

ABSTRACT

The focus of this thesis are the progressive stative verbs in contemporary British English. State verbs, by definition, lack any progress in their semantic structure, thus should be mutually exclusive with the progressive, yet it seems that their occurrence has been recently rising. The research question the thesis aims to answer is: “Are stative progressives employed more often in contemporary colloquial spoken English, than they were 30 years ago?” The thesis is focused primarily on colloquial spoken English since it is expected that changes appear earlier there than in formal written language. The material for the thesis is drawn from a corpus of informal spoken English, and a corpus of news, a register of written language most similar to informal speech. For the period of the late 1980s and 1990s, the demographic component of the British National Corpus is used, while contemporary British English is represented by the British National Corpus 2014. In the quantitative part of the analysis, the occurrence of 12 verbs in spoken language and news is compared. Three of them are further examined in the qualitative part of the analysis, in terms of syntactic structure and semantic functions. The thesis then concludes with a more detailed summary of the results.

KEYWORDS

stative verbs, progressive, British English, spoken language, corpus