

Revisiting the myth of stative progressives in world Englishes

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Wider use of the stative progressive (BE *Ving*) is commonly attributed to Outer Circle varieties as a phenomenon that distinguishes them from Inner Circle varieties (see e.g. Platt, Weber, & Ho, 1984; Hundt & Vogel, 2011). The term 'wider use' may be understood in two different ways: (i) the more frequent use of the progressive with so-called stative verbs, and (ii) non-standard use of stative progressives departing from the standard, temporary reading of such combinations. However, studies making the claim often fail to account for regional differences in verb-phrase density. The present study remedies the methodological problem by focusing on the progressive vs. non-progressive alternation, subjecting the data to a series of statistical analyses. The results indicate that we need to refine the term 'wider use' – it is critical that it is understood in the semantic sense of referring to extension to non-delimited contexts as the sense 'more frequent use of stative progressives in Outer Circle varieties' is not confirmed. Rather, the frequency data, the attraction patterns, and the alternation patterns all indicate that Indian English differs from the other varieties investigated, including the other Outer Circle varieties, Singaporean English and Hong Kong English. It is only within the semantic extension that we find a statistically significant difference between Inner and Outer Circle varieties.