

"and erm . he's having a young woman there who he wants to paint" – The Progressive in Spoken vs. Written Learner Language

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It has frequently been noted in the applied linguistic community that the progressive aspect in English is very difficult to handle for foreign language learners (e.g. Hahn *et al.*, 2000; Mindt, 1997; Rogatcheva, forthcoming; Swan & Smith, 1987; Zydatiņ, 1976). The challenges appear to lie in the variety of functions it serves, i.e. the different contexts of its use as well as its incomplete or inadequate descriptions and representations in mainstream teaching materials (cf. Römer, 2005).

The progressive has been claimed to be particularly troublesome for students whose L1 does not have an equivalent form, which is the case for e.g. Polish, Swedish, and German learners (cf. Wulff and Römer, 2009: 116; Zydatiņ, 1976: 352). In fact, recent learner corpus studies have shown that learners tend to not only misuse, but also overuse the progressive form (e.g. Axelsson and Hahn, 2001; Leńko-Szymańska, 2007; Rogatcheva, forthcoming). However, most previous studies have only looked at written learner language so far. Corpus studies dealing with spoken interlanguage, on the other hand, have been rare.

The present paper will report on the results of a pilot study which aims at exploring the extent to which the learners' issues with the progressive in writing also apply to the spoken language. To this end, we will make use of the German error-tagged subcorpus of the *Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage* (LINDSEI-GE; cf. Känmerer, 2009) and the native speaker counterpart *Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation* (LOCNEC, cf. De Cock, 2003). This corpus pair provides a useful resource to compare German learners' use of the progressive in their spoken output to equivalent native speaker data. We will first report on quantitative differences within the spoken corpus pair. For instance, it turns out that the frequency patterns which have been observed for learner writing are not the same in speech, as German learners even tend to underuse the progressive in the spoken language. This observation might be one important aspect that contributes to the "foreign-soundingness" (Granger, 2004: 132) of learner language. Second, we will analyze our spoken learner data quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of errors. Progressive-related errors are of different kinds: There can be misuse of the progressive in non-required contexts (e.g. **it was very difficult for me to understand . the French because they are speaking so fast* [GE006]) and non-use in required contexts (e.g. **these supermarkets become popular now* [GE016]) as well as erroneous formal realizations, though the latter type barely occurs in our data. We will closely examine all the erroneous uses in order to reveal the contexts, meanings and constructions for which the use of the progressive is particularly error-prone in advanced learner speech and to understand where the underuse in the learner data may stem from. In a last step, we will compare our findings to learner writing by setting them in relation to data

from previous research into the German component of the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE; cf. Granger *et al.*, 2009).

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