universität wien

DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

"Progressive Thinking: Analyzing the Progressive Aspect and its acquisition by EFL learners"

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2013

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt: A 343

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt: Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Betreuerin: Univ.-Prof. Dr. M. Evelien Keizer

To my parents

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank those who have encouraged and supported me throughout the course of my studies and made this thesis possible.

Special thanks go to my supervisor Univ.-Prof. Dr. M. Evelien Keizer. Thank you very much for your time and abundance of patience as well as for your constant supervision and support starting out from the research proposal of this thesis to the final draft.

I would also like to thank Mag.a Barbara Schiftner for granting me access to the Austrian data of the *International Corpus of Crosslinguistic Interlanguage* (ICCI), which provided the basis for the empirical study that underlies this thesis and made this research possible in the first place.

Very special thanks also go to my mother. You were unflagging in your efforts to proofread this thesis. Perhaps my deepest gratitude goes to my parents who have supported me during my studies both emotionally and financially. This thesis is dedicated to them. You have offered me unconditional love and support throughout the course of my studies until the completion of this thesis, and I know for sure that neither love nor support end here. You have always believed in me, even when I did not. You never gave me any idea that I could not do whatever I wanted to do or be whomever I wanted to be. As you guided me through the course of my diploma studies in English I realized that I wanted to follow in your steps as a teacher. Thank you for inspiring me.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank my sisters Eva and Edith, my friends Julia, Udo, Iris, Marlies and Sebi for always being there when I needed them. Thank you for your countless encouraging (telephone) conversations, text messages and emails when I was desperate. Especially, I want to thank Julia for her academic advice, help and support with my thesis. Without you, this thesis would not have

turned out the way it did. I also want to acknowledge the invaluable five years that I spent with Michael. Thank you for the wonderful time that we spent together.

Abstract

It has been observed that German-speaking learners of English tend to face major problems when it comes to the acquisition of the progressive aspect in English. ESL learners are particularly error-prone with regard to deciding in which contexts the progressive should be used. This is often explained in terms of the inexistence of a grammaticalized equivalent in the German language. This thesis attempts to gain insights into the types of errors that occur in L2 acquisition of the progressive aspect by learners of English with German as their mother tongue. To investigate how accurately learners use the progressive and if there is a connection between the lack of a grammaticalized aspectual category in German and the kinds of errors that are produced by ESL learners with the progressive aspect, a small-scale corpus study was conducted using the Austrian data from the ICCI. The starting point of this study was an examination of 200 essays written by ESL learners with German as their mother tongue. For this purpose, all occurrences of the progressive aspect were extracted from the language samples, including all forms that deviate from the target language norm, all correct uses of the progressive aspect and finally considerations were made as to which situations constitute an obligatory occasion for the progressive form. The results of the study revealed that it was possible to make a classification of learner errors namely into meaning errors, form errors and function errors. Further, it could be observed that the progressive aspect is mostly applied to activity verbs. However, most errors occurred with achievement verbs. The results suggest that in many cases the source of error can be traced back to the L1 German thus language transfer constitutes a contributing factor to the acquisition of the progressive aspect; however, L1 transfer cannot be the sole reason for the problems that arise when acquiring the progressive aspect.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CG	Cognitive Grammar
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICCI	International Corpus of Crosslinguistic Interlanguage
IS	Immediate Scope
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MS	Maximal Scope
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

Tables and Figures

1. Introduction

When we hot having we're Flaschen with water. (ICCI: icci_aut0050)

Unfortunately, this is the reality English teachers are facing on a daily basis. Just as important to mention, however, is the reality learners of English are facing, namely grammatical constructions and lexical items they have little or no relation to. It has been noted by Williams (2002: 18) that the acquisition of the progressive aspect "constitutes one of the most basic and ubiquitous problems facing language teachers." Considering the example above, it is of course not just the language teacher who faces problems related to teaching the progressive aspect; more significantly, it is the language learners who have to cope with a grammatical construction they have no conceptual representation of due to the inexistence of a equivalent in their mother tongue.

It has never been asserted that second language acquisition is easy, nor has it been claimed that teaching English as a second language is easy. The example above provides ample opportunity for analyzing learner language and can be analyzed on many different levels. This particular sample sentence has been chosen to introduce this thesis because of the misused occurrence of a progressive *–ing* form. In this utterance two errors concerning the progressive construction can be identified. The first error can be classified as a form error, as the language user clearly failed to apply the correct formation of the progressive aspect BE + *–ing* form of the verb. Secondly, this is also an instance of an overuse of the *–ing* form, more specifically this means that the use of the *–ing* form is inappropriate in this utterance and that no correct meaning of the progressive aspect is achieved.

Consequently, taking this brief analysis of an utterance produced by a German native speaker as a starting point, I would like to put forward the claim that the progressive aspect is an elusive concept for language learners with German as their first language. This thesis is therefore concerned with the use and the acquisition of the progressive aspect by second language (L2) learners of English

with German as their first language (L1). Since language use has become more prominent in second language acquisition research and this aspect has not been accounted for in more traditional syntactic approaches (i.e. generative approaches to grammar), this thesis mainly adopts a Cognitive Linguistics perspective on language in general and on second language acquisition in particular. The overall aim of this thesis is to reveal the difficulties that language learners with German as their L1 face when acquiring the progressive aspect of English. The hypothesis I would like to put forward in this thesis is that the acquisition of the progressive aspect poses such an immense challenge to German speakers because they lack this grammatical concept in their L1; German is prescriptively said to be an aspectless language in which temporal information about a situation is only provided by means of tense marking the verbal construction. So, in short, in German the *when* can be provided by grammatical means whereas the *how* cannot. More specifically this means that in German the *how* has to be expressed lexically. In English, however, the *how* can be expressed via aspect.

In order to find out what difficulties in particular German native speakers face when acquiring the progressive aspect in English, a small-scale corpus study is carried out analyzing students' essays.

In pursuit of this aim, this thesis is divided as follows. Firstly, a general introduction into the field of Cognitive Linguistics is provided as well as its implications and insights for second language acquisition and teaching are outlined briefly. In the second section an in-depth study of the English aspect system is presented, trying to clarify the distinction between grammatical and lexical aspect. The third section of this paper is dedicated to the semantics of the progressive aspect in which the progressive is analyzed in great detail giving a description of the different senses of *–ing*, looking at its functions and introducing the notions of boundedness and unboundedness. The fourth part centers on the acquisition of the progressive aspect by EFL learners before in the last section an empirical study is conducted, which tries to reveal possible difficulties that German native speakers face when acquiring the progressive.

To conclude this introductory section I would like to quote Langacker (2008b: 66; original emphasis), who is one of the founding fathers of Cognitive Linguistics:

> Few would maintain that language instruction is easy. Nor can the advice of linguists always be counted on to make it any easier. Unless they are themselves experienced language teachers, the advice of linguists on language pedagogy is likely to be of no more practical value than the advice of theoretical physicists on how to teach pole vaulting. What they can offer, *qua* linguists, is insight into the structure of particular languages and the properties of language in general. But even when limited in this fashion, the input of linguists cannot necessarily be trusted. They quarrel with one another about the most fundamental issues, suggesting that some of them (at least) must be fundamentally wrong. It is therefore unsurprising that the impact of linguistic theory on language pedagogy has been less than miraculous and sometimes less than helpful.

Accordingly, this thesis, with its underlying corpus study, will hopefully contribute to clarify some problems that occur in connection with the acquisition of the progressive aspect by learners of English with German as their L1.

2. Preliminaries: Cognitive Linguistics and second language acquisition

2.1. A brief introduction to Cognitive Linguistics

This introductory section provides an outline of the conceptual structure of Cognitive Linguistics and provides a brief overview of the conception of language from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective as well as a reference framework for the most salient terms which will be used throughout this thesis.

Cognitive Linguistics is a relatively new approach to the analysis of language which came into existence in the late seventies and early eighties in the work of George Lakoff, Ronald W. Langacker and Leonard Talmy (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007: 7). Unlike previous approaches to analyzing languages, such as Generative Grammar, Cognitive Linguistics sees language not as an autonomous cognitive ability but as embedded in the cognitive capacity of the human mind. Further, the fact that language functions as an instrument which organizes, processes and conveys information is rooted in the basic tenet of Cognitive Linguistics and one of its fundamental characteristics is that of linguistic meaning. Consequently, research in this field is inextricably linked with how people classify and categorize their knowledge. Therefore, one of the main principles of Cognitive Linguistics is its interest in the mental structures that constitute knowledge (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007: 3f.). Given this perspective in which, rather than syntactic structures, the language user is the center, the analysis of language in the Cognitive Linguistic framework is founded on a usage-based model, in which language use determines knowledge about linguistic structures. Thus, Cognitive Linguistics is not interested in "knowledge *of* the language", as it would be the case in Generative Grammar, but in "knowledge *through* the language." (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007: 6; emphasis in the original)

Following this line of argument, knowledge through language is taken to influence and shape grammar, which in turn is seen as the product of language use. Within the broader field of Cognitive Linguistics, Cognitive Grammar is, as the name

suggests, primarily concerned with the theory of grammar and puts forward the claim that grammar is meaningful in its own right (Langacker 2008a: 3f.). A central claim of Cognitive Grammar and Cognitive Linguistics is that grammar and lexicon form a continuum consisting of symbolic structures, i.e. the linking of a form and a meaning (also referred to as form-meaning mapping) rather than treating them as separate notions (Langacker 2007: 438). More specifically, in Langacker's words (2008b: 67; original emphasis), form-meaning mappings are concerned with "the pairing of a **semantic structure** and a **phonological structure**" and thus justifying the meaningfulness of grammar. Further, what Cognitive Linguistics shows is that these form-meaning pairings are not arbitrary in character but motivated (Verspoor 2008: 81). According to Taylor (1993: 205) the non-arbitrariness of grammatical structures means that "syntax is motivated by semantics". Concluding from this notion it can be said that the Cognitive Grammar framework denies the distinction between competence and performance. Nevertheless, focus is put on performance or language use, meaning that language use constitutes the way in which grammar is represented. Bybee (2006: 711) has argued that "[a] usage-based view takes grammar to be the cognitive organization of one's experience with language.", thus offering an appropriate summary of a usage-based description of grammar and indicating the inseparability of language, communication and cognition (Ellis & Robinson 2008: 3). This view of language also suggests that the world is not something objective, but, even more, the world is something that is construed by human perception (Pütz 2007: 1147).

The notion of construal is central in Cognitive Linguistics and, simply put, describes the speaker's choice between alternative ways of how one situation can be conceived and portrayed (Langacker 2008a: 43). Thus, according to Langacker (2008a: 43), linguistic meaning consists not only of the conceptual content it evokes, but also of the particular way of how this content is construed. Langacker (2008a: 43; original emphasis) illustrated this with the example of a glass half filled with water. This can be described on two different levels. Firstly, on a conceptual level, this content is evoked in a fairly neutral manner: a glass filled with water. Secondly, on a linguistic level, a certain construal is imposed:

> (1) *the glass with water in it* designates the container; (2) *the water in the glass* designates the liquid it contains; (3) *the glass is half-full* designates the relationship wherein the volume occupied by the liquid is just half of its potential volume; and (4) *the glass is half-empty* designates the relationship wherein the volume occupied by the void is just half of its potential volume.

Here, the same content is construed in four possible ways, all with substantially different meanings. The speaker's choice of one particular linguistic alternative may be determined by (i) the specificity with which a situation is described; (ii) the speaker's vantage point; and (iii) background assumptions evoking a particular linguistic form (Pütz 2007: 1148). According to Langacker (2008b: 68f.), describing a situation can therefore never be completely objective. There may be defaults, but the linguistic meaning of an expression is only partially, if at all, determined by neutral properties and is essentially dependent on the speaker's perspective of the situation at hand. Pütz (2007: 1148) has rightly noted that "in choosing one way of expression over the other the speaker encodes certain meanings in a specific way." Thus, this means that vantage point has supreme importance in the way situations are perceived and thus may be differently construed (Langacker 2008b: 69). The speaker's choice of one particular construction over another is therefore dependent on his or her perspective of the situation described.

Thus, foreign language learners do not only face the challenge of learning the forms of a particular language, but second language acquisition equally involves learning the different meanings associated with these forms. By way of example, in order to fully understand and make appropriate use of the English tense and aspect systems, learners need to know the various senses associated with, say, the progressive aspect, so as to discover what meaning difference it makes when using the present simple or the present progressive. So, the sentences (1a) and (1b), taken from Langacker (2008b: 69), differ in their perspective. While (1a) depicts a local view, (1b) characterizes a global view.

(1)   a. This road is winding through the mountains.

b. This road winds through the mountains.

The use of the progressive in (1a) (*is winding*) shows how the road and the mountains relate to each other time-wise, in which the mountain is an unmoving entity, whereas the road presents itself in small segments as a moving entity. The situation in which this particular sentence might be uttered is thus while actually driving along *this road*. However, the temporal relationship between the road and the mountain in (1b) is a stable one, in which the two entities are perceived as a single unified whole, when for example describing the landscape during a scenic flight over the mountains, or when looking at a map.

These examples show that language-specific conceptualization of the different forms of a language need to be understood in order to be used appropriately in a certain situation. This implies that the notion of construal has an important role to play on foreign language teaching, particularly in the teaching of grammatical structures. Taylor (1993: 220) has pointed out that Cognitive Linguistics attempts both to seek explanations for these meanings, which should be easily accessible for language learners, and to make language learners aware of the various conceptualizations in their L1 and how they differ in the target language.

Apart from the phenomena of construal and perspectivization described above, another dimension has to be recognized as linguistically relevant, namely that of prominence, which is based on the "Figure/Ground" alignment. The Figure/Ground distinction is one form of construal. It was first introduced to Cognitive Linguistics in the work of Talmy (1978). This distinction describes the different degrees of perceptual salience of one element over another in visual perception. It is a basic idea in Cognitive Linguistics that attention is distributed to the various elements of a scene with different emphasis (Verhagen 2007: 50). According to Verhagen (2007: 50) the Figure is the most salient entity and therefore the focus of attention. It is set off against the Ground, which only has secondary prominence. This is a psychological distinction which is encoded by grammatical as well as lexical means. One such Figure/Ground alignment, which presents itself in a grammatical alteration and partly a semantic difference, is the

active/passive distinction. Further, the difference between the expressions *X is on Y* and *Y is under X* cannot be seen in the spatial configuration; rather, it is a semantic one, namely as to which element provides the Figure and which the Ground. Furthermore, Verhagen (2007: 50) points out that "[t]he meanings of lexical items quite generally include a subtype of this Figure/Ground construal", i.e. that a lexical item allocates a subtype within a larger structure (the "base" in Langacker's (2008a: 66 terminology). According to Langacker (2008a: 66; original emphasis) this is called profiling: "an expression's profile stands out as the specific **focus** of attention within its immediate scope. The profile can also be characterized as what the expression is conceived of as designating or referring to within its base (its conceptual referent)." Thus, knowing the meaning of a lexical item always involves knowing what conceptual base (larger structure) an expression belongs to (Verhagen 2007: 50). Langacker (2008a: 64) provides the example of *elbow* and *hand*, as illustrated in Figure 1. While both profile different substructures, they share the conception *arm* as their common base. Further, Verhagen (2007: 50) points out that

> [g]rammatical constructions may impose a particular kind of profile on the temporal interpretation of a situation. For example the English progressive construction (*be + V-ing*) can be said to impose a particular profile on the interpretation of the clause, backgrounding any boundaries (beginning and end point) of the designated process, irrespective of the meaning of the verb.

In addition to the ability of foregrounding information against a less prominent background there is another key concept in Cognitive Linguistics concerned with perspectivization, referred to as *scope* by Langacker (cf. 2008a: 62ff.; 2001b: 253), who defines the term in the following way:

> An expression's scope is defined as the array of conceptual content it evokes as the basis for its meaning. Its maximal scope is the full array of content evoked. Within the maximal scope, there is often a more limited immediate scope comprising the specific array of content directly relevant for a particular purpose or at a particular level of organization. (Langacker 2001b: 253)

Thus, scope describes the ability of directing one's viewing frame in any direction of our conceptual universe. It is a matter of selection which information is foregrounded or backgrounded – the distinction between an expression's maximal scope, i.e. its full coverage, and its immediate scope, the part which is relevant for a specific purpose (Langacker 2008a: 63). Clearly, as for both terms *elbow* and *hand* the maximal scope is the whole conception of a human body, more relevant for their characterization is the arm, their shared immediate scope. The representation in Figure 1 might help to illustrate the difference.

Figure 1 Profiling & Scope
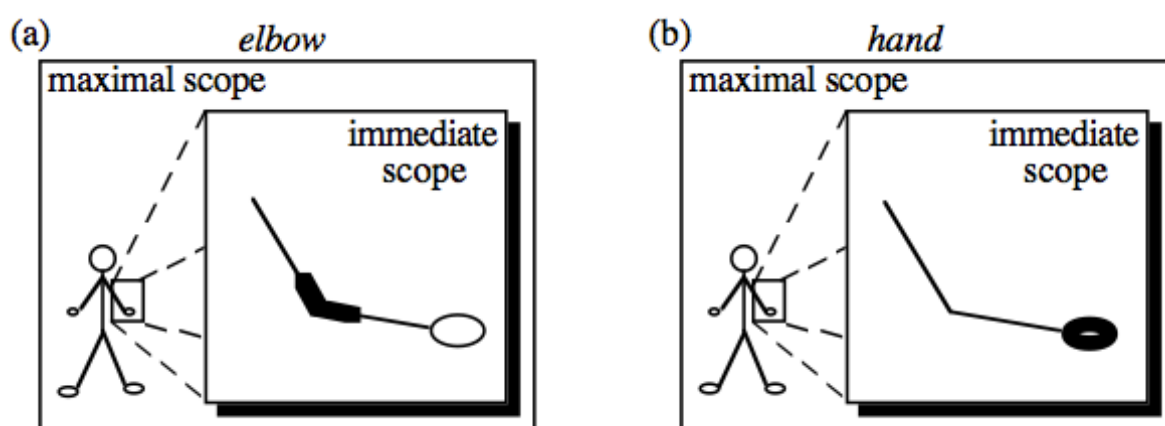
The differentiation between maximal and immediate scope is particularly crucial for the description of the progressive aspect (*be* + V-*ing*). The domain referred to here is that of the time in which the maximal scope of the situation is described whereas the progressive construction imposes an immediate temporal scope on the event and excludes the beginning and endpoint (Langacker 1999: 52). However, this issue will be discussed in far greater detail in section 4.2.

Staying within the realm of the cognitive organization principles of knowledge, the ways of reasoning about the world and language as an instrument for perspecivizing linguistic meaning and giving prominence to certain elements, there is one more central concept in Cognitive Linguistics which needs to be explained at this point, one which has become a benchmark notion in Cognitive Linguistics, namely the notion of *image schema*. It describes schematized activity

patterns which are abstracted from our perception of the world, especially pertaining to bodily experiences (Oakley 2007: 214; Langacker 2008a: 32). According to Oakley (2007: 214f.) an image schema is seen "as a supporting structure for human thought and language" and is, briefly put, "a condensed redescription of perceptual experience for the purpose of mapping spatial structure onto conceptual structure." Image schemas are the means by which knowledge is structured and thus make it possible for humans to communicate via language (Oakley 2007: 218). All everyday activities that are performed involve complex acts of sensing, perceiving, moving and conceptualizing, which also have to be coordinated simultaneously within a three-dimensional world. So, for example, going to the grocery store, taking the groceries that are on the grocery list from the shelf, taking them to the checkout counter, taking them home and putting them aways are all activities that are dependent on simple experience patterns that have been manifested culturally and individually (example adapted from Oakley 2007: 214). Langacker (2008a: 32) uses an illustrative example to shows how the concept of *enter* can be split up into a combination of three image schemas: object, source-path-goal and container-content.

Figure 2 Schematization of ENTER
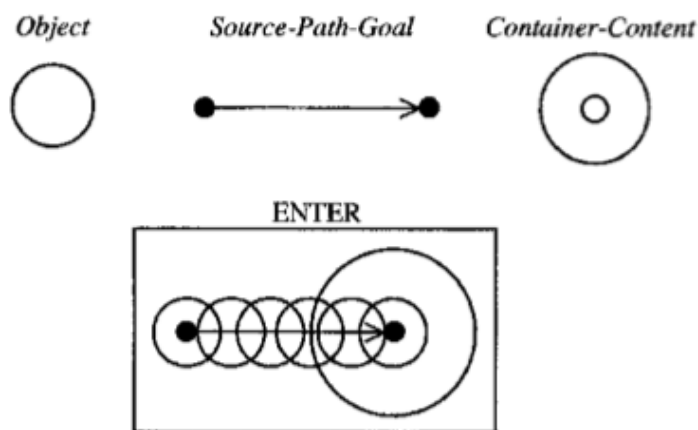
Since the primary concern of Cognitive Linguistics is linguistic meaning and since the assumption that grammar is inherently meaningful, and that grammatical and lexical items form a continuum of meaning, it lends itself preeminently as a tool for the attempt to explore the senses of progressive morphology *–ing* and analyze its functions and uses.

Summarizing this brief introduction to Cognitive Linguistics, three basic tenets of Cognitive linguistics can be discerned, namely the importance and centrality of meaning, the meaningfulness of grammar and its usage-based nature (Langacker 2008b: 66). The next section of this thesis presents a discussion of the aspects and notions of Cognitive Linguistics that have found their application in second language acquisition, second language teaching and language instruction.

2.2.   Cognitive Linguistics and second language acquisition

Even though the application of Cognitive Linguistics to theories of second language learning and teaching and language instruction is still relatively tenuous and Cognitive Linguistic insights are taken up by Applied Linguistics at a rather slow pace, cognitive linguists such as Ronald Langacker have recognized that Cognitive Linguistics provides valuable theories that may have important didactic implications, and as such has a lot to offer to second language acquisition (SLA). Langacker (2008b: 66) has explicitly stated that

> [i]t remains to be seen whether language teaching will fare any better when guided by notions from cognitive linguistics. There are, however, grounds for being optimistic. Compared to other approaches, cognitive linguistics offers an account of language structure that – just from the linguistic standpoint – is arguably more comprehensive, revealing and descriptively adequate.

In traditional theories of SLA Chomsky's generative theory of grammar was the theory underlying teaching instructions in EFL. Generative theories of language are mainly syntactic in nature and ignore all social and functional considerations. Further, language competence and a person's other cognitive abilities are divorced from one each other as two autonomous systems in the human brain. Langacker (2008b: 67) has pointed out the decisive difference as follows: "If generative linguistics views syntax as being central to language, Cognitive Linguistics accords this honor to meaning." The recent shift away from the traditional theories of language learning has called for the need of a linguistic theory that embraces the conceptual link of form and function. The present discussion of the features of Cognitive Linguistics clearly shows that it can offer useful insights into the

meanings of linguistic forms. Further, according to Taylor (1993: 212) "learning a foreign language will involve not only learning the forms of the language but simultaneously learning the conceptual structures associated with these forms." This realization has an important impact on foreign language learning and instruction. The theories of Cognitive Linguistics are therefore beneficial to raise the learners' awareness of such form-meaning connections. Moreover, these theories hold that meaning determines the form of grammatical construction, which could be one effective way of teaching grammatical constructions in the EFL classroom.

There are three central aspects of Cognitive Grammar that make it particularly relevant for teaching English as a second language, all of which have already been briefly mentioned in the preceding section of this thesis: the centrality of meaning, the meaningfulness of grammar and its usage-based nature (Langacker 2008b).

As mentioned above, cognitive approaches to grammar rely on a usage-based model which centers around the language user, his/her vantage point of a situation and the context of the situation. Moreover, as has been stated by Achard (2008: 440), the usage-based model of a language is concerned with the process of mapping meaning onto form. More specifically, this means that grammar is not merely a linguistic system that is necessary to produce and understand language, but even more so, grammar is shaped and learned by the language users themselves during actual communication. This view of grammar is therefore a bottom-up approach in the sense that specific patterns and schemas emerge out of language usage as abstracted generalizations (Broccias 2008: 80). Langacker (2008b: 81) refers to authentic instances of language use from which conventionalized units are abstracted as usage events. He (1999: 99; original emphasis) has noted that

> [i]t is not the linguistic system per se that constructs and understands novel expressions, but rather the language user, who marshals for this purpose the full panoply of available resources. In addition to linguistic units, these resources include such factors as memory, planning, problem-solving ability, general knowledge, short- and longer-term goals, as well as full apprehension of the

> physical, social, cultural, and linguistic context. An actual instance of language use, resulting in all these factors, constitutes what I will call a *usage event*.

Consequently, it can be argued that the notion of construal must play an essential part in speech production or, to put it in Achard's (2004: 179) words "linguistic production is largely a matter of construal". This implies that it is the speaker's choice to use the construction or expression that best represents the conceptualization of the given situation. This puts the speaker directly into a central position of a usage event (Achard 2004: 179). However, this claim does not only hold true for L1 language use, but it should be given at least equal, if not more, attention in L2 acquisition and should therefore also be given consideration in language teaching and instruction.

It is quite obvious that teaching grammar in the EFL classroom largely depends on the teacher's view of the nature of grammar, his/her view on how the overall organization of the target language is stored and learned by the students, as well as the general importance of grammatical knowledge in SL learning (Achard 2004: 165). On the other hand, adopting the main tenets and principles of Cognitive Linguistics for second language acquisition, specifically for teaching grammar, allows a more contextualized and usage-based application in the foreign language classroom. This approach to language teaching is also supported by Achard (2008: 440f.), who claims that

> [t]he usage-based conception of CG [Cognitive Grammar] is crucial for second language instructors because it posits that learners will most benefit from actual exposure to "real" instances of language use. It is only through exposure to the situations in which the natives select specific constructions that they can gain the necessary confidence and expertise to make similar choices themselves in comparable situations.

This, however, puts language instructors into a pedagogically difficult position. From a Cognitive Linguistics perspective the prevailing grammar teaching practices in the EFL classroom cannot do justice to such a usage-based approach. In the current trend of grammar teaching (based on the materials used in EFL teaching at Austrian schools; cf. e.g. Gerngroß: 2005; Gerngross: 2009) a certain

grammatical construction is introduced by explaining the morphosyntactic formation as well as stating the rule for its use. For instance, in the textbook *The New You and Me* for year 1 (Gerngroß 2005: 81) the present progressive is initially introduced by saying: "So kannst du sagen, was jemand gerade tut oder was gerade passiert: Bildung: Person + am / is /are + ing-Form des Verbs" and is followed by a few examples that provide rules for their usage, highlighting ongoing action: "Can you help me? – Sorry, **I'm doing** my homework." (original emphasis).

According to Achard (2008: 441), grammatical constructions are traditionally presented as a rule and as "a property of the target linguistic system, and not a result of the speaker's choice." This fact puts the teacher into a challenging position, because it goes without saying that all speakers in a conversation actually know, and thus choose, what they want to say. The major problem with traditional grammar explanations is seen in the seemingly close link between form and use, i.e. function, instead of associating form with meaning. It is common practice that the progressive aspect – and all grammatical constructions – are taught in a way in which the use of the progressive strongly depends on adverbials or conjunctions that precede or follow the progressive aspect. In this case the choice for a specific construction is therefore lexically restricted (Achard 2008: 441) and depends on what is commonly referred to as signal words. So, for instance, in the sentence *While she was having a shower, the telephone rang* the most probable answer to the question as to why the progressive form is used here would most likely be explained in terms of the conjunction *while*. For students this is of course a simple and transparent rule to follow and easy to memorize. However, this attempt to explain the grammatical system of a language with fixed rules does not conform to the core concept of the centrality of meaning anchored in Cognitive Grammar. For, as mentioned earlier, it is evident that not the linguistic system itself is responsible for constructing and understanding specific constructions. Rather, this is determined by the speaker's choice. On the other hand, teaching grammatical constructions by providing rules for their use is deeply entrenched in the history of our teaching practices. In this, what Achard (2008: 441) refers to as "system-based", approach to teaching grammar problems arise only when students come across examples that clearly deviate from these hard and fast rules that at first

seemed to be so straightforward and easy to grasp. According to Achard (2008: 441)

> For the instructor, focusing on the speaker rather than on the system involves the shift from teaching set patterns of lexical associations to teaching the conventionalized way of matching certain expressions to certain situations, as well as the flexibility of using the available alternatives to express specific semantic nuances. It represents a thorny pedagogical challenge because of the inherent flexibility of construal. The methodological difficulty consists in providing clear guidelines that teach students how to exercise their linguistic choice.

This approach based on the tenets of Cognitive Grammar emphasizes a shift away from instructions of isolated grammatical items within a rule-governed system to the integration of constructions into certain situations, i.e. contextual use of grammatical constructions. Further, the adoption of Cognitive Linguistic principles in SLA indicates that the function of a construction also represents its meaning. Therefore, to make headway in this respect teachers face the challenging situation of having to create situations for teaching purposes, or placing students in situations in which the students find themselves in the similar position as native speakers, where they have to make a specific choice of one grammatical construction over another, depending on what they want to express with it. A major problem, however, is posed by the fact that learners of a language (especially students at beginner level) lack the range of conventionalized options and expressions readily available to native speakers.

With respect to the uses of the progressive aspect, instead of overburdening the students with separate rules for the uses of the progressive and the non-progressive aspect, it might be beneficial to raise the students' awareness of the conceptual difference between constructions such as *John was building a house* and *John built a house*, the progressive construction and non-progressive respectively. This realization may be helpful for the learning process and is essential for understanding that the choice of a progressive construction over a non-progressive one is simply a different way of construing a situation. Further, it is

clear that in the example below, the beginning of a story, no straightforward patterns of lexical associations are recognizable:

It **was** a stormy night, and the wind **was howling** through the trees outside. Anna **was** alone in the dark house and she **was lying** in bed trying to get to sleep. Suddenly she **heard** the sound of breaking glass downstairs. She **sat** up frozen with fear.

Perhaps, an appropriate starting point to explain the use of the progressive aspect versus the simple past tense in narrative discourse is to try to make students aware which grammatical construction is used to set and describe the scene and which one is applied to move the story forward. Or, which parts of the story give information about the background, and which highlight the main events. Here, in the example above, while the progressive aspect is used to describe the background that sets the scene as in *and the wind was howling*, *she was lying in bed*, the simple past tense is used to tell and advance the story, *it was a stormy night*, *Anna was alone*, *suddenly she heard a sound*. Therefore, it can generally be said that while for the description of circumstances the progressive is used, consequences or reactions to them require the use of simple past. Consequently, the progressive aspect functions to outline background information in narrative discourse. It is important to point out is that verbs of *having* and *being* are exceptions, as they do not take the progressive in this context. The effect of applying the progressive *–ing* to *be* and *have* will be explained later in this thesis. As a result of making students aware of these differences they are likely to, at a later stage in the learning process, be able to link the progressive aspect to situations which describes the background of a given situation, or to react to a certain circumstance.

The Cognitive Linguistics approach to language teaching proposes that form, meaning and function are inextricably linked and are not arbitrary but motivated. This fact will help learners to develop awareness toward form-meaning relations and facilitate the usage of grammatical forms in actual situations.

Alongside the relation of construal and second language acquisition, the notion of prototype is another core concept of Cognitive Linguistics which can be helpful in

explaining a grammatical construction or the semantic content of a word and can thereby facilitate language learning. As the idea of prototype is also of great importance to this thesis and therefore the most characteristic features of Prototype Theory should be explained. It is based on the idea that categorization is a fundamental property of how humans perceive, conceive and describe their world around them and their instrument of doing so is language. Thus, categorization is essential to language use. Linguists agree that human categorization is anything but a clear-cut matter. Categories can be referred to as clusters of entities that are determined by members that are more or less central to the category (Pütz 2007: 1148). In Langacker's (1987: 371) terms a prototype

> is a typical instance of a category, and other elements are assimilated to the category on the basis of their perceived resemblance to the prototype; there are degrees of membership based on degrees of similarity.

This suggests that categories do not occur naturally but are imposed onto the world by humans and are therefore highly subjective. For example, when thinking of the category "fruit", which has a vast number of members like apples, pears, bananas, cantaloupes, pomegranates, limes, mangos, and so on, there will be exemplars that are more typical and more salient than others. This, however, is dependent on various factors like time, place, context, and culture. For western Europeans for instance the most typical kind of fruit would in all probability be apples, bananas, pears and plums. Australians on the other hand would most likely include mangos, passion fruits, lychees etc. in a list of typical fruits. Therefore, they would be referred to as the best example or the prototype of the category fruit. It is essential to consider the cultural background of the person who categorizes (Verspoor 2008: 81f.). This suggests that membership within a category is graded and, as mentioned above, subject to change according to time, place and context. In addition, it is influenced by background knowledge and assumptions as well as the cultural background of the language user. Ungerer & Schmid (2006: 45) put it as follows:

> The prototypes of cognitive categories are not fixed, but may change when a particular context is introduced, and the same is true for category boundaries. More generally, the whole internal structure of a category seems to depend on the context and, in a wider sense, on our social and cultural

knowledge, which is thought to be organized in cognitive and cultural models.

It can be deduced that different cultures categorize concepts in various ways and that boundaries between those categories are fuzzy. Admittedly, the example above is a rather obvious one and easily accessible, but there are of course more subtle ones that may not be explained so easily.

The notion of prototype can also be applied productively in the foreign language classroom. According to Pütz (2007: 1148) "[t]he internal structure of categories in terms of prototypical or central members and noncentral or peripheral members is likewise reflected in the semantics of grammatical categories." The obvious suggestion would be to teach from the typical example, i.e. the prototype, to special cases and other major clusters, focusing initially on the most frequent and basic uses of a grammatical construction or lexical item. This helps learners to raise language awareness, especially in terms of how differently languages can be structured. Therefore, a Cognitive Linguistics approach to language learning might also be helpful to introduce grammatical structures or lexical items that are idiosyncratic in the target language and do not exist in the learners' L1. A striking example of a conceptual category that is obviously difficult to acquire for learners of English as an L2 is the acquisition of the progressive aspect for German native speakers since German is, strictly speaking, an aspectless language. However, I will not elaborate on this subject matter here; section 4.6. is dedicated to how aspectuality is expressed in the German language. The logical conclusion that imposes itself here is that it makes it particularly difficult for learners to acquire grammatical or conceptual categories that are nonexistent in their mother tongue. Full mastery of constructions – and especially the ones that are not isomorphous with the learner's L1 – with native-like knowledge of their range of usage is certainly challenging and will only come about through intense exposure to and long-time practice of the target language. Finally, it is also important to mention at this point that it could be of advantage for a better understanding to present something as the non-prototypical use of a grammatical construction or the meaning of a lexical item rather than presenting it as the exception to the rule, thus highlighting the motivational character of Cognitive Linguistics.

3. The viewpoint of events: the concepts of tense and aspect in English

3.1. Situations as the basis of analysis

A fundamental aspect of languages is that they provide their speakers with the ability to describe situations, refer to events that occurred in the past or will only happen in the future, and, most importantly, allow speakers of a language to describe the temporal sequence of these events, as well as talk about events as complete or incomplete processes (Michaelis 1998: 1, Li & Shirai 2000: 1). In her book *Aspectual Grammar and Past-Time Reference* Michaelis (1998: 1) states that

> [t]alking about processes, states, and occurrences is such a mundane aspect of discourse that one can forget that the language does not give an unmediated picture of reality, but instead imposes a particular conceptual framework upon the domain of eventualities.

Michaelis therefore argues that although languages differ in the way in which they express temporal meaning, it is an inherent feature of all languages that they can express the basic concepts of time mentioned above. In order to be able to describe temporal concepts in a language there are two essential distinguishable grammatical systems which enable the speakers of a particular language to specify the temporal features of a situation, namely that of tense and aspect (Michaelis 1998: 1; Li & Shirai 2000: 1). One such feature for marking tense, for example, is placing the situation in relation to the actual time of speaking, often also referred to as speech time, and allows the speaker to specify whether the situation occurred previous to, simultaneously with, or will happen after the time of speaking (Michaelis 1998: 1). According to Michaelis (1998: 1), apart from tense marking, another feature is used to locate the situation within what she refers to as a reference interval, meaning that the situation is viewed through time; this is called aspectual marking. Thus, aspect is a linguistic category that describes how a speaker views the "internal temporal contour" (Downing & Lock 2006: 369f.) of a situation, which is to say, speakers characterize a single situation and state according to whether it continues throughout the reference interval, begins at that time, or is brought to a completion within that time (Michaelis 1998: 1; Li & Shirai 2000: 1f.).

It is evident from the preceding discussion that aspect and tense are usually treated as separate linguistic objects of inquiry. It is equally obvious that both systems also strongly correlate, as Michaelis (1998: 2) puts it:

> Of course, we cannot ignore the temporal components of aspectual meaning, nor can we treat aspectual meaning as a semantic system divorced from the system of temporal expressions in general.

Michaelis (1998: 2f.) maintains that there are certain events which can only be fully instantiated with the passage of time. The present is merely perceived "as a momentaneous interval, i.e. a point in time. Since this point cannot accommodate the full temporal profile of an event, one cannot relativize an event predication to the present." (Michaelis 1998: 2f.) Michaelis (1998: 2f.) convincingly demonstrates this view with the following example of *dying*, thus illustrating the interrelation between tense and aspect. Therefore, it would be anomalous to say that *Harry dies* when constructed as an ongoing situation as *dying* can only be instantiated with the passage of time, to view *dying* as a point in time would be rather unusual (Michaelis 1998: 2f.).

I will now discuss aspect in greater detail and will look at two types of aspect that have had an influential role in the research on the acquisition of aspect: grammatical aspect and lexical aspect. Downing & Locke (2006: 370) argue that "lexical aspect proves to be an invaluable tool for understanding the functioning of the Progressive [...] aspect[s]."

3.2.   Grammatical aspect vs. lexical aspect

For the description of the grammatical and lexical aspects I will adopt the terminology from Smith's (1986) speaker-based model as this is the most prevalent in the relevant literature. In this model a speaker confers a certain perspective upon the situation he/she is referring to. For Smith (1986: 97), lexical aspect is the speaker's characterization of an actual situation, referred to by Smith (1986: 100) as situation aspect. Aktionsart or inherent aspect are further terms

used in the literature to denote the concept of lexical aspect (Li & Shirai 2000: 3). For a uniform description I will use the term lexical aspect throughout this thesis. Smith (1986: 100) defines lexical aspect as aspect which

> involves the linguistic forms and meanings associated, for a given language, with idealized situation types. In English the linguistic forms are verb classes, particles, and types of complements.

Therefore, it is a matter of what is inherent in the lexical item.

Grammatical aspect, referred to as viewpoint aspect by Smith (1986: 100), by contrast, is concerned with the explicit marking of verbs by inflectional and derivational morphology, and/or the use of auxiliaries (Li & Shirai 2000: 3). In English, there are two grammaticalized aspectual distinctions, namely the progressive versus non-progressive and the perfect versus non-perfect. For this reason, grammatical aspect sheds light on how different events can be viewed, either as complete, in which case the term perfectivity is used, or as incomplete, which is referred to as imperfectivity. The present section of this thesis will look at this distinction in greater detail. Further, it is noteworthy that "viewpoint aspect is dependent on situation aspect: the progressive viewpoint is limited to certain types of situation aspect, and the simple viewpoint varies in interpretation according to type of situation" (Smith 1986: 100). Thus, we can assume that there is a direct conceptual link between lexis and grammar during communication.

3.2.1. Lexical aspect

For further illustration of situation aspect, i.e. lexical aspect, it is beneficial to briefly touch upon Vendler's (1957; 1967) semantic categories of verbs (verb phrases), as his "four-way classification of the inherent semantics of verbs has become the starting point for any subsequent research on lexical aspect." (Li & Shirai 2000: 4). Vendler's (1957) theories will be particularly relevant when discussing Shirai's (2002: 457ff.) prototype hypothesis of tense-aspect acquisition later in this thesis. Vendler (1957: 146f.) originally proposed that verbs could be classified – with respect to the temporal properties that they encode – according to the following basic categories: achievement, accomplishment, activity, and state.

Both activity and accomplishment verbs have some duration but differ inasmuch as accomplishment verbs have a clearly defined inherent endpoint. Such situations are referred to as telic events whereas activity verbs describe situations with an arbitrary endpoint, also termed atelic situations. Achievement verbs also describe a situation that has an obvious endpoint, but are reduced to a specific point in time and therefore lack duration. State verbs finally denote a continuing situation and are consequently not dynamic (Li & Shirai 2000: 3-4). So, according to Vendler (1957: 147ff.), state verbs define a situation that is viewed as continuous over a longer period of time unless, of course, some external factors force a change of this state. Therefore, verbs like *love*, *know* are considered to be state verbs. Activity verbs are inherently dynamic, like *run*, *walk* and *swim*. However, according to Vendler (1957: 145f.) the verb *run* in the phrase *run a mile* describes an accomplishment rather than an activity as it has a clearly marked endpoint. The last category described by Vendler (1957) includes verbs like *fall*, *die*, or *drop*, which encode events as punctual and instantaneous and for that reason are referred to as achievement verbs. Table 1 below, adapted from Shirai (2002: 456), gives an overview of this four-way classification and shows the semantic features of Vendler's categories.

Table 1 Semantic features of Vendler's four categories of inherent lexical aspect

	Punctual	Telic	Dynamic
State	-	-	-
Activity	-	-	+
Accomplishment	-	+	+
Achievement	+	+	+

In this context, Downing & Locke (2006: 371) draw attention to the fact that in the traditional way of categorizing verbs into activities and accomplishments, Vendler (1957) disregarded the fact that in cases like *walk to school* (accomplishment) and *win the race* (achievement) human agency is involved. However, it cannot always be the case that all processes are agentive. The following sentence *It snowed heavily* denotes an event which has no agent. Such instances are best described in

terms of boundedness and unboundedness (Downing & Locke 2006: 371f.). The notion of boundedness and unboundedness has its origins in the field of Cognitive Linguistics (Niemeier 2008; Niemeier & Reif 2008) and describes in what kind of viewing frame a situation is looked at. More precisely put, the viewing frame of a particular situation can be either maximal or restricted. So, bounded events are seen from an external and thus holistic perspective, or, in other words, are seen within a maximal viewing frame. In contrast, unbounded events take an internal perspective of a situation and focus on its progression; its starting and end points not taken into consideration but are implied. These events, then, are viewed within a restricted viewing frame (Radden & Dirven 2007: 175). The introduction of the notion of boundedness and unboundedness in the next section (4.1.) of this thesis is an attempt to analyze and describe the progressive construction in English in a more simplified way, capturing the perfective/imperfective distinction as discussed in the present section in other terms. Thus, for the purpose of a clear terminology throughout the rest of this paper I will treat perfective situations as boundedness, and imperfective situations as unboundedness, as has been suggested by Radden & Dirven (2007: 178).

3.2.2. Grammatical aspect

A fundamental aspectual contrast denoted in grammatical structures is the distinction between perfectivity and imperfectivity. A situation can be described as perfective when it is presented as a complete entity regarding its initial and concluding points within a time frame. The speaker/writer takes an external position on a particular situation and views an eventuality as a whole entity in retrospect (Comrie 1976: 4). For example, Comrie (1976: 16ff.) treats a construction as exemplified in sentence (2) as a means of denoting a perfective situation.

(2)   John locked the safe.[1]

In Cognitive Grammar, however, the defining property of a perfective situation, according to Langacker (1999: 223), is that the situation denoted by a perfective verb involves a change through time. Accordingly, In the Cognitive Linguistics

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[1] It is vital to note, and clearly evident from example (2), that perfectivity is not identical with the perfective aspect; the terminology used here may be misleading.

framework perfective verbs are dynamic situations like *learn*, *write*, *study* and *run*, to mention just a few. It has been put forward by Brisard (2002: 252) that they "obligatorily take the present progressive as a default form and that, when they do, no intimation of any type of temporal progression is necessarily being conveyed."

Klein (1994: 3ff., 1995: 23f.), on the other hand, bases his assumptions on the distinction between the time at which a situation actually takes place and the time for which a claim is raised. His (1995: 23f.) interpretation of the perfective aspect is that the time for which an assertion is made is partly included in the post-time of the situation. Consequently, Klein (1994: 3.) exemplifies his theory in the following way. In the utterance

    (3)   The light was on.

the time for which the claim is made, also referred to as topic time (TT) by Klein (1994: 2-3; 1995), is the past. More precisely, this means that the time of utterance (TU) succeeds the topic time whereas the time of situation (TSit) applies to the time at which the light was actually on.

In Cognitive Grammar the basic view is that only perfective verbs can be used in progressive constructions, whereas only imperfective verbs occur in the simple (non-progressive) present tense (Langacker 1991: 207f.; 1999: 223). Or, as Langacker (1991: 207) rightly puts it, "[a] verb's ability to take the progressive is widely and correctly acknowledged as a diagnostic for its perfectivity." By this definition, according to Langacker (1999: 223), *learn (the poem)* is a perfective construction as example (4) shows, whereas *know (the poem)* is imperfective.

    (4)   a. He is {learning/*knowing} the poem.

              b. He {*knows/*learns*} the poem (right now).

Conversely, the imperfective, as described in traditional terms by Downing & Locke (2006: 369f.), provides an internal view of a situation with no clear-cut boundaries and is "conceptualized as ongoing and incomplete; the beginning and end aren't included in this viewpoint – we see only the internal part". Comrie (1976: 4) further states that the imperfective

can both look backwards towards the start of the situation,
and look forwards to the end of the situation, and indeed is
equally appropriate if the situation is one that lasts through
all the time, without any beginning and without any end.

The imperfective aspect as defined by Comrie (1976: 4) focuses exclusively on a certain point in time taking an inside view of a situation. Sentence (5) is by Comrie's (1976: 24ff.) as well as Downing & Locke's (2006: 269f.) definition of imperfectivity a representation of an incomplete event:

(5)   John was locking the safe.

Applying the *–ing* form to the perfective verb *lock* has the effect of construing the situation as homogeneous, i.e. imperfective. The beginning and endpoint of the situation are marginalized. Contrary to Comrie's description of imperfectivity above, Cognitive Linguistics stresses the stative character of imperfective verbs, such as *know*, *like*, *understand*, *see* or *have*. As opposed to perfective verbs, they typically occur in the simple present tense and denote a stative process through time. According to De Wit & Brisard (2009: 8), "the process persists indefinitely beyond the immediate scope and remains qualitatively identical." Figures 3a and 3b (adopted from Langacker 2001b: 257) depict the difference between perfective and imperfective verbs. The two intricate boxes both refer to the temporal scope of a situation, the inner box represents the immediate scope (IS) whereas the outer box indicates the maximal scope (MS) and the arrows illustrate the passage of time. The two heavy lines represent the part of the situation which is profiled. In Figure (3a) the profiled situation is clearly bounded within the immediate scope of temporality. Unlike this, situations designated by imperfective verbs, as illustrated in Figure (3b) are construed as unbounded within the immediate temporal scope and persist indefinitely through time. However, Langacker (2001b: 257) also points out that "only that portion which falls within the immediate temporal scope constitutes the processual profile, because an expression's profile is by definition confined to the onstage region."

Figure 3 Basic aspectual classes

(a) Perfective process   (b) Imperfective process
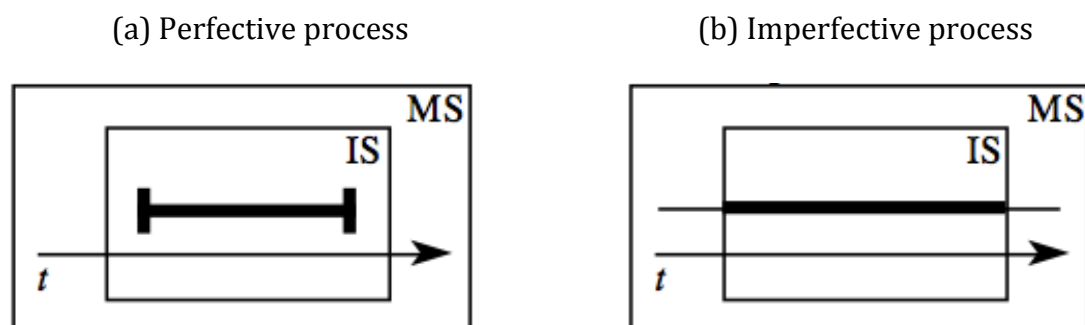
By putting imperfectivity into perspective, the progressive aspect in English is, as Bardovi-Harlig (2000: 211) asserts, "the main imperfective viewpoint." According to Langacker (1999: 226f.) the English progressive construction is, due to a clear functional motivation, only applicable to perfective (i.e. dynamic) verbs. Since the progressive renders a perfective construction into an imperfective one, it would be pointless to apply it to imperfectives, or, to adopt Langacker's (1991: 208) exact words: "The vacuity of imperfectivizing a verb that is already imperfective is sensibly avoided by the collective wisdom of conventional English usage." Therefore, the relationship between –*ing* and the imperfective has been explained by Langacker (1999: 226f.) "The effect of –*ing* is to imperfectivize the perfective process designated by the verb stem it combines with, and to impose on it the holistic, summary construal characteristic of a participle."

Consider again example (5), in which the progressive construction renders a perfective process imperfective, meaning that the perfective process of locking something is viewed from an internal perspective and provides a close-up view of an event, focusing on its progression. The onset and offset of the situation are not taken into consideration but are implied. Or, as Langacker has put it (2001b: 259):

> Technically, I describe it as imposing an immediate temporal scope that excludes the endpoints of the perfective process it applies to. [...] While the maximal scope is a span of time containing the full, bounded process, the immediate scope subtends just an arbitrary portion of its internal development. Only that portion is profiled, since – as a matter of definition – the profile is the focal point within the immediate scope. The overall progressive expression is

imperfective, because grammatical class is determined by the profile and the profiled process is not bounded. Also, as with any imperfective, the profiled process is construed as being effectively homogeneous.

I would like to note here that the actual description of the progressive construction will follow in section four (4.2.) below, which is exclusively devoted to a precise analysis of the progressive construction as such. Therefore, the subsequent discussion is concerned with a brief cross-linguistic discussion of the imperfective/perfective distinction, followed by an outline of habituality.

It is important to mention that in English the perfective and imperfective aspects are covert categories, meaning that they are, unlike in many other languages, not directly encoded morphologically but, as Michaelis (1998: 59) notes, "have a number of grammatical and inferential ramifications." It is the case in English that the distinction between a perfective and an imperfective interpretation is made inferentially by the speakers dependent on the context or, the relevance of one meaning. For example, sentence

(6)   He stopped and *spoke* to me in English. (Downing & Locke 2006: 370; my emphasis)

describes a single event, whereas sentence

(7)   "He *spoke* English with a Welsh accent." (my emphasis)

depicts, according to Downing & Locke (2006: 370), a habitual event. They argue that in other languages like Spanish the perfective in sentence (6) would be clearly marked as such, namely *habló*. In example (7) *spoke* would be translated with *hablaba* (Spanish imperfective, which is clearly different from imperfectivity in English which would be *was speaking*), thus the perfective/imperfective distinction is, contrary to English, grammatically clearly marked in Spanish (Downing & Locke 2006: 370).

The two latter examples show that a clear categorization of English verbs into perfective and imperfective is usually much less straightforward than one might think. To complete this discussion one issue still remains to be addressed, namely the relationship between imperfectivity/perfectivity and habituality, as

exemplified in sentences (6) and (7), meaning whether a habit can be seen as a complete, i.e. perfective, event, as in (7). I do not agree with Downing & Lock's (2006: 370) attempt to explain *He spoke English with a Welsh accent* in terms of habituality. Here, *spoke* describes a state rather than a habit as it refers to the accent of a person, which is ordinarily perceived as a person's character trait and thus describes a lasting state of affairs that holds true for an infinite period of time. It can justifiably be said that habitual situations cannot be viewed as completed events since there is always potential for a change of some sort through time. As a matter of fact, the example at hand is imperfective because it portrays a static situation, its boundaries not being included in this given situation. There are, however, imperfective verbs which normally describe a state – as in *I like this* – but which can, according to Langacker (1991: 208), "sometimes receive a perfective construal" as the situation is perceived differently. In *I'm liking this more and more* the verb *like* is perfective the construction, however, denotes an imperfective situation. Also the state can be viewed as a momentary situation not meant to continue for an indefinite period of time (*At least for now, I'm liking this*). This also applies to perfective verbs construed as being generic or habitual, which are then regarded as imperfective (*A beaver builds dams; Ralph always votes Republican*) (Langacker 1991: 208). The perfective/imperfective-progressive relation is only mentioned in passing in this section; an extensive discussion will be provided in section 4, in which the various uses as well as the different senses of the progressive construction will be addressed.

In continuation of the subject matter brought up above, Radden & Dirven (2007: 193) argue that habituality is a type of state which, in a narrow sense, portrays "successions [rather than states] of indefinitely recurrent equivalent situation." These occurrences of regular patterns do not only apply to repeated human behavior, but are equally, if not even more so, applicable to recursive situations observed in nature, as in *The earth revolves around the sun in a nearly circular orbit*. However, generally speaking, habituals consist of individual events that are viewed in their integrity and hence perceived as a single, homogenous, lasting state. The expression of such habituals can be achieved in a myriad of ways, depending on the time the habitual state holds lasts. Thus, habitual situations may

occur in the present simple. Radden & Dirven (2007: 194) list the following examples:

(8)   a. Mary *smokes* a pipe.   [*personal habit*]

         b. Germans *drink* a lot of beer.   [*social custom*]

         c. My son-in-law *works* in London.   [*occupation*]

         d. But he *lives* in Paris.   [*residence*]

As has been emphasized by Radden & Dirven (2007: 194) habitual states can be expressed in various grammatical ways. For habitual situations in the past the phrase *used to* is applied (9a), *keep* V-*ing* may indicate habituals starting in the past and continuing up to the present (9b), and *now* is used for situations which only recently commenced (9c). These habitual situations are exemplified by Radden & Dirven (2007: 194) in

(9)   a. My fiancée *used to* work in a pub.

         b. She *keeps* applying for new jobs.

         c. She *now* works at McDonald's.

Following Radden & Dirven's (2007: 193f.) definition of habituality, in which they stress the indefiniteness of recursive equivalent situations, it may also be the case that habitual states are only temporary in character. A temporary habitual state can be expressed by using the progressive construction, which then renders a seemingly timeless habitual state temporary, as exemplified in the sentences (10a, b) below, taken from Radden and Dirven (2007: 194). However, this effect of the progressive construction will be discussed in greater detail later in this thesis and is mentioned here merely for the sake of completeness.

(10)   a. Mom *works* at the Ministry of Finance.

          b. Mom *is working* at the Ministry of Finance (for the moment).

Another observation made by Radden & Dirven (2007: 195) worth mentioning at this point is that habitual states may be highlighted by the use of frequency adjuncts such as *constantly*, *always*, *forever* and *all the time*, commonly used in combination with the progressive aspect so as to denote the repeated occurrences of events. The use of –*ing* in order to achieve temporary habitual states puts

emphasis on the progression of the event. However, as has been pointed out by Radden & Dirven (2007: 195), frequency adjuncts focus "on the overall frequency of the individual events in the overall situation." Consequently, if the nature of the event is connoted rather negatively, the negative association is enhanced. According to Radden & Dirven (2007: 195), "[t]he progressive habitual thus tends to invite inferences of irritation or even annoyance at a person's [...] behaviour." The following example (11) is taken from Radden & Dirven (2007: 195) for further illustration.

(11)   My husband *is constantly getting* into trouble.

Comrie (1976: 25) suggests that the semantic distinction of aspectual categories be subdivided as follows:

Figure 4 Classification of aspectual oppositions according to Comrie (1976)
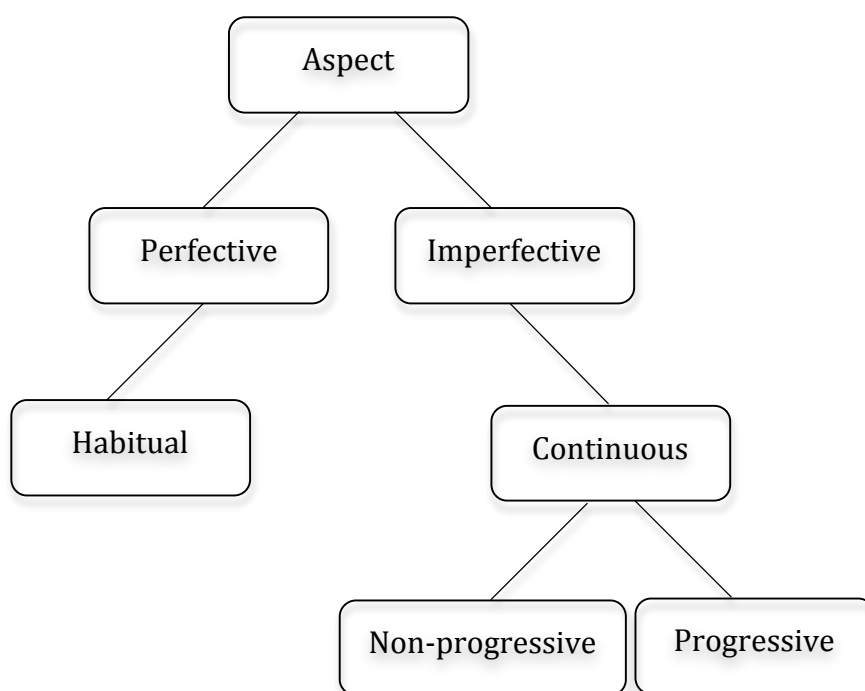
In Comrie's (1976: 26ff.) description, habituality is depicted as a subcategory of the perfective. Further, Comrie (1976: 27f.) points out that one feature which holds true for all habituals is that

> they describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property

of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period. (Comrie 1976: 27f.)

This model differs significantly from Langacker's (1991: 208) as well as Radden & Dirven's (2007: 193ff.) descriptions of the relationship between (im)perfectivity and habituality inasmuch as for Comrie (1976: 25) habitual situations are in fact imperfective in the grammatical sense. The way Langacker describes his model, by using constructs of Cognitive Grammar, a perfective situation is rendered imperfective by changing the perspective taken on a situation. The basic aspectual distinction of English verbs, in Langacker's (2001b: 255ff.) Cognitive Grammar framework, is a matter of perfective/imperfective distinction which is grounded on their grammatical behavior in a sentence. That is to say what Langacker (2001b: 255ff.) refers to as perfective verbs can also be described as dynamic verbs whereas imperfective verbs are the equivalent to stative verbs.

We have now looked at two rather diverging descriptions of the perfective/imperfective contrast: in Comrie's (1976) description, which represents a more traditional viewpoint in the distinction of the aspectual categories (and of aspect in general), aspect is treated as the perfective/imperfective distinction based on the subjective interpretations of situation and are purely grammatical with no impact of the inherent meaning of the verb, whereas Langacker's theories are based on the grammatical behavior of verbs (Langacker 2001b: 255).

At first glance, this lengthy discussion has in some way led to a slight confusion of the concepts and terminologies used in this section. As already mentioned earlier, and as has been stated by Boogaart & Janssen (2007: 815), one of the fundamental ideas in the Cognitive Grammar framework is that there is no distinction between lexicon and grammar, but that they form "a continuum of constructions" (Langacker 2007: 421). Langacker's (2001b: 255) way of dividing verbs into two basic aspectual classes, which he terms perfective and imperfective, is line with the principles of Cognitive Grammar, not based on the inherent meaning of verbs (i.e. lexical aspect). Rather, they relate to verbs of perceiving change (i.e. perfective) and the lack thereof (i.e. imperfective) (Boogaart & Janssen 2007: 815). To make matters even more complicated, Boogaart & Janssen (2007: 815) emphasize that in

the Cognitive Linguistics framework put forward by Langacker (e.g. 1999) lexical and grammatical aspects are both subsumed under the concept of perfectivity and that the progressive construction itself is an "imperfectivizing device".

A detailed discussion of the lexical aspect will follow in the subsequent section, but due to its relevance for some terminological clarifications at this point I will briefly state the so-called Vendler classes of verbs: state, activity, accomplishment, achievement (Vendler 1967: 144). This characterization of verbs is dependent on whether the situation indicates duration, involves change through time, and has an inherent end point, meaning that it is telic (Boogaart & Janssen 2007: 813). This classification has had great influence in the study of lexical aspect. Vendler (1957; 1967), who bases his assumptions on the distinction between lexical and grammatical aspect, treats perfectivity as a function in a sentence. More specifically, according to Vendler's (1967: 144) categorization of verbs, activity, accomplishment and achievement denote a perfective function in a sentence whereas state verbs indicate an imperfective function. Thus, in the Vendler-like analysis of verbs or predicates these have a default option according to the inherent meaning of the verb itself. Moreover, it is to say that lexical, as distinguished from grammatical, aspect is independent of the speaker's/writer's subjective conception of a situation, because aspectual meaning is also inherent in the meaning of the verb. Langacker (1999: 390, note 14), however, formulates his approach to perfectivity and imperfectivity from a diverging angle and cautions against treating Vendler's (1957; 1967) classification of verbs "as rigid lexical partitioning: verbs may have a default value, but the aspectual interpretation of a given expression is flexibly and globally determined."

This discussion leads to the conclusion that the imperfective/perfective distinction is, strictly speaking, a matter of lexical aspect within the Cognitive Linguistics framework. This can be seen in the fact that Langacker bases his assumptions on both perfective verbs, which may also be described as verbs denoting a dynamic process, and imperfective verbs, which may also be referred to as stative verbs (cf. perfective process *learn the poem* versus imperfective process *know the poem*, taken from Langacker 2001b: 258). Thus, it is the inherent lexical meaning of the verbs that affects the interpretation of the grammatical aspect and should be

conceptually distinguished from grammatical aspect marking. In the present discussion, the aspectual notions of imperfectivity and perfectivity are nevertheless treated as a grammatical entity in English.

4. The semantics of the progressive: analyzing the progressive aspect

Up to this point, the major concern of this thesis has been to introduce linguistic concepts that underlie the progressive aspect in English, as well as to shed light on how these concepts are differently dealt with in the relevant literature and how they correlate with the progressive aspect. Assuming that this discussion has provided an adequate overview of the notions tense and aspect, as well as the rather lengthy discussion of the classification of aspectual categories of perfective, imperfective and habituality with respect to the progressive aspect, this section has as its main objective in exploring the progressive aspect as such. Therefore, the notion of boundedness and unboundedness will be introduced at first. It is worthwhile to point to the distinction between these two linguistic phenomena, as it is reflected in the choice between using a simple tense or the progressive aspect and use of the progressive in English can be explained in terms of boundedness and unboundedness. Secondly, it remains to be discussed what the progressive exactly does. Moreover, the actual meaning of *–ing*, even though it is doubtful whether this is in fact possible or not, will be reviewed. Subsequently, I will elaborate on the various uses of the progressive, before concluding this section with a presentation of possible progressive constructions in German.

4.1. The notions of boundedness and unboundedness

According to Langacker (2001a) the concept of boundedness/unboundedness is described as one of the organizing principles of language and is strongly related to the viewpoint and perspective of the language user. Langacker (2001a: 16f.) describes this phenomenon as follows:

> Inherent in every usage event is a presupposed viewing arrangement, pertaining to the relationship between the conceptualizers and the situation being viewed. The default arrangement finds the speaker and hearer together in a fixed location, from which they report on actual occurrences in the world around them. There are however numerous kinds of departures from this canonical circumstance. The departures help make it evident that the default

arrangement, so easily taken for granted, is nonetheless an essential part of the conceptual substrate supporting the interpretation of expressions. Whether canonical or special, the viewing arrangement has a shaping influence on the conception entertained and consequently on the linguistic structure used to code it.

What Langacker suggests here is that in natural communication it is, when assuming a constructivist point of view, never the case that the people involved in this conversation see the situation presented from exactly the same perspective. As it is for the speaker to decide which lexical items to choose and in which grammatical form they should be presented in order to convey the intended meaning, encoding meaning is highly subjective. So for example, by using the simple form we describe a bounded situation; when we choose to use the progressive form instead, we mark a situation as unbounded (Niemeier 2008: 312; 315f.).

In order to make the distinction between boundedness and unboundedness, that is, taking the temporal boundaries of whole situations into consideration, it is important to take another factor of the inherent aspectuality of verbs into account, namely that of whether an event has duration or no duration through time (Downing & Locke 2006: 370f.) The diagram in Figure 5, taken from Downing & Locke (2006: 371), gives a useful overview of the concepts of duration vs. non-duration and boundedness vs. unboundedness. It has to be kept in mind, however, that the illustration of the notions of boundedness and unboundedness below differ quite clearly from Radden's & Dirven's (2007) interpretation of these concepts. For instance, following Radden's & Dirven's (2007) description of boundedness and unboundedness, the example *Jane is their eldest daughter*, taken from Figure 5 below, would be described in terms of boundedness. Therefore, states can indeed be interpreted based on the concepts of boundedness and unboundedness. However, this will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3.

Figure 5 Classification of situations

```
                States
                Jane is their eldest daughter
S                                                    Unbounded (no endpoint)
i                                                    (Activities)
t                                                    we walked slowly along
u                                                    he swam in the pool
a               Processes
t               (dynamic, durative)
i
o                                                    Bounded (+endpoint)
n                                                    (Accomplishments)
s               Occurrences                          we walked home
                                                     he swam 70 lengths in an hour
                                                     the sun went down


                Punctual occurrences        the cable snapped
```
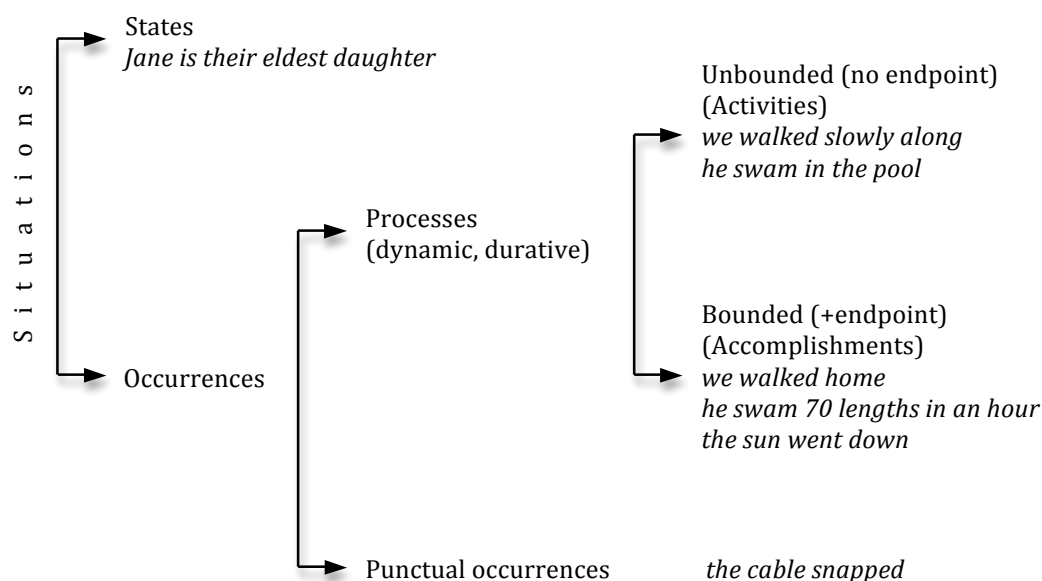
According to this illustration by Downing & Locke (2006: 371) the concept boundedness and unboundedness of situations can be applied to durative processes. Moreover, when scrutinizing the examples above it becomes apparent that the way in which a situation is viewed, that is, whether it is viewed as being bounded or unbounded, can be coded in various ways, that is, for example by adding an adjunct or adverbial particle so as to establish a clearly defined end-point: *he swam in the pool* is an unbounded situation which can be altered into a bounded situation *he swam 70 lengths in an hour*. Further, in the sentences (12) and (13) (Downing & Locke 2006: 372)

    (12)   He rang his agent last week.

    (13)   They rang their agents every day last week.

the situation is presented as a repetition by adding a multiple object or subject rather than a single element; in this way the boundedness of the situation is obtained. Finally, the last way of modifying a situation according to Downing & Locke (2006: 372) is by means of grammatical aspect, which is why it is significant to introduce the concept of boundedness and unboundedness in a thesis which deals with the progressive aspect in English.

Before going into greater detail in the discussion of the progressive aspect, I would like to summarize briefly the concepts introduced in this section of this thesis, as well as clarify the different terminologies used in the previous proposals. So, according to the diagram above there is an important distinction to be made when it comes to situations, taking into account the states that things are in, meaning that there is no clearly defined limitation of time, and the occurrence of things, which describes the "processes that things undertake or undergo" (Niemeier & Reif 2008: 343), which then can be either limited in time or not limited in time. Niemeier & Reif (2008: 343.) thus classify situations on the basis of their "inherent temporal structure". An inherently unbounded situation, for example, would be the instance <LIVE IN THE OUTBACK>, a potentially bounded situation, such as <WANDER ABOUT THE MUSEUM>, can have implicit boundaries, while the instance <BUILD A SNOWMAN> is explicitly bounded. Hence, the verbs used in a communicative instance always have to be analyzed with reference to their other complements, that is, the entire predicate including the verbs complements, as it is the case that verbs and their complements have an effect on the type of situation that is evoked. Niemeier & Reif (2008: 343) therefore conclude that "it is crucial to consider the entire verbal predicate for the purpose of categorisation."

4.2. Bounded and unbounded events with reference to the progressive aspect

In order to put the notion of boundedness and unboundedness in perspective with the progressive aspect I will now have a closer look at the three instances mentioned above.

Niemeier & Reif (2008: 343) note that

> [i]nherently unbounded situations are internally homogeneous and insusceptible to change. By contrast, potentially bounded situations are internally heterogeneous and susceptible to change and they are expected to come to and end at some point. Grammatical aspect, i.e., the use of either the non-progressive or the progressive form, interacts with lexical aspect in that it offers the speaker a means to construe an idealized situation in different ways. Depending

on the type of situation, i.e., whether the situation is inherently bounded or unbounded, and depending on whether the situation is constructed as a single situation or as a repeated situation, grammatical aspect can have different conceptual effects.

So, looking at the first situation, that is <BUILD A SNOWMAN>, it is obvious that it can be presented in the following two ways, in a non-progressive form and in a progressive form (Niemeier & Reif 2008: 343f.):

(14)   a. Eric built a snowman.

        b. Eric was building a snowman.

The situation <BUILD A SNOWMAN> is, according to Niemeier & Reif (2008: 344), already explicitly bounded as such, as the verb *build* in this context – *build* as such is perfective and provokes a situation in progress – evokes a situation in which we automatically think of a starting point, closely followed by a process which involves some sort of change throughout time, and finally reaches an endpoint. In this case the endpoint is a finished snowman, probably looking like this: three round snowballs stacked on top of each other, whereas the one on the bottom typically is the largest one and the one on top, serving as the snowman's head, is the smallest one. Further, the snowman might be decorated with a scarf, a broom and a hat, as well as with pebbles, which serve as eyes and jacket buttons, and a carrot representing the nose. So, this illustration of a finished snowman is also represented in example (14a), in which the situation is viewed in its entirety, taking its starting point, as well as its endpoint into consideration and making clear that it consists of several developmental stages. Figure 6 taken from Niemeier & Reif (2008: 349) may help to illustrate the concept of boundedness.

Figure 6 Explicitly bounded situation: *Eric built a snowman*

In (14b), however, the use of the progressive aspect has the effect of unbounding the situation (Niemeier & Reif 2008: 344). Schmiedtová & Flecken (2008: 370; 374) refer to this as "defocusing of boundaries", meaning that neither the starting point, nor the endpoint are viewed as being part of the situation. In order to fully understand the concept of an unbounded situation as illustrated in (14b) *Eric was building a snowman*, for example, it is important to mention at this point "that the higher order schematic conception of a bounded situation is still evoked by the progressive aspect, [meaning that the bounded situation] functions as a base which provides the possibility of defocusing the boundaries". (Niemeier & Reif 2008: 344). Further, the explicitly bounded situation in (14a) is viewed as fully completed and thus is not susceptible to change anymore, whereas (14b) is perceived as a situation still in progress and can still be changed. In the terminology of Cognitive Grammar, the process designated by the verb *build* in (14a) can be characterized as being perfective. This can be explained by saying that it profiles a bounded situation, or, to be exact, a bounded process which is internally heterogeneous and consists of many successive component states. Due to this heterogeneity, an imperfectivization of the process can be achieved by using the progressive construction as in (14b). Here, the progressive simply narrows the focus of attention, or, as Brisard (2002: 260) puts it, "takes an internal perspective on a homogeneously construed process". The boundaries of the perfective process (14a) are merely implied and are put out of focus in its imperfective form in example (14b). Figure 7 taken from Niemeier & Reif (2008: 350) is an illustration of defocusing the boundaries, thus unbounding the situation.

Figure 7 Unbounded situation: *Eric was building a snowman*

Looking now at the instance <WANDER ABOUT THE MUSEUM>, which is, according to Niemeier & Reif (2008: 344) an implicitly bounded situation. It differs from the example discussed above in as much as the boundaries are implicit, rather than explicit because of the internal structure of the situation in (14a). So, the main distinction between (14b) and (15b) is that there is no actual change of the state involved in (15b), unlike in the snowman example, where the state changes from the incipient state of "no snowman" to a final state "a finished snowman".

(15)   a. We wandered about the museum at night.

           b. We were wandering about the museum at night.

So, (15a) is, like (14a), perceived as a completed situation and therefore not alterable anymore; (15b), however, is still in the middle of the process, with no implicitly marked boundaries (Niemeier & Reif 2008: 343f.).

Finally, there is one remaining situation type to be discussed in this section of the thesis, namely that of inherently unbounded situations, as in <LIVE IN THE OUTBACK>.

(16)   a. I lived in the Australian outback.

           b. I am living in the Australian outback.

This situation type is, so Niemeier & Reif (2008: 344f.) note, somewhat different from the ones discussed above, as the use of the progressive aspect in this case does not only bound the situation and denote a situation in progress which is then potentially susceptible to change, but even more importantly stresses that this state is a temporary one. The use of the non-progressive form, then, as in (16a) expresses a continuing state which the speaker does not necessarily intend to change, at least not for the time being. Thus, the situation in (16b) is unbounded.

In summary, the choice of the progressive aspect versus the non-progressive form clearly has an impact on how a situation is constructed and always adds a communicative perspective to events on behalf of the language user, that is, "they [non-progressive and progressive aspect] indicate in what way the internal constitution of a situation is viewed" (Niemeier & Reif 2008: 345). So, the non-progressive form in inherently bounded situations, as in (14a) and (15a), denotes a

completion of the situation, whereas the progressive form in (14b) and (15b) defocuses the boundaries and does not take either, its beginning or its end into account; hence, the situation is viewed from within, that is, it gives an inner perspective of the situation. In an inherently unbounded situation as in (16a) the use of the non-progressive denotes an ongoing situation which is not expected to change; the progressive aspect, however, "imposes implicit temporal boundaries on the situation, focusing on its temporariness." (Niemeier & Reif 2008: 345)

For instance, the situation in example (17a) can be viewed as dynamic, focusing on the circumstance as a temporary phase or a stage, thus suggesting change from the more permanent situation in example (17b).

> (17) a. I am living in Vienna.
>
> b. I live in Vienna.

So far I have looked at general issues which, so I hope, are relevant to, and contribute to a better understanding of the progressive aspect in English, and have drawn attention to important terminological distinctions which have to be made in this context, as well as the lexis-grammar interface and the essential role that the perspective of situations plays in conveying meaning. The next section attempts to analyze the progressive construction as such by trying to answer the question what does the progressive *–ing* exactly do? Hence, this section aims at describing the meaning of *–ing*.

4.3.   The progressive construction: the meaning of *–ing*

The progressive construction in English is, according to Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1972: 73) composed of "the auxiliary BE + *-ing* participle [i.e. present participle] of the verb-phrase head". However, taking the perspective of Cognitive Grammar (cf. Langacker 1991: 207ff.), the progressive construction forms part of the analysis of the clause structure with the auxiliary verb as the clausal head. Cognitive Grammar has to be set apart from the traditional view of grammar (Generative Grammar) inasmuch as no distinction is made between what are traditionally described as main and auxiliary verbs. What motivates this differentiation in Generative Grammar is the fact that main verbs (e.g. *wash*) are

viewed as lexical verbs with a detailed semantic content, as opposed to auxiliary verbs which supposedly are more of a grammatical category than part of the lexicon, with only a rather abstract, if any, meaning (Langacker 1991: 194). In contrast, Cognitive Grammar adopts the view of "the primacy of semantics in linguistic analysis" (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007: 5), which is one fundamental characteristic of Cognitive Linguistics. More specifically, this means, or, as Geeraerts & Cuyckens (2007: 5) put it

> the basic function of language involves meaning. [...] The *primacy of semantics* in linguistic analysis follows in a straightforward fashion from the cognitive perspective itself: if the primary function of language is categorization, then meaning must be the primary linguistic phenomenon.

That is to say, Cognitive Linguistics imposes meaning on all linguistic levels, thus also morphemes employed for nominalizations are considered to carry meaning.

In what follows, this has significant importance, as Langacker's (1991: 23ff.) description of the meaning of –*ing* is based on the nominalization derived by –*ing*. Perfective verbs, which, as already mentioned earlier, are construed as bounded, can take the progressive. The progressive construction exemplified in (18), taken from Langacker (1991: 25)

(18)   Sylvester is {walking/complaining/sleeping}.

can also be demonstrated as corresponding mass-noun nominalization in the following examples, also taken from Langacker (1991: 25f.)

(19)   a. Walking is very good for one's health.

b. McTavish always does a lot of complaining.

c. *My cat does several sleepings every day.

Consequently, as shown by these examples, mass nouns derived by –*ing* do not necessarily take a determiner (19a), may take quantifiers (19b), and can under no circumstance be pluralized (19c). Langacker (1991: 26) therefore further claims that the progressive –*ing* has the three following effects on a perfective verb stem:

> (1) it construes the event holistically (by suspending sequential scanning), (2) it confines the profile to an immediate scope of predication consisting of an internal series of component states; and (3) it construes these states at a level of abstraction that neutralizes their differences.

More specifically, this means, according to Langacker (1991: 209), "that the progressive construction always views a perfective process from an internal perspective and thereby renders it imperfective." However, it remains to be established how this construal is achieved. In Cognitive Linguistics the process of taking an internal view is described in terms of narrowing the profile of the process to a "series of component states" which exclude the beginning and final state of the process (Langacker 1991: 209). As has been put forward by Langacker (1991: 26)

> [n]ow by definition, the profile at a given level of organization is restricted to the scope of predication at that level, and in this construction the profile is coextensive with the immediate scope imposed by –*ing*. An expression like *walking* or *complaining* thus conforms to the characterization of a mass noun: the profiled region lacks inherent bounding within the scope of predication, since the endpoints of the process fall outside the relevant scope.

What this all amounts to is that by adding –*ing* to a verb a homogenous view of a situation is achieved by defocusing the boundaries of the event and making it unbounded and the profiled states define an abstract region. The present participle form of the verb thus adopts the features of mass nouns and can therefore take the position of mass nouns in a sentence. One defining feature of nouns derived by –*ing* is their contingency of modifying a noun. The following examples are taken from Langacker (1991: 210): *complaining customers*, *egg-laying mammal*, *anyone being followed*, *children playing in the rain*. Further, this modification of a noun requires, what Langacker (1991: 210; emphasis in the original) an "*atemporal relation*".

To remain true to the *primacy of semantics* principle in Cognitive Linguistic, meaning that grammar is inherently meaningful, one integral part of the progressive construction must also be considered so as to arrive at a complete description of the progressive construction, namely the integration of *be* with the present participle (Langacker 1991: 210). Langacker (1991: 210f.) has pointed out that "[t]he effect of adding *be* is simply to retemporalize the expression (i.e. to reimpose sequential scanning), thereby deriving an imperfective process". This is

diagrammed in Figure 8 (taken from Langacker 2001b: 259), which is an illustration of the progressive construction as such. Here, the maximal scope indicates the time span of the full, bounded process (Langacker 2001b: 259), whereas, the immediate temporal scope only demarcates an arbitrary part of the of the bounded situation profiled by the maximal scope.

Figure 8 Progressive construction
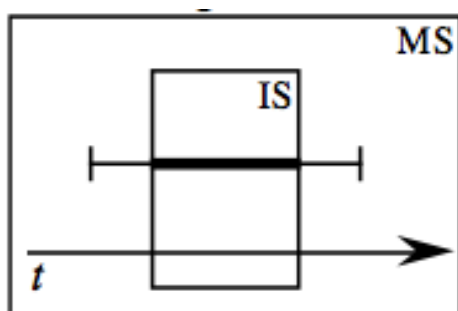
Beside Langacker's (1991: 25ff; 207ff.) approach to describe the meaning of the progressive, Radden & Dirven (2007: 177f.) explain its meaning as having "one unitary meaning for events and states" and base their assumptions on the notions of boundedness and unboundedness.

> The English progressive aspect […] has one unitary meaning for events and states, which may be described as 'unboundedness with implicit boundaries.' This meaning is, though, the result of different conceptual processes: with events, the temporal boundaries are defocused, with states, implicit temporal boundaries are imposed. The two viewing frames applied to events and state give rise to three aspectual classes:
> i.   bounded events, which are expressed by the non-progressive aspect;
> ii. lasting states, which are expressed by the non-progressive aspect;
> iii. unbounded events and states with implicit boundaries, which are expressed by the progressive aspect.

Following this description, the time schemas that define these three aspectual classes can be linked to Figures (3a), (3b) and (8) shown above. Figure (3a) is an illustration of (i), a bounded event, which is viewed within its maximal viewing frame from the outside and in its whole entirety. Here, the center of attention is

directed toward the boundaries of the event, in particular its end, as in the sentence *John locked the safe*.

In (ii) and Figure (3b) an unbounded state is described which may continue for an indefinite period of time, as in *Ted resembles his father.* It thus indicates constancy through time, the beginning and endpoint of the situation are not within the viewing frame of the situation. Here, the progressive is normally not applied (Radden & Dirven 2007: 179).

Unbounded events, as described in (iii), are exemplified in Figure (8). An unbounded event is viewed from the inside, focusing on its development and is viewed within a restricted viewing frame. The use of the progressive aspect, as in *John is locking the safe* conveys a close-up view and therefore conveys a greater immediacy to the event as it progresses. Radden & Dirven (2007: 178) have stated that "the progressive presupposes overall boundaries of the event [...]. This explains why the meaning of the progressive has often, and correctly, been identified as expressing 'limited duration'." This, however, will be explained in more detail in section 4.3.1.

Radden & Dirven (2007: 179) make an interesting observation concerning the use of the non-progressive aspect, which only is applies to two opposed aspectual classes, namely bounded events and lasting states.

This account of the progressive aspect merely exemplifies how complex a linguistic system can be, in the sense that one linguistic form can express a variety of different meanings and vice versa, that one specific meaning can be achieved by using different forms. Of course, this fact poses a huge obstacle for second language learners. In the following three examples the progressive form *–ing* realizes three distinct meanings:

(20)   Please be quiet, can't you see that I'm talking on the phone? (ongoing action)

(21)   I am always loosing my keys. (expressing annoyance)

(22)   We are flying to Australia in summer. (planned future event)

Even though example (21) denotes a habitual situation, in which one would not necessarily make use of the progressive aspect, it may be used to impose a negative connotation on the event. The negative association of loosing something, for instance, is greatly enlarged. As has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, the use of the progressive with time adverbials can impose a negative connotation onto a situation, emphasizing the speaker's annoyed or irritated approach to the situation.

Considering the examples (20-22) above, it would be hard to disagree with Comrie's (1976: 38) statement about the function of the progressive aspect: "There are so many uses [of the English progressive] that it is questionable whether there is a general basic meaning." Further, Comrie (1976: 32f.) commented that "it should be noted from the outset that the English Progressive has, in comparison with progressive forms in many other languages, an unusually wide range."

4.4. Prototypical senses of the progressive – is there such a thing?

It seems that not just the progressive aspect but also the English tense-aspect system as such constitutes a main source of error for learners of English. In the present section of this thesis I will therefore look at verbs, or more specifically, categories of verbs as proposed by Vendler (1957), which cause the most difficulties in the acquisition of the progressive. Following that, I will try to come up with prototypical occurrences of the progressive, i.e. I will follow Rosch's (1978) prototype theory of concepts which conveys that some members within a category are better examples of the category than others. The prototype of a category can be viewed as an idealized description of a category member summarizing the most representative attributes of a category and therefore, it serves as the criterion for classifying the surrounding less representative instances. Ellis & Ferreira-Junior (2009: 371) note that

> [t]he greater the token frequency of an exemplar, the more it contributes to defining the category, and the greater the likelihood that it will be considered the prototype. The best way to teach a concept is to show an example of it. So the best way to teach a category is to show a prototypical

> example. Research on category learning suggests that acquisition is optimized by the introduction of an initial, low-variance sample centered on prototypical exemplars [...]. This allows learners to get a "fix" on what will account for most of the category members.

In the description of the notion of boundedness and unboundedness of situations earlier in this thesis I have discussed types of verbs which allow an internal perspective of a situation and are therefore referred to as unbounded, whereas an outside view of an event allows a holistic perspective on a situation and are thus referred to as bounded. It is, however, not always the case that all types of verbs allow such a perspectivation of events. It is, for example, fairly widespread in Austrian English lessons that the progressive aspect is first introduced as denoting an event in progress at the time of speaking. As for the basic function of the progressive aspect found in the prevalent literature, Downing & Locke (2006: 373) state that it indicates a "dynamic action in the process of happening. Attention is focused on some internal stage of the process, which cognitively, is viewed as something directly observed, unfolding before your eyes." Hence, when the progressive aspect is first introduced in the foreign language classroom it is with the utmost probability associated with verbs describing a process, which correspond with Vendler's (1957: 150) category of activity verbs, like *run*, *walk*, *play*, and, as already discussed above with those instances it is possible to defocus the boundaries so as to "zoom in" on the situation in order to view it as potentially ongoing with a possibility for change. Thus, students start applying the progressive aspect primarily to activities that are characterized by a dynamic as well as atelic nature (Shirai 2002: 455ff.). However, the pervasive and established slogan of the fast food chain McDonalds *I'm lovin' it* may cause confusion among learners of English when following textbook instructions of the usage of the progressive aspect, namely an ongoing process at the time of speaking. So, can you not love something only at the moment of speaking?

The issue here, however, is somewhat more complex. The verb *love* is, according to Vendler (1957), a stative verb and is therefore typically used to describe long lasting situations. So, customarily students of English are taught that verbs describing a state do not usually take the progressive form. Here, it is important to

emphasize the word *usually*, as in the example at hand *love* is used in its metonymical motivated sense rather than in its basic and therefore prototypical sense. In *I'm lovin' it* the verb *love* is used metonymically for the dynamic meaning of *enjoy*. Seemingly, in the prevalent literature the view is held that the same also applies to what Niemeier (2008: 318) and Downing & Locke (2006: 373) refer to as "involuntary sensory perception", which includes verbs such as *see, hear, feel, smell* and *taste*. Likewise, they are also introduced in the EFL textbooks and courses as exceptions, since they do not take the progressive aspect. Niemeier (2008: 318) argues that the major problem with sensory verbs is that when seeing or hearing something, for example, the situation is over before it even truly started and thus does not allow an internal perspectivization: "[i]t therefore seems difficult to conceptualise such perceptions as being in progress." There are nevertheless such verbs which have taken on dynamic uses and thus take the progressive aspect and for native speakers of English, as well as advanced learners of English sentence (23) quite naturally.

(23) When you shine a torch at something you what you are seeing is light being reflected back onto things into your eyes. (Davis 2004: BYU PS53C)

Here, *seeing* is also used in its literal sense, that is, in a more marginal and metonymically motivated sense, rather than in its prototypical sense. Here, the basic meaning of *seeing* is only part of the larger concept, that is to say that *seeing* merely acts as the metonymic link for *taking leave of* somebody (also cf. Niemeier 2008: 318).

Other verbs that commonly fall under the category of exception verbs not allowing a progressive use are verbs that denote activities of a very short duration, like *kick, jump, knock, nod, flash, cough, hit* for example. So, sentence (24) depicts a conventional use of the verb *kick*.

(24) Daria kicked her little brother.
(25) When the mother finally entered the room, she saw that her daughter was not only screaming wildly, but that Daria was also kicking her little brother furiously.

Sentence (25), however, illustrates a rather non-prototypical instance of *kick.* Firstly, let us consider example (24). Here, the brevity of the action does not allow an inner perspective, that is,

> the prototypical sequence of the event's beginning, its continuation and its end is blurred and the phases all overlap, as the event happens so very quickly that we are unable to single out an unbounded "middle phase" but perceive the event as a whole, i.e. as bounded (Niemeier 2008: 317).

However, if the progressive is nevertheless used, it affects the perspective of the situation and hence the lexical meaning of the verb. Rather than seeing Daria kick her brother once, as it is the case in (24), sentence (25) depicts with a quick repeated action. Niemeier (2008: 317) therefore argues that the *kicking*, that is, several quickly repeated kicks, can be viewed as a single event, for example in the framework of a temper tantrum. Hence, she further points out that the unboundedness of example (25) cannot become bounded. An attempt to make the situation bounded would be the following *Daria was kicking her little brother, three times* which renders the sentence as ungrammatical "because the three kicks are conceptualized as three separate events." (Niemeier 2008: 317). So, when the number of repetitions is added, as in *He knocked on the door three times*, the simple form is used.

In this context it is also important to mention two other uses of the progressive, which in my view are more prototypical instances of the progressive aspect than the ones discussed so far. One of these I have already mentioned in my discussion of the concepts of boundedness and unboundedness but I find appropriate to take up again here for the sake of completeness. So, for example states like living at a place, as in *I am living in Vienna* the progressive is applied to a verb, which unbounds the situation and thus shortens an action which otherwise describes an inherently long event. This conception of the progressive aspect which limits the duration of a situation, therefore viewing it merely as a temporary state, also quite often causes learning difficulties among learners of English.

The last instance of the progressive aspect that I would like to mention in this thesis is, I believe, and is also treated as such in the relevant literature (e.g. Shirai 2002; Li & Shirai 2000), the most prototypical use of the progressive aspect, that is, action in progress. However, I am fully aware of the fact that this enumeration of progressive uses is only a fractional amount of what is actually possible. So, concluding, I would briefly like to look at the progressive aspect that is applied to verbs so as to indicate duration. This use of the progressive aspect usually does not cause major difficulties for L2 learners when viewed in relation to all the instances discussed previously. An example therefore would be

(26)   I am helping my dad.

which denotes an action in progress at the time of speaking, which is also the first one to be introduced in the ESL classroom and textbooks (cf. Gerngross et al. 2009: 83).

Having now looked at different situations in which the progressive aspect is used, thus imposing different meanings on a verb, from, as I see it, the least prototypical instance to the best example of progressive uses, the following meanings of the progressive can be summarized according to this discussion: metonymic senses, repeated action, shortening a process as well as action in progress.

4.5.   Extending the use of the progressive: functioning as future time reference

The English progressive construction *be + –ing* has, as already mentioned previously in this thesis, a wide range of uses especially when comparing it to other languages with grammatical progressive constructions. This section is aimed at exploring one use in particular which is clearly set apart from the meaning of the progressive construction with aspectual meaning, namely the use of *be + –ing* for future references. Specifically, this means that the non-aspectual use of the progressive describes situations that are not regarded "as unfolding over time", as per Aarts' (2011: 270) definition. Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 171) as well as Aarts (2011: 270) refer to this future time reference as the *progressive futurate*. Moreover, from a prescriptive way of looking at the grammatical form of *be going*

to + infinitive for future reference (also referred to as "*going to* future" and henceforth used as such in this thesis), this form also adheres to the form of the progressive *–ing* construction. Keeping in line with *–ing* as a futurity marker in English, the other ways of expressing future meaning (*shall/will*, *be* (*about*) *to*, *be gonna* (in spoken colloquial English), as well as the simple present tense) (Brisard 2001: 253) will not be discussed here. That is to say, situations with future time reference can be construed in various ways within utterances. The present section is therefore devoted to analyzing two major constructions expressing futurity, namely *be + –ing* with future time reference and *going to* future, particularly with respect to the different ways of achieving future meaning, as they, as pointed out by Brisard (2001: 253), "tend to focus on slightly different aspects of the future."

Römer (2005: 154) has made valuable observations concerning the two possible variants to express futurity in English, the progressive futurate and *going to* future, as well as concerning their different meanings encountered in a variety of usage types. She claims that the *going to* future is more commonly used in the context of expressing the speaker's intentions than the simple progressive form *be + –ing*. This statement by Römer (2005: 154) is based on the observation of the high occurrence of first person subject in combination with the *going to* future. Bergs (2010: 218) has also made valid contributions concerning the meaning of the future markers *be going to* and *be + –ing*. He states that the *going to* future focuses in particular on the time at which an utterance is intended to be valid, what Bergs also (2010: 218) refers to as "matrix time", and that frequently plans underway are implied (Bergs 2010: 218). Further, Bergs (2010: 224) agrees with Römer's (2005: 154) claim that the *going to* future combines with almost all subject types and frequently co-occurs with temporal adverbials. In terms of function Bergs (2010: 224), like Römer (2010), stresses its intentionality aspect as well as its objective predication derived from present circumstances. The progressive futurate, on the other hand, appears, according to Römer (2005: 154) particularly in contexts where concrete plans for the future have already been made: "These plans are in general much more firm and binding than the intentions expressed by the *going to* future." The corpus-driven study conducted by Römer (2005: 154) supports this claim, as the progressive futurate often occurs in combination with a fixed time or

date. The progressive futurate are exemplified in (27) and (28) and the *going to* future are illustrated in (29).

(27)   We are leaving the department at then o'clock. (Aarts 2011: 270)

(28)   I am playing tennis on Friday.

(29)   I am going to go now.

However, the characterizations of *be going to* and *be + –ing* involve very subtle differences in function which are in some instances difficult to distinguish and describe, if at all, as these expressions share one core meaning, that is the expression of futurity, even though differ quite obviously in their form. Bergs (2010: 230f.), for example, states that

> The *be going to future*, for example, has links to the present progressive (through both form – verbal {-*ing*} – and function, i.e. a certain likeness between *John is going to spend the summer in New York* and *John is spending the summer in New York*).

We can now explain as to why the *going to* future as well as the future progressive disallow progressive aspectuality (Celle & Smith 2010: 249), despite the fact that they share their form with the progressive construction discussed earlier in this thesis. It has been argued by Wekker (1976: 116) that certain occurrences of the progressive construction are "progressive in form but non-progressive in meaning"; thus the *be + –ing* construction is characterized not only by durativity, progressivity, habituality or imperfectivity, but it also implies further meaning, one that goes beyond the notion of aspectuality. Hence, as far as the claim made above is concerned, that is to say that the *going to* future is strictly speaking a progressive construction, cannot be supported. One convincing and valid explanation has been put forward by Römer (2005: 154f.), who claims that the *going* in the *going to* construction has undergone the process of grammaticalization, thus the semantic meaning of *going* has been reduced and has adopted a purely grammatical function (Römer 2005: 154f.). Moreover, to take up and further support the statement by Wekker (1976) from above, Goldberg (1995: 229) has rightly pointed out that

> It is not necessary that every syntactic form be uniquely associated with a particular semantics; there are cases of

constructional ambiguity, where the same form is paired
with distinct meanings.

Thus, this phenomenon can best be explained in terms of Construction Grammar, which holds the view that the language as such and the constructional inventory which make up a language are structured on the basis of form as well as function (Bergs 2010: 229). The Construction Grammar framework is built upon the explicit inclusion of co- and contextual features. This means, according to Bergs (2010: 228) that "each individual expression can be defined in terms of form by the constraints of its occurrence and in terms of function by the core meaning plus subtle distinctions that are made." So, that is to say that the constructions – *be + –ing* and *be going to* – presented in the present section to express futurity are, according to Bergs (2010: 228), not differentiated between various uses, for example through polysemic links, rather, all expressions of futurity are seen as constructions independent of one another and are in fact treated as constructions in their own right. This means that while this section is concerned with two constructions which both have as their core meaning the expression of futurity, there are, as has been put forward by Bergs (2010: 228) "of course a number of other constructions which are structurally similar or even identical, but which have different functions and – usually – also different co- and contextual constraints."

4.6.   Aspect in German

The category of aspect has received relatively little attention in German grammar books (Dietrich 1995: 74). In support of the hypothesis of this thesis this section focuses on the description of aspect in German. The German language is generally characterized by the lack of grammaticalized means to express aspectual properties (Bardovi-Harlig 2000: 102; Slobin 1991: 10; Dietrich 1995: 74, 89).

Im Deutschen existiert keine verbmorphologische Kategorie
mit der Funktion, die begriffliche Kategorie *Aspekt* zu
bezeichnen. Es ist also sicherlich richtig, dass es im

Therefore, some researchers doubt whether it is legitimate to regard aspect as a separate category in German. However, studies were carried out (e.g. Krause 2002) investigating the progressive in German which suggest a trend toward the grammaticalization of this category in German, specifically the *am*-Progressiv construction (see below). However, it should be kept in mind that it is nevertheless possible to make aspectual distinctions in German in order to express imperfectivity. According to Dietrich (1995: 74), for instance, also in German there are forms found that are equivalent to the English progressive form and, as Comrie (1976: 33) convincingly argues, "the nonprogressive form does not exclude progressive meaning." Further, Slobin (1991: 10; original emphasis) also argues as well that "[w]e *do* have available *optional* lexical means for expressing notions that lie outside of the set of obligatory grammatical distinctions in a language." Therefore, if an imperfective viewpoint, that is, the progress or continuousness of a situation with no specific endpoint, is to be expressed, lexical means have to be deployed. Dietrich (1995: 75) mentions two major ways in which the progressive aspect can be realized in German. One such device is the use of explicit adverbial elements like *gerade* or *schon* like the following examples demonstrate:

(30)   a. Ich schreibe gerade einen Brief.

b. Julia schlief schon, als ich nach Hause kam.

Thus, the English translation of examples (30a) and (30b) would be *I am writing a letter* and *Julia was sleeping when I got home* respectively. In the latter example the *Präteritum* (*schlief*) is used to set a temporal frame for an action that happened in the past and has a comparable function of the past progressive in English.

Secondly, Dietrich (1995: 74) mentions complex paraphrases as a means of expressing progressive meaning, like *dabei sein zu* + infinitive and *am* + nominalized infinitive + *sein*, (referred to as *am*-Progressiv by Krause (2002) and Van Pottelberge (2005)), which are labeled by Dietrich (1995) as semigrammatical forms. The expression *am etwas tun sein* (*am*-Progressiv) like in the example *Ich*

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[2] There is no verb-morphological category in German that describes aspect. It can therefore be assumed that there is no systematic morphological aspect category in the German language.

bin am Einkaufen describes the internal temporal properties of the utterance and can thus be seen as the equivalent of English sentence *I am shopping*.

In addition to the *am*-Progressiv, a prepositional progressive construction with a nominalized infinitive, two further constructions with prepositions are worth mentioning here. The prepositions *in*, as in *im Steigen sein* and *bei*, such as *beim Schreiben sein*, also add a progressive meaning to the phrase (Van Pottelberge 2005: 170). These constructions, compared to the *am*-Progressive, however, are, according to Van Pottelberge (2005: 179) more restricted in their use and are not poised to undergo the grammaticalization process, as it is the case with the *am*-Progressiv. Even though both Van Pottelberge (2005: 170ff.) and Krause (2002: 1f.) stress that the grammaticalization process of the *am*-Progressiv is far advanced, it does not yet have the status of the full-fledged progressive aspect in English.

Additionally, Ungerer (1999: 131f.; original emphasis) offers a convincing account of how the progressive aspect may be realized in German:

> Um zu betonen, dass sich ein Geschehen zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt im Ablauf befindet, kann man zusätzlich zur Verbform Adverbien wie *gerade, da* und *jetzt* [...] [He **is running** down the hill. – Er **läuft gerade** den Hügel hinunter.] oder hinweisende Ausrufe wie *Schau! (mal)!* [...] [He **is coming** back. – **Schau, jetzt kommt** er zurück.] einsetzten. Meist aber wird im Deutschen nur die (einfache) Verbform verwendet, der progressive Aspekt also gar nicht ausgedrückt [...] [These people **are** all **waiting** for the bus. – Diese Leute **warten** alle auf den Bus.].[3]

All the above mentioned forms of potentially progressive constructions in German denote action-in-progress and can thus justifiably be regarded as representatives of the progressive category. The English progressive, however, is used in a large variety of contexts. There are various other uses of the progressive construction which do not necessarily express the most prototypical use of the progressive

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[3] To emphasize the ongoingness of an action at a particular point in time, adverbials like *at the moment*, *currently* or indicative exclamations like *Look!* can be used in the verb phrase. For the most part, however, simple verb forms are used in German. Usually the progressive aspect is no expressed in German.

aspect, that is, the duration or continuity of an action. Such characterizations of the semantics of the progressive construction only account for *some* uses of the progressive in English. In German, however, the progressive construction (cf. *am-Progressiv*) seems to be a rather pronounced way of locating a situation in the present, because it frequently implies a marked sense of ongoingness (Brisard 2002: 251). In other words the senses and usages of the progressive aspect in English, as already discussed earlier in this thesis, far exceed the range of senses and usages of other progressive forms in many other languages. The German progressive further differs from the English progressive in as much as its use is not obligatory but always optional (Van Pottelberge 2005: 170).

Despite these attempts to theorize whether German is on the verge of undergoing a grammaticalization process toward an aspectual distinction, the fact that the German language actually lacks grammatical means to express aspect as such, still remains, in spite of Van Pottelberge's (2005), Krause's (2002) and Dietrich's (1995) suggestions. This is particularly worth mentioning, considering the hypothesis underlying this thesis, which is based on the assumption that German completely lacks the concept of aspect.

I would now like to explain briefly the problems that arise for German native speakers who are in the process of acquiring the progressive aspect in English. The most obvious reason is the non-existence of such a grammaticalized concept in the German language (Römer 2005a: 173). Römer (2005a: 173) also addresses another interesting issue that may have some influence on the acquisition of the progressive aspect, namely that learning problems my arise due to

> inadequate descriptions of [this] language phenomen[on] in teaching materials [...]. Maybe learners would find it less difficult to handle the progressive in communicative situations if it was presented in the same way as it is used by native speakers, i.e. in its most typical contexts and functions.

Thus, Römer suggests that for native speakers the prototypical progressive aspect differs from that of L2 learners.

Assuming that the above discussion has nevertheless provided an overview of how the progressive, or, the grammatical representation of ongoingness of a situation in the German language is dealt with in the relevant literature, we will now have a closer look at the acquisition of the progressive aspect.

5. The acquisition of progressive aspect in English as an L2

5.1. Crosslinguistic influence

Learning a second language goes far beyond learning linguistic forms of the target language; more importantly, language learning involves learning how these language specific forms are used appropriately in different contexts. This section of the paper aims at providing a more detailed account of how the progressive aspect in English is acquired by non-native speakers of English, in particular those who have German as their first language (L1). I will try to find relevant explanations for the fact that the acquisition of the progressive aspect very often poses an immense hurdle to German native speakers who are in the process of learning English. This claim may find a possible explanation in the notion of language transfer, also referred to as crosslinguistic influence. Slobin (1991: 12) has proposed that speakers when acquiring a first language learn a special kind of "'thinking for speaking' – a special form of thought that is mobilized for communication." Slobin (1991: 12) states the following:

> [t]he activity of thinking takes on a particular quality when it is employed in the activity of speaking. In the evanescent time frame of constructing utterances in discourse one fits one's thoughts into available linguistic frames. "Thinking for speaking" involves picking those characteristics of objects and events that (a) fit some conceptualization of the event, and (b) are readily encodable in the language.

According to Slobin (1991: 23) this mode of thinking for speaking in an L1 is what is most difficult to master when acquiring a second language. Specifically, Slobin (1991: 23) bases his assumptions on the view that the grammatical categories which are most prone to influence L2 acquisition are not the ones which can be directly experienced cognitively and in a perceptional way. He exemplifies this phenomenon in the following way: if the L1 of a speaker lacks plural marking, the acquisition of an L2 which marks plurality grammatically should actually not cause unsurmountable difficulties, since, as Slobin (1991: 23) puts it "this concept is evident to the nonlinguistic mind and eye [... and] are obvious to the senses."

Hence, language-specific categories which constitute, according to Slobin's (1991), the theory that thinking for speaking in an L1 do not cause the most difficulties in L2 acquisition. However, Slobin (1991: 23) explicitly excludes the distinction of aspect, tense, definiteness, voice, and the like from such language-specific grammatical categories. So, the distinction between "She *went* to work" and "She *has gone* to work" (Slobin 1991: 23; emphasis in the original) cannot be explained in terms of sensorimotor changes in the world. Further, he stresses that these are "distinctions that can only be learned through language, and have no other use except to be expressed in language." (Slobin 1991: 23) Housen (2002: 189) follows this argument and concludes from this theory put forward by Slobin (1991) that

> we can speculate that L2-learners approach the acquisition of the TA [tense-aspect] system of their target language predisposed by the basic TA distinctions of their L1. This will guide them to search the L2 input for a similar TA system. Any similarities found are then used as a basis for reconstructing the target language system. When no similarities are found, i.e. when learners encounter form-meaning relations in the L2-input which have no apparent counterpart in the L1, they may, as an initial strategy, resort to universal semantic prototypes to help them process these unfamiliar mapping relations. In this case prototypes serve as a starting point for reconstructing the target TA system.

Now, taking this transfer theory into consideration with regards to the acquisition of the aspect marker *–ing*, learners of English with German as their first language are predisposed by a grammatical system which marks tense distinctions but completely lacks the concept of aspectual distinction and are therefore not prepared by their L1 that a situation can be construed in alternate, meaning here, in an unbounded or bounded way. Learners are frequently confronted with the problem that the newly acquired morpheme *–ing* does not only have one meaning and function. The meaning component of *–ing* is thus not so easily acquired (Housen 2002: 189f.). Housen (2002: 190) therefore draws the conclusion that learners

> [draw] on universal semantic distinctions and cognitive operating principles first, analyzing *–ing* as a marker of the dynamic-atelic-durative prototype before gradually extending it to other, less prototypical predicates and sorting out its targetlike values.

5.2.   A prototype account of the progressive aspect

This section directly ties in with the previous one, as well as with section 4.4. as I have already briefly mentioned the concept of protoypicality there. This section thus concentrates on the question of what constitutes the prototype of the progressive aspect.

Continuing the discussion from the section above, I would like to hypothesize that the prototypical verbs which take the aspect marker –*ing* are dynamic, atelic and durative in character. Shirai (2002: 457) has also made this observation, namely that in second language acquisition action-in-progress is the most prototypical member of the category. This claim is justified by the chronological order in which the progressive aspect is taught in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom; thus the ESL textbooks which are currently used for teaching English in Austrian schools, the progressive aspect is first introduced as a way of expressing what a person is doing or what is happening at the moment of speaking (e.g. Gerngross et al. 2009: 83). The notion of prototype theory has also made valid contributions to second language acquisition. It has been put forward by Shirai (2002: 457) that "prototypical members of a category are acquired earlier than less prototypical members." According to Shirai (2002: 457f.) the meaning of action-in-progress is achieved when –*ing* is attached to activity or accomplishment verbs. In the learner's – Li & Shirai (2000) do not only apply this to L2 acquisition but also to L1 acquisition – semantic representation of the progressive is only confined to verbs which describe an activity or an accomplishment, then Li & Shirai (2000: 66f.) speak of an

> undergeneralization of morphological markers on the basis of the semantic representation of the markers. This type of early undergeneralization accounts for the lack of overgeneralizations of progressive marking to stative verbs, because stative verbs are not part of the prototype.

Further, Li & Shirai (2000: 66f.) claim that the use of the progressive on stative verbs is hardly ever used, even after learners (L2) and children (L1) use the progressive marker in a non-prototypical way, that is, following Li & Shirai's description of prototypicality that would not be the case with activity verbs.

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Taking this into consideration leaves me to interpret that they do not take the metonymical uses (cf. discussion in section 4.4.) of the progressive into account. Following further Shirai's (2002: 475) prototype hypothesis of tense-aspect acquisition, which claims that *action in progress* is the prototypical member of the progressive category and is first applied to activity verbs and only then to accomplishment verbs. The main reason for this claim is according to Shirai (2002: 475) that the prototype of the progressive, i.e., action in progress, is associated with the atelic characteristic of verbs which can only be attributed to activities, not however to accomplishments. Thus, the defining semantic features of the prototypical progressive as defined by Shirai is [-telic], [+durative] and [+dynamic]. For Li & Shirai (2000: 69) the application of prototype theory on tense-aspect acquisition is adequate as it "reflects an important general mechanism in language acquisition", as the acquisition of the tense-aspect morphology in English is a matter of a form-function mapping process.

Even though current semantic theories (cf. Cognitive Grammar) of aspect reject the dichotomy between lexical and grammatical aspect, this distinction is still prevalent in the present era of linguistic research, especially in connection with the acquisition of the tense-aspect morphology. The next section is therefore devoted to Andersen & Shirai's Aspect Hypothesis (Li & Shirai 2000; Shirai 2002; Shirai & Andersen 1995), which deals with a developmental pattern in the acquisition of L2 tense-aspect morphology for which the dichotomy between lexical and grammatical aspect builds the fundamental basis.

5.3. The Aspect Hypothesis

The Aspect Hypothesis was originally formulated by Andersen & Shirai (cf. 1994 & 1996) and is a model describing the functional development of tense-aspect morphology. Its central claim is that "first and second language learners will initially be influenced by the inherent semantic aspect of verbs or predicates in the acquisition of tense and aspect markers associated with or affixed to these verbs." (Andersen & Shirai 1994: 133) This means that learners associate forms marking tense or aspect with the inherent meaning of the verb, that is, lexical aspect. Thus, there is a relationship between tense-aspect forms and inherent verbal meaning and create a prototypical link and are established acquisitionally (Rocca 2007: 2).

According to Shirai & Andersen (1995: 745) the L1 and L2 acquisition of tense-aspect morphology follows a consistent pattern of development and is influenced by prototypes. With reference to L2 acquisition this means that first the prototypical members of a linguistic category are acquired and that this knowledge is only later expanded to less prototypical members of the category. The Aspect Hypothesis can be divided into four individual claims based on grammatical aspect and its relation to lexical aspect (cf. Shirai 1991: 9f.; Andersen & Shirai 1996: 533, Li & Shirai 2000: 50):

1. Past or perfective marking first emerges with achievement and accomplishment verbs, only later extended to activity and finally to stative verbs.
2. In languages with the perfective-imperfective distinction, the imperfective past emerges later than the perfective past, and the imperfective past appears with statives, extending next to activities, then to accomplishments and finally to achievements.
3. In languages that have progressive aspect, progressive morphology begins with activities, only then extends to accomplishments and achievements.
4. The progressive is not incorrectly overextended to statives.

Thus, Ellis (2010) has stated that the Aspect Hypothesis

describes how the abstract grammatical schema for perfective past generalizes from more concrete beginnings close to the prototypic centre in the clear exemplifications of telic achievements and accomplishments. Likewise abstract progressive morphology emerges from concrete exemplars in the semantics of activities and states.

So, the above list allows the generalization that while acquiring English, past morphology *–ed* is added to verbs which semantically imply a clearly marked endpoint and progressive *–ing* is used with verbs that are inherently dynamic and durative. The generalizations of the Aspect Hypothesis are summarized and schematically represented in Table 2.

Table 2 Predicted order of development of morphology from prototypes to non-prototypes (taken from Li & Shirai 2000: 50, 79)

	State	**Activity**	**Accomplishment**	**Achievement**
(Perfective) Past	4	3	2	1
Progressive	?	1	2	3
Imperfective	1	2	3	4

? combination rarely occurs

The numbers in Table 2 depict the order of acquisition of tense-aspect morphology from 1 as the earliest to 4 as the latest. The interrogation mark in the progressive/state cell marks the rare occurrence of this combination. Thus, the cells marked with 1 are the prototype and spread to the peripherals and non-prototypes 2 through 4 (Li & Shirai 2000: 79f.).

The Aspect Hypothesis is, according to Li & Shirai (2000: 50), intended to apply to both to L1 as well as L2 acquisition of tense-aspect morphology, with exception of the last component, namely that the progressive is not incorrectly overextended to stative verbs. However, proponents of the Aspect Hypothesis do not exclude the possibility of the L1 influencing the L2. The study carried out by Andersen & Shirai (1996: 259), out of which the generalizations of the Aspect Hypothesis arose, has shown that L2 learners actually overextend progressive morphology to stative

verbs, which, they argue, "may be a result of transfer from the learner's L1 of a more general imperfective notion to the progressive marker." (Andersen & Shirai 1996: 259)

6. Study

This section of the paper is devoted to the small-scale corpus study underlying this thesis. The data taken from the corpus is used for analyzing learner's accuracy of using the progressive aspect in the course of acquiring English as a second language. It is, of course, generally accepted to use language students' errors in order to gain an understanding of how proficient students are in their use of the target language. Error analysis is, according to Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005: 73), concerned with the comparison of "the forms used by learners and target language norms."

The significance of learner errors and their implication for second language acquisition research has been dealt with extensively in the relevant literature by linguists such as Corder (1981) for example. He has put forward the claim that a learner's error sheds light on the linguistic system the language learner is using at a given time in the course of acquiring the target language. According to Corder (1981: 10f.) learner errors are of importance in three ways. Firstly, errors are relevant for the language teacher, as they give insight into the progress the learners have made, that is, their status quo, what do they master after a certain time of language instruction and what has yet to be learned or improved. Thus, they serve a pedagogic purpose. Secondly, they provide evidence how a linguistic system is acquired or learned, so they can give useful insights for second language acquisition research. Thirdly, they are essential for the language learners themselves, as they serve as a device by which the learners can learn.

Consequently, following the second reason listed by Corder (1981: 10f.) – that is studying learners' errors for research purposes – I will use the potential that corpora and corpus analysis has to attempt to gain insights into the types of errors that occur in L2 acquisition of the progressive aspect by learners of English with German as their mother tongue. Moreover, this serves as the general underlying research question that will guide the analysis at hand. This study therefore also focuses on how accurately learners use the progressive aspect. More specifically,

focus is put on the errors that learners produce, either when using the progressive aspect in situations that rather would have required a different tense or aspect, that is, overuse of the progressive form, or, when producing sentences which create situations that require the use of the progressive aspect. The latter is also referred to as obligatory occasions (Ellis 1994: 74), a more precise definition of which is given in the next section. Also, in the context of an obligatory occasion analysis I consider it important to look at the grammatical forms that have been used instead of the progressive form. Furthermore, this study also seeks to uncover whether a certain classification of learner errors can be made. Therefore, I propose the following three-way classification of errors: form errors in which the correct realization of the verbal construction BE + the –ing form of the verb has not been achieved; meaning errors such as limiting duration, backgrounding information, or lengthening an action, for example; and function errors, for instance the use of the progressive aspect to refer to future events. Admittedly, this refined distinction between function and meaning is a very subtle one. However, to obtain a more precise classification of errors I would like to put forward this differentiation assuming that function is a more concrete concept, whereas meaning refers to more abstract categories, that is, how does the meaning of the verb change by applying –ing. For this investigation the four-way classification of verb types into activity verbs, accomplishment verbs, achievement verbs and state verbs according to Vendler (1967: 102ff.) is applied. This represents the basis for the analysis and enables a better classification and description of learner errors.

In accordance with the theory that has been discussed in this thesis the following results will be expected from the analysis:

1. While the progressive aspect is most commonly used with activity verbs, thus representing the prototype, state verbs will occur least in the progressive form.
2. There will be a higher frequency of meaning and function errors than of form errors, thus it can justifiably be said that acquiring the form of the verbal construction of BE + –ing is easier for learners of English than acquiring the meaning of –ing.

3. The function that the progressive aspect performs will most likely be that of future time reference.

Further, the following research questions can be derived from the description of this study:

1. What are the types of errors that occur in L2 acquisition of the progressive aspect by learners of English with German as their mother tongue?
2. Which grammatical forms have been applied incorrectly instead of the progressive form?
3. Is a certain classification of learner errors possible?

6.1. Methodology, participants and data

This analysis is based on data taken form the International Corpus of Crosslinguistic Interlanguage (ICCI). The main criteria that determined the choice of the ICCI for this data analysis were accessibility and the comparatively small size of the corpus. The ICCI is an international collaborative project which was initiated in 2007 by Prof. Yukio Tono from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in Japan. Construction of this corpus started in March 2008. The ICCI consists of English written interlanguage data elicited from young learners of English at different stages of development and from different L1 backgrounds. Currently, there are twelve scholars from eight different countries (Hong Kong, Austria, Israel, China, Japan, Poland, Singapore, Spain, and Taiwan) actively contributing to this project. Taking into account the underlying hypothesis of this thesis, the research carried out for the present study limits itself solely to data which was compiled in Austria and has been made available to me for the purpose of this analysis by Mag. Barbara Schiftner, University of Vienna, who is also involved in the compiling the data for the ICCI.

The data of the ICCI that has been compiled in Austria consists of 773 written essays of learners of English with different language backgrounds and first languages and from different language proficiency levels. I have, however, deliberately omitted all student essays from the analysis that were produced by

learners with a different mother tongue than German. The data of the ICCI consists of written language samples in form of descriptive and argumentative essays, written according to various prompts. Learners from fifth to twelfth grade were given different prompts covering a variety of topics and task demands appropriate to their language proficiency level. Therefore, the samples are regarded as the outcome of planned language output, in which more planning and metacognitive strategies are involved than in spontaneously produced language, as in, for example, oral language production. While some prompts anticipate the production of argumentative essays, others require a descriptive way of accomplishing the task. This fact is expected to influence the choice of the tenses and the aspects which are used by the students to produce these texts.

In the light of the central aim of the study, which, generally put, tries to describe difficulties that arise for students of English as an L2 when acquiring the progressive aspect, it is first of all useful to investigate the prompts on which the student essays are based on and which provide the foundation for the data on which the study at hand is based on. As mentioned above, according to the prompts, two types of essays can be expected, namely descriptive and argumentative text types. Following the discussion above about the meanings and functions of the progressive aspect, it may be assumed, since the progressive unbounds a situation and enables a homogenous viewpoint of a situation with marginalized beginning and endpoints, that, simply put, the progressive form is used to describe situations. Since argumentative text types unusually do not involve any descriptions of situations or events, and since it is generally not necessary to background any information, I assume that it would be superfluous to look at argumentative essays for obtaining valuable information about the progressive aspect. According to the following prompt[4] a descriptive text can be triggered: Describing yourself; A postcard to my English teacher; Writing to an English friend about food; A very good or bad day; Last night I had an exciting dream. An illustration of a sample prompt is shown in Figure 9 below.

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[4] All prompts can be found in the appendix.

For this reason, I have deliberately excluded argumentative essays from the data analysis and looked at descriptive essays of learners of English with German as their L1.

Figure 9 Sample prompt

DESCRIBING YOURSELF

This is your first letter to a new friend.

Tell your friend

- your name
- your age
- what you look like
- where you live
- what you like doing

Ask your friend to write back soon.

You can add your own ideas, too.

Write at least 50 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

To arrive at a valuable result of the analysis that helps to determine how accurately the progressive is used by learners of English, the mere analysis and explanation of errors is not sufficient, as error analysis as such only looks at what learners produce wrongly and not what they opt not to produce. Weinberger (2005: 122), for example, stresses that error analysis "fails to provide a comprehensive picture of the learner's language". While this is a valid point, an error analysis is still an appropriate form of analysis for the present study. Since it does not aim at describing one student's proficiency in English, let alone evaluate it, a comprehensive picture of a learner's language is not necessary. Thus, to do justice to the general aim of this study, in addition to analyzing learner errors, an obligatory occasion analysis is conducted, as has already been mentioned briefly above. Obligatory occasion analysis is, as it is the case with error analysis, a method of analyzing how accurately learners apply features of the target language. In the course of learning a language not only errors in form of overuse of a specific feature of the target language occurs, but also, as already mentioned above,

situations are created which require the use of a specific target language form (Ellis 1994: 74). Thus, it can be said that examples (31) and (32) are both illustrations of situations where obligatory occasions for the use of progressive –*ing* have been created.

(31) I am here with mum and dad in Gibraltar.
Here it is very hot (at the arrival we have at 9 p.m 43!!!).
I **am** now **sitting** in a cafe.
Mum is at the shopping street and dad is with me in the cafe.
(ICCI: icci_aut0060)

(32) *There **are** currently 12 scholars from 8 countries/regions (Hong Kong, Austria, Israel, China, Japan, Poland, Singapore, Spain, and Taiwan) actively **contributed** to this project.
(http://tonolab.tufs.ac.jp/icci/index.jsp, 29 December 2012)

Here, as already mentioned above, both situations require the use of the progressive aspect. Example (31) is an extract from a postcard written to the learner's English teacher. The vantage point from which the situation *I am now sitting in the café* is viewed is clear in this example. An inside viewpoint of the actual process of actually sitting in the café is taken by the writer of the postcard, undoubtedly referenced by the use of the time adverbial *now*. Thus, the use of the progressive in this context points to an event that is actually happening simultaneously with writing the postcard. Furthermore, the effect of applying –*ing* in this context is also to unbound the situation. As the verb *to sit* is a state verb according to Vendler's (1967) classification, the temporal boundaries of the situation are imposed. Therefore, limiting the duration of an action that, in the strict sense, could go on for an indefinite period of time.

However, in the utterance illustrated in example (32) the progressive –*ing* has not been used although the situation demands the use of the progressive construction. The use of time adverbial *currently* is indicative for an action that is going on at the present moment, again, presenting an internal view of a situation. Even though the situation created here by the writer of the text quite obviously calls for the use of the progressive form, it is, however, not entirely clear in this context whether this instance of obligatory occasion could not be classified as a form error instead, as

the *are* may point to the attempt to form BE + the *–ing* form of the verb and then mistakenly the past participle instead of the present participle has been applied. This scrutiny of example (32) gives evidence to suggest that such a classification of errors is never an objective and clear-cut matter.

To arrive at the data which now constitutes the basis for the analysis of the underlying study, I have closely scrutinized 200 descriptive essays, omitting essays produced by students with L1 languages other than German. The overall number of descriptive text types that make up the Austrian part of the ICCI amounts to a total of 544; however, I have compiled a subcorpus of the first 200 descriptive learner essays. By doing so, all occurrences of the progressive aspect were extracted from the language samples, including all forms that deviate from the target language norm, all correct uses of the progressive and finally, considerations were made as to which situations constitute an obligatory occasion for the progressive *–ing*. In the course of the data isolation it became apparent that determining the latter posed the most challenge. Moreover, important to mention at this point is that all instances of *be going to* with future reference were included in the study as well, although this construction is in the strict sense of the word no progressive aspect as such. However, in the relevant literature (cf. section 4.3.3. in this thesis) it has been referred to as one possible function of the progressive aspect and has thus also been rightfully included in this paper. From the language samples that were extracted, 109 instances have been isolated from the ICCI that are relevant for the present study on the progressive aspect. In the next step the isolated occurrences of the misused *–ing* forms were scrutinized in the context in which they occur, which makes an error classification possible in the first place. Thus, an accurate and meaningful error analysis can only be carried out if the context in which the progressive is used is provided. Example (33) below highlights this fact.

    (33)   What **are** you **having** for dinner? (ICCI: icci_aut0274)

A situation where one might encounter an utterance as in example (33) could be for example right before the reference point of dinnertime. This is then an ordinary inquiry about what he or she will eat for dinner. Thus, looking at this utterance in isolation the *–ing* form of the verbal construction imposes a future use of the

progressive aspect. However, viewing it in the context in which it occurs, the difference in meaning can readily be spotted.

> (34)   Oh I cant tell you all what I like, because I like so much!
>   Today I would eat a Ice Tea and a egg whit salad to lunch
>   In the evening (dinner) I like to eat a yoghurt or a (pizza)?
>   When my mother is not at home, I have some chocolate or some sweets
>   for dinner.
>   I like LASAGNE! like Garfield
>   What **are** you **having** for dinner?
>   Or for breakfast or for lunch?
>   (ICCI: icci_aut0274)

Here, the meaning that was aimed-at by using the progressive is not that of future time reference, rather, a general inquiry about what the addressed person in question usually has for dinner was intended.

With regard to the analysis of the data, the next step was then to classify the misused occurring forms into meaning errors, function errors and form errors. Also, all correct instances as well as all obligatory occasions were determined. Simultaneous to this procedure, an analysis of all verb types according to Vendler (1967) was carried out. Instances of the progressive functioning to refer to future time were labeled as being non-classifiable, i.e. 0. All other occurring samples of the progressive were classified in accordance with the inherent meaning that the verb carries, that is lexical aspect. As pointed out in section 3.2.1., according to Vendler's (1967: 101ff.) classification of verb types activity and accomplishment verbs differ from achievement and state verbs in that the former both feature duration and allow the use of the progressive aspect, whereas achievement and state verbs do not. Activity verbs and accomplishment verbs are distinguished by the fact that activities do not have an inherent endpoint while accomplishments do, so they are distinguishable in terms of boundedness. State verbs also last for a period time with no internal terminal point; however, achievement verbs are instantaneous in character and describe punctual actions.

Concluding, it is important to mention that when approaching the sample texts (given as examples of evidence and clarification in this thesis) which have been elicited from the corpus any other deviations from the target language norm have

been neglected deliberately, since the study does not aim at describing one student's proficiency it in English, nor evaluate it. So the overall picture of the student's language level proficiency is of no relevance to the present study. Moreover, I would like to emphasize that not all theoretical aspects that were dealt with in the literature review in this thesis can be taken into consideration or studied in detail in the empirical part of this thesis, as this would exceed by far the scope of this thesis. Therefore, some aspects will be mentioned but others will be left out completely in the following corpus study.

6.2.   Presentation of findings

The present section deals with the analysis of the data that has been extracted from the ICCI using the methodology described above. The first thing I would like to address in the context of analyzing the progressive aspect and its use and acquisition by EFL learners is concerned with the general distribution of verb types from all occurring instances that were extracted from the ICCI. A quantitative analysis of the data at hand has shown that all four verb types occur in the progressive aspect, even if unequally distributed. Figure 10 is a diagrammatic representation to help to visualize the relative proportions of the distribution of verb types.

Figure 10 General distribution of verb types
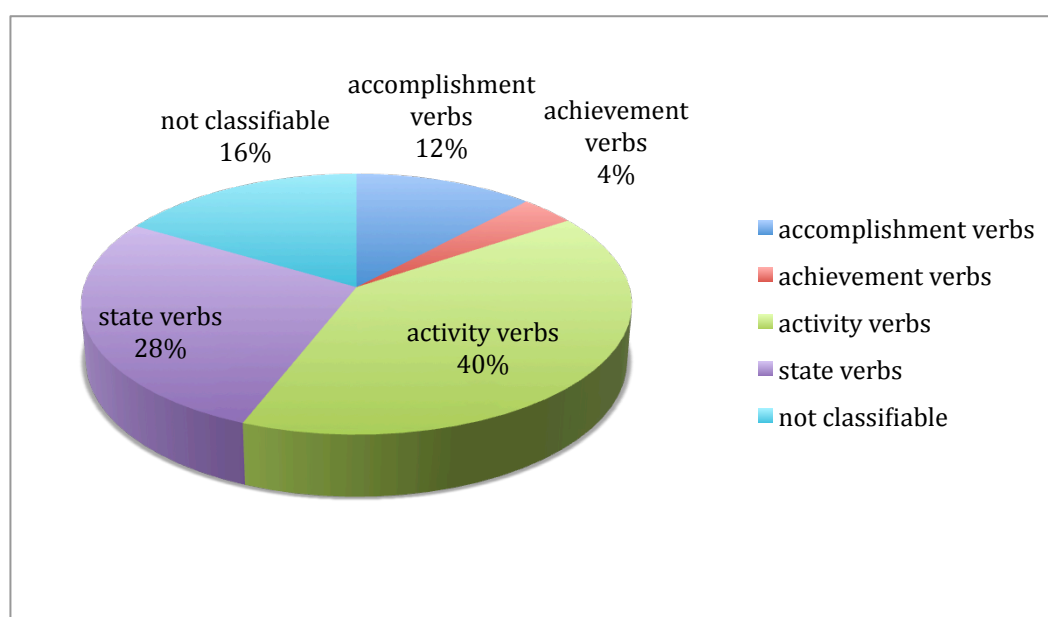
While in the ICCI, as could be expected, activity verbs are the most frequently occurring verb types in connection with the progressive aspect, making up a total of 40%, a surprisingly high number of state verbs were used with progressive *–ing*, amounting to 28%. Accomplishment and achievement verbs are far less common but still make up 12% and 4% respectively. From all 109 occurring relevant instances that were extracted from the corpus, the 16% of verbal constructions that could not have been classified should not be disregarded. By means of this classification of verb types that underlies this study, it has been proven that the majority of the latter were progressive forms which refer to future events and thus function as progressive with future time reference. Among these, only one instance was noted that clearly does not function as the future use of the progressive:

(35)   I'**m looking** forward in seeing you.
       Write back soon!
       Best wishes
       (ICCI: icci_aut0175)

The phrase *I am looking forward to* is, in the strictest sense of the word, a progressive form, however, it can be claimed that this phrase has been fossilized by convention in the English speaking community and has become a fixed and entrenched expression (Schmid 2007: 118). Owing to this fact, the progressive *–ing* form has no impact on the meaning of the lexical item, in that it does not for example imposes duration on the verbal construction. According to Schmid (2007: 118) "a lot of what speakers say is available in memory in some kind of prepackaged, ready-made format." and *I am looking forward to* is indeed one of them. However, looking at example (35) above, for the language user who produced this utterance it represents a conventionalized concept but not a fully entrenched one yet, clearly recognizable as it is a fragmentary progressive construction in which the *to* has been left out.

Out of the 18 extracted samples which did not allow a classification, 7 instances of correctly applied progressive *–ing* forms were noted which go beyond the notion of aspectuality and function as future time reference. The remaining examples that did not enable such a classification into verb types were erroneous uses of the progressive with future time reference. Here, speakers mostly made overuse

errors were made by the speakers, meaning that future time reference was in fact not required. In addition, a few fragmentary forms were noted in which the correct formation of the construction was not achieved, as well as one situation was created that actually would require the use of the progressive –*ing* form, i.e. the use of the present simple in this situation is erroneous. This is exemplified in example (36) below. However, the utterance from extract (36) *Mum, Dad, my sister and I **go** in twenty minutes to my grandma* (own correction, original occurrence see below) cannot conclusively be classified as an obligatory occasion for the progressive aspect with future meaning. The situation that was described by the speaker in (36) allows several possible constructions. In this case *are going to*, *will go*, *are going* and *are leaving* are possible forms that could have been used here. So, the speaker even created an obligatory occasion for the progressive aspect. However, the problem in this case is obvious here, it is a direct transfer from German, since *Mutter, Vater meine Schwester und ich gehen in zwanzig Minuten zu meinen Großeltern* would be the correct equivalent in German, which is a simple present tense. An interesting fact to mention here as well is that all 7 correct uses of the progressive were instances of the *going to* future and not a single example of the progressive futurate was mention in the essays that were analyzed from the ICCI. Examples (37) and (38) show two correctly used samples of the *going to* future:

(36) I'am every jeary ga swimming in the ENT001 pool
It is very hot and I playing PSP at home.
Mum, Dad, my sister and I **go** in twenty minets to my Grantma
We are eating an talking with them.
(ICCI: icci_aut0053)

(37) Yesterday, I go to the sea.
The water is famous, but the weather is not so OK.
Today we **are going to** the pool and then we eat some cake.
I like Croatia and I come next year also to Croatia.
(ICCI: icci_aut0059)

(38) My parents and my two sisters are with me.
The weather is wonderful.
The sun is very hot and the sea is very fine.
My family and I went swimming yesterday and now we **are going to** a good restaurant.
I love Frace.

(ICCI: icci_aut0114)

In both examples, (37) and (38), the languages users express their intentions. In (37) the speaker is taking of the plans for the day, thus plans underway are implied. In example (38) the speaker expresses his or her immediate intentions. This has also already been pointed out earlier in this thesis (cf. Bergs: 2010 and Römer: 2005). Also, in both extracts the co-occurrence of the *going to* future with temporal adverbials that indicate a definite point in time (*now* and *today*) is noticeable. All in all, as has also been indicated by Bergs (2010) and Römer (2005), these examples feature the speaker's intentionality.

Further, I would now like to look at the verbal constructions extracted from the ICCI that were actually classifiable. The classification of verb types into accomplishment, achievement, activity and state verbs thus makes a classification of errors concerning the progressive aspect possible. A diagrammatic overview of the overall distribution of correct and misused instance of the progressive per verb type is provided in Figure 11 below. It also stresses the general distribution of verb types found in the corpus. Figure 12 is a diagrammatic representation that helps to visualize the relative proportion of errors that occurred in more detail. As can be clearly seen in Figure 12 below, accumulations of errors appear in two categories in particular, namely achievement and accomplishment verbs. This highlights the exceptionally high occurrence of errors with accomplishment and achievement verbs, which in both cases exceed the number of correctly applied progressive *–ing* forms by far. As far as activity and state verbs are concerned, in either case the correct use of the progressive is higher than the errors that were produced. However, with state verbs the difference between correctly and incorrectly applied progressives is fractional and merely amounts to a number of two, more specifically, out of the 30 overall cases of the progressive found with state verbs in the ICCI, 16 correct usages and 14 erroneous usages were noted. It is surprising, however, that the correct uses of progressives with activity verbs is only slightly higher than it is the case with state verbs. Also, a rather unexpected finding is the high percentage of misused progressives with activity verbs, which amounts to 43%. This corresponds to 19 errors that were taken from the corpus.

Figure 11 Distribution of correct and erroneous occurrences per verb type
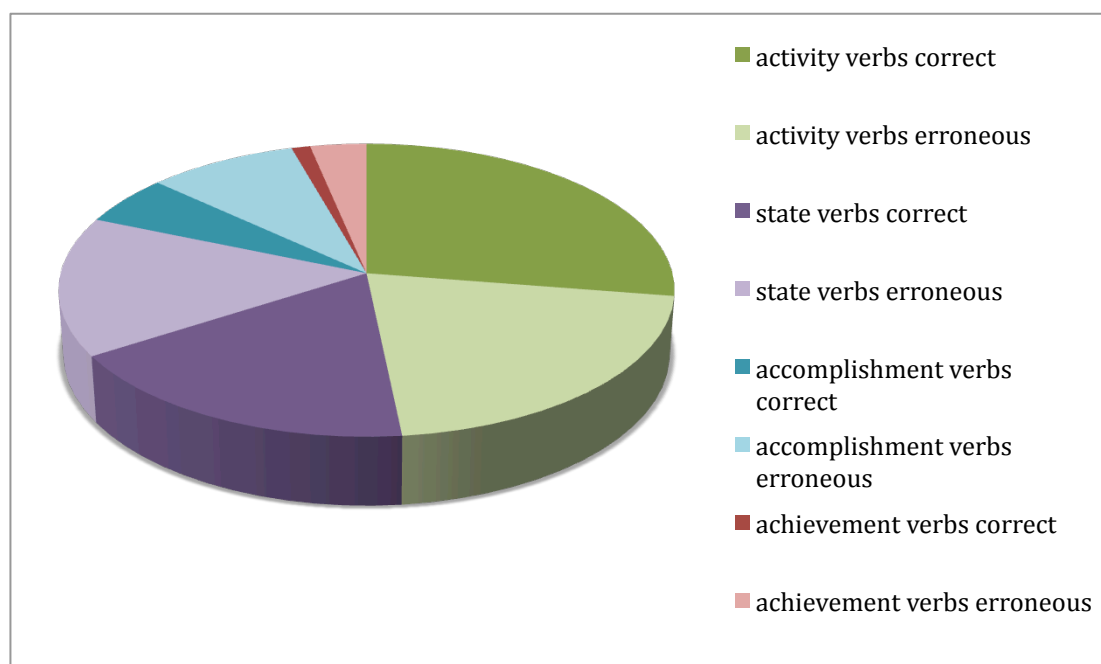
Table 12 Relative proportion of correct and erroneous instances per verb type
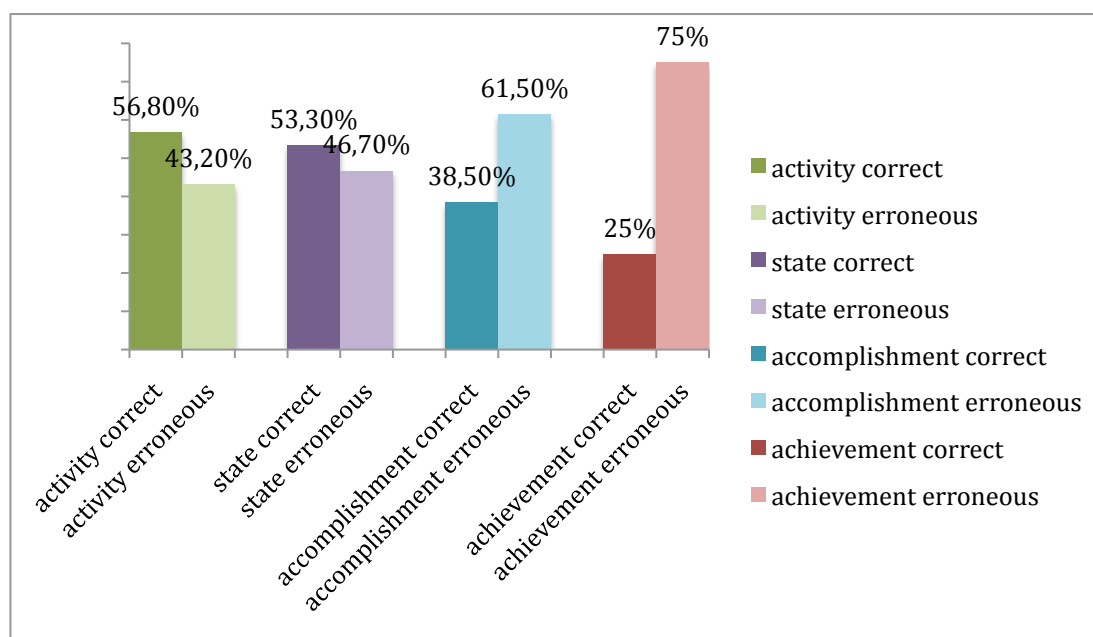
Having now a closer look at the errors that were produced by the language learners, two very broad overall categories of errors arise, firstly, the overuse of the progressive aspect, meaning that the progressive form was applied where it was not required and secondly, obligatory occasions, which are situations where the use of the progressive actually should have been applied, so the non-use of the progressive constitutes the error. In the subsections that follow each verb type is

described in more detail, that is to say, salient instances that were extracted from the corpus are discussed as per the Vender (1967) classification of verb types.

6.2.1. Activity verbs

As the diagrams from above show, activity verbs constitute the verb type which does not only have the most frequencies, but also features proportionally the smallest amount of errors. Example (39) is an illustration of an overuse error of the progressive with an activity verb.

(39) I don't like lasagne.
      Often I haven't a breakfest.
      For lunch I **am cooking** for myselve.
      When I'am not hungry I haven't any dinner.
      When I'm hungry I've a dinner.
      (ICCI: icci_aut0288)

Since, according to the context, which is a description of a habitual situation, the reference point in this example is not within the event itself, the temporal boundaries should not be defocused. So, the present simple has to be applied here to indicate that the situation is habitual rather than unfolding over time. That is to say that the progressive construction in this context imposes a particular profile on the process of cooking something. Here, the meaning of the progressive, which construes the situation as ongoing, was not fully understood by the language learner. Similar to the example above, the following sample of an erroneous instance of the progressive describes a general situation rather than viewing it as happening at the point of speaking. What is more, even though the *–ing* form was not applied here, it can be assumed that the progressive construction was intended here as the use of *are* clearly suggests. Thus, this sample constitutes a meaning as well as a form error with an activity verb.

(40) We are have allready been at the Eiffel Tower and at the Notredamm
      Chirch.
      Avery evening we went to a small street.
      There is a very good coffee house, where we **are eat** a lot of good
      Fransh thinks.
      I think Paris is very beautiful, because it is the town of love.

As to whether direct transfer from German was responsible for the error in example (40) is not clear. This may, however, have been the case, since the correct

equivalent in German is as follows: *Dort gibt es viele Kaffeehäuser, wo wir viele gute französische Dinge essen* which is a present tense in German. However, there is no definite way of telling whether this is the case due to the fragmentary progressive construction that was produced in English.

An example for the avoidance of the progressive with the present simple tense with an activity verb is given in the following extract:

> (41)   But suddenly someone cried for help.
> I saw a woman and fly so fast I could.
> When I was there a man **attack** this woman.
> I took the hands and threw him away.
> (icci_aut0234)

However, it is made clear from the cotext in example (41) that the present tense is undoubtedly misused in this case and that owing to the context of the situation a different grammatical form is required here. In this situation an obligatory occasion was created though not exclusively for the progressive aspect. Two possible ways of putting the above sample into accurate English would be either the usage of the progressive as in *When I arrived I saw that a man **was attacking** the woman* or the use of the participle construction *When I arrived I saw a man **attacking** the woman*. The use of the progressive could be argued because the reference point clearly exceeds in time. Undoubtedly, the process of attacking the woman was already under way when the person arrived at the crime scene, therefore the boundaries of the situation need to be backgrounded and an internal perspective should be taken. A possible source of error that suggests itself here is of course language transfer from German. One correct German equivalent could be the following: *Als ich ankam sah ich wie ein Mann eine Frau attackierte*, the verb in question *attackierte* is a past tense in German. Interestingly, however, the English sample features a present simple tense and not, as it would be the case in German a past simple tense.

Example (42) is a more clear-cut example of an obligatory occasion compared to the one illustrated above, as the situation created by the language user here certainly exceeds the reference point in time, and again, construing the situation as

ongoing. To fully understand the situation that was created by the author of this essay a bit more context is provided.

> (42) I went for a walk in the city when suddenly people were screaming.
> I follow the voice of the people and saw a big hotel.
> On the top of the big hotel was a little boy.
> It seemed that he wanted to jump.
> Suddenly I ran into the hotel without thinking about that I have to do.
> In the hotel the policemen tried to come in the elevator.
> But the elevator was too small for all the policemen.
> I thought I were too late if I wait till the elevator were free.
> So I tooked the stairs.
> The hotel had 20 floors and at the 12th floor I hadn't any power.
> I thougt about the boy and what he **did** now.
> Suddenly I got again power and I could reach the top of the hotel.
> (ICCI: icci_aut0232)

Here, in the first part of the essay the scene was set in a sequential way by listing the events that happened consecutively in the simple past tense *I went for a walk – On top of the hotel was a boy who wanted to jump – I ran into the hotel – I took the stairs* and so on. The omission of the progressive aspect in *I thougt about the boy and what he **did** now* may be due to the failure of locating the reference time within the situation that was described at the beginning of the narration, in which, however, the designated process (what he was doing now) is unfolding over time. The use of the time adverbial *now* clearly indicates the reference point in time, which was, however, missed by the author of the story. This case could also be classified as an error due to a direct translation from the German construction *Ich dachte an den Jungen und daran was er wohl gerade machte*, both verbs, the English *did* and the German *machte* are both past tenses. However, it could be argued that the *gerade* in the German construction *was er gerade machte* should actually indicate an action in progress.

6.2.2. State verbs

So far, errors were discussed that were made with activity verbs. Now, I would like to look at instances of erroneous uses and non-uses of progressives with state verbs. As already mention above, an exceptionally and surprisingly high number of state verbs used with the progressive were extracted from the ICCI. Example (43) is an illustration of a situation which clearly designates a state with limited

duration but the correct formation of the progressive was not achieved, thus constituting a form error.

> (43) Today we are at the beach and play volleyball with our friends.
> The water is blue and the sun **is shine**.
> I like it here because it is every day very warm.
> (ICCI: icci_aut0029)

Here, as it was the case in some of the examples above, the application of the progressive was most likely intended but not implemented. The effect of applying the progressive aspect to a state verb, as in example (43), is limiting the duration of an otherwise inherently long lasting event. That is to say, here the correct meaning of the progressive was achieved; however, merely a fractional progressive construction was produced. Therefore, this type of error can certainly not be seen as a transfer error from the L1, as the correct German translation would be *Das Wasser ist blau und die Sonne scheint*. In German both verbs, the copula verb *ist* and the verb *scheint* are both instances of the present tense. This justifies the claim from above that the correct meaning of the progressive was achieved.

Example (44) is a representation of a clearly overused progressive form with a state verb.

> (44) And for dinner I often have a bread with something or sausages and fruits.
> I would like eat today strawberry (knodel) an a big cake with lots of sugar, fruits and sweets.
> Can you write me a letter back in that **is standing** whats your favourite food.
> (ICCI: icci_aut0282)

This example is indubitably a direct translation from the German construction *schreib mir einen Brief in welchem steht*. However, the use of the progressive in this situation cannot be attributed to German influence. It is clear from this context that the language user does not have a correct representation of the meaning and function of the *–ing* form. One possible reason for the overuse in this case may for example be a certain method or technique in language instruction and could for instance result from overteaching the progressive aspect or from inadequate descriptions of the progressive in teaching materials. Römer (2005: 173) states

that "[m]aybe learners would find it less difficult to handle the progressive in communicative situations if it was presented in the same way as it is used by native speakers, i.e. in the most typical contexts and functions."

A case that is not so clear-cut as the one above is illustrated in example (45).

> (45)   Last night I **was sitting** into a plane because my family and I have to go to america very early.
> My grandmother was in hospital and she would dye soon so we tooked the first fleight.

I would like to argue this case as an ambiguous one, since on the one hand it can be viewed as a completed action when taking the subsequent sentence into consideration, which clearly depicts the event as already terminated. Thus, the vantage point is that is taken from the point of speaking describes a bounded situation, which is viewed as homogenous taking the beginning and endpoint into consideration. This would also have the effect of advancing the story. However, this meaning can only be achieved by using the simple past tense. On the other hand, the student might be conceptualizing the situation as compatible with the progressive, as the prompt asked for an exciting dream. We often enter a dream situation that has commenced before the moment of access and thereby the *sitting* would be construed as unbounded. Even if the explicit reference is absent it might have been in the mind of the author and the student might therefore have an accurate representation of the progressive aspect.

As far as the non-use of the progressive is concerned in situations which require the use of a progressive form, example (46) is an illustration in which the speaker opted for the present simple instead.

> (46)   Hallo I'm in Schladming with my mom, and my grandma.
> It is very fine, but it's very cold for summer, I **have** a lot of fun.
> We play tennis and swim.
> (ICCI: icci_aut0039)

In the situation that is described in (46) the vantage point that is taken by the speaker is clear. Here, the situation should actually be viewed from the inside as an unbounded situation. This meaning is achieved as a result of the conceptual process in which implicit boundaries are imposed, as the action clearly exceeds to

the left and to the right of the reference point. However, this meaning is expressed by the progressive aspect, as in *I am having a lot of fun*. This error might therefore be due to direct transfer form German, as the correct equivalent *ich habe viel Spaß* makes use of the present simple.

6.2.3. Accomplishment verbs

As far as the use of the progressive aspect with accomplishment verbs is concerned, it is particularly salient that, as can be seen in Table 12 above, more errors were produced than correct instances. A correct conceptualization of the situation in which the progressive was used correctly by the language user is shown in sample (47).

> (47)   It was dark outside and I was very tired but I didn't want to fall asleep.
> My sister **was sleeping** and my father **was drinking** coffee.
> My mother **was reading** a book.
> The plane was very big and I wanted to see more than the passanger cabine.
> I said I must go on the toilett but I went into the kitchen of the plane.
> (ICCI: icci_aut0244)

Here, the first sentence specifies the temporal boundaries of the situation, setting the scene in the past which is also the reference point. In the sentences that follow the reference point clearly exceed in time, thus the author of the text takes an internal view of an unbounded situation, marginalizing the beginning and endpoint of the event. Moreover, it can be argued that the use of the progressive describes the background of the scene, whereas the cotext *it was dark outside and I was very tired* and *the plane was big and I wanted to see more* and *I said I must go* put the story forward.

Example (48) is an illustration of a situation in which an obligatory occasion for the progressive aspect was created by the language user. The first sentence clearly sets the scene of the story. The sentence which then follows is a description of a situation that was already ongoing while the person in the story was looking out of the window. Thus, the reference point exceeds in time and therefore requires the use of the progressive aspect.

> (48)   In the night I looked out from my window and saw the animal.

I had seen that the monster had an baby from my neighbar in the arm
and **ran** with it to the lake.
Fast I ran also to the lake and saw the monste with the baby.
The animal gave the baby into the boad and went sleeping.
(ICCI: icci_aut0248)

The error in example (48) occurred clearly due to a Germansim, since the correct German translation would definitely be put in the past tense *Ich sah das Monster, es hatte das Baby des Nachbarn auf dem arm und* **rannte** *zum See.*

However, it has to be duly noted that any activity verb can be construed as an accomplishment verb by implying an endpoint that can be achieved in a processual way. Therefore, taking this fact into account, the result of this study with respect to accomplishment verbs is to some extent surprising. Further, the results of the study show that among the overuse errors that were made only slightly more meaning errors than function errors occurred. A representation of a function error is indicated in example (49).

(49)   Often we have "Topfenkrapferl" or "Palatschinken" for lunch.
        The dinner **is** often **cooking** by my father, seldom by my mother.
        We have often spagetthi or other good food.
        (ICCI: icci_aut0285)

This error can definitely be classified as an overuse error that does not fulfill the appropriate function in the sentence. Here the progressive was wrongly applied to a passive voice. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the source of error. One possibility could therefore be that the speaker did not fully grasp the correct formation of the passive voice, which is of course irrelevant here.

One illustration of a situation in which the progressive most likely should not have been applied can be found in example (50).

(50)   Last jear my family and I were in Italy for a week.
        It was sunny there and we **are** always **going** to the beach.
        At evening we go to the shoping street.
        (ICCI: icci_aut0056)

This sample is worth discussing in the respect that the progressive aspect gives the situation at hand a negative connotation. It has been mentioned earlier that the use

of the progressive with time adverbials such as *always* point to the mood of the speaker. Example (50) definitely falls under this category: *It was sunny there and we **are always going** to the beach* expresses the speaker's annoyance and dislike about going to the beach so often. However, as language production is mainly a matter of construal, this example in particular cannot be classified as distinctly correct or distinctly erroneous. In fact, it could indeed have been the speaker's intention to express his or her irritation about spending every single day at the beach. However, when looking at the whole cotext of this particular sentence I dare to say that this constitutes nevertheless a meaning error, since no any other mention of agitation can be found in the text. The last sentence even suggests quite the opposite:

> (51) Last jear my family and I were in Italy for a week.
> It was sunny there and we are always going to the beach.
> At evening we go to the shoping street.
> I have buy me a Hot weel set.
> In our Hotel we have a big apartement.
> And my mother eat's clam spaghetti.
> It was funny but one day it's raining.
> I like it there but we don't are there this jear.

6.2.4. Achievement verbs

Looking now at achievement verbs, the last category of verbs which remains to be presented, it is particularly striking that they are not only the types of verbs with the least number of occurrences but concurrently most errors happened within this category. The only correct usage of the progressive with an achievement verb is shown in example (52)

> (52) It was the day before our great concert in New York.
> We were standing behind the stage and our heards **are poching** like a cokoo clock.
> When we went out on the stage and looked into the publikum we saw thousands of screaming people.
> (ICCI: icci_aut0258)

This is an interesting example in as much as the progressive was indeed applied correctly; however, a completely correct realization of the verb phrase was not achieved, as the language user clearly lacked the appropriate vocabulary for *our hearts were pounding* using the German word instead. Thus it could be argued in

this case that the form-meaning relation of the progressive was successfully acquired here.

As far as erroneous instances of the progressive with achievement verbs are concerned, one sample of an obligatory occasion and two overuses with meaning error were extracted from the corpus. For an accurate description of the obligatory occasion the whole context in which it occurs has to be given.

(53)   Dear Prof. ENT001!
       I am here with mum and dad in Gibraltar.
       Here it is very hot (at the arrival we have at 9 p.m 43∞!!!).
       I am now sitting in a cafe.
       Mum is at the shopping street and dad is with me in the cafe.
       Here at Gibraltar it is all spectaculary.
       I see the big freeway is closed.
       What is this?
       It **lands** a airplane.
       This is very unusual.
       And at the port are a lot of very big shipps.
       They came all from the U.K but we are from Austria.
       (ICCI: icci_aut0060)

In example (53) the cotext of the sentence *It lands a airplane* specifies the temporal reference point of the situation. In the sentence *I am now sitting in a cafe* the correct realization of the progressive aspect was achieved which locates the reference point within the situation, disregarding the temporal boundaries of the situation. Since, the language user's attention is drawn to the touch down of an airplane while he or she is sitting in a café writing the postcard, indicated by *What is this?*, the process of the landing airplane describes what is happening at the moment, entailing ongoing action and co-occurrence with the event of sitting in the café. The underlying reason for this particular error is difficult to find, owing to the correct usage of the progressive earlier in the text, especially because the second occurrence of the progressive also represents the prototypical usage of action in process. It could, however, be due to L1 influence, as in German the correct realization would most likely be put in the present tense: *Was ist das? Ein Flugzeut landet. Das ist sehr ungewöhnlich.*

Example (54) is a representation of an overuse of the progressive, in which the correct meaning was not achieved. The action described here is not ongoing. The end of the lesson is clearly punctual, thus instead of the progressive a past simple is required.

(54)   Then my mother said to me that I had to go to school because the next day I had my english test.
At the school all my friends contolate me and when the school **was ending** my best friend Oscar and I went to the soccer match Austria vs. Danemark.
The match was great and in the end it was two to one for Austria.

Concluding, most errors occur in particular categories, namely with achievement and accomplishment verbs. These categories are also the least frequently occurring ones in the corpus. Table 3 gives an overview of the data in total numbers. What this table highlights is that there are clearly considerable differences not only with regard to the distribution of the general occurrences of verb types but also in reference to their correct and erroneous instances.

Table 3 Data in total numbers

Verb type	Overall occurrences	Correct occurrences	Errors		
			Overall numbers	Obligatory occasions	Overuses
Activity verbs	44	25	19	8	11
State verbs	30	16	14	7	7
Accomplishment verbs	13	5	8	3	5
Achievement verbs	4	1	3	1	2
Non-classifiable	18				

6.3.   Discussion of results

This section is concerned with the discussion of the findings that have been described in the section above. At the beginning of section six some expected

results of the study were stated. According to the results of this study some of these expectations were confirmed, while others turned out to be invalid and therefore, need to be reconsidered. Moreover, this section is aimed at providing suitable answers for the research questions which guided the present study.

The hypotheses that were stated at the beginning of the empirical study were mainly concerned with the qualitative outcome of the study. The first hypothesis was that while the progressive aspect is most commonly used with activity verbs, thus representing the prototype, state verbs will occur least in the progressive form. Interestingly, this statement has been proven correct and incorrect at the same time. Although, as was expected, the instances that were relevant for the study and were indeed classifiable as activity verbs were the ones that occurred the most. However, the number of occurring state verbs was hardly less frequent than the total amount of activity verbs. What is more, is that with state verbs even less errors were made than with activity verbs (including all types of errors, i.e. overuses as well as obligatory occasions). It goes without saying that following what has been discussed in the literature review above, this is a highly surprising fact, especially, since in the context of second language teaching state verbs are often referred to as the type of verbs that do not allow the progressive aspect. With reference to this, it has become apparent through this study that the claim should be reconsidered. A possible explanation that presents itself here is that the state verbs, in the way they have been classified for the purpose of this study, may actually not be perceived as such. This is due to the fact that by applying the progressive aspect to a state verb the state verbs is thus turned into an activity and can also be viewed an action in process, even if it is limited in duration. This is illustrated in the following examples (55) through (57) that were taken from the corpus:

(55) The weather is most of the time beautiful but sometimes it**'s raining**. (ICCI: icci_aut0106)

(56) I **am** now **sitting** in a cafe. (ICCI: icci_aut0060)

(57) The sun **is scheining**. (ICCI: icci_aut055)

Even if these samples have been classified as state verbs for the use of the study, they could also be described as instances of action in process with limited

duration, may therefore justify the high number of occurrences in the ICCI. Furthermore, another reason that suggests itself for the unexpectedly high number of occurring state verbs may be the topics about which the students were asked to write about. For example one prompt was headed 'A postcard to my English teacher'. This of course involves many description states, of where the people are staying or a description of the weather, for instance. This should therefore also be taken into consideration.

The second hypothesis that was tested was concerned with the distribution of errors that occurred with reference to the classification of meaning, function and form errors. It was expected that there would be a higher frequency of meaning and function errors than of form errors, thus claiming that the acquisition of the form BE + –*ing* is easier for learners of English to achieve than acquiring the meaning of –*ing*. In the course of the study, it turned out that this hypothesis is difficult to prove. Most of the errors that were extracted could not be allocated to just one type of error, meaning that frequently errors tend to feature a combination of error types. There were, however, some instances of form errors in which the correct meaning of the progressive was nevertheless achieved. Examples (58) to (60) are an illustration thereof:

(58) The water is blue and the sun **is shine**. (ICCI: icci_aut0029)

(59) I'am don't go away.
I'am every jeary ga swimming in the ENT001 pool
It is very hot and I **playing** PSP at home. (ICCI: icci_aut0053)

(60) In four days we're coming to our house.
We all **sending** you love Grufle (ICCI: icci_aut0058)

Form errors very frequently co-occurred with meaning errors one such example is illustrated below:

(61) Mum, Dad, my sister and I go in twenty minets to my Grantma
We are eating an talking with them.
Then we go swimming in the pool and playing with the waterball.
ENT003 and I **making** a (sand)casel.
We sometimes go in a restaurant.
(ICCI: icci_aut0053)

Here, in addition to omitting the *be* in the progressive construction, the speaker should not have taken an inside viewpoint of the situation, rather the situation describes a sequence which is introduced by the time adverbial *then*. From the preceding sentences the reference point of time is made clear, namely it is the time before the family is leaving to visit the grandparents, thus what is then following points to the future. If the author of this text still opts for the construction *ENT003 and I **are making** a (sand) castle*, the function the progressive would perform would be that of future time reference.

Further, as far as form errors are concerned it can be said that most of them result in fragmentary constructions in which the form of *be* is missing. However, some were noted in which it *–ing* was not applied, compare examples (58) to (61). In sum, it may be concluded that this hypothesis cannot be confirmed, which leads me to suggest that more emphasis should be put on form-meaning relations in second language instruction.

The third hypothesis can in turn be verified. The function the progressive aspect can perform is future time reference. Several instances thereof were extracted from the corpus. However, I will not go into further detail here, as this has already been discussed in the section above, compare examples (36) to (38).

As far as the research questions are concerned which guided the study, it can generally be said that more overuses of the progressive occurred than errors with obligatory occasions. This is an interesting finding, which does not necessarily support the underlying hypothesis of this thesis, that the acquisition of the progressive aspect poses such a challenge to German speakers because of the inexistence of a grammaticalized equivalent of the progressive aspect in their L1. However, I would like to put forward the claim that, as the study shows language transfer is indeed an influencing factor when it comes to the acquisition of the progressive aspect, it would be mistaken to consider transfer as the only relevant factor in the acquisition of aspectual meanings.[5] More specifically, this means that

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[5] It has to be noted at this point that no effort has been made so as to find other reasons for language transfer in this study, as this would by far exceed by far the realm of this thesis.

the overall tendency to avoid the progressive is due to language transfer, thus there seems to be a strong correlation between errors that were obligatory occasions and L1 language transfer. According to the study, the simple present tense as well as the simple past tense was applied instead of progressive aspect. Translated into numbers, from all the 19 errors that were obligatory occasions which were taken from the ICCI, 13 cases were put into the present simple and 6 into the past simple. As the underlying hypothesis of this thesis suggests, more situations were expected that were obligatory occasions for the use of the progressive. However, some instances were difficult to classify because, as language production is indeed a matter of construal, in some cases it is difficult to determine whether a correct grammatical construction was used to convey what was actually intended by the speaker. One examples that explains the fuzziness of categorization quite clearly is illustrated in (62):

(62)   I **am living** in Vienna (ICCI: icci_aut0016)

As has already been mentioned earlier in this thesis, in this context the progressive shortens an action which can otherwise be defined as ongoing for an indefinite period of time. The effect of *–ing* here is shortening the state of living in a particular place, implying that the person intends to move to another place some time in the future. Thus, opting for the simple present tense or the progressive form makes a meaning difference in a case like this. Following this line of argument I would like to stress the usefulness of teaching students not only about the form of the progressive, but highlight its meanings and its use. Only then can they apply it to suit their needs in conveying their communicative purpose successfully. If this kind of teaching is extended from strict meaning effects on the different lexical aspects to typical occurrences within the different text types, what is conceived as obligatory occasions can be recognized as such and students can learn to make use of this additional way of encoding meaning in English that their L1 doesn't encompass.

Another interesting fact that should definitely be mentioned in this part of the paper is that the high frequency of activity verbs in connection with the progressive aspect may indeed indicate that 'action in progress' can be defined as

the prototype of the progressive in English. This may find verification in the following statement by Gries (2008: 415):

> In a pedagogy context, frequency lists are mostly built on the assumption that it is more useful for L2 learners to learn first those units that are particularly important in the target register/genre/variety, and not surprisingly in Corpus Linguistics "particularly important" translates into "particularly frequent."

Concluding, I would like to mention that this study has contributed to establishing more senses of the progressive aspect which were not discussed in the literature review of this thesis. I would therefore put forward the claim that another effect that *–ing* has on the interpretation of an utterance is denoting a reference point that exceeds over time. Also, the fact that *–ing* can impose a negative connotation on a situation has been mentioned in the context of applying the progressive aspect to habitual events, but this use has not been identified as having its own meaning. Since in this case one can also talk about the effect it has on a verbal construction it could justifiably be categorized as a sense of the progressive aspect.

6.4.   Problems and limitations

It goes without saying that such a small-scale corpus study as the one conducted here, and corpus analysis in general, allows us to spot and describe all kinds of language problems. One of its major limitations according to McEnery, Xiao & Tono (2006: 120) is that the data set of a corpus gives no indication about what is possible and what is not possible, meaning that it cannot provide negative evidence. Since a corpus is a compilation of texts that have actually been produced by language users, what has to be omitted in a corpus out of necessity, is what has not been said. It may seem superfluous to mention this here. As already pointed out, this means of course that only because it has not been said and is perpetuated in a corpus, it would actually not be possible. Further, it has been pointed out by McEnery, Xiao & Tono (2006: 120) that "corpora can yield findings but rarely provide explanations for what is observed." Therefore, observations of attested language facts are based on the researcher's intuitions and generalizations.

This is also what I found most problematic while working with the corpus, namely that judgments of any kind are highly subjective. In this respect, the fuzziness of categorization posed a particular challenge. Some borderline cases of classification of verb types were encountered in the course of the study. Example (63) is an illustration of an example in which the categorization of the verb type was not clear-cut:

(63) I'm at home all holiday.
      I can't after to Italien.
      I **sit** in my room and learn about Englisch.
      How are you?
      I'm not so fine, but I hope next holiday, I can after to Italien.
      (ICCI: icci_aut0045)

In this situation the language user created an obligatory occasion for the progressive aspect. The difficulty that arose here is concerned with the classification of the verb *sit*. In the dominant use, as described by Vender (1967: 99) *sit* is a state verb because no effort is needed for its continuation. However, *I am sitting* could in my view also be classified as an activity. The verb *to sit* is situated on the boundary between state and activity.

Further, another limitation of corpus linguistics that has to be kept in mind is that the outcome of a corpus study is representative of the corpus on which the results are based. Thus, it is essential to make generalizations only in relation to the participants from which the corpus was sampled. Therefore, it is not only vital to know about the nature and composition of the corpus but also information about the participants has to be made accessible for the researcher. As far as the present study was concerned, only the most important information about the participants was available to me, i.e. sex, the grade in which the students were when the essays were written and the L1 of each student. Out of which only the latter was relevant for the study. For the purpose of the underlying study it also may have been helpful to actually have access to additional information about the nature of the language input the students received with respect to the progressive aspect. For example, information as to which textbook built the basis for language instruction would have supported this.

Apart from some difficulties with the classification of verb types, I would like to briefly point out that working with such mini-corpus posed a challenge to draw specific conclusions as to whether language learners have an accurate conceptualization of the morpheme *–ing* they have acquired. It can hardly be claimed that one correct instance is representative for the full understanding of the meanings or functions of the grammatical form that has been learned by the student. A small-scale corpus study, as the underlying one, cannot give enough evidence about whether the full conceptualization of a grammatical construction has been acquired. This especially holds for the obligatory occasion analysis conducted in this study, which fails to give indication about whether the students have fully acquired the meanings an functions of a grammatical construction, in this case the morphology *–ing* (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005: 79). Nevertheless, the study at hand has enabled a generalization of developmental patterns. It has also helped enormously in establishing the fact that the language learners' L1 is indeed a contributing factor in acquiring the progressive aspect in English, thus resulting in language transfer.

7. Conclusion

As the title of this thesis suggests, this thesis aimed at *Analyzing the Progressive Aspect and its acquisition by EFL learners*. Taking the importance of aspect as opposed to tense for this paper into consideration, it was essential to start out with a detailed description of aspect and its two subtypes which differentiate between lexical and grammatical aspect. It has become clear in the course of the empirical study that this distinction of lexical versus grammatical aspect was highly valuable for the analysis that was conducted. The predicate classes that are distinguished within lexical aspect enabled a more or less clear categorization of verbs into activity, state, accomplishment and achievement verbs, which in turn constituted the starting point for the analysis.

For the part that constitutes the analysis of the progressive aspect the framework of Cognitive Linguistics was adopted to take the semantics and uses of the progressive construction under scrutiny. By exploring the notions of boundedness and unboundedness valuable contributions for a better understanding of the effect of *–ing* on a verbal construction could hopefully be obtained. It has not been mentioned before, but I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that the concepts of boundedness and unboundedness could also offer a new approach to teaching the progressive aspect as, I believe, they offer a transparent and accessible explanation for what *–ing* really does.

Since the basic tenets of Cognitive Linguistics is the centrality of meaning, it offered a good starting point to explore the meaning of the morphology *–ing*. The following senses of the progressive could be deduced from the literature that was discussed and from the study that was conducted: describing an action in progresses, i.e. continuousness; limiting the duration of a process; expressing repeated action; imposing a negative connotation on a habitual situation; denoting a reference point that exceeds over time and backgrounding information. In the context of the different meanings of the progressive, it has been attempted to apply the notion of Prototype Theory. It has been claimed that 'action in progress'

constitutes the most typical meaning of the progressive, which in turn has been verified by the corpus study.

Since Cognitive Linguistics unifies linguistic expression, language use, and conceptual structure it offers a wide range of application. Therefore, cognitive-linguistic insights that are relevant for second language acquisition were also discussed in this thesis. Basing its assumptions on a usage-based model, second language acquisition from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective centers around the language learner. It suggests that students need to be sufficiently exposed to conventionally established elements, i.e. language units. Only if representative units are provided by the language instructor can the gradual learning process be successful. Further, it was noted that the acquisition of a grammatical construction should not be exclusively rule-governed because teaching according to rules in traditional grammar teaching goes hand in hand with learning rules and exceptions by heart. Instead, it has been suggested by Niemeier & Reif (2008: 331) that "an integration of the semantic-conceptual level into the pedagogical materials, alongside with morpho-syntactic rules and examples of contextualized use" should be considered. This can easily be applied to teaching the progressive aspect, viewing it as a process of mapping meaning onto form.

The study conducted in this thesis aimed at investigating insights into the kinds of errors that occur in L2 acquisition of the progressive aspect. Therefore, learner language from the ICCI was taken as evidence for the L2 acquisition of the progressive aspect. The results of the study revealed that for the most part it was possible to make a classification of learner errors.

Overall, the tentative conclusion can be drawn that, as has already been mentioned, language production is largely a matter of construal and that the specific context of a situation is crucial for teaching the different meanings of the progressive aspect. This will help language learners to obtain a better understanding of the progressive aspect. Finally, it can be said that in many cases the source of error can be traced back to the L1 German thus language transfer constitutes a contributing factor to the acquisition of the progressive aspect.

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Appendix

Abstract in German (Deutsche Zusammenfassung)

Es wurde zunehmend beobachtet, dass es für Lerner mit Deutsch als Erstsprache die Englisch als Zweitsprache lernen eine besonders große Herausforderung darstellt die grammatikalische Form des Progressiven Aspektes (*be* + Verb *–ing*) – im Deutschen auch *Verlaufsform* genannt – zu erlernen. Eine besondere Herausforderung dabei stellt die Entscheidung dar in welchen Kontexten der Progressive verwendet soll. Häufig wird dies dadurch begründet, dass es im Deutschen kein grammatikalisiertes Äquivalent zum *progressive aspect* im Englischen gibt, weil Deutsch als solches als eine aspektlose Sprache gilt. Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist es Einblicke in die Art der Fehler zu gewinnen die beim Zweitspracherwerb des Progressiven Aspektes im Englisch von Lernern mit Deutsch als Muttersprache auftreten. Weiters soll festgestellt werden ob die Fehler die von Lernern produziert werden einer gewissen Klassifizierung unterzogen werden können. Um herauszufinden wie genau lernende den Progressiven Aspekt verwenden und ob es einen Zusammenhang zwischen der Tatsache, dass es im Deutschen keine Aspekt Kategorie gibt, und die Art der Fehler die deutschsprachige Lerner produzieren, wurde eine Korpusanalyse durchgeführt. Ausgangspunkt der Korpusstudie war eine Analyse von 200 Aufsätzen die von Englischlernenden mit Deutsch als Muttersprache geschrieben wurde. Dafür wurden alle fehlerhaften und alle richtigen Vorkommnisse des Progressives Aspektes aus dem Korpus extrahiert. Weiters wurden alle Aufsätze darauf untersucht ob es Situationen gibt in denen die Verwendung der progressiven Form aufgrund des Kontextes notwendig gewesen wäre. Aus der Analyse ergab sich folgende mögliche Klassifizierung von Fehlern in Bezug auf den Progressiven Aspekt: Formfehler, Bedeutungsfehler und Funktionsfehler. Außerdem konnte festgestellt werden, dass die progressive Form am häufigsten mit Verben verwendet wird die eine Aktivität beschreiben, welche im Englischen als *activity verbs* bezeichnet werden. Die meisten Fehler jedoch traten in Bezug mit Verben auf die eine punktuelle Vollendung beschreiben und im Englischen als *achievement verbs* bezeichnet werden. Das Resultat der Studie stützt die Annahme, dass Fehler of dadurch entstehen weil SchülerInnen oft eine direkte Übertragung vom

Deutschen ins Englische machen. Demzufolge lässt sich schließen, dass Interferenz beim Erlernen des Progressiven Aspektes durchaus eine Rolle spielt, auch wenn dies natürlich nicht als einziger Grund vorliegt. Jedoch ob der Grund, dass das Erlernen des Progressiven Aspektes im Englischen sich darauf beruht, dass Deutsch eine aspektlose Sprache ist, konnte mit dieser Studie nicht eindeutig festgestellt werden.

Prompts

1./2. Klasse (5./6. Schuljahr)

DESCRIBING YOURSELF

This is your first letter to a new friend.

Tell your friend

- your name
- your age
- what you look like
- where you live
- what you like doing

Ask your friend to write back soon.

You can add your own ideas, too.

Write at least 50 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

A POSTCARD TO MY ENGLISH TEACHER

You are on holiday. Write a picture postcard to your English teacher about your holiday.

In this postcard you can write

- where you are
- who is with you
- what the wheather is like
- what you and your family can do there
- how you like it there

You stay at home and do not go away? No problem – you can also write a postcard from home and tell your teacher about your holidays!

Write at least 50 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the postcard. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

WRITING TO AN ENGLISH FRIEND ABOUT FOOD

In his/her last letter your English friend asked you to tell him/her about your favourite food.

Write a letter in which you **can**

- tell him/her what kinds of food you like ☺ and what you don't like ☹
- say what you often have for breakfast, for lunch and for dinner
- ask your friend to tell you about his/her favourite food in the next letter

Write at least 50 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

WRITING TO AN ENGLISH FRIEND ABOUT POCKET MONEY

In his/her last letter your English friend asked you to tell him/her about your pocket money.

Write a letter in which you **can**

- tell him/her how much pocket money you get.
- tell him/her how often you get pocket money.
- say what you do with the money.
- ask your friend how he/she spends his/her pocket money.

Write at least 50 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

3./4. Klasse (7./8. Schuljahr)

WRITING TO AN ENGLISH FRIEND ABOUT FOOD

In his/her last letter your English friend asked you to tell him/her about your favourite food.

Write a letter in which you **can**

- tell him/her what kinds of food you like ☺ and what you don't like ☹
- say what you often have for breakfast, for lunch and for dinner
- tell him/her what you would like to eat today
- ask your friend to tell you about his/her favourite food in the next letter

Write about 100 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

EATING OUT

English pupils are coming to your school on a project week. They need information on restaurants and places where they can eat.

Write a letter and tell them about a restaurant or place where **you** would go.

Before you start writing think about:

- where the place is
- what sort of food you can get
- what your favourite dish at the place is (and why?)
- how the food is
- prices

Write about 100 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

MONEY TO SPEND

Your aunt, who lives in New Zealand, sent you € 2000.- for your birthday. Write a **letter** and tell her what you are planning to do with the money.

Write about 100 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

A VERY GOOD ☺ OR BAD ☹ DAY

Before you start writing think about a very good ☺ or very bad ☹ day in your life.

Think about:

Who (was with you)?
What (happened)?
When (did it happen)?
Where (did it happen)?
How (did you feel)?

Write a story of at least 100 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the story. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

LAST NIGHT I HAD AN EXCITING DREAM

Imagine that you had an exciting dream last night. In your dream you were a star (football star, pop singer, film star) a math genius[1], a hero (e.g. a life saver[2])...

Before you start writing think about:

- who you were (football star/pop singer/...)
- where you were
- what other people were there
- what you did
- ...

Write a story of at about 100-120 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the story. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

Vocabulary:
1 – math genius – Mathematikgenie
2 - life saver – Lebensretterin, Lebensretter

Last night I had an exciting dream. ...

5./6. Klasse (9./10. Schuljahr)

EATING OUT

English pupils are coming to your school on a project week. They need information on restaurants and places where they can eat.

Write a letter and tell them about a restaurant or place where **you** would go.

Before you start writing think about:

- where the place is
- what sort of food you can get
- what your favourite dish at the place is (and why?)
- how the food is
- prices

Write about 100 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

A VERY GOOD ☺ OR BAD ☹ DAY

Before you start writing think about a very good ☺ or very bad ☹ day in your life.

Think about:

Who (was with you)?
What (happened)?
When (did it happen)?
Where (did it happen)?
How (did you feel)?

Write a story of at least 100 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the story. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

MONEY TO SPEND

Your aunt, who lives in New Zealand, sent you € 2000.- for your birthday. Write a **letter** and tell her what you have done (or what you are planning to do) with the money.

Write about 100 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the letter. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

7./8. Klasse (11./12. Schuljahr)

MONEY

There is a focus on money in the next issue of your school magazine. You were asked to write a short essay on the following topic:

Should teenagers work part-time to earn money?

Present your own views and give reasons for your opinion.

Write a text of at least 120 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the text. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

HEALTHY DIET

There is a focus on food in the next issue of your school magazine. You were asked to write a short essay on the following topic:

Human beings do not need to eat meat in order to maintain good health because they can get all their food needs from meatless products and meatless substances. A vegetarian diet is as healthy as a diet containing meat.

Argue for or against the opinion above.

Write a text of at least 120 words.

You have 20 minutes to write the text. Please use a blue or black pen, not a pencil.

MIRIAM SOLTÉSZ

AUSBILDUNG

Universität Wien	2006 – 2013

Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Linguistische Diplomarbeit am Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Titel: "Progressive Thinking: Analyzing the Progressive Aspect and its Acquisition by EFL learners."
Betreuerin: Univ.-Prof. Dr. M. Evelien Keizer

Universität Wien	2011 bis heute

Lehramtsstudium Unterrichtsfach Bewegung und Sport und Unterrichtsfach Englisch

Universität Wien	2007 bis heute

Bakkalaureatstudium Sinologie

Symmedia Akademie für Gestaltung, Bielefeld (D)	2005 – 2006

Einjähriger Lehrgang im Bereich Fotografie

Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe, Rankweil	1999 – 2004

Schwerpunkt Fremdsprachen (Englisch, Französisch, Spanisch), Rechnungswesen, Buchhaltung, Betriebswirtschaft, Kochen und Servieren. Abschluss mit gutem Erfolg.

BERUFSERFAHRUNG

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Studienassistentin am Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik für Univ.-Prof. Dr. M. Evelien Keizer.

Lehrtätigkeit	seit Okt. 2012

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Universität Wien	seit Jän. 2012

Mitarbeit am Fachdidaktikzentrum für „Bewegung und Sport" an der Universität Wien unter der Leitung von Ao. Univ.-Prof. MMag. Dr. Konrad Kleiner. Administrative und organisatorische Tätigkeiten, sowie Übersetzungen Deutsch – Englisch.

PROJEKTERFAHRUNG

Dopingprävention	März – Sept. 2012

Betreuung, Koordination und Organisation eines Projekt des Fachdidaktikzentrums „Bewegung und Sport" unter der Leitung von Ao. Univ.-Prof. MMag. Dr. Konrad Kleiner in Zusammenarbeit mit der NADA Austria unter der Leitung von David Müller zu Dopingprävention als pädagogisch-didaktisches Interventionskonzept mit dem Titel „Fair zum Körper. Fair im Sport." Dabei wurden Unterrichtsmaterialien erstellt und modular präsentiert, sowie Workshops zum Thema geplant, gestaltet und durchgeführt.

ERFOLG

Auszeichnung
> Student Award 2010 für hervorragende akademische Leistungen der Anglistik Wien für eine linguistische Seminararbeit mit dem Titel „Functions of *like* in English utterances" im Zuge des Seminars "Hedging and being vague" im WS 2009/2010 bei Mag. Dr. Gunther Kaltenböck, M.A.

Wien, am 31. Jänner 2013