The progressive verb in modern American English

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1. Introduction

The progressive construction ('progressive' for short)[1] has received a great deal of attention in recent research. It is usually associated with aspect, which is often loosely defined as the internal temporal nature of an event, but the verb form is connected to other meaning components as well. Various more elaborate definitions of aspect have been proposed in the literature. Klein (1994: 6), for example, proposes that aspect is associated with the relation between topic time (which is similar to what is usually referred to as reference time) and time of situation (more often called event time). While topic time/reference time is 'the time for which the particular utterance makes an assertion' (1994: 37), time of situation/event time is the time when an event occurs.

The progressive is often considered to be a subtype of the imperfective. The progressive is defined by Bybee and Dahl (1989: 55) as 'indicating the situation is in progress at reference time', while the imperfective indicates that 'the situation is viewed as not bounded'. Cross-linguistic evidence suggests that progressive markers often develop into imperfective markers (Bybee and Dahl 1989: 56–9; Bybee *et al.* 1994: 125–49; Heine 1994: 279–81), but Kranich (2010a: 30–5) argues that the English progressive has not yet reached this stage. The reasons for this are that progressives in contrast to imperfectives do not typically refer to habits (as found by Dahl 1985: 93; for data on habitual progressives in English, see Mindt 2000: 248–65 and Römer 2005: 88), and that the progressive has not yet lost its association with limited duration (the next postulated step in the grammaticalization cline postulated by Heine (1994: 280) (see also discussions in Bybee *et al.* 1994: 125–49).

An often-cited problem in the analysis of the English progressive is that in many instances, such as (1) below from *Time Magazine*, it is difficult to discern a difference in meaning between the simple form (*think*) and the progressive (*be thinking*).

(1) I *ought not to think* about her. I *should be thinking* of China and the returned air crew of the spy plane. (*Time*; 2001/04/30)

Because of their low frequencies, the verbs in this study have previously produced inconclusive results in diachronic studies. The first area of study concerns BE *being* followed by an adjective (*I'm being serious*), and the second comprises 'private' verbs (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 202) (*I'm wondering if you can't help me*). The study covers verbs fairly often occurring in the progressive (WONDER) as well as verbs which only marginally do so (KNOW). This chapter seeks to address the questions whether there has been an increase in the progressive with these verbs in *Time Magazine* during the twentieth century, what the synchronic situation looks like, and what possible factors have affected these patterns.

Traditionally, a distinction has been made between stative verbs, which resist the progressive (BE, BELIEVE, OWN), and dynamic verbs, which do not (RUN, WRITE) (e.g. Biber *et al.* 1999: 470–5). On the face of it, this generalization holds true, but as noted by, among others, Leech *et al.* (2009: 129), it is the case that while the progressive cannot be used with verbs with strictly stative meanings (**She is knowing the truth*), it does occur with such verbs

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[1] This traditional – and most frequent – term for BE V-*ing* will be used in the present paper. Other terms include Jespersen's (1909–49: IV) 'expanded tense' and Visser's (1963–73) 'expanded form'.

when they do not express pure states, as in *And I'm loving every minute of it.* (COCA; Spoken; 2008), where the progressive probably has an intensifying or emphatic function.

In the present study, the *Time Magazine Corpus* (http://corpus.byu.edu/time) provides the diachronic material while the synchronic material comes from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) (www.americancorpus.org) (accessed in October 2009) and the *Longman Spoken American Corpus* (LSAC). Some additional diachronic searches were made in the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) (http://corpus.byu.edu/coca) (see Davies, this volume). The *Time Magazine* Corpus, COCA and COHA have been compiled by Mark Davies at Brigham Young University as monitor corpora for the investigation of ongoing changes. At the time of writing, the *Time* corpus consists of 100 million words comprising all issues of *Time Magazine* 1923–2006. The present study is restricted to data from the 1920s (7.6m words), 1960s (16.1m) and 2000s (6.4m).

Earlier studies on the language of *Time Magazine* have focused largely on its idiosyncratic vocabulary (a recent exception being Millar 2009). Findings by Firebaugh (1940) and Yates (1981) suggest that the style of the magazine is characterized by, among other features, esoteric blends and compounds (*cinemactor*, *Beatledämmerung*), revived old-fashioned or provincial words (*hornswoggle*, *jape*) and "indiscriminate" use of certain epithets (*unflappable*, *pragmatic*) (Yates 1981: 55–6). These stylistic features appear to be connected to the "irreverence toward authority" of the magazine (Firebaugh 1940: 242). As yet, no study has shown there to be idiosyncratic grammatical features to the same extent in *Time Magazine*, and it seems likely that the material provided by this magazine is sufficiently representative to be used in studies of change in grammar. Furthermore, it can be assumed that material from the most-read news magazine in the USA with a weekly circulation of four million copies in 2006 (Hau 2008) will be fairly representative of the genre of newsmagazines as a whole, as argued by Millar (2009: 194).

The advantages and disadvantages of the *Time* corpus are discussed by Millar (2009: 193–4). The most obvious advantages are, he argues, its size and span. Large amounts of data separated by more than 80 years facilitate diachronic studies of rare phenomena. The *Time* corpus is also internally consistent since it contains material from one single publication. Using the *Time* corpus therefore entails a "single-genre approach" (p. 194) rather than a "language-in-its-entirety approach" (p. 193). However, Millar (2009: 214) notes that the contents of *Time Magazine* have changed substantially during the decades with articles from the 1920s containing, for instance, imaginary interviews with people in the headlines, excerpts from fiction and religious commentary. The concept of a single-genre approach therefore has to be construed rather loosely in connection with this magazine. Needless to say, investigating a single genre is problematic when it comes to the generalizability of the results. A change in the language recorded in the *Time* material cannot necessarily be assumed to hold for the language as a whole, but if there is an increase in the use of progressives in AmE as a whole, then this is likely to be reflected also in this corpus.

Corroborating evidence is provided by the COCA corpus. This corpus comprises 400 million words of American English from 1990 to 2009 in roughly equal proportions from the genres Spoken, Fiction, Magazine, News and Academic. At the time of writing the Spoken subcorpus comprised 81.7 million words of unscripted dialogue recorded not in private conversational contexts but from TV and radio programmes such as the news magazine *60 Minutes* and the tabloid talkshow *Jerry Springer*. Fiction (78.8m) includes, among other texts, movie scripts and short stories from literary magazines. Magazines (83.3m) covers nearly 100 different titles such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Sports Illustrated*, while News (79.4m) includes ten different newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. Finally, the Academic subcorpus (79.3m) consists of material from nearly 100 peer-reviewed

journals (for more information on COCA, see Davies (2009), (2010) and this volume). In order to compare distributions with conversational speech, material from the five-million-word LSAC from the 1990s was also investigated. There is very little information available on this latter corpus, but Leech *et al.* (2009: xxi) argue that LSAC is similar to the spoken demographic subpart of the *British National Corpus* in its method of collection, and give a word count for just over 5 million words for the corpus (2009: 100). The corpus appears to consist almost entirely of spontaneous conversation recorded all over the USA. When writing this paper, I only had access to a non-tagged version of LSAC, and when searching this corpus, I used the WordSmith software.

Section 2 provides the background to the meanings and historical development of the progressive. Section 3.1 presents findings for the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction, and 3.2 discusses private verbs. The aim is to determine if there is an increase in the progressive in *Time Magazine* with the verbs at hand, what the synchronic distribution is in COCA, and what factors that may affect the synchronic and diachronic patterns found.

2. Background

Previous investigations suggest that there has been a major increase in the use of the progressive since Early Modern English times.[2] For instance, Hundt (2004: 58) found a five-fold increase in BrE between the late seventeenth century and the late twentieth century in the ARCHER corpus, and Smitterberg's (2005: 62) findings indicated an increase of between 71% and 81% in nineteenth-century BrE in the CONCE corpus. Kranich (2010a) found a steady increase across many genres over four centuries with a notably more progressives in the second than the first half of the twentieth century in BrE from the ARCHER-2 corpus. In a comparison of the Brown/Frown and LOB/FLOB corpora of AmE and BrE from 1961 and 1991/2, Leech *et al.* (2009: 118–43) showed that the progressive is still on the move in Present-Day writing with an overall increase of about 10% in three decades (for more diachronic depth with the same corpora, see Smith and Leech this volume). This change does not appear to be restricted to writing, since a significant increase also occurred in Leech *et al.*'s diachronic spoken BrE corpora sourced from the Survey of English Usage (for an overview of the recent literature on the subject, see Aarts, López-Couso and Méndez-Naya forthcoming). These studies were based on small-scale corpora which only allow the investigation of the most frequent phenomena. The size of the *Time* corpus, on the other hand, allows allows lexical comparisons over time also with phenomena of intermediate frequencies. Lexical factors should ideally be taken into account in the study of the progressive since synchronic corpus studies (e.g., Biber *et al.* 1999: 470–5; Römer 2005) have shown there to be large differences between the frequencies with which different verbs occur in the progressive.

Apart from the well-established growth in the progressive, previous studies suggest that the progressive is most common in informal, speech-based genres, and rare in academic writing (Biber *et al.* 1999: 470–5; Mindt 2000: 248; Collins 2009: 116; Leech *et al.* 2009: 122–7). Evidence from Hundt (2004: 61) and Smitterberg (2005: 66–7) suggests that this genre distribution was already established during earlier periods of the English language. The differences between non-expository genres such as letters, fiction and drama and expository genres such as science and debates in Smitterberg's nineteenth-century data indicate increasing diversification between genres since the progressive spread faster in non-expository genres.

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[2] Denison (1993: 400ff) discusses the origins of the progressive and the developments in Old and Middle English.

As for recent change and variation, Aarts, Close and Wallis (2010: 156–60) reported an increase in BrE speech between the 1960s and 1990s in the *Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English* (DCPSE). Leech *et al.* (2009: 122) found slightly more progressives in written BrE than in written AmE, while Biber *et al.* (1999: 463) put AmE press texts in a small lead before BrE press texts, and AmE far ahead in conversation. However, using the ICE-corpora supplemented by additional speech data, Collins (2009: 116–17) found a somewhat higher frequency in AmE conversation and writing than either of these studies. Collins' results from Australian and New Zealand English suggest that the Antipodean varieties are more advanced in the use of the progressive than AmE and BrE.

Because the progressive appears to be undergoing continual change, it is difficult to define the meanings and connotations at any given point in time, let alone across time periods. The meanings of the progressive have therefore previously mainly discussed in synchronic studies (e.g., Ljung 1980; Williams 2002; Leech 2004; Römer 2005) and in reference grammars (Quirk *et al.* 1985; Biber *et al.* 1999; Huddleston and Pullum 2002), but recently a number of diachronic studies have been carried out (e.g., Wright 1994; Hübler 1997; Killie 2004, 2008; Kranich 2008, 2009). The many different analyses from corpus-based studies and introspective accounts suggest that the progressive is elusive in its nature, even from a synchronic perspective. Typical definitions usually state that the progressive presents a situation as dynamic (involving change) and durative (extending over a period of time) (e.g., Leech *et al.* 2009: 119). As a comparison, Bergs and Pfaff (this volume) argue for the existence of three main functions, imperfective aspectuality, the expression of speaker stance and politeness. Other classifications instead involve inventories of specific features. For instance, Mindt (2000: 248–65) lists as many as nine meanings, the most important being 'incompletion', 'temporariness' and 'iteration/habit', the others including 'highlighting/prominence', 'emotion', 'politeness/downtoning', 'prediction', 'volition/intention' and 'matter-of-course'. Römer's (2005: 88) investigation of BrE speech produced two main functions, 'continuousness + repeatedness' and 'continuousness + non-repeatedness', and the minor ones 'general validity', 'politeness or softening', 'emphasis or attitude', 'shock or disbelief', 'gradual change or development', 'old and new habits', and 'framing'. In contrast to these corpus-based studies, Ljung's (1980: 157, passim) intuition-based analysis comprised three main factors (apart from the secondary semantic effects temporariness and interpretation in contrast to description): the reference of the predicate, dynamicity and imperfectivity. According to Ljung, a predicate must refer to a real-world situation to allow the choice of the progressive. If the situation described is dynamic, the progressive can be used if the speaker chooses an imperfective view of the event. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 162–72) list six features, two of which are implicatures. According to these authors, the progressive presents a situation as being in progress, viewed imperfectively and as durative and dynamic. According to the first implicature the situation described involves a point which does not include the beginning or the end of the activity, which thus suggests incompleteness (*She was writing a novel*). The second implicature relates to limited duration. Since the progressive can convey extended duration with punctual verbs (*The train was arriving*) and limited duration with typically stative verbs (*He is being tactful*), the authors argue that limited duration is an implicature and not part of the meaning of the progressive (for similar views, see Leech 2004: 19). Williams (2002: 87), finally, focuses on a single main feature and argues that the progressive highlights that a situation is susceptible to change, whereas the same does not hold for the simple form.

As will be seen in Section 3, temporariness and a situation's susceptibility to change are among the central features in the present study. These are in turn closely connected with some of the other features such as politeness. Politeness in the present case mostly concerns negative face, i.e. the progressive is used as a device that reduces imposition on the addressee.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 The BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction

BE *being* followed by an adjective is a fairly recent phenomenon in English. The first attestation is from 1819 in a letter by Keats writing *how diligent I am, and am being* (Jespersen 1909–49: IV: 225). Previous studies have reported low but possibly increasing frequencies. Thus for example, Smitterberg (2005: 157) only found one instance in his one-million-word nineteenth-century material, Kranich (2010a: 155–9) found eight instances of progressive BE between 1600 and 2000, three of which occurred in the first half of the twentieth century and five in the second half, while Mindt's (2000: 139, 166) results indicated that progressive forms of BE are "extremely rare" occurring around eight times per million words in Present-Day English. Leech *et al.* (2009: 292) found tentative support for an increase in the Brown/Frown and LOB/Flob corpora where present-tense forms increased from a mere two instances in 1961 to 14 in 1991/2 in AmE. The limited data from these previous studies thus provide some limited support for the progressive spreading to the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction. It should be noted that the increase of this construction only has a very marginal influence on the overall frequency of the progressive. Raw numbers for the progressive in *Time Magazine* suggest an increase per million words from around 1,500 in the 1920s to around 2,000 in the 1960s and 3,500 in the 2000s[3] (which is the approximate level both in *Time Magazine* in the 2000s and in written AmE in the 1990s in Leech *et al.* 2009: 123).

Although the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction is rare, there has been no lack of discussion of it. As with the progressive in general, many different analyses have been proposed. Six different characteristics of the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction have been suggested: (i) it expresses temporariness, (ii) it refers to specific behaviour rather than a personal trait, (iii) the effects of the behaviour are observable, (iv) it describes an event as violating some kind of norm, (v) the construction may have emotional connotations, and (vi) it may indicate that the subject is putting on an act. As will be seen below, a seventh feature that can be added to this list is politeness. If a speaker says *You're being unreasonable*, it is less face-threatening than *You're unreasonable*, since the progressive describes the behaviour as temporary, and something atypical of the person in question.

Temporariness is the most frequently mentioned characteristic (Jespersen 1909–49: IV: 226; Denison 1998: 146; Williams 2002: 174; Leech 2004: 31). The progressive 'compresses' the time span of stative verbs, as argued by Leech (2004: 19), and hence in instances such as *I'm being facetious* (COCA; Spoken; 2005) there is an indication that the activity will soon come to an end. Connected to this is the second feature, that of describing specific behaviour, rather than personal traits (Jespersen 1909–49: IV: 226; Quirk *et al.* 1985: 200; Leech 2004: 31; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 167). As for the third feature, Ljung (1980: 45–9) argues that the effects of the state described by BE *being* ADJECTIVE have to be observable. He suggests that this also applies to some instances of private verbs (e.g., *this whole audience was loving the clips* (COCA; Spoken; 1997)), but in many corpus examples this does not hold (*I have been knowing him for 20 years* (COCA; News; 2002)). Nevertheless, Ljung's suggestion that the progressive typically serves an interpretative function appears to hold true for the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction. By saying *I'm being facetious*, a speaker offers an interpretation of previous behaviour or utterances in the preceding discourse. For the fourth feature, Williams (2002: 174) argues that the behaviour described is "in some way out of

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[3] This is based on an estimate on a search for the string is/are/was/were/be/been/'re/am/'m/'s [v?g*] (BE *going to* progressives excluded).

keeping with respect to the norm", and therefore the action is viewed as temporary and hence liable to change. Regarding the fifth feature, Visser (1963–73: 1955) notes that the construction may have emotional or sarcastic connotations, as in *In Saigon, the Reds were being clever again* (*Time*; 1965/01/22), while, finally, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 167) argue that in instances such as *He is being tactful*, there may be an indication of the agent putting on an act. Such suggestions of agents putting on acts are rare in corpus data, but some instances can be found (*It would almost be a – an insincere apology and an insincere acceptance because we were being polite to each other* (COCA; Spoken; 1998)). In the last three features the subjective meaning of the progressive comes to the fore. Subjectivity here refers to speakers' expression of self and the representation of perspective or point of view in discourse, and subjectification refers to the processes of linguistic evolution that lead to such strategies (Finegan 1995: 1).[4] In particular Smitterberg (2005) discusses subjectification as a crucial factor behind the increase in progressives. Subjective attitudes and politeness, which are central in the present study, appear to be expressed only rather rarely by the progressive in general, according to Collins (2009) and Leech *et al.* (2009). As a comparison, this study finds only c. 600 tokens from the restricted set of verbs investigated from the 2000s in *Time Magazine*, while a search for BE V-*ing* produces more than 20,000 hits for the 2000s.

In what follows, results are mainly presented in instances of the construction per million words but where practicable, frequencies are also given in comparison with the overall number of verb phrases that could potentially contain progressive forms.[5] Figure 1 below shows that that there has been a clear increase in BE *being* ADJECTIVE in *Time*.[6]
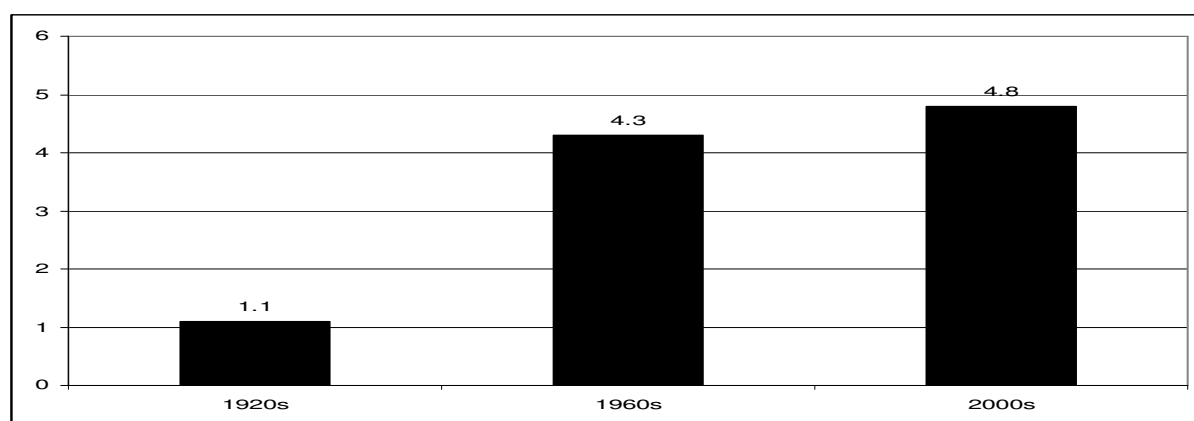

Figure 1. BE *being* ADJECTIVE in the *Time* corpus (pmw)[7]

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[4] The relation between the progressive and the expression of subjective attitudes is often discussed in connection with progressives and ALWAYS-type adverbials, as in *You're always complaining*. For a discussion of the subjective use of the progressive, see Wright (1994), (1995), Killie (2004), Smitterberg (2005) and Kranich (2007), (2008) and (2009). There was no indication of such expressive or subjective progressives with *always*-type adverbials becoming more frequent in Smitterberg's (2005: 214) nineteenth-century material, while Leech *et al.* (2009: 134) found a slight increase from low numbers in the Brown family of corpora.

[5] See Smitterberg (2005: 39–53), Aarts, Close and Wallis (2010) and Smith and Leech (this volume) for discussions of advantages and drawbacks of the various methods of counting the frequency of the progressive. While Smitterberg and Aarts, Close and Wallis measure the frequency of progressives against the total number of verb phrases, Smith and Leech find it "convenient, as well as justifiable" to measure occurrences per million words.

[6] The search string included any form of BE (ADVERB / *not*) being (ADVERB) ADJECTIVE and inverted variants of this, e.g. any form of BE * (ADVERB) ADJECTIVE covering tokens like *Was he being too cautious?* (*Time*; 1961/06/16).

[7] The token frequencies for the decades were as follows: 1920s 8, 1960s 69 and 2000s 31.

Figure 1 corroborates the previous findings that BE *being* ADJECTIVE is increasing. The main increase in *Time* occurred in the early decades, and there has been only a marginal increase in later years.[8] Millar (2009: 210–12) proposes that the writing in *Time* has become colloquialized over the years, and that this colloquialization accelerated from the 1980s and onwards.[9] Moreover, a number of researchers (notably Mair and Hundt 1995; Smith 2002, 2005; Smitterberg 2005) have stressed the effect of colloquialization on the increase in the progressive. Mair (2006: 187) defines colloquialization as a shift towards written norms closer to spoken usage. Mair connects colloquializing language norms to a general drift in western society towards more informal and spontaneous conduct (2006: 185–7). This trend appears to have accelerated after World War II. Colloquialization does indeed appear to be involved in the spread of BE *being* ADJECTIVE in *Time*, since three typical measures of more informal and involved style, namely the use of contractions, first- and second-person pronoun subjects (Biber 1988) and the proportion of quotations (Mair 2006: 188–9), all indicate a lower degree of formality in the latter decades: the proportion of contracted forms of the preceding auxiliary or the negation *not* increased from 0% in the 1920s to 14% in the 1960s and 35% in the 2000s, while first- and second-person pronoun subjects increased from 0% to 17% to 23%[10] and quoted examples from 0% to 32% to 42%.[11]

Figure 2 (with data from COCA and LSAC) shows that the construction is definitely associated with conversation and other informal genres in synchronic usage. As indicated above, many studies have found a preference for the progressive in speech.

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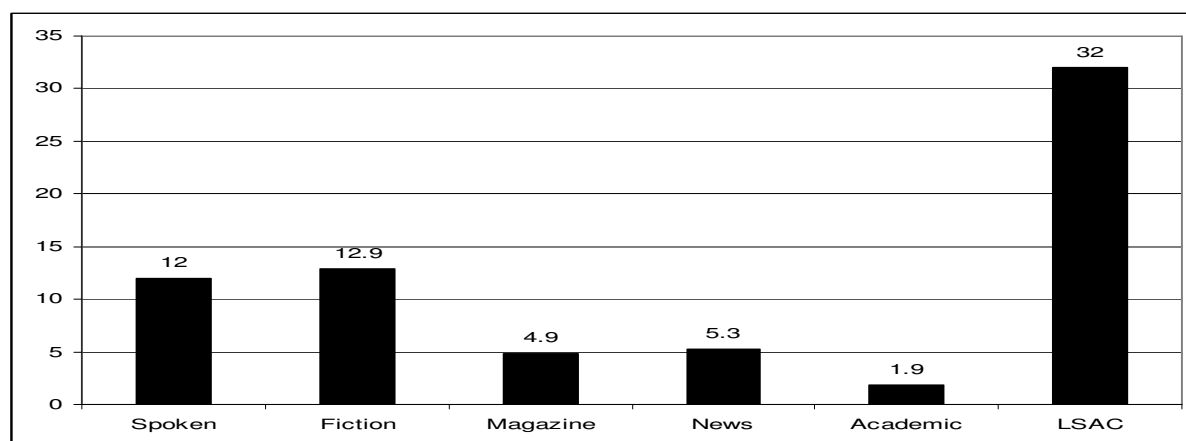
[8] Raw frequencies from the multi-genre COHA support this historical development. In that corpus, the construction is virtually non-existent in the nineteenth century, and then rises steadily up to the mid-twentieth century, where it levels off.

[9] Interestingly, Visser (1963–73: 2427ff) notes that a possible reason for the restricted use of the construction in earlier writing may have been that prescriptivists disapproved of its use, and more colloquial writing styles would indicate a loosening prescriptive influence.

[10] Kranich's (2010a: 156) eight instances of progressive BE involved four first- and second-person subjects. Hirtle and Bégin (1990: 9) argue that BE *being* begins to occur with inanimate subjects in the twentieth century. However, only one of the 108 instances in *Time Magazine* in this study contains this: *But Gelber's hero is concerned about being self-concerned, feels guilty about not feeling guilty, and this suffuses the play with moral pathos-even while it is being abrasively funny.* (*Time*; 1965/03/28)

[11] The numbers were as follows: contractions 0/8 (1920s), 10/69 (1960s), 11/31 (2000s) (the difference between the 1960s and 2000s was significant ($p \leq 0.05$); first- and second-person pronouns: 0/8 (1920s), 12/69 (1960s), 7/31 (2000s); quotations 0/8 (1920s), 22/69 (1960s), 13/31 (2000s). Leech *et al.* (2009: 128) also found increasing use of quotations and contractions, while the use of pronouns (130–1) produced "rather erratic fluctuations". The *Time* material also contains some fluctuations in the frequencies of pronouns, as will be seen in section 3.2. Yet there was also an increase the use of such pronouns as seen in connection with the discussion of the findings in Figure 6.

Figure 2. BE *being* ADJECTIVE in COCA and LSAC (pmw)[12]

The BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction is most frequent in the informal and spontaneously produced LSAC material, while COCA's television and radio programmes contain considerably fewer instances. The Spoken and Fiction categories contain roughly equal frequencies. In Fiction, there are many examples from Dialogue (*You're being rational, Edward, and I'm being primitive* (COCA; Fiction; 1996)) and from representations of the characters' thoughts and emotions, typically regarding their behaviour towards others (*He knew he was being curt, abrupt, false with her* (COCA; Fiction; 1990)), which explains the greater frequency in this subcorpus as compared to News and Magazines. Finally, academic English, which is often slow at adopting innovations in language (Mair 1998), has the lowest frequency. It is likely that the pragmatics of BE *being* ADJECTIVE makes it less frequent in academic texts. The construction typically involves evaluative adjectives such as *honest*, *silly*, *unfair* and *unreasonable* which rarely occur in scientific writing. The distribution of BE *being* ADJECTIVE thus reflects the extent to which a genre allows for the expression of subjective attitudes (Smitterberg 2005: 238).

The order of the genres Conversation > Fiction > News > Academic in Figure 2 matches that reported overall with the progressive in previous studies (Biber *et al.* 1999: 462; Collins 2009: 116; Leech *et al.* 2009: 123). Moreover, it is noteworthy that the frequency in *Time* in the 2000s matches that of Magazines in COCA, which means that at least as regards the frequency of the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction the former corpus is a close representation of American magazines in general.

Because the construction typically refers to temporary behaviour rather than more permanent traits, it often has a hedging or face-saving function. By saying *I think you are being unfair to Barack Obama* (COCA; Spoken; 2008) rather than *I think you are unfair to Barack Obama*, a speaker can specifically restrict the criticism to some specific utterance rather than to the addressee's character. This is further underlined by Visser's (1963–73: 1953) assertion that, apart from expressing something temporary, BE *being* ADJECTIVE may refer to something that is untypical for a person. Instances of this kind typically have an interpretative function (Ljung 1980) in that they involve a speaker's interpretation of someone else's (observable) behaviour.

Only slightly more than half the tokens in *Time* express some kind of annoyance or negative evaluation (as in (2) below), while a sizeable proportion expresses neutral or even positive connotations (as in (3)).[13] This distribution is similar to that in conversation in LSAC where 61% (98 of 161 tokens) were negative (as in (4)). In LSAC the construction occurred with more first-person than second-person subjects, and although there were more instances with negative connotations with second-person pronouns, negative connotations also predominate with first-person subjects, as illustrated in (4).[14] Negative evaluations with second-person subjects function as a hedged way of criticizing the addressee's behaviour (as in (2)), while positive evaluations praise specific acts (as in (5)). With first-person subjects, negative and positive adjectives serve similar functions in that they either compensate for the speaker's behaviour against the listener (as in (4)) or comment on the epistemic stance towards what has been said, as seen in (6). This construction hence typically serves

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[12] The token frequencies for the subcorpora were as follows: Spoken 978 (in 81.7 M), Fiction 1,013 (78.8 M), Magazine 412 (83.3 M), News 420 (79.4 M), Academic 152 (79.3 M) and LSAC 161 (c. 5 M).

[13] No diachronic trend towards either more or fewer negative connotations was apparent in *Time*.

[14] Of the instances with second-person subjects, 70% (33/47) were negative and 56% (31/55) of the first-person subjects. The interpersonal function of this construction is clearly illustrated by the fact that almost two-thirds of the instances (102/161) involve first- or second-person subjects. Kranich (2009: 344) found a higher frequency of first- and second-person subjects with interpretative progressives than with progressives overall. Interestingly, there was a slight decrease in such pronoun subjects between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

interpersonal functions, which is why it is most commonly found in more spontaneous and speech-like genres. The colloquialization of writing styles will possibly lead to an increased frequency in writing as well.

(2)   "In other words," a newsman asked, "it's best that the Governor is not 'brainwashed?'"
      "I didn't say that," laughed Lindsay. "*You're being naughty*." (*Time*; 1967/09/22)
(3)   The European papers are doing the right thing. *They're being courageous*. (*Time*; 2006/02/13)
(4)   I feel like *I'm being boorish* (LSAC; 115001)
(5)   I believe that *you're being honest* about it (LSAC; 152502)
(6)   But the other interesting thing is I think most people who would -- who find themselves in the same situation would do what I suggested. # *I'm not being hypocritical about this. I'm being honest.* (COCA; Spoken; 2003)

The adjectives found in COCA with the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction support Williams' (2002: 172–4) suggestion that the construction describes behaviour going against the norm. The construction compares specific behaviour to a norm where a positive adjective functions implicitly as the ground. In COCA negated adjectives (e.g., *unreasonable* in *Maybe you think I'm being unreasonable here* (COCA; Fiction; 1998)) are considerably more frequent after BE *being* than in the corpus as a whole. For example, there were 29 instances of *unreasonable* and only 6 *reasonable* (disregarding 4 *not being reasonable*, which, like the instances of *unreasonable* mostly occurred in fictional dialogue) following BE *being*, whereas *reasonable* outnumbers *unreasonable* eight to one in COCA as a whole. Similar trends were noticed for *(un)fair, (un)faithful* and, to a lesser extent, *(dis)honest*.[15]

The findings from COCA also indicate that some low-frequency adjectives are strongly connected to the BE *being* construction. This is most noticeable for *facetious*, where a striking 20% of all instances of this adjective occur after BE *being*. Other adjectives with similar but much weaker collocational preferences include *disingenuous* (4%), *truthful* (4%), *coy* (3%) and *obtuse* (3%).[16] Explanations similar to those in the examples above can be adduced for these adjectives (as well as for the most frequent adjective, *honest*). They often occur with first- and second person subjects, and by restricting the scope of criticism to something that is liable to change, the construction has a face-saving function. This is seen in (7) where something that has been said is retracted by the speaker. It also functions as a downtoner when someone is contradicted or criticized, as in (8) and (9). Examples (5) to (9) also refer to the truth value of what is being said in that they indicate that what has been asserted previously is untrue.

(7)   *I was being facetious* earlier, Barbara, when I said that. (COCA; Spoken; 1991)
(8)   *Mr. Wexler is being disingenuous* at very best. (COCA; Spoken; 1999)
(9)   "I don't think *Cy-Fair is being truthful* with the public on what to expect," Lampe said. (COCA; News; 1994)

The final feature we will consider regards the distribution of tenses. The biggest increase in the frequency of the progressive can be expected to occur in the present tense, since,

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[15] BE *being unfair* occurs 55 times, and BE *being fair* only 20 times (excluding 27 *not being fair*), while *fair* is 5 times more common in the whole corpus. There were 16 BE *being unfaithful* as compared to 6 BE *being faithful* (plus 3 *not being faithful*) with 10 *faithful* for every *unfaithful* overall, and 15 BE *being dishonest* to 95 BE *being honest* (plus 22 *not being honest*) with 13 *honest* for every *dishonest* overall.

[16] The number for the different adjectives were as follows: *facetious* (30 of 147), *disingenuous* (24 of 575), *truthful* (45 of 1,185), *coy* (19 of 648) and *obtuse* (7 of 216).

according to Leech *et al.* (2009: 126), the present tense is the realization "par excellence" of the progressive in speech. In Leech *et al.* (2009) the fastest increase was seen in the present progressive active in both BrE and AmE writing, while there was an unexpected *decrease* in active past progressives in BrE and passive past progressives in AmE. (There were no consistent diachronic trends among these patterns in Smitterberg's (2005) nineteenth-century BrE material. See, however, Bergs and Pfaff (this volume) for a new progressive use in the past.) With the BE *being* construction in *Time Magazine* there is a clear, but non-significant trend of present-tense forms increasing faster than past-tense forms ($p \geq 0.05$; using a chi-square test).[17] The synchronic results from COCA and LSAC are presented in Figure 3:
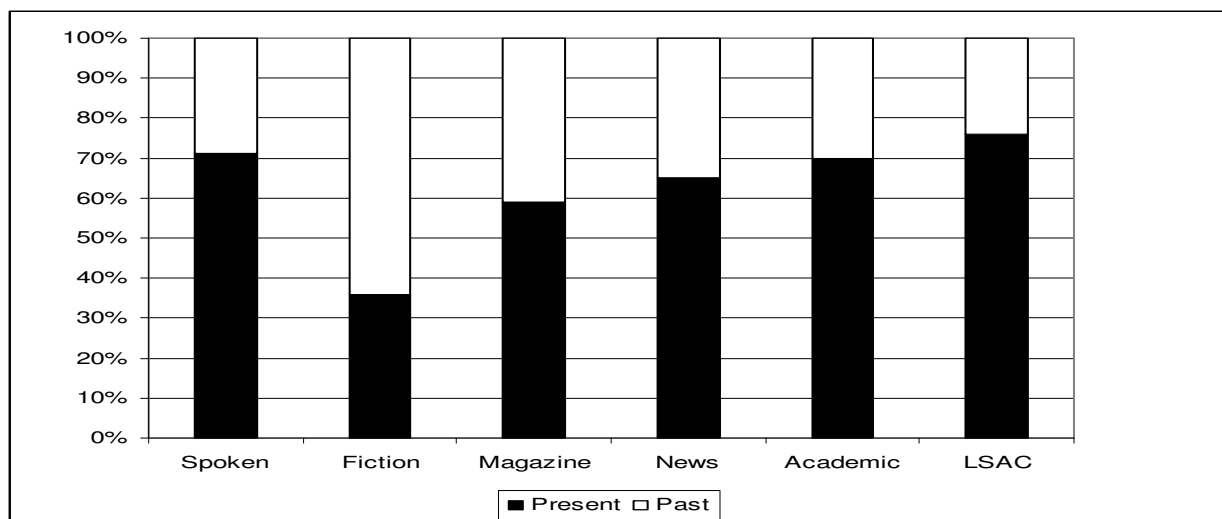

Figure 3. Present- and past-tense forms of BE *being* ADJECTIVE in COCA and LSAC[18]

All but one of the subcorpora contain more present-tense forms than past-tense forms. The present tense is generally preferred in the more involved styles, namely in informal speech from LSAC and in the Spoken category from COCA.[19] To some extent, the tense distributions with progressives reflect the tense distributions overall in the corpora. Evidence from Wright (1994: 479) and Römer (2005: 107) nevertheless suggests that progressives expressing subjective attitudes (as the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction typically does) often occur with present-tense forms rather past-tense forms. This is in line with this construction being most often used in the present tense in the spoken material in COCA and LSAC. Fiction, which is perhaps most evidently characterized by narrative concerns, as judged by Biber's (1988) factor analysis, has the lowest proportion of present-tense forms. Like spoken material, academic texts also contain many present-tense forms in COCA, which is largely due to progressives occurring in quotations of spoken language and in generic descriptions such as *To some extent, every performer is being creative when he or she decides how fast allegro is* (COCA; Academic; 1991). A comparison with Smitterberg's (2005) findings suggests, to the extent that COCA can be contrasted with genres from written nineteenth-century BrE, that

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[17] In the 1920s, there were 25% present-tense forms (2/8 tokens; i.e. there were 6 past-tense-forms), 55% (38/69) in the 1960s and 77% (24/31) in the 2000s).

[18] The numbers for the subcorpora were the following: Spoken 71% present tense (691/978), Fiction 36% (369/1013), Magazine 59% (242/412), News 65% (272/420), Academic 70% (106/152) and LSAC 76% (120/161).

[19] Fiction differed significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) from all the other subcorpora in the choice of tenses. The category Informal conversations from LSAC was also significantly different from Magazines and (only just) from News, but, not from Spoken and Academic. This suggests that tense with BE *being* ADJECTIVE is only marginally affected by the informal or interpersonal nature of the text, and that rather the dimension narrative vs. non-narrative text is a more important factor.

similar tense differences between genres were established early on. In Smitterberg's material, Science and the spoken-like category of Drama had the highest proportion of present-tense forms, and Fiction among the lowest.

In concluding this discussion of the spread of the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction in written AmE, I would like to suggest that this increase is connected to four general trends, namely democratization, subjectification, colloquialization and generalization. Just as the trend for people to want to make their speech appear less face-threatening may be leading away from the "stronger" deontic modals such as *must* towards the "weaker" semi-modals HAVE *to* and NEED *to* (as proposed by Leech *et al.* 2009: 88–9, 259, Millar 2009: 209, Close and Aarts 2010 and Smith and Leech, this volume), the increase in BE *being* ADJECTIVE can partly be attributed to the spread of more tactful, less face-threatening ways of expression in English. Ultimately this change towards less face-threatening means of expression may be a reflection of the democratization[20] of society (as argued by Leech *et al.*; see also Smith and Leech this volume). The growth of such interpersonal and hedged modes of expression also instantiates the subjectification of meaning (i.e. the tendency for meanings to become increasingly based in speakers' subjective attitudes) (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 91). Furthermore, colloquialization is important in the increase in *Time* since this construction is spreading from its base in informal discourse into published forms of writing in conjunction with other informal and interpersonal features. Finally, it can be argued that the progressive is generalizing, i.e. that it is continuing to increase in frequency by expanding into new contexts. This process of generalization is a continuation of the grammaticalization[21] of the progressive which occurred hundreds of years ago (Leech *et al.* 2009: 238). In the case of the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction, grammaticalization and subjectification go hand in hand. This last factor is more influential in the spread of the progressive to private verbs, as seen in the next section.

3.2 Private verbs

Any investigation into the progressive with private verbs has to take into account that there is a fuzzy border-line between states and dynamic processes (e.g., Biber *et al.* 1999: 470–5 and Leech *et al.* 2009: 129). The present investigation comprises ten "marginally progressive" private verbs referring to mental states (BELIEVE, (DIS)LIKE, HATE, INTEND, KNOW, LOVE, PITY, WANT and WISH) and five verbs denoting mental and emotional processes (EXPECT, FEEL, HOPE, THINK and WONDER).[22] The verbs in the former group denote meanings towards the stative end of the continuum, and only rarely occur in the progressive, while the latter verbs, which are more towards the dynamic end of the continuum, are often used in the progressive.[23] Some verbs refer either to prototypical states, e.g. stable conceptions of the world (such as *He thinks that learning is useful* (COCA; Academic; 2007)) or mental activities (such as *They had been thinking* (COCA; Fiction; 1991)), but there are no simple correlations between the meaning and the use of the progressive. For example, the progressive and the simple form may occur with different verbs in practically synonymous sentences, as

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[20] Fairclough (1992: 98) defines democratization as the 'reduction of overt markers of power and asymmetry'.
[21] A standard definition of grammaticalization is given by Heine and Kuteva (2002: 2) as 'the development from lexical to grammatical forms and from grammatical to even more grammatical forms.'
[22] The verbs were selected from those mentioned in the literature (Jespersen 1909–49: IV: 221–2; Visser 1963–73: 1936; Quirk *et al.* 1985: 203; Biber et al 1999: 472; Römer 2005) and which were deemed frequent enough to warrant investigation.
[23] This latter point is illustrated by Römer (2005: 114), who finds *expecting*, *hoping* and *wondering* to be among the four most common progressive forms in spoken BrE.

in *She is suffering from influenza* and *She is ill with influenza*, as pointed out by Leech (2004: 25).

The dating of the use of progressive with stative verbs is uncertain, but "frequent usage, at least, is fairly recent", according to Denison (1998: 146). Killie (2008) notes that BE + present participle was used in OE and ME with stative predicates, but Bybee *et al.* (1994: 136) argue that this older construction disappeared and was eventually replaced by the more recent construction. Smitterberg (2005) found low but increasing frequencies for progressive statives in nineteenth-century BrE, and already Jespersen (1909–49: IV: 221–3) noted a difference between the fairly frequent progressive occurrences with verbs like HOPE and rarer progressives with, for instance, LOVE (see also Aarts, Close and Wallis 2010: 162–3, Smith and Leech, this volume).[24]

A number of different meaning components have been proposed for progressive statives. It has been argued that the progressive emphasizes or intensifies the mental process involved (Visser 1963–73: 1936), that subjects display visible or audible signs of the emotion in the case of verbs such as HATE and LIKE (Visser 1963–73: 1978; see also Ljung 1980: 45–9), and that the progressive stresses the temporariness or tentativeness of the activity described by the verb (Leech 2004: 26). The temporariness of a situation described by the progressive can be linked to a susceptibility to change (Jespersen 1909–49: IV: 221; Williams 2002: 87; Leech 2004: 29) and, for some verbs, to politeness. For example, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 210) suggest that *I wonder if you could help me is* "less tentative, and potentially less polite" than *I am wondering ….* Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 170) suggest that the politeness of such verbs is connected both to the temporariness expressed by the progressive and the fact that longer or more complex expressions tend to be more polite than simpler ones. Such considerations aside, many writers on the subject mention that it is often difficult to discern clear distinctions between the simple form and the progressive (e.g., Leech 2004: 27), a problem which all corpus investigations of the progressive have to grapple with.

The diachronic distribution of the ten marginally progressive private verbs in *Time* is seen in Figure 4.

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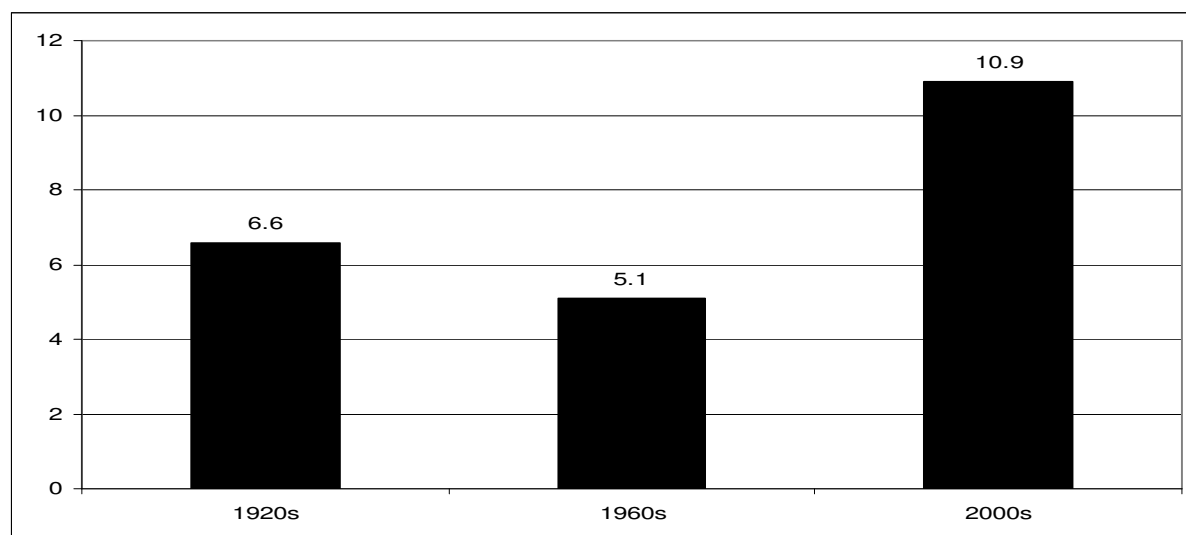
[24] In COHA the first instance of progressive LOVE dates from 1859: *Either you had never cared for me, and had but amused yourself with deceiving me; or having, after your own fashion, liked me, you were now experimenting upon my love, wantonly giving me pain. In either case I* had been loving *an ideal.* (*My Third Book: A Collection of Tales*; Louise Chandler Moulton)

Figure 4. Proportion of progressives per 10,000 verbs for the set BELIEVE, (DIS)LIKE, HATE, INTEND, KNOW, LOVE, PITY, WANT and WISH in the *Time* corpus [25]

In spite of the slight decrease between the 1920s and 1960s there is a (statistically non-significant) increase in progressive statives in *Time*, but in contrast to Figure 1, which presents the use of progressives with EXPECT, FEEL, HOPE, THINK and WONDER, this increase is restricted to the latter decades.[26] The number of types taking the progressive in the three sampled decades, four (1920s), four (1960s) and seven (2000s), suggests that the spread to new types has only recently gained momentum in this corpus. As will be argued below, the slow spread to the few remaining types, which is typical of the end-stages of lexical diffusion, combined with the increase in frequency with individual "marginal" progressives indicates that the progressive is becoming generalized (see Leech *et al.* 2009: 238). Because the progressive in Present-Day English can be used marginally with statives and habits, Kranich (2010a: 32) argues that it is no longer a prototypical progressive form, but has moved towards becoming a marker of imperfective aspect. However, as seen in the present chapter, the progressive still remains marginal with many such verbs, and, furthermore, it is still associated with limited duration (Heine 1994: 280) with typically stative verbs.

The increase in the most recent decades in Figure 4 coincides with the decrease in formality in *Time Magazine* in the latter decades, as discussed above (Millar 2009: 210–12). This trend towards more spoken-like writing habits is reflected in the subjects of the verbs in Figure 4 since the proportion of first- and second-person pronoun subjects increases also with these verbs.[27]

Below are three illustrative examples, all of which contain first- or second-person subjects. In (10) there is the intensifying adverbial *really*, and in (11) the adverbial *for a second* both highlights the temporariness of the state and serves to intensify the activity. In (12) the tentativeness and temporariness of the progressive make the suggestion that the addressees are interested in digital photography less imposing (note that progressive *wanting* is followed by the negated simple form *don't want* in this example).

(10) I'*m* really *wishing* I could watch the muddy brown water of the 'mighty Miss' wash over my toes again. (*Time*; 2000/04/31)
(11) I *was* not *believing* for a second that this guy has ever read PEOPLE. (*Time*; 2004/04/26)
(12) If you'*ve been wanting* to try your hand at digital photography but don't want to buy pricey equipment, this camera may be for you. (*Time*; 2003/08/04)

The synchronic distributions in COCA and LSAC in Figure 5 show that, as with BE *being* ADJECTIVE, progressive statives are most frequent in informal speech and least frequent in

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[25] Some of the most frequent 'knockout contexts' (e.g., *you know*; *I don't know*) were disregarded in the figure (see Aarts *et al.*, this volume). In the 1920s there were 9 progressives for 13,612 non-progressives, in the 1960s 15 progressives for 29,462 non-progressives and in the 2000s 21 progressives for 19,221 non-progressives. The verbs thus only occur exceptionally in the progressive. WANT and WISH represent almost half the progressives in the figure.

[26] Interestingly, raw figures from COHA do not indicate a very consistent trend over the twentieth century with these verbs. It is possible, however, that there is a slight increase, but this does not occur until the 1990s and 2000s.

[27] The numbers are small and not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$; using a chi-square test), but the increase nevertheless points in the same general direction as in the previous section. First- and second-person pronouns increased from 22% (2/9) in the 1920s to 27% (4/15) in the 1960s to 43% (9/21) in the 2000s. Similarly, as with BE *being* ADJECTIVE there were small increases in the use of contractions and quotations in connection with progressives.

academic writing. It is noteworthy that the progressive is rarer overall with these ten verbs than with BE *being* ADJECTIVE in Figure 2 above.
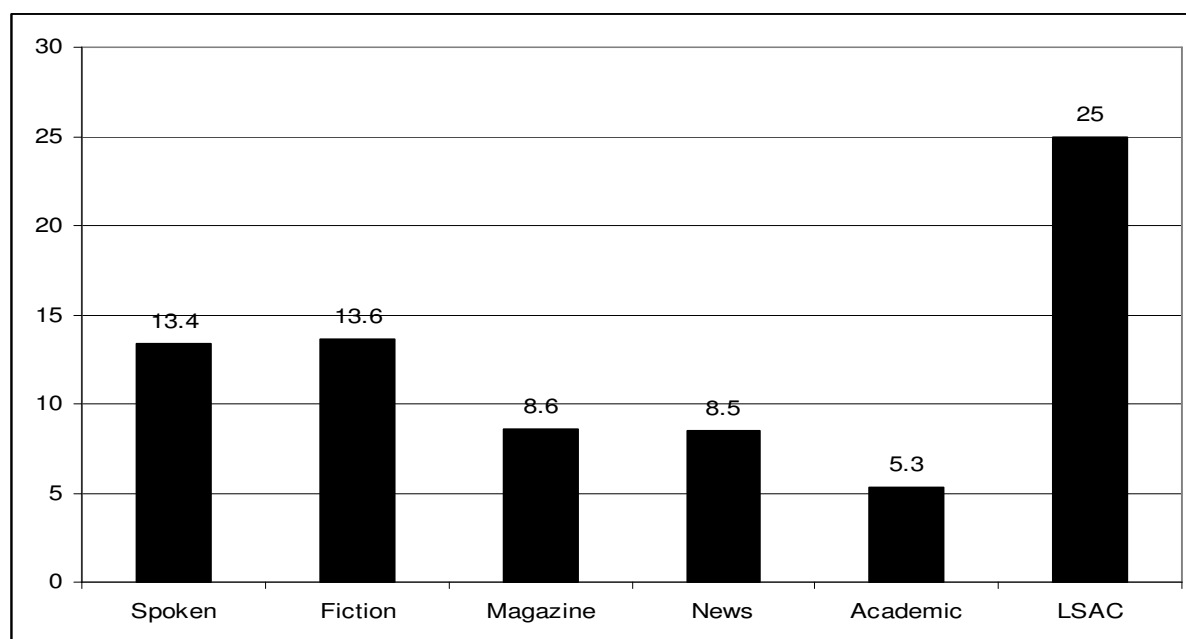

Figure 5. Proportion of progressives per 10,000 verbs for the set BELIEVE, (DIS)LIKE, HATE, INTEND, KNOW, LOVE, PITY, WANT and WISH in COCA and LSAC[28]

As with BE *being* ADJECTIVE "marginal progressives" serve interpersonal functions (i.e. they signal the relations between speakers) most typically found in informal speech from LSAC, and which are quite rare in Academic writing. The rank order between the genres is similar to that in Figure 2 with roughly equal frequencies in Spoken and Fiction on the one hand, and Magazine and News on the other. The relatively high frequency in Fiction is mainly attributable to high proportions of contractions and first- and second-person subjects typically found in fictional dialogue.

As regards representativeness, *Time Magazine* 2000s (3.3 pmw) is similar to Magazines in COCA (2.8 pmw), and the comparisons between COCA and LSAC indicate that the Spoken subcorpus of COCA, recorded in public settings, is clearly different from the spontaneous conversational AmE in LSAC, as regards the frequency of marginal progressives. It is nevertheless not surprising that the interpersonal functions of these verbs yield different results in LSAC and the "almost completely spontaneous" (Davies 2009: 162) Spoken subcorpus in COCA, since, after all, the language of interviews and discussions from radio and television broadcasts is likely to be quite different from that of completely spontaneous conversations. More research on other variables is required to determine to what extent the Spoken subcorpus in COCA differs from AmE conversation in other respects.

The large amount of COCA material reveals that there are notable differences in frequencies even between these marginal progressives. Some verbs are extremely rarely found in the progressive, such as DISLIKE and PITY with only two and six progressives, respectively, in more than 1,000 tokens of each lemma (e.g., *in divorces, people are disliking each other a great deal* (COCA; Spoken; 1992)). Another group of verbs (BELIEVE, HATE, INTEND, KNOW and LIKE) occur in the progressive in COCA between 0.1 and 0.5 pmw, largely due to their

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[28] The number of tokens in the subcorpora were Spoken 701, Fiction 653, Magazine 235, News 220, Academic 66 and LSAC 112. As in Figure 4, some high-frequency 'knockout' contexts were excluded. For LSAC, I extrapolated numbers from 100 random tokens.

high frequencies overall. Three verbs with which the progressive is becoming increasingly established (LOVE, WANT and WISH) comprise three quarters of the progressive statives identified in COCA. In particular BE *wanting*, which occurs twice in a million words, is frequent.[29] More detailed analysis shows that BE *wanting* is frequent in more spoken-like genres, where it typically fulfils one of two functions which are illustrated in the choice of co-occurring adverbs in (13) to (15).

(13) Hi. I *was just wanting to know* if you're going to have another book out? (COCA; Spoken; 1991)
(14) He *was always wanting* to do the right thing. (COCA; Fiction; 2009)
(15) (…) it's helped me come back on stage because I *was really wanting* to come back to you. (COCA; Spoken; 2000)

Firstly, *just* is used as a downtoner in tentative and polite requests, as in (13). More frequently, however, *wanting* expresses intensification, which is seen in the co-occurrence either with *always*[30] (as in (14)), and more typically intensifying adverbs like *really* (as in (15)). In (14) a progressive stative, a feature which compresses the time-span of the activity (Leech 2004: 19), combines with a hyperbolic adverb extending the time-span. Furthermore, it can be argued that there are visible or audible signs of the mental state denoted by the verb at least in (13) and (14). In (13) the very fact that the speaker utters her wish to know the answer is an audible sign of her mental state, while (14) refers to the subject's earlier activities which include expressions of his mental state. High frequencies with the progressive expressing intensification or politeness support Smitterberg's (2005: 246) hypothesis that the progressive is becoming increasingly subjective in nature.[31] However, it should be noted that Kranich (2008, 2010a: 243–8, 2010b) argues that later stages of grammaticalization, which is what we are dealing with in the case of progressives in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, instead typically involves decreasing subjectivity (see below).

The remainder of this section concerns EXPECT, FEEL, HOPE, THINK and WONDER. The progressive increases steadily in frequency with these five verbs, as seen in Figure 6 (see also Figure 7 below).

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[29] In AmE conversation from LSAC, there were as many as 15 progressives with WANT pmw (74 tokens).

[30] Interestingly, the verbs in Figures 5 and 6 rarely express negative connotations with *always* and similar adverbs. Leech *et al.* (2009: 134) found that such adverbials usually express attitudes such as annoyance or amusement and their material indicated a possible increase in such uses. For diachronic discussion of progressives with ALWAYS-type adverbials, see Smitterberg (2005: 210–17), Killie (2004) and Kranich (2007).

[31] A minor factor in the spread of the progressive with these verbs is the increasing use of certain frequent collocations. For example, most of the instances of *loving* in *Time Magazine* (7 out of 9), and almost a third, 101, of the 316 instances in COCA and LSAC occurred in the phrase *loving it* (e.g. *Silicon Valley, meanwhile, was loving it all* (*Time*; 2000/03/10)). A certain fast-food chain's choice of *I'm lovin' it* as its slogan may have contributed to the popularity of this particular phrase.
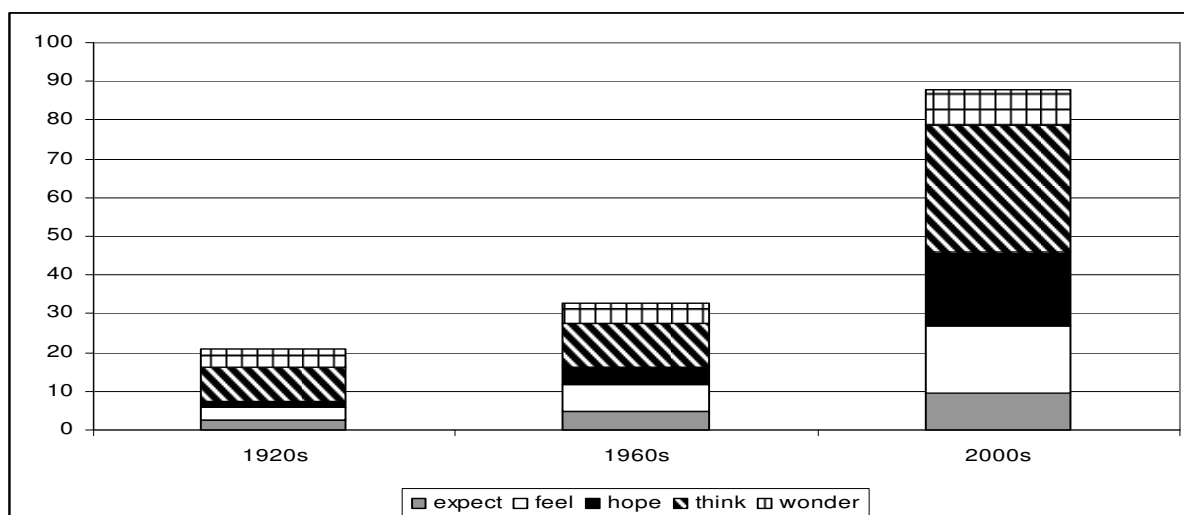
Figure 6. Progressives with EXPECT, FEEL, HOPE, THINK and WONDER in the *Time* corpus (pmw)[32]

As discussed in section 3.1 the colloquialization of *Time* seems to have gained momentum in the last few decades, which tallies with the accelerating change seen here.[33] Like with BE *being* ADJECTIVE in section 3.1, there is independent evidence of stylistic change. To begin with, first- and second-person pronouns accounted for 22% of the subjects with the five verbs in the 1920s, dropping off slightly to 18% in the 1960s and leaping significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) to 36% in the 2000s.[34] This general development is reflected in the distributions of *I* and *you* across the decades with a slight drop between the 1920s (3,600 pmw) and the 1960s (3,300 pmw) and a sharp increase in the 2000s (8,700 pmw). While there has only been a 140% increase overall with these pronouns between the 1920s and 2000s, first- and second-person pronoun subjects with the five private verbs have increased by 600% (as counted per million words). Colloquialization as reflected in first- and second-person pronoun subjects is thus shown to be relevant for the spread of the progressive, but the *Time* corpus also suggests that the progressive is spreading independently of the subjects.[35]

This increased use of more "involved" first- and second-person pronouns in *Time Magazine* does not combine with an increase in direct quotations.[36] There is a significant ($p \leq$ 0.05) increase in the use of contracted verbs forms: 4% in the 1920s, 11% in the 1960s and 26% in the 2000s.[37] Despite the increase in progressives, usage in *Time Magazine* nevertheless lags far behind the rates found in conversation from LSAC, where the progressive with these verbs is more than five times more frequent.[38]

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[32] The overall occurrences pmw were 20.8 in the 1920s, 32.8 in the 1960s and 87.8 in the 2000s.

[33] The COHA corpus produces a fairly similar pattern: the frequency of the progressive with these five verbs increases steadily up to the early twentieth century, where the trend slows down almost to a stop. Only in the 1990s and 2000s is there a renewed boost in frequency.

[34] The numbers for first- and second-person pronouns were as follows 34/158 (4.5 pmw) (1920s), 93/528 (5.8 pmw) (1960s), 205/562 (32.0 pmw) (2000s).

[35] First-person subjects were found to be relevant to the increase in the 'future' use of the progressive (Nesselhauf 2007), while the only significant finding found by Leech *et al.* (2009: 130–1) in their comparison of LOB and FLOB was that present-tense forms with generic *you* had increased, a rare pattern with private verbs.

[36] The proportions of instances occurring in quotations remained remarkably stable in *Time*: 22% (34/158) in the 1920s, 21% (109/528) in the 1960s and 20% (111/562) in the 2000s.

[37] The numbers for contractions were the following: 7/158 (1920s), 59/528 (1960s) and 148/562 (2000s).

[38] In LSAC there was a striking rate of progressives with these verbs of 464 tokens pmw, the 2,318 tokens distributed thus: EXPECT (93), FEEL (212), HOPE (219), THINK (1434) and WONDER (360). Of these five verbs, THINK is the most frequently used in the progressive both in *Time Magazine* and LSAC, but the proportions are

The illustrative examples below contain contracted auxiliaries and first- or a second-person pronoun subjects. Further potential factors for the choice of the progressive in (16) are that the feeling is temporary, that the progressive intensifies the emotion, and that the effects of the emotion are observable. (17) contains a hedged clause where, due to its association with temporariness, the progressive makes the suggestion in the subordinate clause more tentative, thereby reducing imposition on the hearer.

(16) "I'*m feeling* full of beans and very excited," she said. (*Time*; 1962/04/06)
(17) In case *you're wondering* whether combining porn and economics makes economics interesting or porn boring, it's the former. (*Time*; 2003/04/28)

The increase in Figure 6 may be due to increasing frequencies overall for these verbs. Figure 7 therefore compares progressives with the other finite forms of the five verbs (computing the proportion *p* and 95% Wilson intervals on *p*, see Appendix 1, Aarts *et al.*, this volume). It is of course not unproblematic to compare the proportion of progressives since not all instances of simple forms are interchangeable with the progressive. The results nevertheless indicate that there have been significant increases in the progressive for all verbs in spite of some considerable variations in token frequencies.[39]
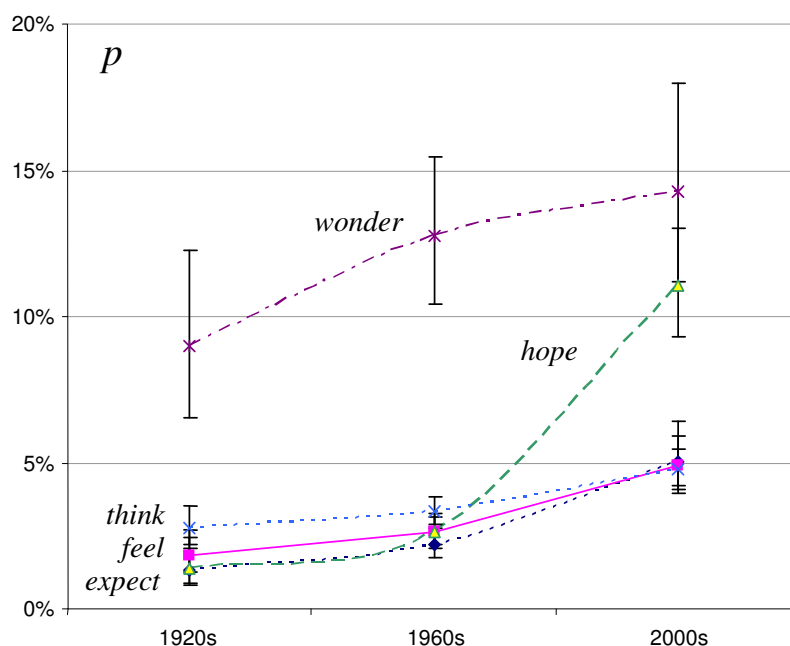

Figure 7. Changes in the probability of particular verbs being used with progressive aspect over time: data for EXPECT, FEEL, HOPE, THINK and WONDER in the *Time* corpus, with 'I'-shaped error bars calculated using Wilson's score interval at a 95% confidence level (see Aarts *et al.*, this volume Appendix 1).

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very different. In the last decade of *Time Magazine* this verb accounts for 37% of the verb tokens while in LSAC it accounts for 62%. Possibly the progressive is generalizing faster with this verb than with the others. As will be seen below, even what seem to be typical stative instances now occur in the progressive.

[39] The increasing use of the progressive with THINK as seen in Figure 6 thus occurs together with a general increase in the use of this verb. Since the progressive has increased more than the overall frequency of the verb this change cannot explain the growth in the progressive. It should also be pointed out that the progressive is only a marginal alternative in most of the instances (at least as regards usage in writing). Of 100 random instances of non-progressive THINK, 70 were categorized as inert cognition and 30 as 'cogitate' (see below).

The graph in Figure 7 plots the proportion of cases of a given verb which is progressive (i.e. out of other finite forms). We can show how, for this particular group of verbs, in each case progressive forms increase significantly as a proportion of finite usages from 1920s to 2000s. The intermediate 1960s step does not represent a significant difference from the starting point in most cases. However, HOPE increases over each successive time period, i.e. from 1920s to 1960s and (dramatically) to 2000s.

This figure also allows us to see if patterns of change associated with a particular verb are distinct.[40] Applying a Newcombe-Wilson test to the 2000s data reveals that the incidence of the progressive for WONDER and HOPE are not separable, but these two verbs are distinct from the other three. A comparison between EXPECT, FEEL, and THINK in the 1920s data reveals that the two most distinct p values, those for EXPECT and THINK, can be separated. In the 2000s, usage for EXPECT, FEEL, and THINK has converged.

All five verbs consistently increased their proportions of progressives between the three decades, and the increases were bigger for four of the five between the 1960s and the 2000s than between the 1920s and the 1960s (WONDER being the exception). The findings from Figures 6 and 7 therefore suggest that the increase in the progressive with private verbs in *Time Magazine* accelerated in the latter part of the twentieth century. As argued above, this change coincides with increasing colloquialization. The fact that the progressive is becoming increasingly frequent with individual verbs (as seen in Figure 7) and spreading to the few verb types previously not allowing the progressive (as seen in section 3.1) also indicates that the progressive has become grammaticalized and is now becoming more grammaticalized.[41] Smitterberg (2005) uses the term 'integration' to include both the grammaticalization and obligatorification of the progressive. In his nineteenth-century BrE material, the progressive was expanding to new subjects and situations and was increasing across genres. Such generalization is typically associated with semantic bleaching, Traugott (1995: 35–7) argues, but in the present chapter there rather appears to be "a realignment involving a strengthening of speaker perspective" (p. 37), i.e. there is a tendency for the progressive to increasingly express subjective meanings (as also argued by Smitterberg 2005 and Leech *et al.* 2009: 142). Kranich (2009), however, suggests that while grammaticalization is typically accompanied by subjectification in its early stages, in its later stages grammaticalization instead leads to the reverse, i.e. objectification. This idea has some intuitive appeal, since when a form is becoming more obligatory, it is less likely to be linked to the expression of subjective attitudes. Findings from Kranich (2010: 245) support this conclusion. However, there is a second increase in subjective progressives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which Kranich argues is restricted to interpretative progressives. A number of the verbs in the present study have interpretative functions, so this lends support to the idea that subjectification is one of the reasons behind the increase in progressives with the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction and private verbs. However, it should be noted that Aarts, Close and Wallis (2010: 162) caution against drawing too firm conclusions about the spread of interpretative progressives based on previous studies in view of differences in definitions and inherent problems in identifying interpretative meaning in individual instances (see also Smith and Leech, this volume who report "frustratingly high" numbers of indeterminate examples of interpretative progressives).

Below we will consider some specific meaning developments of the verbs in question, but first we will briefly consider tense.

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[40] The easiest way to spot this is simply that non-overlapping error bars must represent a significant difference. A more precise method, which we need only apply when error bars partially overlap, requires a 2×2 χ^2 test or Newcombe-Wilson test (see Aarts *et al.*, this volume, Appendix 1).

[41] As seen in the introduction to this chapter, previous research by, e.g., Bybee *et al.* (1994: 125–49) and Kranich (2010a: 30–5) indicates that the English progressive has not (yet) developed an imperfective marker.

3.2.1 Tense with private verbs

Previous studies indicate that the progressive is increasing unevenly across the tenses. Table 1 and Figure 8 present the distributions of tenses for the five verbs from the *Time* corpus in words per million with the number of tokens in brackets.

Table 1. Progressive forms across tenses in the *Time* corpus with EXPECT, FEEL, HOPE, THINK and WONDER (pmw; raw frequencies in brackets)

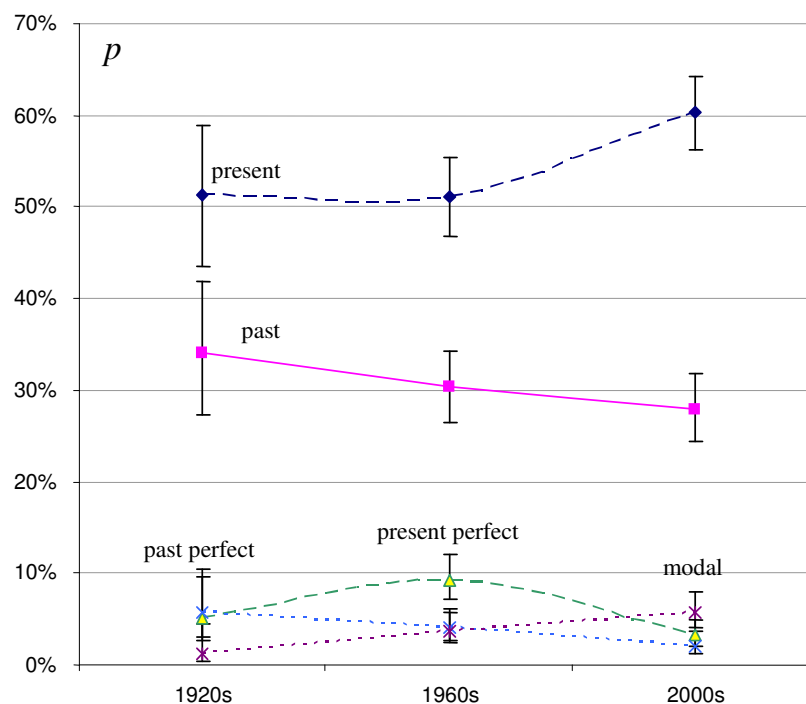|	1920s	change %	1960s	change %	2000s
present	10.6 (81)	+58%	16.8 (270)	+216%	53.0 (339)
past	7.1 (54)	+40%	9.9 (160)	+148%	24.5 (157)
present perfect	1.1 (8)	+178%	3.0 (49)	-6%	2.8 (18)
past perfect	1.2 (9)	+16%	1.4 (22)	+34%	1.9 (12)
modal	0.3 (2)	+314%	1.2 (20)	+317%	5.0 (32)
other	0.5 (4)	-13%	0.4 (7)	+56%	0.6 (4)
Total	20.8 (158)	+58%	32.8 (528)	+168%	87.8 (562)

Figure 8. Proportions of tenses in the *Time* corpus with progressive forms of EXPECT, FEEL, HOPE, THINK and WONDER, with 95% Wilson error bars.

All tenses increased between the 1920s and 2000s as counted in words per million. As found by Leech *et al.* (2009: 124), the biggest increase in frequency is with present-tense forms, where the present tense increased significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more than the other forms between the 1960s and 2000s. The past tense represents the second biggest increase in numbers, which is in contrast to Leech *et al.*'s (2009: 126–7) finding that past progressives were stable in written AmE (and even decreasing slightly in written BrE) between the 1960s and the 1990s. Nevertheless, the proportion of past progressives decreased from 34% of all tokens in *Time Magazine* in the 1920s to 28% in the 2000s, which suggests that the past progressive is only a minor factor behind the overall increase. The same can be said of the perfect, which increases

only marginally. Progressives preceded by modal auxiliaries (e.g., *Arrrrrrrgh! you may be thinking.* (*Time*; 2000/09/18)), however, increased significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) between the 1920s and the 2000s as compared to the other forms. This marked increase in modals + BE V-*ing* occurs in tandem with a slight overall increase in modals in *Time Magazine* (reported in Millar 2009: 199). Previous studies have produced slightly contradictory results on modal progressives. Smitterberg (2005: 134–5) found low and apparently decreasing numbers in nineteenth-century BrE, while Leech *et al.*'s (2009: 139), Celle and Smith's (2010) and Smith and Leech's material (this volume) showed a significant increase in modal progressives in twentieth-century BrE in spite of modals decreasing overall (see also Aarts, Bowie and Wallis forthcoming). For AmE, however, there was hardly any change for modal progressives at all. Because of these conflicting findings, the diachronic development of tense (including the use of modals) is thus an area where more research is needed. As for the increasing frequencies discussed above, the shifts in tenses can be related to colloquialization (the progressive is spreading most rapidly in the spoken-like present tense), democratization (it is increasingly occurring in less face-threatening contexts such as in combination with modals) and generalization (it is becoming established in new syntactic contexts such as after modals).

3.2.2 Meanings and complementation patterns with private verbs

This section concerns changes in the distributions of the meanings and complementation patterns of the verbs and more qualitative analyses of the findings. Needless to say, there are different degrees of stativity for these verbs. WONDER and HOPE, for instance, are typically activity verbs where the subject actively must expend energy, while FEEL is more stative. THINK is clearly towards the more stative end of the continuum in some contexts, but as will be seen below, there are no progressives found in these contexts in *Time Magazine*, but in speech such progressives are not infrequent.

We will first consider BE *thinking*, which has perhaps undergone the most striking changes, as can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 9 below. Four different meanings were identified in the material. 'Cogitate' (as seen in (18)) and 'intend' (in (19)) are the most common, but two other meanings appear to be expanding, namely the quotative (where the verb phrase is followed by a quote) (in (20)), and the interpretative function (König 1980; Ljung 1980: 69–93; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 165; Collins 2009: 120; Leech *et al.* 2009: 134–6; Kranich 2009) (in (21)) where the clause with the progressive verb provides an interpretation of the subordinate clause. This is a sub-category of the 'cogitate' instances, but because of its specific pragmatic function the category was counted separately.

(18) Stephens, aggrieved, *had been thinking* the same thing. (*Time*; 1929/12/23)
(19) Mom, *I'm thinking of* joining a cult and want to leave it everything in my will. (*Time*; 2000/01/15)
(20) "I *was thinking*, Man, this is normal?" says Danielle. (*Time*; 2000/09/04)
(21) When he said that stringent water-pollution standards would hinder industry, he *was* again *thinking* of Alaska and its abundance of clear rivers. (*Time*; 1969/01/24)

Table 2. Meanings of progressive THINK in the *Time* corpus (pmw; raw frequencies in brackets)

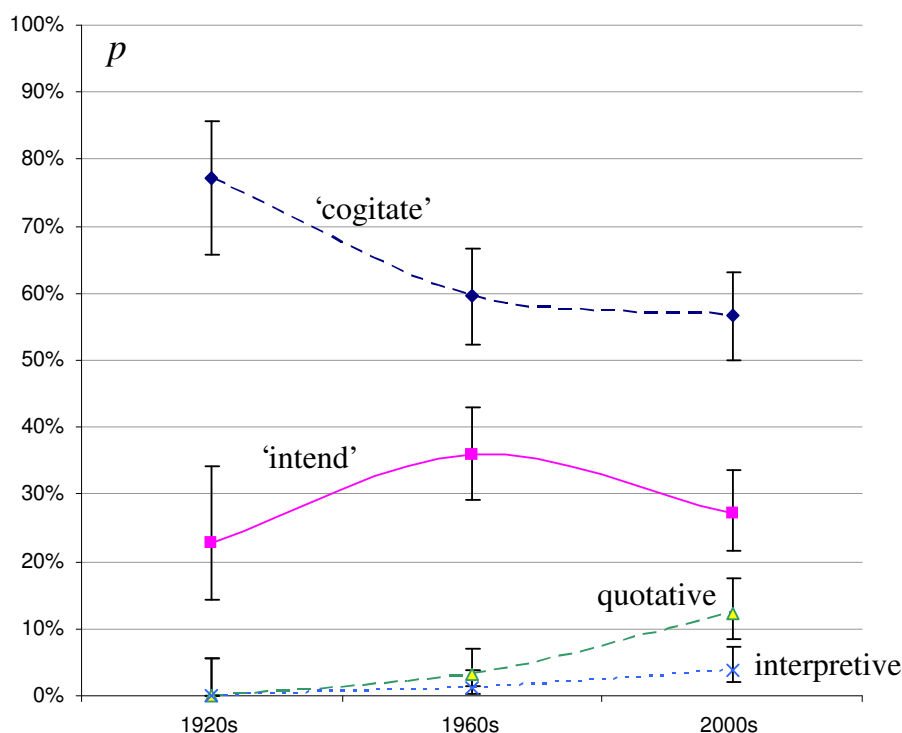|	1920s	change %	1960s	change %	2000s
'cogitate'	6.7 (51)	+0%	6.7 (108)	+178%	18.6 (119)
'intend'	2.0 (15)	+100%	4.0 (65)	+123%	8.9 (57)
Quotative	(0)	-	0.4 (6)	+925%	4.1 (26)
Interpretative	(0)	-	0.1 (2)	+904%	1.3 (8)
Total	8.7 (66)	+29%	11.2 (181)	+193%	32.8 (210)

Figure 9. Changes in the proportions of different meanings of THINK in the *Time* corpus, with 95% Wilson error bars.

The table shows that the largest increase in real numbers occurs with the "basic" and already frequent 'cogitate' meaning,[42] while the fairly colloquial 'intend' represents the second largest part of the increase. Apart from this, the progressive has spread to the two informal, interpersonal and spoken-like meanings (the increase in the quotative was significant ($p \leq 0.05$) in comparison with the other meanings between the 1960s (3%) and 2000s (12%)). Figure 9 thus illustrates how two distinct meanings in the 1920s have developed into four in the 2000s. The emergence of the quotative and interpretative uses supports the hypothesis that colloquialization affects the increase in the progressive, but since about half the increase is with the core 'cogitate' meaning, it appears that the generalization of the progressive in areas where it was already fairly common is possibly more important in this particular instance (see Leech *et al.* 2009: 143).

The progressive with THINK meaning 'cogitate' seems to emphasize or intensify the action expressed by the verb (as for example in *But ever since making the first one, Dr. Marton has been thinking of more applications for his discovery.* (*Time*; 1967/04/14) and *These days his tone is quieter and more autumnal than it used to be; he is thinking hard about*

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[42] This increase was not significant in comparison with the other meanings ($p \geq 0.05$).

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old age. (*Time*; 1967/12/02)). In some instances of 'cogitate' there is an indication of temporariness (*I am thinking of a series of disguises for myself* (*Time*; 1929/04/22)), but in other cases this is obviously not so (*This is something we've been thinking about for 40 years* (*Time*; 1963/06/14)). 'Intend' progressives usually indicate tentativeness.[43] When the speaker is thinking of joining a cult in (19), they are still considering the idea and have not quite made up their mind, and hence the situation is susceptible to change (see Williams 2002: 87).[44] In some past-tense instances, a change in the intentions of the subject is explicitly expressed, as in (22):

(22) Senator Thruston Morton *was thinking of* entering the convention as a favorite son, but decided against it (…) (*Time*; 1964/06/12)

For quotatives, the use of the progressive is "puzzling", in the words of Biber *et al.* (1999: 475), but their suggestion that the progressive "conveys a more vivid imagery and a greater sense of involvement" goes some way towards explaining its use. It is natural that a form conveying such features is more common in informal, interpersonal contexts, and therefore that this use is increasing in a colloquializing *Time Magazine*. In the interpretative progressive in (21), the progressive adds the speaker's subjective interpretation of a situation, and thus the subjectification of meaning is a further important factor here (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 91).[45] Subjectification of meaning is also relevant with THINK referring to inert cognition. There was no indication of the progressive being used with this meaning in the *Time* material, but in the Spoken subcorpus from COCA and LSAC there are quite a few instances.[46] This is exemplified in (23) and (24) where the progressive is used as a hedged variant of *I think*. The co-occurrence of other hedges (*just*, *maybe*, *a little bit*) in (23) particularly illustrates the interpersonal features.

(23) I just have a comment. *I'm thinking* that maybe the Republicans are blowing this up a little bit (…) (COCA; Spoken; 1996)
(24) Now *I'm thinking* I should go through all the stuff that I uh, packed and streamline everything. (LSAC; 131001)

Progressive THINK thus serves to express a number of subjective meanings such as intensification, tentativeness and politeness. It is noteworthy that the verb increasing most rapidly in the material has a number of functions which are not solely aspectual. The development of this verb thus provides further evidence that the progressive is becoming less aspectual in Present-Day English.

Some notable trends were also found with HOPE, in this case relating to complementation patterns. The numbers are presented in Table 3 and Figure 9 contains a graphic representation of the changes for the three most frequent patterns. Although numbers are small, the size of the *Time* corpus pays off allowing us to distinguish a significant change over time. Note also that the progressive with HOPE typically expresses a greater degree of

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[43] 'Intend' progressives are in competition with the simple form in the past tense ((22a) *Thruston Morton thought of entering the convention…*), but in the present tense there appears to be no scope for variation (**I think of joining a cult…*). The habitual or stative interpretation of *I think* makes this an unlikely alternative.

[44] It should be pointed out that *I'm thinking* in (19) is followed by the simple form *want*. It is possible that this is a reflection of the overall much lower likelihood of WANT occurring in the progressive than THINK.

[45] For an instructive example of the diachronic of subjective (interpretative) progressives, see Kranich 2009.

[46] From a random sample of 100 instances of BE *thinking* from LSAC, as many as 10 could be classified as belonging to this category. The distribution among the other instances suggests fairly similar distributions in speech as in *Time* in the 2000s, apart from slightly more quotatives at the expense of 'intend': 'cogitate' 54 tokens, 'intend' 17, quotative 18 and interpretative 1.

tentativeness than the simple form (e.g., *I'm hoping we can still find a way to celebrate* (*Time*; 2005/04/18) instead of *I hope …*).

Table 3. Complementation patterns of progressive HOPE in the *Time* corpus (pmw; raw frequencies in brackets)

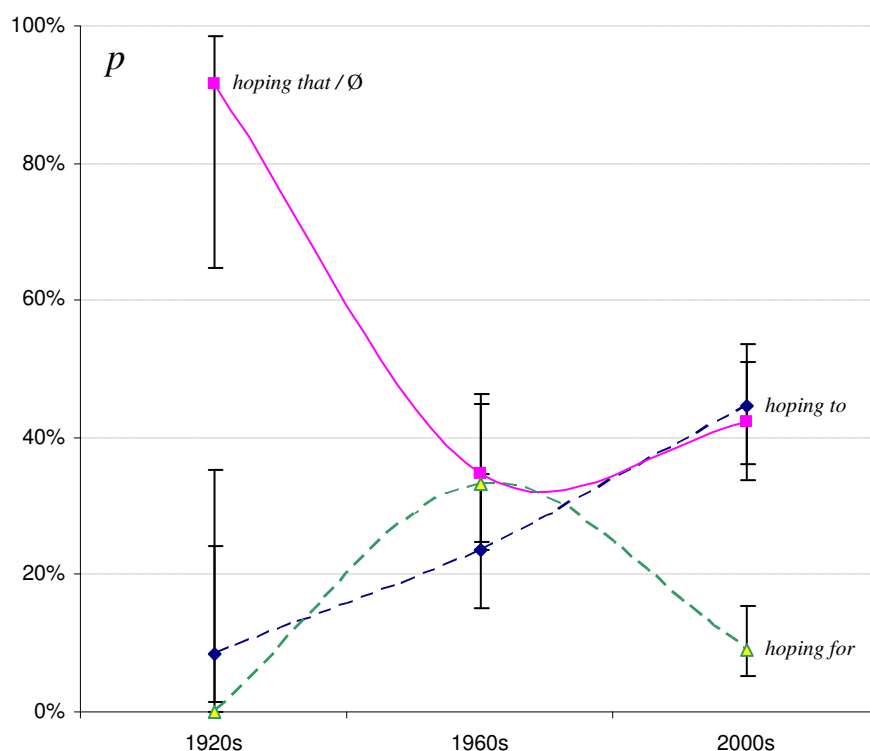|	1920s	1960s	2000s
hoping to	0.1 (1)	1.1 (17)	8.4 (54)
hoping that / Ø	1.5 (11)	1.6 (25)	8.0 (51)
hoping for	0	1.5 (24)	1.9 (11)
other	0	0.4 (6)	0.8 (5)
Total	1.6 (12)	4.5 (72)	19.1 (122)

Figure 9. Changes in the complementation patterns of progressive HOPE in the *Time* corpus (as a proportion of progressive uses), with 95% Wilson error bars.

Figure 9 illustrates how HOPE from being mainly used with *that / Ø* complementation now has developed a plurality of complementation patterns. Significant proportional shifts occur in the increase in *to*-complementation between the 1960s (24% of the tokens) and 2000s (44%), and in the decrease between in *for*-complementation between the 1960s (33%) and 2000s (11%) ($p \leq 0.05$).[47] *To*-complementation, which expresses the future intentions and hopes of the subject (e.g., *"I was hoping to turn it over to Jackie,"* he demurred. (*Time*; 2000/12/25)), is similar to a number of private verbs which are either increasing in frequency and/or

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[47] In speech from LSAC, however, *hoping to* only accounts for 16% of the tokens (34 of 219), and only reaches 6.8 pmw. Instead, *hoping that / Ø* (169 tokens; 33.8 pmw) is five times more common. It is possible that the lower frequency of *hoping to* in speech is partly due to even more colloquial progressives taking over some of its functions. For example, *wanting to*, which only occurs 3 times in the *Time* corpus in the 2000s (0.5 pmw) as compared to 44 times (8.8 pmw) in LSAC, is sometimes used in similar contexts to *hoping to* (*Yeah, yeah and that's exactly what I was wanting to do* (LSAC 138301)). Leech *et al.* (2009: 199–201) show that WANT (TO) is increasing greatly in frequency in Present-Day English.

typically occur in speech (*hoping to*, *thinking about/of V-ing* ('intend'), *expecting to* (see below), *intending to*, *wishing for/that* and *wanting to*). Because the future by necessity is connected with a degree of uncertainty, the tentative progressive allows speakers a more hedged way of expressing future wishes and intentions. As argued elsewhere in this chapter, this change is probably a result of speakers increasingly responding to a social pressure to express themselves in more tactful ways.

The increases for the other private verbs lend themselves less easily to such specific explanations, but rather seem to be due to the generalization of the progressive. The most common meaning of progressive FEEL, the expression of a mental state, emotion or attitude, as in *The Americans are feeling a hell of a lot of frustration* (*Time*; 2002/04/08), accounts for most of the increase. The almost ten-fold increase in this meaning[48] appears to be caused by an overall generalization of the progressive (apart from a potential but difficult-to-prove tendency to describe emotions in a more intensive way). The emotions described are typically transitory, and variation between the simple form and the progressive hardly expresses a discernible difference in meaning. This lack of a clear meaning distinction constitutes a bridging context where speakers readily switch from the simple form to the progressive, and this facilitates the generalization of the progressive with this particular verb.

For the increase in *expecting*, two separate minor tendencies were identified. One is that the collocation EXPECT *a child/baby*, a phrase which almost exclusively occurs in the progressive, has become more frequent, increasing from 0.5 to 2.0 and 2.5 instances per million words over the period. The second reason is a minor growth from 0.1 to 0.4 and 1.4 instances per million with the future-oriented *expecting to* (*They are expecting to be blasted out of their seats* (*Time*; 1969/10/31)). The spread of progressive WONDER, a frequent alternative already in the 1920s, is not due to an increase in first-person indirect requests and questions (*I'm wondering whether the public is really interested* (*Time*; 1929/08/26)), but instead a fairly large part of the increase comes from *wh*-complementations with third-person subjects (*Scientists are wondering what the hell is going on* (*Time*; 2001/12/07)). This change therefore also appears to stem from an across-the-board generalization of the progressive.

This exploration of private verbs in *Time Magazine* indicates a notable increase in progressives. In this section, similar factors are affecting the increase as with the BE *being* ADJECTIVE construction: subjectification, democratization, colloquialization and generalization. Progressives with private verbs convey a number of subjective meaning components such as intensification, tentativeness and politeness, and the increase of such meanings can be argued to be a prime example of subjectification. Furthermore, as argued above, the growth of more tentative and polite speech habits is grounded in the democratization of society, and due to the colloquialization of the writing in *Time Magazine*, these uses are becoming increasingly frequent in the written mode. The changes in genre conventions produced by the democratization and colloquialization of writing habits thus occur in tandem with the functional change of subjectification. However, in spite of the changing genre conventions and the progressive spreading to the more marginally progressive verbs, the results show that the biggest change is seen in the core areas of meaning of the verbs which already frequently take the progressive. This indicates that the generalization of the progressive, a functional change like the subjectification of meaning, is a crucial factor behind its increasing use.

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[48] This meaning increases from 1.2 pmw (9 tokens) in the 1920s to 3.4 (54 tokens) in the 1960s and 11.9 (76 tokens) in the 2000s. Other meanings, such as 'bodily sensations' (e.g. *Dick Cheney is feeling "just great" after surgery* (*Time*; 2001/03/16)), have only increased little.

4. Concluding discussion

All areas investigated in *Time Magazine* showed increasing use of the progressive. The question is to what extent the findings from a single-genre corpus are generalizable. Millar (2009: 216) points out that both the *Time* corpus and the Brown family of corpora have their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to their ability to represent the language, or even the genre of news writing, as a whole. The Brown/Frown data for news is sampled from a large variety of sources, but is very limited in size. The findings from *Time Magazine*, on the other hand, are very robust because of the size, but only a single source is used. Because of this restriction, results from *Time Magazine* need to be supported by findings from other corpora. In the present case, the increase with a restricted set of verbs in *Time Magazine* is corroborated by Leech *et al.*'s (2009) overall findings for the progressive in written twentieth-century AmE in Brown/Frown and by the general increase in the progressive as shown in a wide range of previous studies. Furthermore, the additional searches in COCA and LSAC provided indirect support for this increase since comparisons show that the progressive is typical for informal, interpersonal text, and the writing in *Time Magazine* appears to be colloquializing. It can therefore be argued that the changes in the *Time* material at least in this case are a fairly accurate representation of the patterns seen in the language as a whole. If the results are affected by changes in the house style of *Time Magazine*, then such changes are just "a belated reflection of actual change in community preferences", as Mair (2006: 190) puts it.

The different verb groups that have been sampled are changing at different rates: the growth of the progressive is accelerating with private verbs, while the increase with BE *being* ADJECTIVE seems to be slowing down in *Time Magazine*. The considerably higher frequency with which the latter construction occurs in speech is due to the interpersonal functions it fulfils in face-to-face interaction. It is uncertain whether these functions occur frequently enough in magazines to warrant a further marked increase (unless the proportion of spoken quotations keeps increasing), so further studies are needed to determine if this construction is reaching a saturation point in this genre.

The different rates of change for different verbs illustrate that, ideally, lexical factors should be taken into account in studies of change, and, furthermore, that more than two data points should be used in diachronic studies, as stressed by Millar (2009: 216). The size and the time depth of the *Time* corpus allow lexical comparisons across the years and explorations of the spread of a pattern to new members. The spread of progressives to "marginal" progressives can be seen as the end stages of the typical S-curve seen in lexical diffusion. However, lexical diffusion and the spread to new meanings (such as quotative THINK) only to a minor extent have a bearing on the overall increase of the progressive (which, as noted above, has reached around 3,500 tokens pmw in *Time Magazine* in the 2000s). The main factors behind the increase seem to be the sociostylistic factors of colloquialization and democratization, and the systemic processes of subjectification and generalization (cf. Smith and Leech this volume).

Firstly, the progressive is more frequent in speech-like genres and the increase in the progressive in *Time Magazine* coincides with increasing colloquialization. Thus, the results support Leech *et al.*'s (2009) hypothesis that colloquialization affects the growth of the progressive in writing.

Secondly, subjectification (Traugott and Dasher 2002) affects the growing use of the progressive. The progressive with the verbs in this study often expresses subjective attitudes such as politeness and hedging, as opposed to being solely aspectual. Although subjectification and colloquialization occur on different levels, the former being a semantic change and the latter a stylistic change in writing habits, it can be argued that subjectification

in this case builds on colloquialization, since subjective attitudes are mostly expressed in interpersonal, speech-like genres, and since writing habits are becoming more like spoken language, more subjective uses of progressives appear more frequently in writing. While Collins (2009: 120–1) argues that factors such as the expression of subjective attitudes and politeness have probably affected the general increase in the progressive, Leech *et al.* (2009: 142) argue that these uses have only had a marginal effect.[49] Judging from the numbers in *Time Magazine* where the verbs in the present study perhaps cover 5% of all progressives in the 2000s, the influence of this feature still appears to have a rather marginal effect on general usage in writing.

The third factor, democratization (discussed by Mair 2006: 185–7, Leech *et al.* 2009: 88 and Millar 2009: 209–14), is connected colloquialization. The progressive often expresses politeness and tentativeness with the verbs in this study, and more tactful and less authoritarian ways of expression can be argued to be an effect of changing norms in society towards less emphasis on power and social distance. Since this shift can be related to a tendency towards informality, Leech *et al.* (2009: 259) argue that democratization is inter-related with colloquialization.

The fourth and final factor is generalization. The increase of the progressive is only to a small extent caused by the extension to new verb types or meanings, and instead seems to occur in the 'core' areas where it is slowly becoming generalized as an after-effect of the centuries-old grammaticalization of the progressive (Leech *et al.* 2009: 238). The progressive is possibly losing some of its aspectual character in the process (Leech *et al.* 2009: 269), and this loss of meaning is inter-connected with the same phenomenon as subjectification, since there is some evidence in this chapter that subjective meanings appear to be taking over from aspectual ones. Because progressives are spreading from informal genres to more formal ones, it can be argued, in the words of Leech *et al.* (2009: 244), that "colloquialization builds on grammaticalization".

In order to explain such puzzling drifts in language where, once started, increases appear to be taking place under their own momentum, Leech *et al.* (2009: 269–70) adopt the hypothesis of increase begetting increase and decrease begetting decrease in language. The idea is that increasing frequency of a feature makes central choices in language more central (in the present case, e.g., progressive THINK meaning 'cogitate') while some peripheral choices become less peripheral (e.g., progressive WANT). As a result of this increase, frequent choices become more entrenched in speakers who in turn use them even more. Apart from this self-generating kind of language change, the present study indicates that the increase in the progressive is promoted by colloquialization, subjectification, democratization and generalization which feed into each other.

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[49] Interestingly, Kranich's (2008) seventeenth- and eighteenth-century data even suggests that subjective progressives (comprising the three groups progressives with ALWAYS-type adverbials, subjective progressives without ALWAYS-type adverbials (e.g. *she's so pert, her Tongue would have been running* (Kranich 2008: 248)) and interpretative progressives) may have been decreasing since Early Modern English times. That conclusion is based on a fairly low number of subjective progressives and therefore needs further empirical support.

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