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Progressive aspect in Italian: findings from a 'developing' aspect system.

When talking about events, aspectual distinctions allow speakers to state whether an event is completed (perfective), or not (imperfective), or is explicitly in progress (progressive aspect). The concept of progressive aspect is grammaticalized to different degrees across languages, and Italian poses an interesting case as use of the progressive (*stare* + gerundio), which is facultative, is in a state of evolution (Bertinetto 2000, Squartini 1990, Villarini 1999, Strudsholm 2004). The aim of the present study is to identify, on an experimental basis, which temporal properties of dynamic situations lead speakers to code an event with this marker. To do so, dynamic situations were designed and recorded (video clips; everyday situations) so as to profile different temporal properties. The method allows us to trace which factors serve as an attractor effect for the selection of the form. A time pressure condition was used to test both stability of use over the different situation types and the extent to which the different frequencies observed are stable or not.

References:

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