

**STATIVE SITUATIONS AND THE PROGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTION
(BE/ESTAR + GERUND) IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH: A CONTRASTIVE
CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

This paper explores the frequency with which English and Spanish make use of the Progressive construction (*be + gerund, estar + gerund*) with stative predicates. The behaviour of different verbs typically associated with stative process types has been examined in corpora of one million words of the European variety of both languages. This has revealed not just differences in the frequency of use of the Progressive construction, but also in the restrictions imposed on certain verbs in English and Spanish.

Key words: Progressive aspect, stative situations

1. INTRODUCTION

The combination of stative situations and the Progressive construction (*be + gerund* in English, *estar + gerund* in Spanish) is one of the most interesting problems concerning the field of aspect. English is often said to be particularly versatile in this respect (Comrie 1976, Dahl 1985, Ebert 2000, Bertinetto 2000 among others), and Spanish, while deserving less attention in the literature, shows a similar tendency to combine the construction *estar + gerund* with a wide range of stative situations. Nevertheless there is at present no systematic study of the frequency with which both languages combine the Progressive form with stative situations and what verbs in particular admit this combination more easily. The purpose of this paper is to offer information on these important issues based on the results obtained from corpora.

2. METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

In order to investigate how often stative predicates are combined with the Progressive form in English and Spanish, the most common verbs representing semantic categories typically associated with stativity were selected in both languages. The semantic categories used here are mainly based on the process types established by Systemic-Functional Grammar (Halliday 1985, Eggins 1993, Matthiessen 1995, Martin et al. 1997), more precisely those explicitly classified as stative in Downing and Locke (1992:366). The categories and the lexical items used in this study are the following:

- 1) Verbs of perception.
 - a) English: *see, hear, feel, smell.*
 - b) Spanish: *ver, oír, sentir, oler.*
- 2) Verbs of cognition.
 - a) English: *think, believe, forget, remember, know, understand, realize.*
 - b) Spanish: *pensar, creer, olvidar, recordar, saber, conocer, entender, comprender.*
- 3) Verbs of affection.
 - a) English: *like, love, hate, detest, prefer, enjoy, want, hope.*
 - b) Spanish: *gustar, encantar, odiar, detestar, preferir, disfrutar, querer, esperar.*
- 4) Verbs of existence.
 - a) English: *there be, exist.*
 - b) Spanish: *haber, existir.*
- 5) Verbs of possessive relation.
 - a) English: *have, need, lack, possess, own, contain.*
 - b) Spanish: *tener, necesitar, carecer, poseer, contener.*
- 6) Verbs of attributive and circumstantial relation.
 - a) English: *sit, lie, stand, be, live.*
 - b) Spanish: *ser, estar, vivir.*

These verbs were searched in corpora of one million words to find out how many cases of combination with the Progressive form they offered. Both corpora comprised the same proportion of written and spoken language (a million words). The English corpus employed for this study was a British National Corpus Sampler. The Spanish corpus

consisted of a selection of a million words of written texts from the CREA (Corpus de Referencia de Español Actual) and a selection of a million words of spoken language from the oral corpus produced by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. This oral corpus is currently also part of the CREA. Both the written and the oral texts of Spanish represent the European variety of the language.

3. RESULTS OBTAINED FROM THE CORPORA

The results obtained from the corpora offer information of three different types:

- a) the general frequency with which the Progressive construction is used in both languages in combination with the verbs examined;
- b) the frequency with which each particular verbs is combined with the Progressive construction in both corpora and the meanings of the verbs in the examples obtained;
- c) the meaning of the Progressive construction in the examples found in the corpora.

These points are treated separately in the sections that follow

3.1. Global results

Overall the English corpus offers a higher number of examples of the Progressive form of the verbs mentioned above. But in both corpora the Progressive is found in the oral texts at least twice as often as in the written texts. The results are summarized in table 1:

	English	Spanish
Occurrences of the Progressive form	595	136
Progressive forms from oral texts	401	104
Progressive forms from written texts	194	32

Table 1. Number of cases of the Progressive construction in the English and Spanish corpora

The distribution of the Progressive examples throughout the different verbs is explained in the following sections.

3.2. Individual results

3.2.1. Verbs of perception

In this category we include verbs that express physical perception through one of our senses (Downing and Locke 1992:126-127). Most of these verbs however can also express a perception that is mental rather than physical. In that case the phenomenon perceived is an abstract entity instead of a concrete object. And if the phenomenon is a process, these verbs then adopt a meaning that is similar to “learning”, “knowing” or “understanding”. Besides some verbs of perception can be used attributively, indicating through a quality the sensorial impression caused by the phenomenon.

The verbs of perception examined in this study are *see*, *hear*, *smell* and *feel* for English, and *ver*, *oír*, *oler* and *sentir* for Spanish. Verbs of voluntary perception such as *look*, *listen*, *mirar*, or *escuchar* have been excluded since they are dynamic and their combination with the Progressive form is not unexpected.

The results obtained from the corpora are summarized in table 2. *Smell* and *oler* are the only verbs not well represented in the corpora, with less than 100 occurrences each. The rest of verbs offer over 1,000 occurrences or come near that number.

	<i>SEE</i>	<i>VER</i>	<i>HEAR</i>	<i>OÍR</i>	<i>SMELL</i>	<i>OLER</i>	<i>FEEL</i>	<i>SENTIR</i>
Total number of occurrences	4415	2137	2168	1164	98	164	951	1278
Occurrences in the Progressive form	21	36	6	9	4	2	44	2
Progressive forms from oral texts	14	33	4	5	0	0	27	0
Progressive forms from written texts	7	3	1	1	2	0	17	2

Table 2. Verbs of perception

The English and Spanish corpora offer a similar number of Progressive forms in combination with the verbs *smell* and *oler*. And in both languages we find examples of attributive and non-attributive perception:

- (1) Was I smelling the trees -or something else?
- (2) “To me, if the kitchen’s not smelling of delicious food then there’s something wrong at home”, says Sheila, who does all her cooking herself.
- (3) Pero inmediatamente uno se da cuenta de que algo está oliendo a podrido muy cerca, y los más variopintos residuos demuestran que hoy la amenaza se está invirtiendo.
- (4) El muchacho puso cara de estar oliendo alguna imposible cochambre.

The Spanish verbs *ver* and *oír* appear slightly more often in combination with the Progressive construction than their English equivalents *see* and *hear* in the corpora, despite the fact that the total number of occurrences of the Spanish verbs is approximately half that of the English verbs. The reason for this higher frequency of the Progressive forms is partly explained by the fact that the distinction between voluntary and involuntary perception is not so neatly drawn in Spanish, being both *ver* and *oír* often used as verbs of voluntary perception. An important proportion of the Progressive examples obtained from the Spanish corpus present this dynamic sense of *ver* and *oír*:

- (5) Yo el otro día que estuve diez minutos esperando en la autopista, el efecto... mama, ¿tú te acuerdas, que estuvimos viendo lo de "Cosmos"? Que hay un efecto que la luz cuando viene...
- (6) Pero a lo que me decías de David, yo me acuerdo que David cuando era pequeño estaba siempre oyendo discos, y yo le dije:

Both the English and the Spanish corpora offer cases of the Progressive construction when the verbs *see*, *hear*, *ver* and *oír* have a physical meaning, that is, the phenomenon is a concrete object that is perceived through sight or hearing:

- (7) Try looking at people, objects and places as If you are seeing them for the first time without being influenced by what you have known about them in the past.

- (8) The 5th company of the PDF, apparently surprised by the American move, slowly organised a counter-attack and gunfire was still being heard from this area yesterday morning.
- (9) Bueno, entonces, fijaros: vemos estrellas y yo quiero que reflexionéis una cosa. Mientras estáis viendo las estrellas en Zaragoza a las tres de la tarde, los americanos, que están en el lado de noche normal, salen al balcón y ven estrellas también, claro; una noche normal.
- (10) Pues mareo, mareo de estar oyendo los coches

It is also common to find among the examples obtained from the corpora the use of the Progressive with a more mental type of perception. The phenomenon is then an abstract entity or a whole process, and the verbs *see*, *hear*, *ver*, *oír* have the meaning of “experiencing”, “learning” or “understanding”:

- (11) They’re gonna gain from that or they’re gonna be seeing that they think they gain from that and all you’ve gotta get over to the members we’re gonna be a cohesive force and that we’re going, we are going to fight some day together for them.
- (12) And charity does seem to be relevant, when we’re hearing that people now, in our own time are really in a an awful state in parts of the world.
- (13) Estamos viendo la debilidad de los gobiernos democráticos: la corrupción no es sólo española.
- (14) Estamos todos los días oyendo que la economía va viento en popa,

On the other hand the Spanish verb *sentir* is used in combination with the Progressive form far less frequently than *feel* in the corpora. But the divergence between the two languages is not restricted to numbers: the vast majority of the 44 English examples obtained from the corpus exhibit the attributive construction of *feel*, in which a particular emotion or state of mind is ascribed to the subject:

- (15) Don’t know, I think he’s probably feeling a bit insecure.

- (16) I was feeling so bad that I treated it as a kind of moral victory that I was able to empty most of the water out of the obviously Gav-filled kettle and leave the level at the minimum mark.

The only 2 examples found in the Spanish corpus are non-attributive. The non-attributive construction is also present among the English examples, although in a much lower proportion, with only 5 cases:

- (17) It was feeling pain, like me.

- (18) También puedo sentir lo que el otro está sintiendo, como si me pasara a mí.

3.2.2. Verbs of cognition

Verbs of cognition describe intellectual capacities such as knowing, remembering or understanding (Downing and Locke 1992:127-129). Very often, but not always, they present two different meanings: a) a mental state, as in *I remember what you said*; b) a dynamic process that leads to that state, as in *I suddenly remembered what he said*. Some cognitive verbs present only one of these two senses, while others have both but are used in one of them more often.

The verbs of cognition examined in this study are *think*, *believe*, *forget*, *remember*, *know*, *understand* and *realize* for English, and *pensar*, *creer*, *olvidar*, *recordar*, *saber*, *conocer*, *entender* and *comprender* for Spanish. The results obtained from the corpora are summarized in tables 3, 4 and 5. Compared with verbs of perception, the equivalence between the English and the Spanish verbs of cognition is not so easy to define. The verb *creer* covers the meanings of English *believe* and *think*, being then synonymous with *pensar* when it has the meaning of “holding a view or opinion”. The English verb *remember* corresponds to two Spanish verbs: *acordarse* and *recordar*, although the latter also covers the meaning of English *remind*. The English verb *know* also has two translations in Spanish: *saber* and *conocer*; the selection between these two terms in Spanish depends on the nature of the phenomenon. Finally both *entender* and *comprender* translate English *understand* and *realize*, since the Spanish forms are both equally used for states and dynamic processes, while in English *understand* is more often used for states and *realize* for dynamic processes.

	THINK	PENSAR	BELIEVE	CREER	FORGET	OLVIDAR
Total number of occurrences	5791	1425	564	879	317	419
Occurrences in the Progressive form	152	43	1	1	2	1
Progressive forms from oral texts	101	35	0	0	1	1
Progressive forms from written texts	51	8	1	0	1	0

Table 3. Verbs of cognition

	REMEMBER	ACORDARSE	RECORDAR	KNOW	SABER	CONOCER
Total number of occurrences	764	291	625	7099	3368	679
Occurrences in the Progressive form	2	5	4	0	1	0
Progressive forms from oral texts	1	3	1	0	1	0
Progressive forms from written texts	1	2	3	0	1	0

Table 4. Verbs of cognition (cont.)

	REALIZE	UNDERSTAND	ENTENDER	COMPRENDER
Total number of occurrences	193	413	1388	437
Occurrences in the Progressive form	2	2	0	1
Progressive forms from oral texts	1	1	0	0
Progressive forms from written texts	1	1	0	1

Table 5. Verbs of cognition (cont.)

Verbs of cognition are only seldom combined with the Progressive form in the corpora examined. Even though most verbs are very well represented in the corpora, almost all of them offer a number of examples between 0 and 5. The only exceptions are *think* and *pensar*, with a very high number of occurrences. Nevertheless every single example of these two verbs found in the corpora presents the dynamic meaning of “considering” or “meditating about something”, never the stative meaning of “believing” or “holding an opinion”:

- (19) who's, who's thinking of going?
- (20) Above all, don't ask me what I'm thinking.
- (21) Está todo el mundo ya con un pie aquí, con otro pie allá porque casi todo el mundo está pensando en aquello de las vacaciones
- (22) ¿Qué le preguntarías tú, Lázaro? (Vuelve el silencio.) -Lázaro.- No lo que estás pensando.

And in general all the examples of the Progressive construction found in the corpora present the dynamic meaning of the verbs:

- (23) Once you've got that fourth equation in from all this lot adds up to the total, and that's the one that you seem to be forgetting, that's the one you've got to try and remember.
- (24) I was remembering what my father had told me about other conquering heroes who had tried to attack the great bear.
- (25) Mr. Mendez started to nod, very slowly, as if he was just understanding something.
- (26) The benefits of cost savings, greater efficiency and synergy are being realised.
- (27) ayer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán decía en "La Vanguardia" que... "los Juegos Olímpicos son una puerta abierta a la especulación inmobiliaria" y que se está olvidando el aspecto social de la ciudad.

- (28) Yo también estoy ahora recordando uno de esta misma noche, de lo más rarísimo que imaginarse pueda.
- (29) ¡Ah!, ya me estoy acordando que me lo contaste, sí, ahora me estoy acordando, sí.
- (30) hubiera podido comprender entonces todo lo que estoy comprendiendo ahora.
- (31) Bueno, yo creo que por lo que estamos sabiendo, los que han sobrevivido al síndrome tóxico, algunos, no todos
- (32) Los niños saben muy bien cuándo alguien los está creyendo.

As I say, all these examples represent changes from one mental state to another rather than purely stative intellectual abilities, and consequently the predicates match the definition of dynamic process proposed by authors such as B. Comrie (1976), Ö. Dahl (1985) or C. Smith (1991).

The only exception to this is the following English example, in which it is difficult to see a dynamic mental process:

- (33) The sun had pierced through the mist, and they were not believing their good luck at being alive, and being cared for by the beautiful colleens.

This example is thus the only case found in the corpora in which a cognitive verb with a purely stative meaning is combined with the Progressive construction.

3.2.3. *Verbs of affection*

We classify as affective verbs those verbs that indicate the senser's attitude towards a phenomenon. This covers not just likings and dislikings, but also desires, wishes and hopes (Downing and Locke 1992:129-130). The verbs examined in this group are *like*, *love*, *hate*, *detest*, *prefer*, *enjoy*, *want* and *hope* for English, and *gustar*, *encantar*, *odiar*, *detestar*, *preferir*, *disfrutar*, *querer* and *esperar* for Spanish.

The results obtained from the corpora are summarized in tables 6, 7 and 8. Notice that only the sentences in which the verb *love* had the meaning of "liking something very much" were taken into account for this study. This is by the way the only meaning the

Spanish verb *encantar* may have. Likewise the Spanish verb *esperar* has been studied only when it showed the meaning of English *hope*, discarding all the cases in which it had the meaning of *wait*, which does not even represent a mental process.

	LIKE	GUSTAR	LOVE	ENCANTAR	HATE	ODIAR
Total number of occurrences	1064	925	202	144	157	68
Occurrences in the Progressive form	1	1	1	0	0	0
Progressive forms from oral texts	1	1	1	0	0	0
Progressive forms from written texts	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6. Verbs of affection

	DETEST	DETESTAR	PREFER	PREFERIR	ENJOY	DISFRUTAR
Total number of occurrences	9	52	110	169	276	98
Occurrences in the Progressive form	0	0	0	0	26	1
Progressive forms from oral texts	0	0	0	0	22	1
Progressive forms from written texts	0	0	0	0	4	0

Table 7. Verbs of affection (cont.)

	WANT	QUERER	HOPE	ESPERAR
Total number of occurrences	2879	1843	424	520
Occurrences in the Progressive form	12	3	50	0
Progressive forms from oral texts	10	1	32	0
Progressive forms from written texts	2	2	18	0

Table 8. Verbs of affection (cont.)

Roughly speaking the verbs that indicate liking or disliking offer only one or no example at all of the Progressive form in the corpora of both languages, although some of the verbs are not well represented.

- (34) He's nuts! Blinking ! Bit cold for that innit? No, it was gorgeous yesterday wasn't it? Yeah. And it's very You and Brian were loving it!
- (35) Even the Bishop of Durham, I've just recently bought one of his books and I rather wish I hadn't, I'm not liking it much erm he's still much too orthodox really.
- (36) Aunque durante la semana había comentado a los micrófonos de la cadena Cope que le hubiese gustado y me está gustando de momento conseguir algún buen resultado y buen gol en el estadio gaditano.
- (37) Pero veamos como lo... cómo está disfrutando ese... futuro y posible triunfo el... candidato a la alcaldía de Palma por la coalición P.P. U.M..

The only exception is the English verb *enjoy*, with 26 cases:

- (38) I mean the police riders look as if they're enjoying it.
- (39) Are you enjoying yourself, darling?

Also the verbs that indicate wishes and hopes appear more often combined with the Progressive form in the English corpus. The difference is not very significant in the case of *want* and *querer*, especially if we take into account that the Spanish verb is less widely represented in the corpus. As for the characteristics of the examples obtained, in both languages we find instances of the Progressive construction when the phenomenon involved is a process realized by an infinitive clause:

- (40) He was wanting to know whether he could expect you for lunch.
- (41)Si en Madrid somos tres millones, medio Madrid sería...millón y medio... Claro, así que cuando... estoy queriendo decir que ayer no había casi nadie... por aquí

But the use of the Progressive with a nominal phenomenon is found only among the English examples:

(42) Are they wanting a budget figure from us?

(43) erm we're going to need to know what we're wanting.

The difference between the frequency with which the verbs *hope* and *esperar* are combined with the Progressive construction in the corpora is much more significant, with 50 cases obtained in English and none in Spanish, being both verbs equally well represented in each corpus. In addition to this English shows a great variety of constructions among the Progressive examples, with various types of phenomenon:

(44) interpretations of his music erm, I, one of the things I would love to do and I'm hoping to do next year is to do something related to art using a dance

(45) I'm hoping that it has worked this time.

(46) erm and we're hoping for the same success

3.2.4. *Verbs of existence*

Verbs of existence present two main meanings: either they simply state the existence of an entity or they describe events that happen or take place (Downing and Locke 1992:138-140). The verbs studied in this category are *there + be* and *exist* for English, and *haber* and *existir* for Spanish. Only *there + be* and *haber* can express both kinds of existence, being *exist* and *existir* restricted to stative existence.

These are the results obtained from the corpora:

	<i>THERE + BE</i>	<i>HABER</i>	<i>EXIST</i>	<i>EXISTIR</i>
Total number of occurrences	5803	9347	351	571
Occurrences in the Progressive form	0	3	0	0
Progressive forms from oral texts	0	2	0	0
Progressive forms from written texts	0	1	0	0

Table 9. Verbs of existence

The results are very clear for English, which offers no example of the Progressive form in the corpus, even though the verbs of existence are very well represented. The Spanish corpus on the other hand offers 3 instances of the verb *haber* combined with the Progressive, although it must be noted here that the total number of occurrences of the verb *haber* shown in table 9 covers other values of this verb such as obligation or acting as the auxiliary element of the Perfect tenses. The three examples of existence obtained from the corpora represent happenings rather than stative existence:

- (47) Además, como va a haber cambios en los mercados laborales, en las calificaciones, como está habiendo cambios en las estructuras, no va quedar más remedio que la empresa pase a ser la protagonista.
- (48) Y ahora se ha cambia(d)o al opuesto y está habiendo un perjuicio tremendo.
- (49) es que claro, que no tenemos (suficientes) policías para cubrir la multitud de llamadas que está habiendo.

3.2.5. Verbs of possessive relation

Verbs of possessive relation cover different types of ownership, containment or inclusion, as well as relationships such as needing or lacking (Downing and Locke 1992:134-135). The verbs examined in this study are *have*, *need*, *lack*, *possess*, *own* and *contain* for English, and *tener*, *necesitar*, *carecer*, *poseer* and *contener* for Spanish.

Verbs of possession are rather uniform in their meaning, with two exceptions. The verbs *have* and *tener* are almost open to any meaning in combination with a noun, particularly in English. These two verbs can adopt meanings such as “receive”, “happen” or “make” among others, all of them dynamic. In English it is also the verb that acts as auxiliary of

Perfect tenses. The other exception are the verbs *contain* and *contener*, which also present the dynamic meaning of “keeping under control” or “refraining”. Besides these two exceptions it is worth noting that the verb *own* has no equivalent in Spanish, being translated by *tener* or *poseer*.

The results obtained from the corpora are summarized in tables 10 and 11:

	HAVE	OWN	TENER	POSSESS	POSEER	LACK	CARECER
Total number of occurrences	22707	115	5636	31	88	32	12
Occurrences in the Progressive form	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Progressive forms from oral texts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Progressive forms from written texts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 10. Verbs of possession

	CONTAIN	CONTENER	NEED	NECESITAR
Total number of occurrences	180	145	986	363
Occurrences in the Progressive form	0	0	3	1
Progressive forms from oral texts	0	0	2	0
Progressive forms from written texts	0	0	1	1

Table 11. Verbs of possession (cont.)

These results suggest that genuine possession is incompatible with the Progressive form, since most verbs offer no example of this construction in the corpora. The verbs *have* and *tener* offer 139 examples of the Progressive construction in English and 10 in Spanish as a matter of fact, but these cases exhibit dynamic meanings of these verbs that have little to do with possession.

- (50) er Who's having tea?
- (51) Those who do leave are having problems finding employers who will take them on
- (52) El mantenimiento de un clima de estas características está teniendo dos efectos fundamentales:
- (53) Paz García que está teniendo una desastrosa actuación

The only verbs of possession that offer examples of combination with the Progressive construction in the corpora are *need* and *necesitar*:

- (54) You might be needing your own .
- (55) Some blinking thing they're, they're needing for a er accents you know
- (56) `What would I be needing money for with a likely lad like Tom here to support me?"
- (57) Quiero ver a Manuel -gritaba-. Me necesita. ¡Me está necesitando!

3.2.5. *Verbs of attributive and circumstantial relation*

Verbs of attributive relation are used to ascribe qualities to the subject or to identify it with another entity, while verbs of circumstantial relation have a circumstance as a central element of the process (Downing and Locke 1992:131-134). By far the most common attributive verb in English is *be*; this has two equivalents in Spanish: *ser* and *estar*, which differentiate between transitional or permanent qualities. All three verbs are very well represented in the corpora, although it must be noted that the figures for the total number of occurrences shown in table 12 include other uses of the verbs in both languages, such as auxiliary of the Passive and Progressive constructions.

Within verbs of circumstantial relation I have concentrated on those that contain a locative as the central element of the process, also known as verbs of position. The most common English verbs of position are *sit*, *lie* and *stand*. These are all covered by the

Spanish item *estar*. In addition I have also included the verbs *live* and *vivir* as verbs of position, following A. Downing and P. Locke (1992:365-366).

The results obtained from the corpora are summarized in the following table:

	<i>BE</i>	<i>SER</i>	<i>SIT</i>	<i>LIE</i>	<i>STAND</i>	<i>ESTAR</i>	<i>LIVE</i>	<i>VIVIR</i>
Total number of occurrences	94121	3134 2	651	207	432	7191	582	638
Occurrences in the Progressive form	47	13	109	12	51	0	50	14
Progressive forms from oral texts	38	9	73	3	34	0	35	10
Progressive forms from written texts	9	4	36	9	17	0	15	4

Table 12. Verbs of attributive and circumstantial relation

English clearly offers more examples of the verb *be* combined with the Progressive than Spanish *ser* or *estar* in the corpora. But on the other hand Spanish offers more variety of meanings associated with the verb *ser*. Thus, all the English examples contain qualities that describe conscious behaviour from the subject:

(58) Yeah, well he isn't being nice to me!

(59) No I'm not being rude to Brian !

The only exception to this are two examples in which we find a quality that does not represent conscious behaviour, but a transitional condition or state. This quality is in both cases *sick*:

(60) Their bairn's always being sick!

(61) I watched erm, you know Warren? He was being sick right and he was hanging over the banisters like this these flats and I couldn't stop laughing.

In Spanish we find two kinds of sentence in which the verb *ser* is combined with the Progressive form. One of them is similar to the English usage, consisting of a quality that represents conscious behaviour. This was the case in 5 of the 13 examples obtained:

(62) Felipe González, no está siendo sensible a ese clamor popular.

(63) ¿No se le está yendo un poquito la mano al partido popular? ¿No está siendo excesivamente duro en su...

The other construction, not found among the English examples, contains an evaluative quality which describes how an event is developing. This was found in 8 of the 13 examples obtained:

(64) Tampoco el rendimiento del equipo está siendo bueno

(65) El crecimiento del empleo asalariado en 1995 está siendo espectacular

Verbs of position very often present two meanings in English and Spanish: one indicates physical position, referring the circumstantial of the sentence to concrete places or times; the other meaning expresses attitude, opinion, ways of living, thinking or acting. The circumstantial is then an abstract entity or indicates manner through a quality or an accompaniment circumstantial.

The verbs *sit*, *lie* and *stand* offer a good number of examples of the Progressive form in the corpus analysed, even though these verbs are not among the best represented in the corpora. Almost all the examples retrieved refer to physical position:

(66) I was, I was lying in bed thinking ha ya good

(67) He was standing outside?

There is only one example in which we find a meaning closer to attitude:

(68) In making these statements the church is not standing aloof from the unconverted instructing them on how they ought to live their lives rather the church is speaking to itself

In contrast with this the Spanish corpus do not offer a single example of the Progressive construction, since position is mostly indicated by the verb *estar* in Spanish and this lexical item is incompatible with the Progressive.

As for the verbs *live* and *vivir*, we find in both languages a good number of examples of the Progressive form as well, although this number is clearly higher in English. The examples of the Progressive found in the corpora present three meanings, one of them

present only in the Spanish examples. The first meaning is rather literal and defines the physical place inhabited by the subject or the people with whom he lives:

(69) By 5,000BC men were living along the coast; they hunted and gathered mussels.

(70) que están viviendo... cuarenta y la madre en un piso

In the second meaning the place inhabited by the subject is less concrete, and in that case the sentence rather refers to an attitude to life or a manner of living. In contrast with the rest of verbs of position studied here, the group of non-physical position is almost as numerous as the group of physical position with the verbs *live* and *vivir*:

(71) But if that's an incentive they're not living in the real world.

(72) Hacerlo es tanto como hacer patente la ilegitimidad en la que se está viviendo, es referenciar el delito.

The third meaning, only found among the Spanish examples, is similar to “experiencing something”:

(73) Las visicitudes que está viviendo el equipo azulgrana... debido a las lesiones

(74) el mundo que... que estamos viviendo hoy va a llegar a <ininteligible>

3.3. The meaning of the Progressive

So far we have concentrated on the frequency with which certain stative verbs were combined with the Progressive construction in the Spanish and English corpora and which meanings of those verbs were present in the examples. This section will be devoted to describing the meaning or meanings contributed by the Progressive construction itself.

An important difference between English and Spanish is that in some of the English examples the Progressive has a temporal meaning, as can be observed in sentences like:

(75) I'm seeing her at lunch time, I'll speak to her.

(76) are you seeing Katie this week?

(77) No but not only that and people get pissed off don't they? So they buy double usually don't they, well I would. If I thought oh bollocks I'm not standing here again. Yeah but they get served in the end see, by the end of the night they get served don't they, you know?

I refer to this as a temporal meaning of the Progressive because the predicate is located at a time posterior to that signalled by the finite form. Thus, although the finite is in the Present tense in (75-77), the whole predicate is located in the future. The types of future reference found among the sentences obtained from the English corpus can be grouped in two categories: a) schedules (Dahl 2000), like in (75, 76); b) intentions (Dahl 2000), like in (77).

But the vast majority of the English examples and all of the Spanish examples contain a temporal reference that coincides with that indicated by the finite form. In this case, it is evident that the Progressive form has a purely aspectual meaning. More precisely, the kind of aspectual information this construction conveys in the examples examined here can be said to be based on the opposition generic/episodic (see Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger (1982) and their distinction between phenomenal and structural world). That is, the use of the Progressive has the effect of presenting the situation not as a stable property of the world, but as a temporary happening usually connected with an episodic event. This can be observed in the following examples:

(78) Even the Bishop of Durham, I've just recently bought one of his books and I rather wish I hadn't, I'm not liking it much erm he's still much too orthodox really.

(79) The sun had pierced through the mist, and they were not believing their good luck at being alive, and being cared for by the beautiful colleens.

- (80) Some of them are just being rude.
- (81) También puedo sentir lo que el otro está sintiendo, como si me pasara a mí.
- (82) Y por otra parte quería decir también... que tratando lo del <ininteligible> que... el mundo que... que estamos viviendo hoy va a llegar a <ininteligible> O sea, el ser humano

If we compare (78-82) with sentences taken from the same corpora in which a simple tense is employed, as in:

- (83) I don't like the look of my wife.
- (84) Neither of us believes it.
- (85) And when I arrived at this party, she is totally unsubtle and sometimes very rude, you know, and er
- (86) Ni siquiera tratáis de poneros en su piel, de imaginaros lo que piensan y sienten.
- (87) También el humanista debe saber en qué entorno se mueve, y todos debemos conocer ciertos fundamentos físicos del mundo donde vivimos.

we can see that in (83-87) the sentences refer to what the subject likes, believes and is in general, without any temporal restriction. In fact these situations are presented as occupying the whole stretch of time covered by the present world. On the other hand, in (78) we restrict the temporal influence of the liking around a very specific event, which is the reading of a book. Likewise in (79) the mental attitude of believing is temporally restricted around specific events which have taken place recently, and in (80) there is an evident contrast with (85) to distinguish between a general quality of a person and an episodic behaviour.

The Spanish examples show a similar pattern of usage: (81) refers to what a person is experiencing within a specific interval of time, while (86) takes on a more general meaning. Similarly (87) refers in more generic way to the world in which we live, whereas (82) emphasizes the transitional quality of that world.

It is interesting however to notice that, judging from the results obtained from the corpora, English and Spanish do not agree on what situation types can be combined with the Progressive to explicitly mark the opposition generic/episodic, nor do they agree on the frequency with which they make use of this explicit marking.

3.4. Conclusions

The results obtained from the corpora allow us to conclude that the use of the Progressive construction with stative situations is more common in English than in Spanish. Besides the English Progressive presents a temporal meaning (used to indicate futurity) that is absent in Spanish.

The examination of the examples obtained from the English and Spanish corpora also revealed that some of the verbs studied here take on a dynamic interpretation when combined with the Progressive, although the combination of genuine stativity and the Progressive is by no means impossible or unusual.

The meaning of the Progressive in the Spanish examples and the majority of the English ones is to mark the opposition generic/episodic, associating the predicate to an event and therefore limiting its temporal application.

Finally, it is remarkable that Spanish allows combinations of the Progressive with verbs that are not allowed or are less common in English, despite the fact that the use of the Progressive is more common in that language.

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