VIEW[z]

VIENNA ENGLISH WORKING PAPERS

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

DEAR READERS,

As you might have noticed, this issue is a bit thinner than usual, and the hard copy might have reached your inbox a bit later than expected. This, however, should be viewed as a testament to the high standards of this journal, as it is not due to a categorical lack of submissions that this issue ultimately contains only two contributions. The point that we would like to make is, in other words, that the issue's brevity should not distract from, but rather should be seen to underline, the quality of those articles that do appear in it: *quality before quantity*, as the old adage goes, and we are confident that our two present contributions attest to exactly this sentiment.

First off, Nora Dorn presents a rich analysis of the progressive aspect in English as a Lingua Franca, reflecting the strong research tradition that exists at our department with regard to ELF. She extracts data from both the VOICE and the ICE-GB corpora to compare the quantitative distribution of its formal characteristics in English as a Lingua Franca and British English. Building on this initial formal analysis, the later part of her paper considers the functions the continuous fulfils in her ELF data. Drawing on Henry Widdowson's concept of the virtual language, the author suggests that all these various functions, both canonical and non-canonical, can be explained by recourse to an underlying semantic quality the progressive seems to possess at the level of the virtual language, which relates to the 'internal positioning' of the speaker with regard to the situation.

In the second contribution, Igor Pejic provides a critical examination of Critical Discourse Analysis. Though he is not the first to do so (his article, needless to say, contains a brief synopsis of the literature in this regard), the novelty of his article lies in the way he expands on the theoretical argument by providing empirical support. Specifically, the author attempts to expose the methodological shortcomings – as he sees them – in the framework of CDA by applying the very methodology he critiques to a news release by a well-known international corporation. His 'findings', because they are thoroughly counter-intuitive, point to a lack of rigor in CDA, he argues, since the results of his analysis clash with any common-sense conception of the ends of the organisation that originally disseminated the text. This demonstrates, the author posits, that CDA would benefit from a more rigorous methodological framework, something which would reduce the subjectivity of any textual analysis based on the approach.

We hope that the two current papers provide interesting food for thought, and, as always, would welcome any responses you might have, especially in the form of actual contributions. Based on our recent experience, the editorial board has decided that in the future – very much in line with the nature and purpose of working papers – articles will appear online as soon as they are ready to be published to ensure a quick turnaround and provide you with cutting-edge research. If you would like to receive an e-mail message whenever a new article has appeared on the web site, please write to us at views.anglistik@univie.ac.at (simply put 'newsletter-subscribe' in the subject line). Our plan is to continue to collect these articles into print volumes to appear towards the end of each calendar year.

THE EDITORS

The '–ing thing': Exploring the progressive in ELF

Nora Dorn, Vienna ∗

1. Introduction: the dynamic progressive

In recent years, English as a lingua franca (ELF) has developed "from an outlandish idea to a massive new research agenda" (Seidlhofer 2009: 37). Interest in this field is certainly increasing and the steadily growing body of books and articles that are being written, the compilation of the first ELF corpora, as well as the launch of the first ELF journal are witness to this development.

Studies on ELF cover a wide range of different aspects and one area of interest is how grammatical categories are variably realized in ELF interactions – one such category being the progressive.[1] What makes this grammatical category so interesting for ELF research is what recent studies concerned with the progressive in other uses of English, namely English as a native language (ENL), the New Englishes, as well as in learner English, have revealed.[2]

First of all, diachronic studies by Mair and Hundt (1995), Smith (2002) and Leech and Smith (2006) show that the progressive is used more frequently in ENL nowadays. Furthermore, it is also used in situations traditionally considered 'incompatible' with the progressive, namely with stative verbs and for expressing habits. This phenomenon is found in various

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[1]   Although a variety of different terms are used to refer to the combination of be and an *–ing* participle, in this paper I will only use the term 'progressive'.

[2]   For studies on the progressive in these uses of English see for instance Scheffer (1975), Joos (1964), Allen (1966), Levickij & Romanova (1997) and Römer (2005) for native speaker English, Baskaran (2004), Schmied (2006) and Collins (2008) for the New Englishes and Leńko-Szymańska (2007), Axelsson & Hahn (2001) and Eriksson (2008) for learner English.

ENL varieties as well as in different New Englishes (see for instance the *Varieties of English Multimedia Reference Tool* by Kortmann et al. 2004-7 or Platt, Weber and Ho 1984: 86). Similarly, studies on learner English report an 'overgeneralization' of the progressive (see for instance Eriksson 2008 for a detailed study of Swedish learners). What all this shows is that the progressive seems to be evolving – also in ENL, which is often taken as the yardstick for comparisons. The progressive is certainly a grammatical category which is active, dynamic and on the move. This makes researching it with regard to ELF especially intriguing.

However, to my knowledge, the only study concerned with the progressive in ELF is Ranta (2006). Ranta analyzed ELF data from the ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca in academic settings) corpus and also compared the results to native speaker data from MICASE (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English). In her study, Ranta (2006: 102-106) investigated the progressive from a quantitative point of view, and analyzed, for instance, the distribution of different tenses and the verbs used. The core part of her analysis is the issue of the "'extended' use" (Ranta 2006: 95) of the progressives. In this section, she classifies the progressives which do not express meanings as found in traditional grammars, both from ELFA and from MICASE. Ranta (2006: 112-113) concludes from her findings that the progressive could be used to put extra prominence on the verb to ensure understanding.

As Ranta's is the only study that deals with the progressive in ELF, I decided to conduct my own study on the subject with different ELF data. Ranta's (2006) study thus served as a starting point for my own analysis and some of my results are also compared to hers. However, as will be shown, I have decided to go my own way with regard to various aspects of analysis.

The present article,[3] then, reports on an empirical study that explores the use of the progressive in ELF, using authentic spoken data from VOICE (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English). The aim is to investigate whether this structure is central for ELF communication and how it is (or is being?) used. First, the data are presented and the issue of what can be counted as a progressive in ELF data is discussed. The data are then analyzed from both a qualitative and a quantitative point of view. In the quantitative analysis overall frequency, forms and verbs used are investigated. The results are compared to native speaker data from ICE-GB and also to the results of Ranta (2006). The analysis shows that the progressive is a relevant structure

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[3] This article is a condensed and adapted version of a more detailed account in Dorn (2011).

that is found in a variety of forms and is not used in a simplified way compared to native speaker data. In the qualitative analysis I show which functions the progressive fulfils in my data that are not found in ENL grammars, namely 'historic progressive', emphasis, frequent repetition and convergence. Moreover, it is shown that the progressive is a communicatively effective form.

2. The data

I used ELF data from VOICE, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, which was compiled at the University of Vienna. VOICE is a corpus of spoken ELF and comprises about 1,000,000 words. In the corpus five different domains, i.e. educational, leisure, professional business, professional organizational as well as professional research and science are distinguished and the data are classified with regard to ten different speech event types (VOICE-Homepage 2010). The ELF data captured in VOICE show a high degree of interactivity, as only interactive data can give "insights into how people actually employ ELF to talk to each other, […] how they generally co-construct discourse" (Seidlhofer 2010: 154-155).

For my study I focused on one speech event type from VOICE, namely 'conversation', which comprises roughly 160,000 words. This choice was mainly motivated by feasibility and comparability as I set out to compare the quantitative findings to native speaker data. For this, ICE-GB, the British part of the ICE-project, was selected as a part of it is comparable to my specific ELF data, viz. the so-called 'direct conversations' (i.e. S1A 001-090). Both sets of data occur face-to-face, are interactive and cover a wide range of topics. It should be stressed that the aim of the comparison with ENL data from ICE-GB is not to point out 'deficits' of ELF.

As already mentioned, the results of the quantitative analysis are also compared to Ranta's (2006) results from ELFA and MICASE. A comparison between the two sets of ELF data is possible, yet on a general level only. This is because my analysis is concerned with one speech event type, i.e. conversation, while Ranta deals with the domain of academic English as defined in ELFA across different speech event types. However, both sets of data are concerned with ELF that is spoken and mainly interactive. Likewise, the two sets of native speaker data can also be compared on a general level only, as the data from ICE-GB contains 'direct conversations', while MICASE contains texts from the domain of academic English.

3. Finding progressives in the data

As ICE-GB is fully parsed, finding the progressives in the data was straightforward, namely by using a fuzzy tree fragment that searches for verb phrases with the feature 'progressive'; this yielded 1,594 results.[4] Selecting data from VOICE, however, proved to be much more difficult.

As VOICE is currently neither POS-tagged nor parsed,[5] the query *ing* was used, which yielded 2,899 results.[6] Data selection is of course necessary as the query *ing* is very broad and many of the results were clearly not progressives but for example nouns or adjectives ending in –*ing*, gerunds or instances of *be going to* with future reference. These had to be manually excluded from the data. Therefore, for working with the data from VOICE I used the programme WordSmith Tools (version 4.0, Scott 2004) as it offers the possibility of excluding hits.

What made data selection especially complex is that, in spoken ELF reality, not all cases correspond to the clean and clear 'canonical' form[7] of progressives, i.e. *be* plus –*ing* participle, as it is found in ENL grammars. This is not to say that the canonical form is rare in the data; on the contrary, the majority of cases conform to this pattern. However, there is also a range of cases which could still be regarded as progressives when considering co-text and (as far as possible when working with corpus data) context, even though they do not occur in the canonical form.

But then what counts as a progressive for the purpose of studying it in ELF? One way of dealing with cases that do not occur in the canonical form would be to disregard them and exclude them from the analysis; this is what Ranta (2006) does in her study. However, spoken interactive language in general is often fragmented and in ELF, strict adherence to ENL forms is not always necessary for successful communication. Therefore, I take a less

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[4] It should be noted that for all searches so-called 'ignored material' was included. Ignored material is defined as "nonfluencies – repetitions, reformulations, and partial words" (ICECUP 3.1 Help 2006: Syntactic Parsing). When searching for progressives in the ELF data such phenomena were not disregarded; this is why 'ignored material' was chosen to be part of the searches in ICE-GB. The search yielded 1594 instances in total – 48 instances more than when only searching in the principal material.

[5] The VOICE team is currently working on POS-tagging the corpus. (Personal communication with the project team.)

[6] Instances of uncertain transcription which are marked with round brackets () in VOICE were treated just as the other text (VOICE Project 2007: 4).

[7] In ELF literature different terms are used to refer to ELF forms or functions that are also found in ENL (grammars) and those which are not. In this paper, the term 'canonical' will be used to refer to forms and functions found in ENL grammars and the term 'non-canonical' for those which are not.

restricted approach to progressives, because I consider this more appropriate and more interesting for spoken, interactive ELF data.

Of course, this also makes deciding what to include in the analysis and what not complex and challenging in some cases. A central complexity with regard to judging the status of a form ending in –*ing* is ellipsis, i.e. "the omission of elements otherwise considered required in a structure" (Carter & McCarthy 1995: 145). Even though ellipsis is concerned with missing elements, "in reality nothing is 'missing' from elliptical messages; they contain enough for the purposes of communication" (Carter & McCarthy 2006: 181). With regard to my data, ellipsis of the form of *be* (referred to as 'zero *be*') and that of *be* and subject ('zero subject and zero *be*') are central phenomena that make judging the status of a form ending in –*ing* difficult.

This difficulty of indentifying progressives is illustrated by the following examples. For determining the status of a form ending in –*ing* both co-text and context are considered; that VOICE contains whole speech events and provides contextual information is clearly an advantage for this process.

In the data there are cases in which it seems as if the speaker intended to produce a progressive but the auxiliary *be* is not there. The following utterance, for instance, contains such a case of zero *be*.[8] In this conversation there is some confusion about the number of years S1, who is from Korea, still has to study at university. The information and numbers S1 gives concerning her school and university education do not seem to match for S3, and only after some explanations S3 finally understands.

> 462   S3: oh okay
>
> 463   S1: @ <7> @ @ </7>
>
> 464   S3: <7>cos </7> i **calculating** your ye- years <8> (and) i am </8> little (.)
>
> 465   S1: <8> yeah </8>
>
> 466   S3: high school (1) this why i was (.) wondering (4) {soft background laughter}
>
> (Extract 1: VOICE 2009 LEcon8: 462-466)

In this case it is very likely that a progressive was intended (i.e. *i am calculating* or *i was calculating*) as this seems to describe what S3 was doing in the course of the stretch of conversation in question. Moreover, S3 produces a canonical progressive immediately after this utterance, yet with a

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8   It should be noted that I use the term 'zero be' even if other auxiliaries could also be omitted, such as have been. *Be* is, however, the central auxiliary needed for forming the progressive.

different verb (*I was wondering*). This shows that the speaker is capable of producing canonical progressives and also uses them.

The following extract contains a case of zero subject and zero *be* and it is very likely that this is a progressive.

> 519   S3: = you <@> don't <2> see </2></@> him @ @ @ (.)
>
> 520   S1: <2>hm </2>
>
> 521   S1: not **wearing** my glasses now
>
> (Extract 2: VOICE 2009 LEcon8: 519-521)

Here the underlying structure is probably *I am not wearing my glasses now* which is clear when considering the situational context: the speech event is a dinner table conversation (VOICE: LEcon8) and S1 is unable to see a certain person.

There are cases of zero subject and zero *be* which are, however, not as clear-cut as those described above because other options seem equally or even more likely. This applies to the following extract:

> 267   S2: <soft>well (then) yeah of course but </soft> you knowif they get a lots of enquiries like THIS . maybe they think ooph (.) **setting** up a service? (sends) to all the <spel> [org6] </spel> landline? (.)
>
> (Extract 3: VOICE 2009 LEcon575: 267)

In this case it is possible that *we are setting* or *we will be setting* was intended. However, other options seem to be more likely. The prepositions *about* or *of* could be inserted before *setting*, making it a noun. In this case *of* seems to be especially likely because of the sound *ooph* produced before *setting*, which might even be an intended *of*.

Finally, in a few cases of zero subject and zero *be* judging their status is complex because it is not quite clear what the form ending in *–ing* really refers to or what it should express. Consider for instance the progressive in the following extract:

> 460   S4: <8>that the </8> subject is is <9> of h:uge importance </9>
>
> 461   S2: <9><un>xx </un> the time is now </9> to act or something (1) <1> e:r </1>
>
> 462   S4: <1>er or </1> just (.) **trying** out <un> xxx </un> w-we have <un>x</un>(.) competition (.) e:r =
>
> 463   S3: = we can't ignore (.) <soft> @ @ @ </soft> =
>
> (Extract 4: VOICE 2009 EDcon521: 460-463)

Here *trying out* could refer to the preceding utterance and be a continuation of it, yet with a different structure. Then the utterance would read *or to just try*

out, i.e. parallel to *to act*. Maybe the speaker also intended to comment on what he was planning to say, as in *I'm just trying out*. Moreover, unintelligible speech is involved here – represented by x's in VOICE (VOICE Project 2007: 8) – which makes the status of the construction even more ambiguous.

As has been shown, the question of what counts as a progressive is complex to answer for spoken ELF data. For the purpose of my study I decided to resolve it in the following way: not only canonical, 'complete' progressives are included in the analyses. Rather, cases where due to a qualitative assessment of co-text and context I regard it as *most likely* that a progressive was intended are also included despite their 'incompleteness'. On the other hand, cases of words ending in *–ing* where other options seem more likely are not taken into account. Also, cases in which unintelligible speech is involved are excluded, because in these instances too much guesswork is necessary.

This decision is based on the nature of the data used, namely spoken, interactive ELF. I am aware that this selection is in some cases subjective, yet it allows me to also include non-canonical forms and I consider this important and appropriate with regard to my data. Based on this approach, the progressives in extracts one and two are included, while those in three and four are not. In total, out of the original 2,899 results returned by the query 1,037 progressives were identified in the data from VOICE.

4. Quantitative analysis: focus on forms

Having established which progressives are included in my analysis, the current section investigates these progressives in more detail, i.e. from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. For the quantitative analysis I investigated three aspects: overall frequency, form (i.e. occurrence with tense, voice and modals) and verbs used as *–ing* participles. However, for the analysis of forms and the analysis of verbs not all progressives could be considered.

4.1 Methodological remarks

For the analysis of *forms* each progressive in VOICE was manually analyzed. However, due to the approach I adopted, the data contain cases of zero *be*, where it is not possible to establish in which tense the progressive is used as there is no auxiliary. Despite this, it is in some cases relatively clear which form was meant, namely if there is a connection to a preceding form via *and*, *but*, *or*, an 'implied comma' (as in enumerations), or if the *–ing* participle is a

repetition of a preceding one. Progressives that fall into these categories were thus classified according to the form of the preceding auxiliary. Using this procedure, 990 of the 1,037 progressives in the VOICE data could be considered in the analysis of forms.

As concerns the ICE-GB data, it was discovered that 154 cases were not fully classified (i.e. with the features 'ing-participle' and 'progressive' or merely with 'progressive'). These instances were classified manually. If other features were present,[9] the mark-up of ICE-GB was generally followed. However, some indeterminate cases as well as some errors in the POS-tagging were identified and excluded. Thus, 1,583 progressives (out of the total of 1,594 hits) were considered for the analysis of forms.

Concerning the analysis of *verbs* used, in the ICE-GB data there is a range of cases which are marked as 'incomplete' because they do not contain an *-ing* participle. Additionally there are cases which are for some reason not marked as 'incomplete', although they likewise do not have an *–ing* participle. In some cases the *–ing* participle could be inferred: If an *–ing* participle uttered by the same speaker immediately follows the 'incomplete' structure, then this participle was taken into account and counted. Under these considerations, 1,556 *–ing* participles (out of the total of 1,594 hits) from ICE-GB were taken into account for the analysis of verbs used.

4.2 Results

As regards overall *frequency*, as already mentioned applying the criteria discussed in section 3 yielded 1,037 progressives in all conversations of VOICE (158,047 words in total). In ICE-GB 1,594 progressives were found in a total of 185,208 words. Normalizing this reveals that about 66 progressives are used per 10,000 words in VOICE and about 86 per 10,000 words in ICE-GB.[10] In VOICE progressives are thus used less frequently than in a comparable sample of native speaker English, yet they are not infrequent either. Interestingly, in Ranta's data, progressives were also more frequent in the native speaker corpus, viz. 41 progressives per 10,000 words in ELFA and 76 per 10,000 words in MICASE (Ranta 2006: 102). The difference between Ranta's and my own results is most likely due to the characteristics of the different data used and possibly also because I used a different approach to data selection.

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9   This refers to features found in the node of the verb that functions as the auxiliary.

10 Although only parts of the two corpora are part of the analysis, the subcorpora will nevertheless be referred to as VOICE and ICE-GB respectively.

The progressive is found in different *forms* in my data in terms of its combination with tense, modality and voice.[11] Table 1 shows in which forms progressives are used in VOICE and ICE-GB.

Form	VOICE		ICE-GB	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Present	742	74.95	1,035	65.38
Past	190	19.19	424	26.78
Present passive	8	0.81	21	1.33
Past passive	1	0.10	6	0.38
Present perfect	26	2.63	28	1.77
Past perfect	2	0.20	4	0.25
Future	11	1.11	21	1.33
Modal	10	1.01	34	2.15
Infinitive	-	-	10	0.63
Total	990	100	1,583	100

Table 1: Forms in VOICE and ICE-GB

What Table 1 shows is that in ELF there seems to be a strong preference for present and past progressive active. This trend is also found in the native speaker data from ICE-GB. This is, however, not surprising as also other corpus studies concerned with different Englishes reveal similar results (see for instance Collins 2008: 232, Smith 2002: 319).

However, there is some difference with regard to the frequency of these two tenses in the two sets of data, as in the ELF data the present progressive active is more frequent than in the native speaker data while the opposite is true for the past progressive active. For all other forms the numbers of occurrences and the percentages are rather low.

The table shows that in VOICE various forms are used, including more intricate constructions such as past perfect progressives. However, not all forms of the verbal paradigm that are possible are employed. For instance, passive voice only occurs with present and past progressive. However, more complex constructions are likewise absent from the ICE-GB data.

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[11] It should be noted that my category 'modals' includes the so-called central modals as well as semi-modals and other fixed expressions which function like modals, such as for instance *want to* (Biber et al. 1999: 483-484). The choice to group them in the same category is motivated by the fact that they have the same function and result in the same form, i.e. followed by *be* plus an *–ing* participle. *Will*, *shall* and *be going to* were classified as 'future', i.e. apart from modals, although they actually are modals. This was also done to make a comparison with Ranta's data (2006: 106) possible as in the rank order she gives for the occurrence with different tenses, 'future' is one category.

In fact, there is little difference with regard to the level of complexity of forms between VOICE and ICE-GB. The only category that is found in ICE-GB but not in VOICE is the infinitive, yet infinitive progressives are, with 0.63%, infrequent in ICE-GB. This is especially interesting as it suggests that when ELF speakers use the progressive, they do not 'reduce' the original, i.e. ENL. On the contrary, they seem to exploit the possibilities there are in ENL and thus do not use the progressive in a simplified way.

Ranta does not give any numbers with regard to progressive forms in MICASE and ELFA but the same rank order of tenses is found in the two corpora (Ranta 2006: 106) as is found in both VOICE and ICE-GB.

The analysis of the *verbs* used reveals an interesting difference. Tables 2 and 3 show the twenty most common verbs used as *–ing* participles in VOICE and ICE-GB respectively. However, it should be noted that this refers only to the basic verb form itself and is thus very general; phrasal verbs such as *look for*, which were also found in the data, were not taken into account separately.

VOICE

verb	No.	%
1. going	115	11.09%
2. doing	50	4.82%
3. saying	48	4.63%
4. looking	45	4.34%
5. coming	44	4.24%
6. talking	39	3.76%
7. taking	34	3.28%
8. trying	32	3.09%
9. working	30	2.89%
10. speaking	24	2.31%
11. studying	20	1.93%
12. getting	19	1.83%
13. thinking	18	1.74%
14. living	16	1.54%
15. playing	14	1.35%
16. standing	14	1.35%
17. walking	14	1.35%
18. staying	13	1.25%
19. being	11	1.06%
20. happening	10	0.96%

50% cut-off point (after row 13)

Table 2: Verbs used in VOICE

ICE-GB

verb	No.	%
1. doing	179	11.50%
2. going	152	9.77%
3. saying	93	5.98%
4. coming	66	4.24%
5. talking	64	4.11%
6. getting	51	3.28%
7. trying	47	3.02%
8. looking	46	2.96%
9. having	44	2.83%
10. working	42	2.70%
11. being	40	2.57%
12. thinking	36	2.31%
13. taking	26	1.67%
14. sitting	18	1.16%
15. telling	16	1.03%
16. using	16	1.03%
17. wondering	15	0.96%
18. reading	14	0.90%
19. wearing	14	0.90%
20. asking	13	0.84%

50% cut-off point (after row 10)

Table 3: Verbs used in ICE-GB

As the tables illustrate, in VOICE 13 verbs account for half of all forms, whereas it is only ten forms in ICE-GB. This makes the distribution over

different verbs in VOICE wider than in ICE-GB and indicates that progressives might be, as Ranta (2006: 103) remarks in reference to her data, "used more freely or in more diverse contexts" in ELF. Ranta (2006: 103) likewise found a difference with regard to the number of verbs making up 50% of all progressives, i.e. 16 verbs in ELFA and 12 verbs in MICASE.

Although the frequency of the verbs used surely also depends on the topics of the interactions, it is interesting to note that the difference concerning the verb *doing* is most marked: it is much more frequent in ICE-GB. This seems to support the argument of the wider distribution, as *doing* is a very general verb. These findings raise the question whether ELF speakers use the progressive to express more meanings than native speakers do. This issue will be investigated in the following sections.

5. Qualitative analysis: Focus on functions

In the qualitative part of my study I focus on what the progressives in the ELF data may express, or more precisely, on the underlying functions the progressives can have. Moreover, their communicative effectiveness is investigated.

5.1 Methodology

In my analysis I took a different approach than the one Ranta used in her study. Ranta (2006: 106) essentially distinguishes between progressives which "[fall] into the typical categories of use for the progressive described in traditional grammars" and those which do not. I decided not to go about it this way for the following reasons: First of all, it is well-nigh impossible in practice to distinguish between 'correct' progressives, i.e. those in line with ENL rules, and those which are not since apart from very prototypical cases, there is always room for interpretation and counter-evidence can be found.[12] More importantly, I argue that it is also not *necessary* to make this distinction with regard to ELF data. This is because the criterion of correctness is not as relevant for ELF as it is for instance for studies concerned with learner English. I suggest that for ELF a more global approach is appropriate: looking at what the progressive might express when used by ELF speakers, i.e. the functions it has – and also whether the progressive is communicatively effective in ELF communication or not.

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[12] For a detailed discussion of this and examples from VOICE see Dorn (2011: 67-71)

As concerns the functions of the progressive, some of the ways in which the progressive is used have already been well-researched: the meanings or functions of the progressive found in native speaker English. The progressive is a complex and controversial category in ENL grammars and there is considerable disagreement concerning its exact usage. Various accounts of progressive meaning exist, which identify different functions and attribute varying importance to them. However, some functions feature frequently in different accounts of the progressive and thus seem to be widely accepted aspects of the meaning of this form.

I identify three functions as central for the progressive in ENL which I refer to as 'canonical' functions. These are 'expressing a situation as in progress', '(limited) duration' and 'future reference'. As they are frequently found in the literature on the progressive (see for instance Quirk et al. 1985: 197-198 or Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 162-172), it is also appropriate to call them 'canonical'. Moreover, as grammars of native speaker English today are based on or complied with the help of corpora of actually occurring language data (including for instance Huddleston & Pullum 2002, Biber et al. 1999 or Carter & McCarthy 2006), they can be assumed to reflect actual ENL use.

Many progressives in my data express canonical functions, but there are also cases which express what I call non-canonical functions. It should be stressed that this distinction is based on canonicalness only, and is strictly non-evaluative. In the following section I will focus on the non-canonical functions of the progressive and present four that emerge for me from the data. It should be stressed that they are by no means mutually exclusive; on the contrary, more than one function may be found in a given example. Furthermore, they can also overlap with canonical functions. This is why I do not give numbers regarding the individual functions: there is so much overlap that it is impossible to classify the functions in discrete categories in a satisfactory way. Nevertheless, the functions I identify occur with different frequencies and, moreover, some of them emerge more clearly than others from the data. The functions are ordered starting with those that are found more often and would appear to be most prominent.

5.2 Results

5.2.1 Historic progressive

One function found in my data is what I call the 'historic progressive'. In these cases, the progressive has the effect of making the utterance livelier, more vivid and also more immediate. What is being described by means of

the progressive seems to be happening at the moment of speaking – yet not in reality, but in the mind's eye of the listener. The effect is that a mental picture of the situation is given instead of a real one.

Interestingly, this function has been alluded to by Potter (1969: 120) with regard to ENL, who speculates that the progressive is becoming more frequent because "people desire […] to make what they say (are saying) more lively and vivid" (Potter 1969: 120). So this function is mentioned in literature on ENL use, yet it is not recognized, i.e. considered canonical. Moreover, the use of the progressive in such a way is similar to the 'historic present', hence the name of the function. The term 'historic present' describes the use of the present tense simple to refer to the past (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 130) which has the effect of "produc[ing] a more vivid description" (Biber et al. 1999: 454).

The following example illustrates the function of the historic progressive. The speakers are talking about and drinking mulled wine, which is a drink made of hot wine and spices and traditionally drunk in Austria in the winter. The Argentine and Spanish participants are not sure they like this drink.

> 36 S4: but that's special from austria.{parallel conversation between S3 and S2 starts} that's the reason why we brought it today. (1) {parallel conversation ends} now <6> you have </6><loud> you   have to imagine now </loud> =
>
> 37 S7: <6>it's er </6>
>
> 38 S7: = (maybe he's) good in er in er (.) up in the mountain
>
> 39 S4: [S7] er you have to imagine now you are on the Christmas market (.) snow **is falling** (.) {parallel conversation between S3 and S2 starts} it's COld (.) you **are standing** there <7> with a hand like a <un>x </un></7>
>
> 40 S7: <7>well e:r </7>
>
> 41 S6: it's (hot) and (.)
>
> 42 S4: THEN it's really lovely
>
> (Extract 5: VOICE 2009 LEcon351: 36-42)

S4 is describing why mulled wine is popular and in which situation drinking it is especially pleasant. By using the progressive a picture of a certain situation is painted in the mind's eye of the listeners and what is being described (so to speak) becomes livelier. The use of the verb *imagine* at the beginning of the extract of course enhances this function.

In the following extracts there is, however, no such introduction and the examples also illustrate the historic progressive in a stretch of conversation where more progressives are used consecutively. The speaker S5, an exchange student, thinks that there is not much of a 'social environment' at

his university. He illustrates this by describing what the students do, using progressives.

159 S5: = because (.) er in MY university i don't know: what's about yours? (.) there is no place to sit and (.) talk to (.) other persons in my <12> university </12>

160 S2: <12>oh:</12> there's no social =

161 S5: = there's no there's <13> no so- social </13> environment yeah (.)

162 S2: <13>hm:</13>

163 S5: everybody'**s coming** to school university (1) **taking** courses and after (.) that **going** to (.) er: their home. (.)

164 S2: mhm. (.)

165 S5: there is no social environment no (1) c- but the er city is very good. (.) er the transportation and the (.) everywhere is green (1) i like it (.)

(Extract 6: VOICE 2009 EDcon250: 159-165)

The use of the progressive makes the actions appear more vivid and illustrates that there is not much contact between students.

5.2.2 Adding emphasis

Another function that emerges from the data is added emphasis. Emphasis is certainly an issue in ELF speech. Dewey (2007: 339-342), for instance, identifies 'enhancing prominence' as a central function of the use of the definite article in ELF. That the progressive has the function of adding emphasis is, however, not surprising, simply because of its formal characteristics: the progressive is marked and more prominent compared to the simple form because it is longer and consists of two parts. Ranta (2006: 112), too, draws attention to this in reference to the communicative value of the progressive, which "makes the verb stand out, so to speak, and draws the interlocutor's attention as a 'heavier' periphrastic structure" (Ranta 2006: 112, original emphasis). It thus acts like a kind of 'framing device' as it 'frames' the lexical verb providing semantic focus (Widdowson p.c.). It is interesting to note that the function of added emphasis is also mentioned in the literature on the progressive in ENL, notably by Scheffer (1975: 40). However, like the historic progressive, this function is not canonical.

The idea of added emphasis is further supported by the fact that many common English verbs are monosyllabic and thus rather ephemeral and not perceptually salient. The use of the progressive could therefore be regarded as a feature that signals verbiness. (Seidlhofer p.c.) Interestingly, looking at the

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twenty most frequent verbs used as –*ing* participles in VOICE (see Table 2 above) shows that all but two (*study* and *happen*) are monosyllabic.

With regard to the data from VOICE, I see the function of adding emphasis as noticeable most clearly in situations where the speaker is giving a piece of information that stands in contrast with another piece of information, usually with what has just been said. The following extract contains an example of this. In this stretch of conversation, the speakers are trying to work out the name of a Maltese singer S3 had seen the other day.

587   S3: oh i have to tell you i saw your erm (.) yesterday i was at a jazz concert

588   S2: yes?

589   S3: and i there was a very famous singer (.) e:rm

590   S2: maltese singer?

591   S3: yes maltese

592   S2: claudette <2> patch?</2>

593   S1: <2>clau</2>dette patch? cos she <3> sings yes </3>

594   S3: <3>no </3> no

595   S2: no?

596   S3: some er it'**s beginning** with a with an <spel> h </spel> (.) erm ha ha ha (1) erm (2) <4> a </4> BLOND woman

597   S1: <4>ha ha </4>

(Extract 7: VOICE 2009 LEcon329: 587-597)

S3 cannot remember the singer's name and the others are trying to help her. S2 then makes a suggestion, namely *Claudette Patch*, yet S3 is referring to somebody else and replies *no no* and that the name of the person *is beginning with a with an h*. S3 thus gives an additional piece of information to solve the matter, and this new hint contrasts with the suggestion by S2, *Claudette Patch*, as this artist's name begins with the letter P. The progressive used, i.e. *it's beginning*, gives extra prominence to this piece of information – that the name begins with an H – which the speaker perceives as central and in fact it is crucial for the further search for the correct name. Interestingly, in the same utterance, S3 gives another piece of important information, namely that the woman is blond. This piece of information is emphasized by stressing the word 'blond', so emphasis seems to be realized in two different ways in the utterance.

Another case of added emphasis by giving contrasting information is found in the following example. Here, the speakers are talking about university systems in different countries.

811   S2: you pay for state universities?

812   S4: no <7> no </7>

813   S2: <7>also </7> no. (.) hm: (.)

814   S4: er this: is er: (1) i choose this university because e:rm i mean i: wanted to go er on: state university? (.) i was taken o:n erm (1) external? (.) er: part (.) of studies because er we've got it divided into internal and external (.) internal that means tha:t you **are attending** school every day (.) er and external that mean that (.) er (1) you go to school just er once in the MONTH (1)

(Extract 8: VOICE 2009 EDcon250: 811-814)

In this stretch of conversation a progressives is used to define 'internal', namely *attending school every day*. What is interesting in this example is that for defining the other term the simple form is used and the word *month* is stressed. Thus, in this extract there is a contrast between two definitions, and emphasis can again be seen as realized in two different ways: by means of stressing a word and by means of the progressive.

5.2.3 Expressing frequent repetition

In my data, the progressive is clearly also used to express that a certain situation frequently recurs. Repetition is mentioned in the literature as a special interpretation of verbs like e.g. *knock* or *nod* which as *knocking* and *nodding* refer to a repeated number of knocks or nods happening immediately after each other (see, for instance, Leech 2005: 24). The kind of repetition found in my data is, however, not a case of short actions, i.e. separate punctual events that happen immediately after each other. By repetition I mean here that the progressive is used in the data to refer to situations, i.e. continuous states of affairs that happen frequently again and again.

In the following extract, taken from a conversation about living in Malta, a progressive expresses a frequently repeating situation. The conversation takes place in Malta and S3 is talking about a friend.

271   S3: he's been here for twelve ear- years? a:nd er his family (.) and they they are i i told you already (.) they **are extending** e:r their (.) erm permits

272   S4: mhm

273   S3: each and every year. (.) and in the beginning they thought we are staying here for lon- only one year (.) two years and then it was (.) each and every year the same (.) so they really didn't know (.) otherwise (1) everyone would have learned (.) er <3> maltese </3>

(Extract 9: VOICE 2009 LEcon329: 271-273)

S3 uses the phrase *they are extending their permits each and every year*. This has been happening every year up to now, for twelve years to be precise. The act of extending the permits is thus regularly repeated.

5.2.4 Converging to someone's speech

Another phenomenon found in the data is convergence, i.e. adapting one's speech to that of another speaker on various levels (Giles & Coupland 1991: 62-67). With regard to progressives, convergence means that a speaker uses one or more progressives and another speaker accommodates to this by using progressives, too. It should be noted that this function is different from the preceding three as it is second person orientated (or interpersonal), expressing the positioning of one speaker towards another speaker.

Interestingly, as for instance Cogo and Dewey (2006: 70-73) show, convergent accommodation strategies play an important role in ELF communication. Behaviours of convergence enhance efficiency in communication and can signal agreement with others (Cogo & Dewey 2006: 70).

Convergence with regard to the progressive is also a function found in VOICE, yet it is not particularly frequent. The most interesting example of convergence in the data is found in the following extracts, and stretches over many lines of conversation. For reasons of space only the core part of it can be presented here. The extracts are taken from a conversation concerned with different traditions. At the beginning of the extract S6 is explaining what the so-called 'Sternsinger', carollers at Epiphany, are.

193 S6: at the <9> sixth of january we have </9> (1)

194 S3: <L1ger><9>die sternsinger sind eine imitation </9> von den heiligen <10> drei koenigen </10> {the carollers are an imitation of the three kings} </L1ger>

195 S6: <10>yeah those </10> people who **are walking** around and **imitating** as they would be the =

196 S7: = er and on the sixth of january <2> is the:</2><3> the kings</3>

197 S1: <2>three kings </2>

198 S6: <3>the three kings </3> yeah? =

199 S1: = the three kings. that's <4> looking for </4>

200 S7: <4>three kings </4>

201 S6: <4>and they **are** </4> **singing** =

202 S5: = but =

203 S6: = christmas carols and something <11> like that </11>

204   S5: <11>what <un> xx </un></11>

205   S3: and collect <6> all the </6>

206   S6: <6>and they **are** </6> **walking** from door to door and <7> you have to give them </7> some (.)

207   S5: <7>what's what's </7>

208   S6: <1>cents? some <L1ger> groschen @@ schillinge {penny shilling}

(Extract 10: VOICE 2009 LEcon351: 193-208)

As can be seen in this extract, S6 clearly makes heavy use of progressives when explaining who the 'Sternsinger' are. Only a few lines later, the conversation turns to 'Nikolaus' and the 'Krampus', again traditional figures. This time, S5 explains who these figures are and what they do – using progressives.

246   S5: no a <L1ger> krampus {devil-like creature accompanying st. nicholas} </L1ger> is erm (.) it**'s coming** with the <L1ger> nikolaus? {st nicholas} </L1ger> (1) {spanish conversation goes on}

247   S6: @ @

248   S5: and then there is the mother outside talking with the n- <un> xx xx xx </un> (3) {parallel conversations in spanish continue} and then either the <L1ger> nikolaus {st nicholas} </L1ger> **is coming** into the living room

249   S4: they look awful

250   S5: no the <L1ger> nikolaus {st nicholas} </L1ger> **is looking** very <7> nice </7>

251   S4: <7><L1ger>na {no} </L1ger> the </7> (.) <L1ger> krampus {devil-like creature accompanying st. nicholas} </L1ger>

252   S5: the <L1ger> krampus? {devil-like creature accompanying st. nicholas} </L1ger> (.) <8> the </8><L1ger> krampus {devil-like creature accompanying st. nicholas} </L1ger> has these (.)

253   S3: <8><L1ger>ich glaub der {i think the} </L1ger></8>

254   S5: wooden sticks in her in his hand and (.) <1> if </1>

255   S6: <1>he**'s hurting** </1> you all the time =

(Extract 11: VOICE 2009 LEcon351: 246-255)

Thus, in this conversation, the progressive has successfully been established by S6 as a way of talking about traditions and S5 has clearly accommodated to this mode of speaking.

5.2.5 Communicative effectiveness of the progressives

As has been shown, the progressive can have a range of functions when used in ELF. But is this structure communicatively effective? Communicative effectiveness is particularly essential for ELF communication. As Hülmbauer (2007: 8) puts it, in ELF "[t]he focus is clearly on understanding, with mutual intelligibility being, by definition, the most important criterion in lingua franca communication." Therefore, the question arises in how far the progressive is communicatively effective in ELF. The issue of communication problems has already been dealt with in ELF research (see, for instance, Meierkord 1996, House 1999, Mauranen 2006, Pitzl 2010) and interestingly, generally few instances were found (e.g. Pitzl 2010: 26-27).

In order to investigate the communicative effectiveness of the progressive, I looked at progressives in context and tried to establish whether they caused communication problems or not. As a basis I used, like Pitzl (2010), a model by Vasseur, Broeder & Roberts (1996: 77) in which different ways of signalling non-understanding are arranged on a continuum from indirect 'symptoms' to explicit 'signals', focusing on more explicit signals.

The analysis shows that some progressives were involved in cases of non-understanding. However, in none of the cases could the progressive be identified as the *trigger* of a non-understanding. Consider for instance the following example in which the speaker is talking about the floods in Venice.

> 34 S1: i look to people (.) but i liked (.) i i look to (.) i look at people (.) who are walking without shoes in this (.) water and i <ono> mmm: </ono> (1)
>
> 35 S2: but those are only the tourists <1> who </1> do <@> that right?</@>
>
> 36 S1: <1>yes </1>
>
> 37 S1: yes (.)
>
> 38 S2: so **are** they **bothering** you? (.)
>
> 39 S1: sorry?
>
> 40 S2: **are** they (.) er **disturbing** you? (.) the tourists (.)
>
> 41 S1: no (.) no no no (.) it's e:r (.) the only (.) thing to do is to (.) erm (.) to walk er in e::r (.) to go in places different from tourist and <2> (to choose as i said) </2> to to choose different ways (as each match) <un> x </un> it's not a problem er (.)
>
> 42 S2: <2>mhm </2>
>
> (Extract 12: VOICE 2009 LEcon405: 34-42)

In this case, there is an explicit signal of non-understanding in reaction to an utterance with a progressive, namely *sorry*. To resolve it, S2 reformulates the

question by selecting a different verb, but still uses the progressive. Moreover, *the tourists* is added to clarify who the pronoun *they* refers to. Thus, in this case the problem clearly lay in the verb used and possibly in unclear reference, not in the use of the progressive.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Although the results of this study are of course limited to the particular set of data used, they give some interesting insights into the use of progressives in ELF. First of all, it has been argued that dealing with the progressive in interactive, spoken ELF data is methodologically challenging, and requires that one adopts a more open approach appropriate to the nature of the data. The findings of my study demonstrate that the progressive is not a minor phenomenon and certainly plays a role in ELF communication. It is found in a variety of forms and shows a similar level of complexity as the native speaker data from ICE-GB. However, in the ELF data the distribution of the progressives over different verbs is wider than in the native speaker data, a tendency also identified by Ranta (2006).

As regards the functions of the progressive, in my data the progressive is also used to express some functions not found in ENL grammars – though interestingly, some are reported as present in ENL contexts of use, namely the 'historic progressive' and emphasis. It is interesting to note that two functions that I found have also been identified by other researchers as important for ELF interactions, namely emphasis (see for instance Dewey 2007: 339-342) and convergence (see for instance Cogo and Dewey 2006: 70-73). This study thus adds some weight to the assumption that these strategies are important for ELF interactions – and shows that they can also be expressed by means of the progressive.

The functions of the progressive that I found in my ELF data can be accounted for by Widdowson's concept of the virtual language. Virtual language is based on the idea that in language there is an "underlying virtual resource" (Widdowson 1997: 146) which can be actualized in different ways. This means that "[a]ll uses of language [...] are actual realizations of the virtual language – exploitations of the underlying system" (Seidlhofer 2011: 119). However, some of these realizations are considered conventional or canonical while others are not, but these are still possible in principle. (Widdowson 2003: 48)

With regard to 'English', virtual language means that there is an underlying resource, a 'virtual English' so to speak, that speakers make use of. Whether ELF or ENL, 'virtual English' is the underlying common

resource that is actualized in different ways. (Seidlhofer 2011: 111) In this sense, "[i]t [i.e. ENL] represents what has been encoded, but not what *can* be" (Seidlhofer 2011: 117, original emphasis) and so in ELF we can find new, hitherto uncodified ways of how the underlying semantics of the virtual language can be actualized.

In the case of the progressive, this means that all functions of the progressive are realizations of an underlying virtual category of meaning. If aspect is defined as "a matter of the speaker's viewpoint or perspective on a situation" (Brinton 1988: 3), then "[t]he progressive takes an internal view, looking at it from the inside, as it were, as something ongoing, in progress" (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 117). One could thus say that when using the progressive, the speaker positions him- or herself in a way that is not removed from, but close to the situation described. The underlying category of meaning could then be the internal positioning the speaker takes with regard to the situation.

The functions of the progressive found in ENL grammars are then the actualizations which are conventional, or as I refer to them, canonical, while some of those found in my ELF data are not. Therefore, I argue that what is ELF-specific with regard to the progressive is that the speakers are aware of the underlying semantics, but they also realize what is underlying in other, non-canonical ways.

The last section on communicative effectiveness revealed that the progressive is never the trigger of a non-understanding in the data, and this is also true for cases where the progressive is found with zero *be* or zero subject and zero *be*. Thus, in my data there is no evidence of the progressive itself causing non-understanding, irrespective of its function or its form.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that the progressive is an appealing form for ELF speakers because it can have a range of communicative functions and can express different communicative needs of the speakers. Therefore, the progressive can be considered part of the repertoire of ELF speakers and is selected in different contexts as the most effective resource for their communicative purpose.

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A Critical Rationalist perspective on Critical Discourse Analysis

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1. Introduction

Over the last few decades the study of discourse has witnessed the rise of a new approach called Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). Started in the 1970s under the label 'Critical Linguistics' (henceforth CL), CDA today is described as "an established paradigm in linguistics" (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 4). What's more, it is said to have "become one of the most influential and visible branches of discourse analysis" (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000: 447). CDA's success also coincides with the emergence of a new 'critical' paradigm that stretches over the entire field of language study. However, CDA is not only gaining popularity within linguistics, but due to its appeal to interdisciplinarity is spreading to other disciplines as well, thus making a discussion of CDA's academic value inevitable. And indeed, not only are the adherents of CDA growing in number, but also its critics. There are three main standpoints from which this criticism has come. First, there is critique from CD analysts themselves (e.g. Stubbs 1997). The second sort of criticism comes from the field of applied linguistics (e.g. Widdowson 1995; 1998; 2004). Finally, some authors observe shortcomings with regard to the philosophical basis of CDA (e.g. Hammersley 1997). All of these critiques are interrelated and deserve closer scrutiny; however, due to the limited scope of this article, I will focus on the examination of CDA from a philosophy of science point of view, drawing primarily on the critique from the applied linguistics perspective.

The theoretical underpinning of my article is Critical Rationalism, an approach that for the most part was developed by Karl Popper. At its core lies the principle of falsification, with regard to which theories can never be proven to be absolutely true and therefore they have to be constantly exposed to refutation efforts (e.g. Popper 1982: 225). Hypotheses that are derived from

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them are only valid as long as they are not proven to be incorrect. In order to ensure that testing and falsification are possible, Critical Rationalism excludes those approaches from science that do not meet the requirement of refutability. There is also a grading of the quality of a theory: a theory is better the more prone its hypotheses are to falsification (Chalmers 1999: 44-45).

In this essay I will put CDA to the test and see whether it meets the criterion of refutability. My central argument will be that certain theoretical weaknesses have resulted in significant problems with the methodology, namely a very low degree of reliability, which then makes it harder for claims to be tested and eventually refuted.[1]

The structure of the article is as follows: Section 2 gives a very short overview of the key theoretical tenets of CDA, which is followed by some remarks about its methodology in section 3. In the course of discussing CDA methodology, I also examine the relationship between the theoretical shortcomings and the methodological problems. In section 4, I present my analysis to illustrate the points made in the preceding discussion. Finally, the conclusion includes some reflections on the analysis and proposes some possible ways of improving the CDA project.

2. Key theoretical tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis

As stated in the preceding section, CDA has its origins in CL, which can be traced back to the works of Roger Fowler and his associates at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s. Two publications, namely Fowler et al. (1979) and Kress & Hodge (1979), have been the basis for almost all studies with a CL background, and even the vast majority of CDA's textual analyses are based on the tools suggested in these two books. The transition to CDA was primarily grounded in Fairclough's publications *Language and Power* (1989) and *Discourse and Social Change* (1992).[2]

However, it is highly questionable whether CL and CDA can be defined as different approaches, which is evident in the fact that their key tenets are to a very large extent identical. The basic assumption in both is that language is

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[1] Apart from reliability, the validity of CDA was also questioned by some authors. For this problem see particularly the so called "functional fallacy", a term coined by Widdowson (1998: 139; 2004: 96), meaning that CDA practitioners assume that there is a direct and simple link between semantic meanings of linguistic forms and their pragmatic significance.

[2] In the following I will be using the label 'critical linguistics' without capital letters to refer to both CL and CDA.

always embedded in a socio-political context and every context is loaded with a certain ideology. Consequently, language is said to reflect this ideology. What's more: ideology is both constructed and shaped by language use. It is not only the content of a text that has an impact on the readers, but also the language form. Therefore, language is seen as a site of struggle and the use of it as "an instrument of control", since it helps the dominant group to maintain the existing power relations (Kress & Hodge 1979: 6). Consequently, practitioners of critical linguistics do not regard it as sufficient only to describe a discourse, but they also want to bring about change in the discourse and in society, which is primarily done by performing linguistic analyses from a critical perspective (Simpson 1993: 6). Therefore, critical linguistics, unlike former approaches, is not limited to descriptive discourse analysis, which is probably its most distinctive feature. This can be explained by the fact that both belong to the tradition of the critical social sciences, which have developed mainly on the basis of Marxism (Van Dijk 1993: 251).

So CL and CDA believe "that the meanings are carried and expressed in the syntactic forms and processes, that is, that the analyst can 'read off' meaning from the syntax" (Fowler & Kress 1979: 197). Here is an illustration of this rather abstract point: The by far most studied language feature in critical linguistics is the passive voice, because it allows for agent deletion i.e. it enables the author to write about a process without naming the responsible entity or at least placing it in a less prominent position. The best-known example is Trew's (1979) analysis of an article in *The Times* about the police shooting rioting blacks. Trew illustrates the effect of the passive with two newspaper headlines about the same event, namely *Rioting blacks shot dead by police as ANC leaders meet* and *Police shoot 11 dead in Salisbury riot*. His argument is that by using the passive, the agent is obfuscated in the first example. Hence, the second depiction is said to show more sympathy with the black rioters than the first one (ibid.: 102). A similar argument is made about nominalizations, which are claimed to make processes appear as if they were entities, thus leaving the agent unnamed. If an author uses the expression *due to the change in distribution* it is not mentioned who is 'doing the changing'. This nominalization can be said to do even more than just to disguise the agent. In this example, the change in the distribution is depicted as a thing happening all by itself. Consequently, the agent is not only obfuscated, but it is suggested that there is no agent at all (Fairclough 2003: 12-13).

Additionally, in accordance with a Hallidayan mind-set, in critical linguistics language is regarded as having multiple functions. Assuming a tripartite nature of language functions, CL and CDA practitioners differentiate between the ideational (representation of the outside world), interpersonal

(representation of the social world) and textual function (realization of the former two). As a consequence, in CL the primary focus of attention is the clause, for it is in the clause that all three of these metafunctions of language come together (e.g. Fowler & Kress 1979: 188). In CDA, however, the claim is made that the method is not restricted to the clause, as it was the case in CL. Fairclough (1992: 29) believes that ideological significance can also be found in other aspects than grammar and vocabulary, for example in the argumentative or narrative structures of a text, which is why the organization of a text and larger linguistic units are considered as well.

There is one essential problem with CDA's theory that has a negative impact on its empirical work, namely that the concept of CDA is contradictory in itself. Analysis, in contrast to interpretation, is characterized by abandoning the subjective point of view of the researcher,[3] who is supposed to use a method in order to see whether his initial hypotheses are correct, incorrect or whether they need some modification. In order to be able to do so, it is crucial that the method is characterized by a high level of reliability, i.e. the results that different researchers get when they analyze the same material with the same method should be as consonant as possible.

The 'Critical' in Critical Discourse Analysis, on the other hand, by definition is based on a certain way of looking at society and the examined material, which goes back to Marxist influences. And despite the fact that it is unrealistic to expect researchers to be absolutely impartial and free from any pretext,[4] according to Hammersley (1997: 239) there is one crucial difference in CDA: 'critical' scientists give preference to their beliefs over the data. As a result, critical linguistics and the idea of analysis are irreconcilable. As I will demonstrate in my CD analysis in section 4, the mode of examination is interpretative rather than analytical.

3. Some remarks on CDA's methodology

The methodology of CDA is very hard to illustrate, since it is primarily characterized by an absence of clearly defined procedures for the actual analysis. Generally, CDA does not have a closed corpus of analytic techniques, meaning that it is up to the analyst to decide which concepts and procedures to employ. Most of the methodological advice is given in the form of checklists. Since in my analysis I will use some of the most prominent

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[3]   Of course in practice this is very hard to achieve, but this is the ideal that the researcher works towards.

[4]   The concept of pretext goes back to Widdowson (e.g. 2004: chap. 5)

analytic concepts, I will briefly refer to the probably most influential checklist for CL and CDA, namely that of Fowler & Kress (1979: 198-213). The major categories are *transitivity*, *modality*, *transformations* and *classifications*. As far as transitivity is concerned, most prominence is given to so-called "pseudo-actions" (ibid.: 200), which means that although a transitive verb is used, it does not denote a real action, but rather a mental process or a state. The modality-category includes naming conventions, the use of pronouns and modal auxiliaries. Analyzing transformations is primarily aimed at detecting agent deletion, therefore relying mostly on the analysis of nominalizations and passivizations. In the category of classifications one can consider relexicalization (i.e. the creation of new words for an already existing concept), overlexicalization (i.e. a high density of different expressions for the same concept within a text) and the position of adjectives. As far as the latter is concerned, it is claimed that pronominally used adjectives make modality less visible, since they are integrated into the noun phrase (ibid.: 112). For a more extensive list of the employed concepts the reader is referred to the checklists by Fairclough (1992: 225-240; 2001: 92-116; 2003: 191-194).

In order to illustrate why these checklist-guidelines are highly problematic, I will once again refer to the example of agent deletion. The major problem is that it is not defined in which cases a missing agent is significant, and in which cases agent deletion is simply used to avoid violation of the Gricean (1975) maxim of quantity. In many instances, it is absurd to talk about the obfuscation of the agent, namely when it can be inferred from the context or the linguistic co-text. The argument of critical linguists is that even though the agent can be inferred, this forced inference leads to an alienation of the agent and the process (Trew 1979: 98-99). Moreover, Trew makes a claim that can be found in much writing of critical linguistics, namely that if the agent is not mentioned and the reader has to uncover it by a process of inference, then this is regarded as a weaker form of the representation of an action or event. In these cases, the agency is considered to be backgrounded (ibid.). Nevertheless, this assumed effect seems to be a matter of convenience. Consider the following analysis, where Fairclough (2001: 44-45) comments on a newspaper article that describes the wife of an army-member:

> *Notice that at no point here (or in the rest of the article) is Jenny Keeble explicitly* said *to be a 'good wife', or an admirable person; the process depends entirely on an 'ideal reader's' capacity to* infer *that from the list of attributes – she expresses confidence in her husband's professional abilities, she is concerned for his safety, she 'prays' he has 'done enough', she tries to 'maintain an air of normality for the children's sake'.* [his emphasis]

Here, Fairclough's argumentation is the complete opposite of Trew's. Precisely because certain things are left unsaid, they are claimed to be ideologically significant. The stereotypes are only enforced because of the inference work that needs to be done by the reader. The effects of inference processes he depicts in this passage are antithetical to those that are usually assumed when the use of the passive is criticized.

This lack of systematic procedures and rigor has been termed the "patchwork principle" (Widdowson 2000: 17), meaning that the method enables the analyst to select whatever suits his or her argumentation, but at the same time disregards elements that are inconvenient. If the reliability of the method is low, the testability is automatically low as well. The more rigorous the procedure and the less deviation exists in the results of measurements at different times, the easier it is to prove a hypothesis to be wrong.

Now, CDA practitioners could object to this whole critique and argue that the application of the refutability criterion is illegitimate. After all, Critical Rationalism is not the only approach within the philosophy of science and the principle of falsification would deny the scientific status to prominent theories such as those of Freud. It could be argued that Critical Rationalism is a form of modern positivism, since it assumes that natural and social sciences work by the same principles. Such positivistic criteria are explicitly rejected in CDA (e.g. Fairclough 2001: 6; Flowerdew 1999: 1091). Yet CDA implicitly subscribes to the same criteria as the philosophy it criticizes. A closer examination of CDA's work lays bare some quite positivistic working routines. This is how Patterson (1997: 425) describes the most vital element in the procedure of positivistic research: it "claims to read the truth of the object off the surface of the data". As some have demonstrated (e.g. Widdowson 1996: 62), this is exactly what is done in CDA, regardless of claims to the contrary (e.g. Fairclough 1992: 28, who implies that meaning is enshrined in a text and not generated during the process of reading it). Furthermore, many studies with a CDA background use statistics to support their assumptions,[5] which again seems like a rather positivistic thing to do. To put it in a nutshell, CDA has a number of positivistic premises and the results are treated the same way as in positivistic research. At the same time, however, CDA denies the legitimacy of the positivistic critiques of its own methodology along the lines discussed above.

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[5] This is particularly prominent in the combination of CDA and corpus linguistics, an approach of which Michael Stubbs (e.g. 1994; 1996) is the most notable representative.

Fairclough (2001: 6) rejects the use of methods comparable to those in the natural sciences. This, he claims, can only deliver results about the 'what' questions. The 'why' and the 'how' are disregarded. CD analysts do have a point in arguing that it is necessary to examine questions such as how ideological manipulation works, but the problem is that it is not investigated whether there is ideological manipulation at all. Rather, CD analysts assume a certain position on the part of the author of a text (for example that the author of a newspaper article wants to convey racist ideologies) and then they try to prove it by searching for supportive textual features. Let me illustrate this with a passage in which Fairclough (2003: 202) talks about the guiding questions in CDA:

> [H]ow do existing societies provide people with the possibilities and resources for rich and fulfilling lives, how on the other hand do they deny people these possibilities and resources?

Here, Fairclough does not ask whether these possibilities and resources are denied (nor does he provide any other evidence for this claim), but immediately jumps to the 'how'-question. The argument that Flowerdew (1999: 1093) puts forward in defense of such a priori assumptions is that the researcher knows the ideological stance of a certain person, institution etc. because he or she was exposed to its discourse on a macro level (i.e. outside of the text). So Flowerdew claims that it suffices to get an impression by superficial examination of the macro level and then to try to prove it with evidence from the micro level, i.e. the text. This implies that the 'what' question should be answered by an unsystematic intuitive evaluation and that the 'how' needs to be explained by closer analysis. But this is illogical, since the 'how' question is a subordinate one, i.e. it is useless if the premise proves to be wrong. Asking how manipulation works is absurd if it turns out that there is no manipulation.

4. Performing a CD analysis

I already stated in the introduction that I will test the reliability of CDA's methodology by using the tools of CDA. The method has already been shown to be low on reliability by a number of re-readings of texts that CD analysts examined. The authors of these re-readings (e.g. Widdowson 1996; Poole 2010) performed a different CD analysis on the same texts, and put forward different ways of interpreting them. I will try to go one step further by not only showing that different results can be attained by using the same method, but I will attempt to substantiate a completely absurd claim, namely that a text with a clear agenda and clearly defined strategic goals (in my case a press

release) transmits ideology on the level of language form contrary to these strategic goals. This shall demonstrate not only that different results are possible, but that basically any assumption can be corroborated with CDA methodology. I analyzed a press release that was issued by a major British tobacco company, namely British American Tobacco (henceforth BAT), in April 2010 as a reaction to the proposed banning of the display of tobacco products by the British Health Act 2009, and I tried to find evidence that the ban is actually supported as far as language form is concerned. (The full text of the press release can be found in the appendix.)

4.1. The question of power

Usually, press releases are used to present an organization as powerful and influential, but the opposite is true for the release in question. Here, the tobacco display ban is the one that is represented as mighty and dynamic. Not only is the ban often the agent of a process, but for the most part it is also in the most prominent position in the clause. This prominent placing adds importance to the new regulations. Also very telling are the verbs that are used in connection with the ban. They do not imply static relational processes that simply describe what the ban is, but the ban is involved in material processes. It *requires*, it is *imposing*, it forces companies *to comply* and it also has the potential of making large companies *abandon* their plans of entering the UK market. The ban is said to be able to *prevent* manufacturers from doing something and it is described as having a damaging potential.

Notice also the line *Many newsagents and convenience stores have protested strongly against the ban*. Protesters are usually in the position of the powerless. This depiction of the anti-ban alliance as weak plays down the actual power relations. There is a strong alliance against the Health Act 2009, including a number of multinational tobacco companies (BAT, ITG, Japan Tobacco International, Tobacco Management & Consulting Company), retailers and even political parties like the Conservatives. This support is not even mentioned in the press release, whereas in *The Daily Telegraph*,[6] for example, it is. This is counterproductive for BAT, because if the opposition to the ban is perceived as insignificant and only coming from powerless actors, it will be experienced as an unimportant controversy by the readers and public attention will eventually diminish. Another indicator that hints at the

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6 This article is available at:
   http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/7635736/Tories-back-cigarette-companies-effort-to-turn-over-ban-on-display-of-tobacco-products.html (28 November 2011)

distortion of the power relations is the omitting of the *boilerplate*, one of the most typical moves in the press release genre. This is usually the last paragraph where the basic facts of a company or organization are given and credentials are established (c.f. Catenaccio 2008: 24). The boilerplate particularly enjoys great popularity among large companies, since they can present themselves as powerful, so the omission of the boilerplate can only be a disadvantage for BAT.

The company, as opposed to the ban, is portrayed as passive. For the most part, it is involved in relational processes, which simply denote a relation of being. This applies to the co-plaintiffs and smokers as well, which is especially evident in the statement by Hemang Patel in the penultimate paragraph, where he only describes what his company is and what it is *not* doing. At best, members of the anti-ban alliance are represented as sensers in mental processes, thus evaluating things that other actors do, but staying passive themselves. Probably the most striking example of this can be found in the very last paragraph. Here BAT is performing an action – it is defending itself against the government regulations by hiring leading barrister Lord Pannick – but this is depicted by using the passive construction *has been instructed*. Even though barristers are usually not instructed directly by the clients, the company certainly had a significant influence on this and thus this instance of agent deletion only has the effect of depicting the company as less active.

However, there are two instances in the text where the anti-ban alliance is involved in material processes. The first is the title and the second is the lead paragraph, where the words *seeking* (in the lead) and *sought* (in the title) are used. But in the headline the agent is deleted. So here again, BAT and its allies are the driving force behind a real action, but they are hidden. Of course, it is BAT and the ban opponents that seek the judicial review, but this is obfuscated. As far as the lead is concerned, we have an active sentence, but it is packed into a verbalization process. This has the effect that more emphasis is put on the process rather than on the fact that BAT and its allies are seeking the judicial review.

4.2. Favorable depiction of the opponent

A look at the transformation processes also points into the direction that the press release is not as opposed to the government as might be expected in the light of the circumstances. Consider the passage where the fear of illegal products is expressed: *[…] or to counterfeit and smuggled cigarettes in a flourishing black market*. Instead the author could, for instance, write

cigarettes are smuggled, which is worrying small convenience stores. This alternative construction would put more emphasis on the nuisance, which would stress the government's bad management of the tobacco sector. The same is true for the formulation *in a flourishing black market*. This can be seen as hiding a process. If the author on the other hand used the construction *the black market is flourishing*, this would have given more prominence and immediacy to the claim.

4.3. Reducing identification

Generally, the article contains few personal pronouns. However, in the quote by Hemang Patel in the penultimate paragraph, an excessive use of the "'exclusive' *we*" (a term used by Fairclough 2001: 106 and Fowler & Kress 1979: 201-202) can be observed. The exclusive *we* is a *we* that does not include the addressee(s), but rather refers to the company and its employees only. Now the question has to be asked what effects this extreme amount of auto-references within only a few lines has. As opposed to the 'inclusive we', the 'exclusive we' reduces the probability of the readers' identification with the entrepreneurs. This would be different if the statement looked like this: *Responsible retailers, who are not selling to minors, are punished simply for selling a legal product*. With this formulation readers could more easily place themselves in the position of the retailers. It is also telling that their problems are stressed more than those of the smokers, who are among the major target groups of the text. In the last sentence of the paragraph, the smokers are peripherally touched upon in *our efficient customer service will suffer*. If the focus was instead on the customers (like in *smokers will have to deal with a worse customer service*), this would probably have led to a higher emotional involvement of the readers who are smokers.

4.4. Evaluation over argumentation

Content-wise, the text is full with arguments against the ban, but with regard to their placement these arguments are rather hidden. The issue of subordination is especially interesting here. In complex sentences, the rational arguments against the ban are always placed in the subordinate clause, whereas the superordinate clause gives evaluative comments about the ban. Consider the following examples:

(1) *The display ban will damage both competition and the livelihoods of tens of thousands of small businesses by imposing high compliance costs on them.*

(2) *These unwelcome effects are unjustified as there is no credible evidence that it will reduce smoking rates in the UK.*

Both of these examples have the real argument in the subordinate clause i.e. more weight is given to what BAT believes than to the actual arguments.

That the arguments are backgrounded can also be observed on the level of the macro-structure of the text. The larger-scale structure is partly unusual for a press release. The headline and the lead are, as expected, about the event which contains the real news value, namely that a judicial review is being requested. The first paragraph, however, is atypical. It provides background information on the Health Act 2009. With regard to the inverted pyramid writing style one would rather expect this to be in the last paragraph, because it is at the end where details are usually provided in this text genre. That indeed is what happened in newspaper articles related to the issue. Journalists mostly did not place the description as prominently as in the press release (compare, for instance, the above-mentioned article in *The Daily Telegraph*). The shift of the paragraph to such a prominent position could also be interpreted as rather detrimental to the central concern of promoting a rejection of the ban. The arguments against the new regulations (such as damage to small businesses, the flourishing black-market etc.) are placed less prominently. This is problematic with regard to newspaper reading habits and journalists' editing habits of press releases. Each paragraph is less likely to be read than the preceding. In consequence, there is a significant chance that a large number of readers will not even get to the arguments against the ban.

5. Conclusion

Admittedly, in the analysis I have assumed a paradox pretext and therefore I did not read the text like the average person would have, but this is exactly the point that I am making: often, the results of CDA say more about what the analyst believes to be in the text than about what can actually be found there. Given the same texts and the same toolkit for analysis, another researcher could (and in all likelihood would) obtain results that are diametrically opposed to mine. In the course of my analysis, I pointed to a number of textual features and I suggested that these have negative effects on the depiction of the press release's issuer. It is beyond question that these grammatical and lexical features are in the text, but the problem is that in the course of selecting these features I was not bound to any ex ante defined procedures, which means that by making use of the patchwork mechanism, it was possible for me to describe those features that supported my preconceived interpretation, while at the same time disregarding those that were inconvenient for my line of argumentation. Another reason why this way of reading was possible was that I divorced the text from its context by taking

the stance of a non-cooperative reader and this is exactly what is being done in other CD analyses as well. When Fairclough (1992), for example, reads pre-natal medical texts in order to investigate domination rather than to obtain information about pregnancy, he is not reading them in the way of the intended target audience.

I should make clear that this article is not intended as a disparagement of some of the laudable accomplishments of CDA, like contributing to increased language awareness through their thought-stimulating work. However, in order to prevent long-term credibility loss, CDA needs to address the methodological and theoretical shortcomings outlined in this article. So what can be done to remedy these weaknesses? The first option is to make an explicit distinction between interpretation and analysis and to concede the subjectivity and potential fallibility of the results that are generated by a CD analysis. If, however, there is insistence on labeling the procedure *analysis*, a more systematic framework is needed. This is not only the case for the examination of text, but also of context, especially with regard to the processes of text consumption and text production.

To begin with, textual analysis should not only include a rigorous model, but also clear definitions of key concepts. Take nominalizations as an example. It is not sufficient to define them only as "turning verbs into nouns" (Hodge & Fowler 1979: 14). According to Billig (2008: 787-788), there are five different kinds of nominalizations: linguistic, etymological, psychological, between-text and within-text nominalizations (ibid.). Neither in CL nor in CDA a clear distinction is made between these five types.

As regards the aspect of text production, it could be investigated by supplementing the textual analysis with empirical evidence from ethnographic research. With regard to the study of press releases the work of Sleurs & Jacobs (2005) is an example of how this could be achieved. They carried out detailed qualitative analyses of the production process and its different stages.

Concerning the analysis of text consumption, which may be even more important, improvements have been proposed as well. One of them is a framework developed by O'Halloran (2003), who approaches the interpretation process of news texts from a cognitive perspective, taking into account empirical work in the area of cognition since the 1980s. By fusing evidence from psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics and connectionism, he creates his *idealized reader framework*,[7] which enables analysts to make assumptions about the interpretation process based on empirical evidence.

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7   See O'Halloran (2003: 189-191) for a list of the basic processing principles defined in that framework.

Working within this framework reduces the probability of over-interpretation and offers a more systematic procedure (ibid.: 3-4).

If these improvements were implemented, CDA would come much closer to the ideal of Critical Rationalism, since it would be true analysis and capable of delivering testable assumptions. However, these improvements are not likely to gain much ground in CDA, for it is, as I argued, a contradiction in the theoretical conception of CDA itself that has to be remedied first. As long as there is a clearly defined political motive that is channeling the investigation of the text in a certain direction, it is doubtful whether there will be a push towards a more objective methodology.

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Appendix: The original text of the analyzed press release

Source: BAT Website

http://www.bat.com/group/sites/UK__3MNFEN.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DO84VC7B?opendocument&SKN=1 (28 November 2011)

Judicial review sought on tobacco display ban

26 April 2010

British American Tobacco said today its UK subsidiary, two retailers and a German cigarette manufacturer are seeking a judicial review of the Government's ban on the display of tobacco products in shops.

The Health Act 2009 requires cigarettes, cigars, pipe and roll-your-own tobacco to be hidden from view in England, Wales and Northern Ireland from October 2011 in large retailers and October 2013 in smaller outlets.

Michelle Healy, General Manager, British American Tobacco UK Limited, said: "The display ban will damage both competition and the livelihoods of tens of thousands of small businesses by imposing high compliance costs on them. Driving the legal trade from public view will also play into the hands of illegal traders.

"These unwelcome effects are unjustified as there is no credible evidence that it will reduce smoking rates in the UK."

British American Tobacco believes the display ban will prevent manufacturers from communicating to consumers the most basic product information and is anti-competitive under EU law as it will be impossible to tell consumers about new products available for sale.

Many newsagents and convenience stores have protested strongly against the ban. They are worried about loss of trade to supermarkets - which smokers may perceive as stocking more brands - or to counterfeit and smuggled cigarettes in a flourishing black market.

They are also concerned about costly shop point-of-sale refits and the impact on efficient customer service and security.

British American Tobacco's co-plaintiffs are Portland Food and Wine, owner of six London convenience stores, Harendra Bhatt who owns one store in North London and German cigarette maker Tobacco Management & Consulting Company which had to abandon plans to enter the UK market in light of the new regulations.

Hemang Patel of Portland Food and Wine said: "We are responsible retailers and we do not sell to minors. Why are we the ones being punished like this simply for selling a legal product? The display ban regulations are complex, will be difficult to comply with and our efficient customer service will suffer."

Leading barrister Lord Pannick QC has been instructed to represent British American Tobacco and the co-plaintiffs in their application.

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