change" and convey "politeness" will be discussed below, followed by the use of the progressive as an expression of the "speaker's subjective interpretation".

## 4.2.4.1 Subject to Change and Politeness

The notion of "subject to change" bears resonance to previously discussed features, i.e., "incompletion", "temporariness", and "dynamicity". However, there is a slightly more distinct feature that comes with this notion, which has been especially noted by Leech (2004). This feature is "tentativeness", or "speaker's commitment", which Leech claims can be derived from his view towards what the basic meaning of the progressive is, which is to refer to situations bearing "limited duration" and thus, are "subject to change" (ibid, p. 31-32).

He attempts to support this view by comparing the difference in interpretation between progressive and non-progressive sentences when it comes to sentences that are claimed to convey a sense of politeness, and sentences that bear a future time reading. According to Leech, (92a) below comes across as more polite, and this can be accounted for if we accept the meaning of the progressive to be indicating that

the situation of *hoping to hear from you soon* is "subject to change". The next step

will be to assume that the speaker has not made a final commitment to the *hoping*,

and thus, (92a) is arguably more "polite" than the unmarked (92b).

(92)  a.  I am hoping to hear from you soon.

       b.  I hope to hear from you soon.

My claim will be slightly different from Leech's, although I acknowledge that

there is potentially a difference in speaker's attitude or commitment between the two

sentences. I argue that these comparisons can be made due to the fact that the

progressive has a modal component, and that modality, which indicates the assertive

strength of a proposition (Kratzer, 1981; Chung & Timberlake, 1987; among others),

is partially responsible for the fact that (92a) can have a more "tentative", thus

"polite" interpretation. Consider the examples below which illustrate the difference

in assertion strength between two modal sentences, in comparison to the meaning of

the corresponding non-modal statement.

(93)  a.  John **may** be ill.      (weaker modal, hypothetical state of affair)

          $\neq$ 'John is ill in the actual world.'

          $=$ 'It is **possibly** true that John is ill.'

       b.  John **must** be ill.     (stronger modal, hypothetical state of affair)

          $\neq$ 'John is ill in the actual world.'

          $=$ 'It is **necessarily** true that John is ill.'

       c.  John is ill.        (non-modal, actual state of affair)

          $=$ 'John is ill in the actual world.'

Comparing (93a-c), the modal sentences (93a) and (93b) describe hypothetical state of affairs, and the different modal auxiliaries, *may* and *must*, influence the assertive strength of the utterance. The non-modal (93c) states the actual reality, and a weaker assertion cannot be assumed. In the same way, I assume the modal progressive to be comparable to (93a-b) above, whilst the non-modal simple tense functions just as (93c) does.[49]

Another feature of progressive sentences that Leech attempts to account for in relation to the notion of "subject to change" is the potentially weaker statement of a progressive sentence expressing a future time event. His claim for this is similar to that of "conveying politeness", as he argues that the speaker has not made a final commitment to the described eventuality, if using the progressive to express it. Once again, I do not consider this to be a key feature of the progressive, but an inference made available due to the progressive's modality. Furthermore, I argue that the claim towards the progressive indicating the speaker's weaker commitment only comes across as evident when the subject is the first-person speaking. Consider and compare examples (94) and (95) which are provided to support this claim.

(94)  a.  I am starting school again next year.

b.  I start school again next year.

(95)  a.  She is starting school again next year.

b.  She starts school again next year.

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[49] Things are a little more interesting with examples (92a-b), as the verb *hope* has been argued to be a modal in itself (e.g., Palmer, 1979; Saeed, 2003). Following Kranich (2010), I take that *hope* already conveys "tentativeness", and what the progressive does is emphasize this. One last note on this matter is that I assume the "more polite" reading of (92a) to only be made apparent when it is explicitly compared to its non-progressive counterpart. Thus, I conclude that the meaning of "politeness" comes from the verb *hope* itself, and it is pragmatically inferred that the progressive (92a) conveys a further sense of politeness only when there is a direct comparison made with the non-progressive version.

Although in all examples, there is an intention of starting school in the following year, the utterance in (94a) occurring in the progressive with a first-person *I* subject, can be argued to be a weaker statement on the speaker's behalf towards the plan of *starting school again next year*. The speaker could still be in the midst of making the necessary arrangements to go back to school and there is arguably, room for a change of plan. In comparison, the simple tensed report in (94b), seems to indicate that the arrangement to *start school again next year* is more or less finalized and unchangeable. In (95), as the subject is the third-person *she*, it is difficult to deduce if the speaker indeed has more certainty towards another party going back to school in (95b), and therefore, (95a) and (95b) are concluded to be equivalent.

## 4.2.4.2 Subjective Interpretation

The final usage of the progressive to be discussed is one that is used to distinguish the speaker's subjective evaluation towards a previous clause expressed in simple tense. Two examples are repeated below to illustrate this usage type.

(96)  a.  Julie says she is tired but she is really just making excuses.

b.  ?Julie says she is tired but she really just makes excuses.

(97)  a.  When I said 'the boss' I was referring to you.

b.  ?When I said 'the boss' I referred to you.[50]

(Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 165)

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[50] Upon consulting several native speakers of English, all claimed that the sentences in (96b) and (97b) appear odd. They further self-initiated the correction of the second verb phrases into the progressive form, confirming that (96a) and (97a) are more naturally sounding.

Following Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) explanation for example (97a), it is inferred that the *saying* and *referring* are temporally simultaneous as they are expressing the same event, but from a different point of view.

In relation to this, I take examples (96a) and (97a) above to be explicit exemplifications of Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger's (1982) claim, that the progressive and perfective both serve to express different types of perceptions or knowledge of the world. The clauses in simple tense, i.e., *Julie says she is tired* and *when I said 'the boss',* are a report of what actually happens/happened in the world, and thus, are deemed "structural". On the other hand, what is expressed in the progressive, i.e., *she is really just making excuses* and *I was referring to you*, are the speakers' epistemic evaluation of the reported facts.

Based on the discussion above, it is seen that an epistemic meaning is needed for the progressive in order to function as a marker of the speaker's subjective interpretation. Therefore, the proposal for modifying the progressive's modal meaning to be epistemic in flavor, would account for this usage of the progressive.

## 4.3 Summary

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 have attempted to distinguish the conventional meaning of the progressive from what should be regarded as implications derived from the progressive's interaction with other linguistic elements. Table 3 below provides a summary of what have been discussed so far.

Effects of Various Elements in the Interpretation of English Progressive Sentences

| Observed Readings | Semantics of the Progressive | | Other Linguistic Factors | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Temporal | Modal | Aktionsart | Tense | Adverbials |
| Ongoingness | ✔ **(Conventional meaning)** | | | | |
| Incompletion | ✔ **(Conventional meaning)** | | | | |
| Duration | ✔ **(Conventional meaning)** | | | | |
| Temporariness | ✔ (Incompletion) | | ✔ (Stative predicates) | | |
| Dynamicity | ✔ (Incompletion) | | ✔ (Certain stative predicates) | | |
| Repetition | ✔ (Duration) | | ✔ (Semelfactives) | | |
| Habituality | ✔ (Ongoingness) | | | ✔ (Present tense) | ✔ (Periodic time adverbial) |
| Future Time Reading | | ✔ (Epistemic modality) | | ✔ (Present tense) | ✔ (Future time adverbial) |
| Emotional Coloring | | ✔ (Epistemic modality) | | | ✔ (*Always*-type adverbial) |
| Subject to Change | | ✔ (Epistemic modality) | | | |
| Politeness | | ✔ (Epistemic modality) | | | |
| Subjective Interpretation | | ✔ (Epistemic modality) | | | |

From the table above, it can be seen that there are three features — **ongoingness**,

**incompletion**, and **duration** — that are deemed as the conventional meaning of the

progressive due to its temporal component. The table also shows that the conventional meaning of the progressive is made up of a **modal** component which is more versatile than previously assumed.

The modal component is shown to be responsible, not for yielding, but for allowing several readings and inferences to come through in the interpretation of progressive sentences. These include bearing a future time reading, emphasizing emotion, expressing tentativeness and politeness, and indicating a subjective interpretation of an event. Based on these, I regard the conventional meaning(s) of the progressive to be as below.

(i)   The progressive has the property [+ ONGOINGNESS].

(ii)  The progressive has the property [+ INCOMPLETION].

(iii) The progressive has the property [+ DURATION].

(iv)  The progressive has the property RT $\subseteq$ ET: it is necessary for the event described by the progressive to be related to a contextually supplied RT; the ET is evaluated to extend over/hold throughout RT.

(v)   The progressive has the property EPISTEMIC MODALITY: truth conditions should be interpreted on the basis of the speaker's knowledge rather than structural facts of the world.

All other observed meanings outlined in Chapter 2, including "temporariness", "dynamicity", "repetition", and "habituality", are assumed to be secondary meanings which arise when the progressive is used in combination with one or more of the following external factors — Aktionsart, tense, and adverbials. Finally, several more readings, including "emotional coloring", "subject to change", "politeness", and

"subjective interpretation", are made possible due to the progressive's modal meaning that is argued to be epistemic in flavor. Figure 1 below is a visualization of how the aforementioned factors interact with one another for the various readings of progressive sentences to be arrived at.

Figure 1:

Interaction of Various Elements in the Interpretation of English Progressive
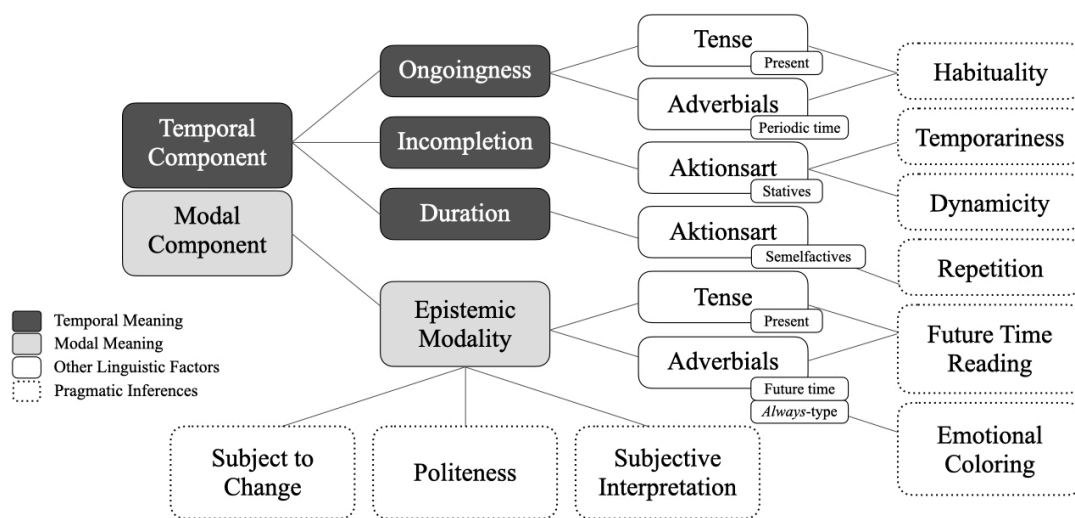
# 5. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to determine how the seemingly diverse interpretations of English progressive sentences can be accounted for. Previous researchers who accept the progressive to be polysemous have extensively detailed these various usage types, also noting the conditions needed for certain meanings to arise (Quirk et al., 1985; Biber et al., 1999; Leech, 1971, 2004; Mindt, 2000; Römer, 2005; Kranich, 2010, 2013; etc.). In a different vein, researchers who have attempted to explain the meaning of the progressive in formal terms, have developed a modal-temporal theory for the progressive, which is able to capture the essence of the progressive bearing a modal component (Dowty, 1977, 1979; Asher, 1992; Landman, 1992; Portner, 1998; etc.). Accounts that fall in this line of research have contributed greatly to the ongoing discussion regarding the relationship between aspect and modality.

In this study, I first attempted to organize the various readings that have been attributed to progressive sentences. I acknowledge that there may have been several readings which shared some overlap in meaning with one another, such as "temporariness" and "dynamicity", but I chose to present all observations that had at least some distinct features, in hopes that these could provide additional clues towards what constitutes the meaning proper of the progressive.

Through the detailing of these readings, I concluded that the progressive serves to express the speaker's perception towards a situation or event, rather than stating actual facts of the world. In this regard, I found it appropriate to view the progressive as having an epistemic flavor as a possibility modal, while it has been argued to have a circumstantial flavor as a necessity modal in the literature (Dowty,

1977, 1979; Portner, 1998). I postulate that it is because traditional modal accounts dealt primarily with the aspectual usage of the progressive, that the other "subjective" usages of the progressive have not been accounted for. However, if these instances are ignored, that leaves room for doubt regarding whether such accounts holistically capture the semantics of the progressive.

To find a solution to the above, I drew from De Wit and Brisard's (2014) analysis, which I take to be the most "unified", in the sense that they attempt to explain all their identified usage types of the present progressive under one framework. Despite assuming a different theoretical framework from De Wit and Brisard, I was able to gain insight on how attributing an epistemic modal flavor to the progressive could account for several of the observed readings of progressive sentences.

After a consideration of what constitutes the meaning proper of the progressive, and what readings arise due to this, I concluded that the conventional meaning of the progressive comprises of two components; a temporal component and a modal one. The readings that owe directly to these two components were found to be ongoingness, incompletion, and duration. In addition, the $RT \subseteq ET$ temporal relation, born of Jespersen's (1932) view that the progressive functions as a temporal frame, was determined to be the most basic way of sketching the temporal meaning of the progressive, allowing for the aforementioned three features.

From this, I proceeded to distinguish which of the observed readings are not solely due to the progressive, but are derived from the progressive's interaction with other linguistic elements. I was able to conclude that the temporary, dynamic, and repeated readings of progressive sentences, are in fact due to the aspectual properties

of the predicate that the progressive occurs with. Furthermore, I show that progressive sentences being able to yield a habitual or future time reading, is not due to the progressive, but to the semantics of the present tense.

It was also observed that the the modal component allows for a variety of interpretations of progressive sentences, but I postulate that these interpretations only arise under specific contextual conditions. Thus, these meanings, i.e., future time reading, emotional coloring, conveying politeness (or tentativeness), and indicating a subjective interpretation of an event, are regarded as secondary meanings or pragmatic inferences that are derived from the progressive's interaction with other factors in the course of interpretation.

The contribution that this study offers is a more systematic look into how the various readings of progressive sentences can be accounted for. By clearly understanding the semantics of the progressive, readings that are not solely due to this can be distinguished, and a consideration towards what truly give rise to the different readings can be made.

There remain a number of limitations to this study, which can also be seen as prospective research topics: first, the analysis presented in the study remains largely descriptive, thus, future work on formalizing fully the semantics of the progressive is needed. Second, with a more developed formal framework, the derivation of the various readings can be compositionally accounted for. This would contribute greatly in capturing the interaction of different linguistic elements, providing further insight into the semantics of these elements as well.

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# 국문초록

# 의미-화용 접합면에서 영어 진행형 문장의 의미

영어 진행형(*be* + V-*ing*)이 포함된 문장은 진행 중인 상황을 표현하는 기본적인 의미 외에 다양한 의미를 가질 수 있다는 것이 주장되었다 (Comrie, 1976; Quirk et al., 1985; Biber et al., 1999; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002; Kranich 2010, 2013; etc.). 본 논문의 목적은 첫째, 영어 진행형의 기본적인 의미를 밝히고, 둘째, 영어 진행형 형식이 문맥상 다른 언어적 요소와 상호작용할 때 부가적 의미가 어떤 방식으로 나타나는지를 살펴 보는 것이다.

영어 진행형에 대한 양상(modal) 의미를 가정하는 Dowty (1977, 1979), Portner (1998), De Wit and Brisard (2014) 및 기타 연구자의 분석에 따라 본 논문은 영어 진행형의 의미론이 시간적 의미와 양상 의미를 구성하는 것으로 주장한다. 진행형의 상적 사용(aspectual usages), 즉 상황을 진행 중이고 불완전하며 지속 시간을 갖는 것으로 표현하는 것은 시간적 의미론 측면에서 설명된다. 반면, 영어 진행형의 양상 의미는 미래 시간 해석(future time reading), 공손(politeness)을 유발하고 화자가 설명된 상황에 대한 주관적 해석(speaker's subjective interpretation)을 표현할 수 있도록 하는 것과 같은 다른 기능도 가진다.

이것들 외에도, 영어 진행형 문장의 다른 해석은 시제(tense), 어휘상(Aktionsart), 부사(adverbials)와의 상호작용을 고려함으로써 설명된다. 진행형 문장이 습관 해석(habitual reading)과 미래의 시간 해석을 하기 위해 영어 현재

시제는 필요한 요소라는 주장이 제기된다. 반복적 해석(iterative reading)과 일시적인 해석(temporary reading)은 진행형과 발생하는 동사구의 유형의 관점에서 논의되고, 마지막으로 첨부된 부사는 진행형이 감정적 색채(emotional coloring)를 위한 장치로 작용한다고 주장한다.