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THE GRAMMATICAL CONTENT AND USE OF THE PROGRESSIVE TENSES IN MODERN ENGLISH (LINGUODIDACTIC ASPECT)

Summary. Is dedicated to the 100-th anniversary Of an outstanding grammarian of our time, founder of Odessa grammatical school, A. Korsakov. His ideas are still alive and remain topical. In the article we have made an attempt of linguodidactic reconsideration of the theoretical heritage of prof. A. Korsakov, namely his theory of aspect, suggested by him in the 70-ies of the previous century.

Key words: aspect, linguodidactics, model, frequency, aspectual forms.

This article is dedicated to the 100-th anniversary of prof. A. Korsakov (November, 1916) – an outstanding linguist and a talented lecturer. His most significant work “The Use of Tenses in English”, published about 50 years ago, in the late 60-ies, is still in demand. Despite numerous attempts to penetrate into the essence of this phenomenon, it still remains the most fundamental work on the English tenses ever written. Furthermore – it is a model of linguistic research. Based on the enormous corpus of about 50 000 examples collected consecutively – which is a rather rare occurrence, theoretically it presents a unique combination of two philosophical trends: the neo-positivistic approach of the American descriptivism and the materialistic dialectics – an approach not only remarkable in his days but also worth being made a note of by a linguist at present.

The article below is an anniversary one. It touches upon the problem of the English aspect as it has been worked out by prof. A. Korsakov [6]. In doing this we lay special emphasis on the linguodidactic side of A. Korsakov’s theory – and this is our own contribution. The reason for this is that, acknowledged theoretically by all, the principle of linguodidactics, which sets forward high demands to the linguistic content and scientific quality of the material delivered, is often ignored in practice. This is especially characteristic of foreign language teachers who, paying much attention to other aspects of teaching, give very little thought, if any, to the linguistic quality of the material presented. In this they wholly rely on books, being unaware that most of what the latter suggest is scientifically not grounded, not to say wrong. Naturally, this makes the process of teaching much less effective than it could possibly be. Another reason for our turning to linguodidactics are the numerous learners of English whose native tongues don’t possess progressive tenses (as the Ukrainian language, for instance) and for whom, as the practice shows, it is rather difficult to understand why and when they should be used. Hence **the aim** of the article is to reveal from within the interdependency between the linguistic content of the material in question and its best possible way of its presentation. Each grammatical issue in our article is supplied with methods of teaching commentaries.

Proceeding from the statistics on tenses and aspect given by prof. A. Korsakov and relying on our long-term practical experience we recommend to take up the topic of aspect after the learners have gone through the system of the indefinite and perfect tenses (according to A. Korsakov – the system of absolute and anterior tenses [6, p. 14–16]. This order of succession is called forth not only by the much lower frequency of occurrence of the progressive tenses compared with the non-progressive ones but also by the fact that the progressive tenses never occur in their pure form, as is the case with the Indefinite and Perfect tenses, but blend with the latter. That is why to grasp the nature of the aspect is much more difficult than that of the tense. So to understand what the aspect is one has first to know what the tense is. The suggested order is much more scientifically justified than the one presented in most of manual on grammar, where the aspect is not treated as a separate grammatical topic based on the category of tense, but where aspectual forms simply alternate with the tense forms [25, p. 1; 1, p. 332, 38, 40–50; 5, p. 159–171; 2 p. 3–7].

Another method of teaching recommendation is that the presentation of the theory of aspect should be carried out in five strictly outlined stages (portions of material). Let us dwell upon each stage in detail.

The first stage includes the explanation of the general notions: the difference between tense and aspect. The tense is a grammatical category which implies the set of forms denoting time relationships. The term aspect is understood as a system of oppositions of different verbal forms referring to different modes of action. In the English grammar aspect is the opposition of the forms –ing₀ // –ing denoting *the speed of the development of the process in time* [6, p. 11]. As such it could be treated as a specific *measure of time*, which makes it closely related to the category of tense. That explains the fact of blending by linguists of the two categories in the morphological boundaries of the English verb.

We believe that here it would be appropriate to draw the attention of the students to *the cognitive value* of this grammatical category. The category of aspect is not only a matter of linguistics or a matter of practical mastering of the language but is also a specific means of understanding the objective reality in quite a new, unaccustomed way, typical of a nation, namely – the English nation.

The second stage implies the use of visual aids, namely, *The Frequency Table of the English Tense and Aspect Forms*, which should be commented on with the focus on the progressive tenses. The comments should be made by students with the help of the teacher.

The Frequency Table of the English Tense and Aspect Forms is given below. *The Table* is compiled by on the bases of statistics taken from A. Korsakov's manual and the works by his postgraduates [6, p. 51, 52], [8, p. 28; 10, p. 12]. It presents the frequency of tense and aspect forms in narration, dialogue speech and technical literature. The basis of comparison is narration. Therefore the tense and aspect forms are listed in order of their decreasing frequency in narration. Besides the traditional names we also give the names, suggested by A.K. Korsakov (table 1).

Judging by the Table the aspectual forms ("the progressive tenses") are used by the Englishmen much less frequently than the indefinite and perfect tenses: from about two and a half to less than one percent. The exception is the present progressive which makes up 7.3% in dialogue speech. The second frequent tense is the past progressive tense. It is registered in 2.5% in narration and 1.4% in dialogue speech. The rest three tenses are used extremely rarely- in less than one per cent each. The future perfect progressive exists only theoretically and is practically never used by Englishmen.

This fact of the rare occurrence of the progressive tenses is unfortunately ignored by most grammar manuals [1, p. 9], especially secondary school exercise books, which make emphasis in the material delivered precisely on the progressive forms at the expense of the frequently used tenses. What concerns the present progressive form it should be practiced mostly on extracts from dialogue speech, which is a natural sphere of its occurrence. Our methods of teaching recommendations are especially important for secondary school teachers, who waste much time and efforts on training tense and aspect-forms that are practically out of use.

The third stage is focused on the morphological and syntactic paradigm of the progressive tenses. This material is allotted much space to in all grammar books. The task of the teacher therefore is only to outline the items that should be paid special attention to. They are: affirmative, negative and interrogative forms of the pro-

gressive tenses; full and contracted variants of these forms; spelling variations before "-ing".

It would be also important to stress that all the changes in the morphological paradigm of the progressive tenses are caused by the changes of the auxiliary "to be", the "-ing-element" being unaltered.

The fourth stage is devoted to the grammatical content of the Progressive tenses in opposition to the non-progressive ones. It is the most important and at the same time the most complicated one. The grammatical content is covered by four semantic models [6, p. 21–35].

Before passing over to presenting the models we would like to make one reservation: the models given below are illustrated with the simplest examples. This is necessary to make the explanation as clear as possible. The analysis of the examples from the original sources should be given later – only after the students have understood the models perfectly.

The verbal presentation of the models is supplemented with their graphic variants.

Model I: the non-progressive tenses represent *verbal processes with emphasis on their limits*, while the progressive ones represent *verbal processes in their development*.

Graphic representation of M I: [V] // VVV

The peculiarity of this model lies in the fact that it corresponds to the Ukrainian *perfective and imperfective aspects* (in the past and future time spheres). That is why we recommend to begin with the explanation of Model I by opposing examples of the past indefinite and the past progressive tenses (the future indefinite and the future progressive ones). The examples should be translated into Ukrainian [6, p. 21].

Examples:

He opened his eyes // He was opening his eyes.

(Він відкрив очі) // (Він відкривав очі).

Cf.: He opens his eyes // He is opening his eyes.

Table 1

The Frequency Table of the English Tense and Aspect Forms

№	The name of the tense	The form	Relative frequency		
			Fiction		Technical literature
			narration	dialogue	
1.	Past Indefinite <i>Past Static</i>	lived, went	57.2	22.0	18.0
2.	Present Indefinite <i>Present Static</i>	lives, goes	25.5	58.7	70.2
3.	Past Perfect <i>Beforepast Static</i>	had lived, gone	5.2	—	0.2
4.	Present Perfect <i>Beforepast Static</i>	have/has lived, gone	3.8	9.8	8.1
5.	Future Indefinite <i>Future Static</i>	shall/will live, go	3.0	—	2.0
6.	Past Progressive <i>Past Dynamic</i>	was/were living, going	2.4	1.4	0.16
7.	Present Progressive <i>Present Dynamic</i>	am/is/are living, going	1.9	7.3	1.16
8.	Present Perfect Progressive <i>Beforepresent Progressive</i>	have/has been living, going	0.2	0.8	0.04
9.	Past Perfect Progressive <i>Beforepast Dynamic</i>	had been living, going	0.17	—	—
10.	Future Progressive <i>Future Dynamic</i>	shall/will be living, going	0.06	—	0.04
11.	Future Perfect <i>Beforefuture Static</i>	shall/will have lived, gone	0.002	—	—
12.	Future Perfect Progressive <i>Beforefuture Dynamic</i>	shall/will have been living, going	—	—	—

(Він відкриває очі) ≠ (Він відкриває очі).

He closed his eyes // He was closing his eyes.

He took off his coat // He was taking off his coat.

He jumped from the fence // (while) he was jumping from the fence.

Since some grammarians associate the grammatical meaning of the progressive tenses with duration of the processes in time (from here is another name of them – the “continuous tenses”) ask the students to perform the actions mentioned in the above examples in order to see if *opens* really differs in duration from *is opening*, etc.

Model II: the non-progressive tenses represent *processes as a relatively static feature* or a *static relationship* characteristic of them, while the progressive represent *processes in their development* (exactly as in Model I).

Graphic representation of M II: F; R // VVV

a) General processes: not pinned up to the moment of speech (not going on at the moment of speech):

Examples:

1. They teach English. // They are teaching English.

2. He paints portraits // He is painting portraits.

3. He plays football // He is playing football.

(Model I is out of question as the above processes are represented as non-terminative: He taught English → Він викладав англійську // He was teaching English → Він викладав англійську).

Here we may come across the difficulty of the students' not understanding of the fact that the semantics the verbs, besides actions and states, as it usually said in grammar books, also has a shade of the meaning of a feature. The evidence of this is the existence in some languages semantically identical but structurally different utterances: *Він хворіє* (the verb) and *Він був хворий* (verb + adjective) (Ukrainian) *Er hat sich verspätet* and *Er war spät* (German). In the English language, however, there is just one structurally corresponding translation of each of the two utterances that is with the help of the structure “verb + adjective”: *He was ill* and *He was late*. Semantically the latter utterances represent the specific existence of the substance *he* by its property (feature) at a certain moment (period) of time expressed by an adjective *ill* (*late*). From here it follows that *They teach English* could also be understood as *They are teachers of English*. So the answer to “What do they do for living?” could be both: *They teach English* or *They are teachers of English*. The same concerns other examples with the present indefinite: *He paints portraits* (*He is a portraitist*); *He plays football* (*He is a football player*), etc.

Another case is the utterance *They are teaching English*. It could also be an answer to the question “What do they do for living?” In this case we mean that every day they are in the process of performing activities typical of a teacher.

So both answers *They teach English* and *They are teaching English* to the question “What do they do for living?” are perfect English, the difference between them being that by the first utterance we mean that *they are teachers of English* while by the second that *they every day are in the process of performing activities typical of a teacher*. This could be compared to a photograph and a video. Some more examples of Model II:

Why is she so pale?

She smokes hard // – She is smoking hard.

(She is a hard smoker) // (She is often in the process of smoking).

b) “On line” processes: going on or being performed at the moment of speech:

The above mentioned difference in meaning between indefinite and progressive forms concerns not only general processes as in the above examples but also the processes that are going on right now, before the eyes of the speaker.

Examples:

– **What is she doing now?**

– She cooks an omelette // – She is cooking an omelette.

– (She is an omelette cook at present) // (She is in the process of cooking an omelette)

The answer «*She cooks an omelette*” to the question **What is she doing now?** Could also be compared to a photograph of the corresponding situation, while the utterance “*She is cooking an omelet*” to a video. By using the progressive tense you bring the situation to life.

– Look! She dances divinely. // Look! She is dancing with him.

(She is a divine dancer) // (She is in the process of dancing.)

This model is more than any other peculiar of the English language. It represents the specific way the Englishmen reflect in mind the objective reality: statically – as a photograph and dynamically – as a video. The best way to show the difference between the usages of non-progressive and progressive aspect in the analysis of examples where these aspectual forms are used parallel. For example:

Phil lay in stupor. His little hands plucked incessantly at the bed-clothes. He breathed now very quickly, now so slowly that one began to wonder whether he was breathing at all (A. Huxley). In this utterance *He breathed now very quickly, now so slowly* could be transformed into *His breath → was now quick, now so slow* while *whether he was breathing at all* into *→ whether he was doing it at all*.

She was certain that everyone in the ward was noticing how badly she walked. But she was walking – that was the important thing (D. Cusack). In this utterance *how badly she walked* could be transformed into *→ how bad her walk was* while *she was walking* into *→ she was doing it*.

Diana Haddon was at this moment brushing her sleek fair hair before the mirror of her dressing table. She brushed it with a fierce fatigue (T. James).

Diana Haddon was at this moment brushing her sleek fair hair → Diana Haddon was busy brushing her sleek fair hair; she brushed it with a fierce fatigue.

→ That action (the action of brushing; her brushing was that of a fierce fatigue) // was fiercely fatigue.

So as could be seen from the above examples the non-progressive aspect (static) aspect allows the transformation into substantives (gerund, noun), while for the progressive forms such transformation is out of the question. The latter, however, allow the transformation into **be doing; be busy doing smth.**

Bellow we list a number of examples of Model II where the progressive form is practically never used. The reason for that is that it is not possible to imagine these processes in their development. (The list of examples could also be given after the teacher has explained Model II, at the end of it).

The column stands 17 feet high. → The column is 17 feet high.

The shoes fit me perfectly. → The shoes are my size.

The clock says five. → The time is five.

Model III: the non-progressive tenses represent the verbal processes as a relatively static feature (or a relationship), exactly as in Model II, while the progressive tenses represent it as a changing feature (relationship) in respect to the anterior or posterior period of time.

Graphic representation of M III: F; R // F_(t1-t2); R_(t1-t2)

Examples:

1) *He's as thin as bone. He hardly eats a bit (Th. Wolfe)* He is a poor eater (no changes are implied.) // *"You're not eating very much", she commented as she saw his ribs beginning to arc through the skin (I. Stone)* He was a good eater before, now he is a poor eater. His appetite has undergone certain changes.

2) *He talks charmingly. Dances divinely. // When a baby begins to talk, he at first uses single words. Later on <...> he puts words together. Soon he is talking fluently (A. Strong).*

3) *"I teach and do the Appeals work, that's all" (A. Maltz) // "Pete, I often think of what your dad used to tell me about teaching. Now I'm teaching myself, I see what he meant" (J. Updike) [6].*

Analysis by Model II in these cases is out of the question as you can't observe any changes taking place before your eyes. The changes which are implied in these utterances appear as a result of your comparing the two states of the person – before and after something have happened to him. It is so as if you were comparing the two photographs and by comparing them you come to a certain conclusion as to the changes in the characteristic features of the person. You define the tendency of those changes (in the appearance of the person) by using the progressive form. The same concerns relationship processes:

Examples:

Another complete castle before you... with its eight enormous round towers which still stand (Th. White) No signs of ruination → // *The castle is still standing, and you can see its lovely ruined walls with ivy on them (Th. White)* One can observe signs of ruination. [6]

Model IV concerns only relationship-processes that are **transitory** by nature.

By Model IV the non-progressive tenses represent verbal processes without emphasis on their transitory nature, while the progressive ones, on the contrary, lay special emphasis on it. In Model IV, the same as in Model II, the choice of the aspectual form is subjective: in most cases it is a matter of a speaker.

Graphic representation of M IV: R_{tr} // R_{tr}

Examples:

1. *"A plain wooden chair with a homely round back stood at the foot of the bed, and a fairly serviceable broom was standing in one corner" (Th. Dreiser).* (Without emphasis on their transitory nature of the spatial relationship between the chair and the bed).

2. *"May I at least get my hat? It hangs on the peg opposite to us" (Ch. Dickens) // Take my waterproof to lie on: it is hanging up in the hall (B. Shaw).*

(Without emphasis on their transitory nature of the spatial relationship between the hat and the peg // with emphasis on their transitory nature of the spatial relationship between the waterproof and the place (the piece of furniture) it hangs on).

Comparing the cases of the aspectual oppositions covered by Model III and Model IV, we see that in the sentence "A chair stands near the window" (Model IV) the progressive form is much more probable than in the sentence "The house stands on the hill" and "The picture hangs on the wall" (Model III). That is explained by the fact that the process represented in the first sentence is transitory by nature, while the processes of the two last sentences are not. In the last two sentences the progressive form, though possible, is much rarer than the non-progressive one. The transitory nature of the processes covered by Model IV makes it possible for the speaker to use the two aspectual forms parallel (equally frequent).

Graphic representation of the Models:**M I:** [V]// VVV**M II:** F; R // VVV**M III:** F; R // F_(t1-t2); R_(t1-t2)**M IV:** R_{tr} // R_{tr}**Where:****V** – a verbal process;**/V/** – a verbal process with its limits emphasized;**VVV...** – a verbal process in its progression;**F** – feature expressed by a verb in a context;**R** – relationship expressed by a verb in a context;**tr** – transitory;**tr** – transitory emphasized.

In the fifth stage we summarize the grammatical material. The students with the help of the teacher try to reduce the semantics of the four models to one essential semantic opposition between the non-progressive and progressive tenses. The conclusion will be as follows: the non-progressive tenses represent verbal processes **in the static way**, while the progressive tenses – **in the dynamic**. In conformity with this we, following A. Korsakov, suggest new names to the tenses: the non-progressive tenses should be called **static tenses**, the progressive ones – **dynamic tenses**. (The present indefinite tense → the present static tense; the present progressive → the present dynamic tense).

Finally, the teacher helps the students **to define the grammatical meaning** of the tenses with regard to their aspectual oppositions (e.g.: the grammatical meaning of the present static tense is the mental present of the speaker represented as relatively statistically // the grammatical meaning of the present dynamic is the mental present of the speaker represented as relatively dynamicaly) [6, p. 60, 95].

Below we will analyse some uses of the dynamic tenses from the standpoint of the suggested theory of aspect on the examples taken from the original sources. For this purpose we recommend for the teacher to take the text which the students have already read. Here we analyse the utterances taken from the English fairy tale "The Tulip Pixies" [11, p. 34–36]. First of all we suggest the students to analyse the use of the dynamic tenses in the fairy tale in general (their relative frequency, forms, etc. See: Stage I and Stage III.) Then we analyse each case of the dynamic tenses separately.

E.g.: *Then she got out of bed and peered from the window. There below her in the moonlight all the tulips in their shining colours were waving their heads in tune with the sweet music. It seemed as though they were singing too.*

From the context it is clear that the process is represented in its development. The old woman was observing it from the window in detail, in motion (VVV...).

This means that the use of the dynamic tense in this case could be explained either by Model I or by Model II. To find out by which model exactly we substitute the form "were waving" for "waved" and analyse the semantics of the two sentences by translating them into Ukrainian [9, p. 243] and then by comparing them. As a result we get the same translation of both: *Тюльпани коливали голівками в такт до солодкої музики*. The translation shows that despite the substitution of the dynamic form by the static the process remains non-transitive which makes Model I out of the question. So the conclusion is: the use of the dynamic form in this case could be explained by Model II only.

e.g.: *"They are lulling their babies to asleep, I do declare", said the old woman delighted. "Ssh, yes, dear soul, I see them now.*

The pixie babies are fast asleep and there go the pixie folk themselves to dance in the meadow grass”.

This process is also represented in its development. The old woman observes it stage by stage, in detail. That means that this case of the dynamic tense falls under the first two models (VVV...). To decide exactly under which we substitute the form “*are lulling*” for “*lull*”. This is not enough as the opposition becomes evident only after we have checked it up on the corresponding past forms of the Ukrainian language. That is why we convert “*are lulling*” into “*were lulling*” and “*lull*” -into “*lulled*.” After we have got two parallel English utterances with a dynamic and static form in the past we translate them into Ukrainian and compare the semantics of the utterances translated: *заколюсували* // *заколюсали*, respectively. The analysis shows that “*are lulling*” represents the process as a non-terminative one. From here it follows that this case falls under Model I.

“*You shouldn’t be gathering they gooseberries out of season*”, *the neighbour warned him (the new tenant)*. The usage of the continuous form in it implies the changes that are going to be introduced in the garden by the new tenant which appeared in the house after the old lady’s death. To put it in other words – a more or less stable **relationship** between *gooseberries* and *the time of their gathering* observed strictly by the old lady is soon going to be ruined). Being a relationship process this case falls under Model III. The same concerns the utterance “*Surely, you won’t be digging up they tulips?*”. The permanent **relationship** between *the bed-flower* and *tulips* is also under the threat of ruination. The utterances “*What be you putting in?*” and “*I be putting a bed of parsley, if you must know*”, however, are cases of Model I. The speaker implies that he will be soon in the process of doing it (be busy doing it). This is proved by the terminative and non-terminative meaning of the static and dynamic forms. Cf.: *What will you put in?* // *What will you be putting in?* (*Що ти посадиш?* // *Що ти будеш садити?*)

The suggested way of presentation of the category of aspect, on the one hand, is scientifically more grounded, and as such, more reliable. On the other, it makes the process of teaching more effective and economical by excluding from it a number of cases of low frequency that are usually wasted much time on under the traditional approach.

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Жаборюк О. А., Жаборюк І. А. Граматичне значення т. зв. «продовжених часів» у сучасній англійській мові

Анотація. Стаття присвячена 100-річному ювілею видатного граматики сучасності, засновника Одеської граматики школи А.К. Корсакова. Його надбання живуть донині й не втратили своєї актуальності. У статті робиться спроба лінгводидактичного переосмислення теоретичного спадку вченого, зокрема запропонованої ним у 70-х рр. минулого століття теорії аспекту в сучасній англійській мові.

Ключові слова: аспект, лінгводидактика, модель частотності, видо-часові форми.

Жаборюк Е. А., Жаборюк И. А. Грамматическое значение т. н. «продолженных времен» в современном английском языке

Аннотация. Статья посвящена 100-летнему юбилею выдающегося грамматиста современности, основателя Одесской грамматической школы А.К. Корсакова. Его идеи живы и поныне и до сих пор не утратили своей актуальности. В статье сделана попытка лингводидактического переосмысления теоретического наследия ученого, в частности предложенной им в начале 70-х гг. прошлого столетия теории аспекта в современном английском языке.

Ключевые слова: аспект, лінгводидактика, модель, частотность, видо-временные формы.