ABSTRACT

In our increasingly globalized world English is used as a lingua franca (ELF) for many different communicative purposes. This thesis seeks to make a contribution to ongoing ELF research by investigating the progressive in ELF. The aim of the paper is to give insights into how the progressive is used with regard to both forms and functions and on a more general level, to contribute to a better understanding of what ELF is like.

The paper provides a theoretical part which briefly addresses the concept of ELF and also characterizes ELF research. Furthermore, central issues with regard to the progressive as a grammatical category are discussed to provide a starting point for the empirical part.

The thesis rests on a study that examines the progressive in the speech event type ‘conversation’ of the VOICE corpus. The data is analyzed both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. In the quantitative analysis the paper seeks to show in which forms and with which frequency the progressive is used in ELF. The results are also compared to native speaker data from ICE-GB. The paper shows that in the data the progressive is a relevant structure in ELF communication and that it is found in a variety of different forms.

The qualitative part attempts to show which functions the progressive has in the data in order to investigate what may motivate the use of this form. The analysis reveals that the progressive in ELF has some functions that are also found in ENL grammars and others that are not, such as ‘adding emphasis’ or the so-called ‘historic progressive’ that makes what is being said more lively. It is argued that speakers draw on underlying resources of language and that all functions are actualizations of the same underlying criterion of meaning. Finally, also the issue of the communicative effectiveness of the progressive is addressed.

The paper concludes that in the data investigated the progressive is certainly a relevant structure for ELF communication that is clearly communicatively effective and moreover, the ELF speakers actualize what is underlying compared to ENL more generously.