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## THE PERFECT, THE PROGRESSIVE FORM, AND MEASURING SITUATION LENGTH\*

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The topic explored here is the use of perfect finite forms (*present* and *past perfect*) in conjunction with adjuncts introduced with *for* and *since* in order to provide an assessment or measurement of the duration of a given situation (state-of-affairs, event...) that is not represented as complete at the time of measurement. To illustrate: in *It's been raining for two hours now*, the activity whose length is measured, denoted by *raining*, has been going on for two hours from its inception to the time the sentence is uttered, and the raining is likely to continue – although it might also come to a sudden end. This type of use falls within the category of continuative use (DECLERCK *et al.* 2006 : 235) in that the full situation may continue beyond the time the duration measurement is made.<sup>1</sup> With this specific use, the situation is provided with provisional boundaries to measure its length while it is still unfolding.

The main thesis I wish to defend is that when one measures the duration of an unfolding situation with the use of *for* or *since*, the choice between the *simple perfect* or *non-progressive perfect* and the *perfect progressive* is crucially determined by the type of situation being measured. In particular, to account for the data there is no need to assume the existence of an overarching value for the progressive form (like abstract anaphora – see, e.g., Adamczewski & Delmas [1998 : 57]; and Corre [2002] – or, similarly, the expression of a commentary or point of view by the speaker – [LAPAIRE &

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\* I wish to thank very warmly those who have helped me for this paper through their comments, suggestions and support: Eric Corre, Ilse Depraetere, Marc Fryd, Grégory Furmaniak, Geneviève Girard-Gillet, Claude Rivière. All the mistakes that are bound to remain are to be imputed to me: this research is still very much work in progress.

<sup>1</sup> I will leave aside the issue of the number and types of uses for the perfect. Authors tend to disagree. For instance McCawley [1971] recognizes four main uses for the perfect in English, Michaelis [1994] three, and Depraetere [1998] two.

ROTGÉ 1991]. In the context of occurrence that this study specifically covers, disregarding situation types is likely to lead to fallacious conclusions.

After introducing the construction itself, a general classification of situation types (derived from Vendler's, revisited by Smith [1997]) is presented to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between situation types and the use of the progressive or non-progressive perfect, to be refined almost immediately in order to cover two (minor) classes of apparent counter-examples, which are best understood as cases of analogical extensions of the correspondence rules given. Lastly, I draw on ICE-GB both to give an overall picture of the repartition of situation types used with the perfect – progressive or not – in the relevant context of occurrence, and to gain a better understanding of one of the two classes of apparent exceptions. Apart from a few sentences produced as noteworthy examples, for which no reference is given, and utterances borrowed from other authors (including one from the BNC), all occurrences in this paper are taken from ICE-GB (all the emphases being mine).

#### *The perfect used in conjunction with for or since illustrated*

The use of the perfect examined here is illustrated with utterances (1) to (3):

1. She's *been writing* her thesis for six years.
2. They *have been working* with us since 2007/we launched this company.
3. Saussure *had taught* ancient and modern languages for eleven years when he obtained a professorship in Geneva.

For this specific, continuative use of the perfect, *for*-adjuncts indicate the duration of a situation up to a reference point (orientation/reference time)<sup>2</sup> that coincides with the end point for measurement, whereas *since*-adjuncts provide an initial boundary for measuring the situation, whether it is followed by a date (2007) or an event (*since we launched this company*). More generally, *for* is used to introduce situation duration, with or without measuring it before its term has been reached (*He worked on this problem for two hours yesterday* is a typical example for which the whole situation came to completion prior to reference time), and *since* to provide the starting point of a time interval stretching up to reference time, on which a situation can occur or be iterated (e.g. *She has eaten three cakes since 2 o'clock*).

The situation itself can be telic, i.e. have an inherent *telos* or termination point, as in (1): the predicate *write a thesis* conjures up a bounded representation for the situation with, as its end point the thesis being fully

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<sup>2</sup> *Orientation time* is from Declerck et al. [2006], *reference time* from Reichenbach [1947].

written.<sup>3</sup> The situation can be atelic as well, as in (2) and (3): *work with us* and *teach ancient and modern languages* do not have an inherent end point. However the situations in (2) and (3) can be said to be bounded in the sense that the speaker chooses a reference time before the end of the situation and measures its duration from there, whether that time is also the time of utterance ( $T_0$ : zero-time/ speech time),<sup>4</sup> as in (2), in which case the present perfect is used, or is located elsewhere ( $T_1$ ). In (3), it is located *before* the time of utterance and the past perfect is required (with a continuative use). Note that the situation coded in (1) is also bounded in the same sense:  $T_1$  provides an end point for measuring situation duration. Although the situation is telic, its duration up to  $T_1$  (i.e. 6 years prior to  $T_0$ ) is measured before the thesis is fully written. There is neither contradiction nor synonymy between telicity and boundedness, as demonstrated by Depraetere [1995], from whom the distinction is taken.

It should be added that, in this use, the phrases introduced by *for* or *since* do not necessarily occur after the perfect form. They can also occur initially, as in (4) and (5):

4. For seven years I *had been broadcasting* regularly on Monday morning from the archives. [w2b-001 005]
5. Between the years of 1950 and 1984, the world grain output increased 2.6-fold, but since then there *has been* little further increase. [w2b-024 046]

The semantic difference between utterances with *for/since* occurring initially and their counterparts in which they fail to do so will not be explored here, as it has no bearing on the account developed in this paper.

#### ***Progressive and non-progressive perfects with telic and atelic situations***

Considering utterances with perfect progressive forms employed in a continuative use, like (1), (2) or (4), how can one reconcile the idea that the situation is represented as ongoing (with the progressive) with the claim that it is construed as bounded – which I will take in the sense of Depraetere

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<sup>3</sup> A telic or atelic interpretation is critically dependent on context. Even for (1), an atelic reading is not ruled out, if one assumes that the PhD candidate rewrites a new version of her thesis every time she finishes the previous one, being deeply dissatisfied with it. Corre [2009] demonstrates at length that context is all important to deriving situation types and (a)telicity and that, in some cases, considering predicates is not sufficient to that effect and whole utterances should be taken into account.

<sup>4</sup> *Zero-time* for Declerck *et al.* [2006], and *speech time* for Reichenbach [1947].

1995 – at the same time (with the perfective aspect)? The two do not need to be contradictory if the situation is understood as being partly completed at  $T_0$  or  $T_1$ , and so still ongoing then. In other words, although the situation is bounded by  $T_0$  or  $T_1$  to measure its duration up to then, it is represented as having yet to reach its end point. This is a straightforward account suitable to telic situations. In (1), *She's been writing her thesis for six years*, the end point of the situation is the moment when the thesis is fully written, while the situation is also bounded by the moment of utterance, at which point its duration is assessed. When no *telos* is provided, perfect progressives still occur alongside perfect non progressive forms, as the few examples already provided show. How does one account for the competing use of the two forms?

Mittwoch notes that “normally **activity** sentences occur only in the perfect progressive” [1988: 211], a statement which is corroborated by (2), *They have been working with us since 2007*, and (4), *For seven years I had been broadcasting regularly on Monday morning from the archives*. For continuative uses of the perfect with *for* or *since* adjuncts, Rivière makes remarks to the same effect, observing that (telic) actions still in progress call for the progressive form – as in (1), *She's been writing her thesis for 6 years* – and adds that “states, which are inherently devoid of a *telos* and incompatible with the aspectual value conveyed by the BE + -ING verb form, take on non-progressive verb forms” [1993 : 123]; the translation is mine). This accounts for (5), ... *since then there has been little further increase*, and other such sentences like *He's been dead for a while* (Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*).

To take up Rivière's main insights and incorporate Furmaniak's [2004: 175-177] analysis of the progressive in the relevant configuration, I distinguish between the main cases encountered again, presenting them in an algorithmic form:

- The situation is telic (without its termination point being reached)
  - *be + -ing* makes it possible to bound the situation before it has reached its *telos*: *She's been writing her thesis for six years now*.
  
- The situation is atelic and denotes an activity
  - *be + -ing* makes it possible to bound the situation without providing an end point (/telos) for it: *They have been working with us since 2007*.

- The situation is atelic and denotes a state<sup>5</sup>
  - The non-progressive perfect is used: *be + -ing* is impossible with states by definition (states being deprived of internal structure and thus incompatible with the progressive, except for temporary or episodic states):  
*He's been dead for a while now.*

The progressive form is presumably crucial for this, and Furmaniak is certainly right in highlighting its pivotal role. However, the correspondence brought to light is striking enough in itself to demand further explanation: what kind of correlation does exist between situation type and the use of the perfect progressive or non-progressive perfect? It is to this problem that I now turn.

### *Situation types and their interaction with aspectual forms*

I will follow Smith [1997: 20] in her classification of situation types, which draws heavily on the work of Vendler (1967) and those he has influenced. To the four canonical situation classes Smith adds the category of semelfactives, i.e. punctual non-telic situations, like *sneeze*. She also classifies situation types according to three main features:

Situations:	Static	Durative	Telic	Illustrations:
State	[+]	[+]	[-]	<i>He's been dead for a while now</i>
Activity	[-]	[+]	[-]	<i>It's been snowing since yesterday</i>
Accomplishment	[-]	[+]	[+]	<i>She's been writing her PhD for 6 years</i>
Semelfactive*	[-]	[-]	[-]	<i>He's been coughing for two minutes</i>
Achievements*	[-]	[-]	[+]	<i>She's been dying for ten years</i>

\* Note that some authors refer to the semelfactives and achievements as *punctual* occurrences (e.g. Mourelatos 1978) or situations (or *procès à bornes confondues* in Culioli's theory of enunciative operations), in virtue of the fact that they lack any apparent duration.

The examples provided (as well as the notes) are mine, and show that all situation types are apparently compatible with the continuative use of the perfect with *for/since*. Yet an important proviso should be made as the diagram fails to take into account Smith's derived situations. Consider (6):

6. *He's been coughing for two minutes.*
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<sup>5</sup> In the same passage, Furmaniak [2004: 76] mentions situations conveying the habitual/frequentative aspect, as illustrated with *For a long time, Alex and Nick have walked for two hours every day*. The progressive form cannot be used in either case. Habits are tackled in a later section.

In this instance, *coughing* refers to a series of semelfactive situations (coughs...) that amount together to an activity, which is a derived situation (through aspectual coercion, following terminology introduced by de Swart 1998). Now consider (7):

7. *She's been dying* for ten years.

It is obvious however that the situation is no longer punctual with the progressive, and that resorting to it foregrounds the ultimate phase leading to the *telos*, without it being reached, so that the situation could be seen as some kind of activity.<sup>6</sup>

The provisional conclusion from the last section was that except for states, continuative uses of the perfect with *for/since* calls for the progressive. In point of fact, Rivière [1991: 133] remarks that the non-progressive perfect can be used with typical activities:

8. *She has taught* for twenty years.

The repeated activity seems to be akin to a state, and Smith regards situations that denote habits <sup>7</sup> – as in (8) – as derived states. Similarly, Fryd [1995: 75] considers such repeated activities as properties (i.e. a kind of state), for which the non-progressive form comes up.

At this point, I need to point out two things. First, in examples (6) to (8), the duration being measured relates to the time extension of the interval in which the event keeps being actualized. Second, the dividing line between habits (derived states) and activities made up of series of individual situations may prove hard to pin down with purely semantic criteria. Should (9) be considered as a habit or rather as an activity made up of instances of 'teaching'?

9. *She has been teaching* for twenty years.

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<sup>6</sup> The same can in fact be said for accomplishments that have not reached their *telos*. This highlights some of the issues raised by the project of classifying situations into general types, and suggests that a sound analysis of situations requires a fine-grained understanding of their unfolding, and breaking them down into components or phases as may be (see Dowty [1979] for a first attempt, and Corre [2009] for a general survey). Yet for the purpose of this paper Smith's framework will fully suffice, and the generalizations offered are unaffected by assuming it.

<sup>7</sup> See Kleiber [1987: 199-221] for a characterization of habits and habitual sentences, as opposed to frequentative sentences.

It is tempting to suggest that *'teach'* is envisaged as an activity<sup>8</sup> in (9), as opposed to a habit in (8). Yet this sounds arbitrary to some extent. I'll now suggest that habits should be simply treated as sporadic activities.

### *Habits and sporadic activities*

Whereas for Smith habits are derived states, Declerck [2006: 271-273] makes an interesting distinction between temporary and permanent habits:

The progressive form represents them [habits] as TEMPORARY HABITS, whereas the nonprogressive form represents them as PERMANENT HABITS, i.e. as not restricted in time.

10. Ever since I was fifteen I *have slept* only five hours a night.
11. I *have been sleeping* ten hours a night since we have been on holiday.

The main problem with this conception is that for the two examples given (the numbering is mine), the other form could have been used. The progressive form would have been more readily substituted for the nonprogressive in (10) than the other way round in (11) though. In addition, one easily finds instances of long-lasting habits described with a progressive form:

12. Yeah but they've *been saying* that for ten years. [<s1a-029 177>]
13. I've *been driving* for thirteen years. [<s1b-080 291>]

Yet, when the duration being measured is long enough to approach permanency, the habit or activity is stable and can be conceptually likened to a state:

14. Well ladies and gentlemen Ordnance Survey makes maps and *has done* so [made maps] for two hundred years. [<s2b-045 012>]

*'Make maps'* designates an activity that seems to have always been pursued, and it is worthwhile to liken (14) with utterances in which a simple (present/past) perfect co-occurs with the adverb *always*. In (15), it also occurs with a prepositional phrase headed by *for* to measure duration:

15. The fact that the villagers *have* always (or at least for seventy years) *played* cricket on this site implies that they want (and are entitled) to continue to do so. [<w2a-007 058>]

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<sup>8</sup> Keeping in mind that situations do not need to be continually ongoing to be seen as being a single situation, as remarked by Kleiber [1987: 156-157], discussing more or less prolonged interruptions: if someone on a day hike stops for a lunch break, the utterance *He is hiking today* remains true, even during the lunch break.

The same line of reasoning, tying stability to the non-progressive, applies to:

16. Mexico's *struggled* with the problem for generations. [<s2b-022 124>]
17. For one thing I *had worked* for Keith for years and presumably he only selected me once he was satisfied that he could work with me. [<w2b-012 090>]

In these examples, as well as for habits in general, the situations denoted are sporadic in that they are represented as being periodically interrupted and resumed afterwards. I call such situations sporadic activities. At first blush, apart from the general tendency that has just been mentioned, it seems to be rather difficult to predict whether sporadic activities will be expressed with a progressive or a non-progressive perfect. However it remains important to pinpoint that both forms can be found with sporadic activities, as opposed to other situation categories. In his 1993 article, Rivière confessed that the semantic difference between *She has taught maths for twenty years* and the same utterance but with a progressive form, *She has been teaching maths for twenty years*, is hard to pin down.

It is essential to recognize that there is a strong grammatical constraint bearing on verb forms depending on whether the sporadic activity is made up of iterated telic (sub)situations. The non-progressive form appears to prevent the situation from being represented as a continuous event still unfolding at  $T_0$  or  $T_1$  – in which case it could no longer be understood to be a sporadic activity. The contrast between (18) and (19) is well-worth bearing in mind in this respect.

18. Eight women *have died* here for (the past) three weeks (, every week/day...).
19. Eight women *have been dying* here for three weeks.

With the non-progressive, the achievement is interpreted as periodical or habitual. The situation cannot be thought of as a continuous event. With the progressive, the speaker refers to the preliminary phase of an achievement whose end point has not yet been reached – or instead the speaker refers to a series of preliminary phases, as in (19), each one of the eight women being dying.

The hypothesis that I wish to propose for the other sporadic activities (made up of a series of atelic events, i.e. sub-activities) and the continuative use of the perfect (in conjunction with *for/since*) is that the situation is likened to a state with the non-progressive form and thus enjoys a high degree of stability, while the progressive form occurs with situations that are represented as more dynamic or unstable and may therefore contribute to highlighting the effort entailed by maintaining the activity alive and



ongoing. Sometimes the two forms are interchangeable without any significant semantic variation.

In (20), owing to the context in which the verb *argue* occurs, the situation it denotes is a sporadic activity that brings to mind one of its precondition: the mental state of thinking or believing (*that it is folly...*).

20. Together with colleagues from the National institute and notably Zig Price I *have* for some time *argued* that it is folly not to address this problem urgently and immediately by all means available to us...  
[<s2a-031 018>]

The non-progressive form presumably contributes to highlighting the stable grounding for repeatedly making the same argument. In contrast, verbs like *think* may evoke a dynamic mental process rather than a state, as in (21):

21. *I've been thinking* of sherbet for a long time. [<s1a-010 101>]

The temptation of having sherbet keeps on actively titillating the speaker's mind. The notion of dynamicity (opposed to state-like stability) is equally helpful to understand the use of the progressive in (22) and (23):

22. *I've been trying* to get in touch for months. [<w1b-014 076>]  
23. *We've been saying* tomorrow since last week. [<s1a-030 165>]

Dynamicity correlatively connotes the speaker's willpower in (22), as she makes repeated attempts to reach her goal. In (23), the progressive form is similarly used to underline the effort of repetition.

Lastly, the fact that the progressive form is sometimes found although the duration measured is close to incommensurability (*'always'*) can be mustered in support of my hypothesis:

24. *I've been thinking* for years 'sometime' but thought when is there ever time? [<w1b-003 131>]

The progressive form eloquently suggests that the thought keeps on rearing its head again and again: the speaker is talking about meeting her unknown biological father, a desire lying around the border of conscious thought that might conceivably obsess her.

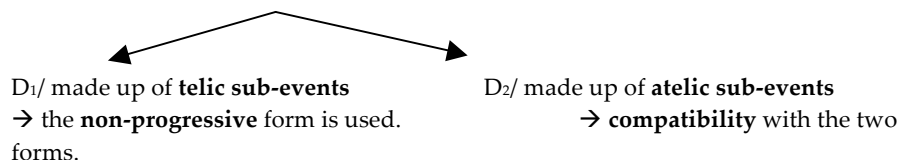
To summarize the discussion so far, the use of the progressive or non-progressive form is predicated on the situation type. If the situation type is:

A/ a **state**: the **non-progressive** form is used.

B/ a telic situation (**accomplishment** or **achievement**): the **progressive** form is used.

C/ a **non-sporadic activity**: the **progressive** form is used.

D/ a **sporadic activity**:



### *The role of negation*

Jespersen [1931: 194] quotes two examples borrowed from H. E. Palmer [1924], *A Grammar of Spoken English on a strictly phonetic basis*, Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons; numbering of examples mine):

25. *He hasn't been speaking since three o'clock* (but only since half past three)  
26. *He hasn't spoken since three o'clock* (he's been silent since three o'clock)

In the first sentence the negative belongs to the time-indication (he is speaking and has been speaking, though not from three o'clock till now); in the second sentence the negation refers to the speaking itself.

Ota [1963 : 99] interprets the opposition in terms of negation scope: whereas (25) denies that the speaking has been lasting since three o'clock, and the negation scopes over the time adjunct (*since three o'clock* here), in (26) what is negated is the speaking itself. In other words, for situations that are not states (i.e. events), it appears that if the progressive form is used, what is negated is the duration of the event, and not the event itself ('It is not true that he has been speaking since 3'). This does not always hold true however. Yet prior to qualifying the rule stated, an account of why negative events naturally call for non-progressive forms is first in order.

In ICE-GB one only finds occurrences with non-progressive forms, as in (27):

27. you have to keep in mind that their expectations *have not been* fully met since March. [<s1b-021 111>; bold type found in ICE-GB]

Negated situations appear as stable and homogeneous, like states. Not doing something implies a stasis and it has been suggested that negated situations are conceptually likened to states [Larrea and Rivière 2010: 78]. I endorse the suggestion, which leads me to postulate further that for occurrences like (26), when a progressive comes up with a negated event, the event itself is not thought of as akin to a state. The event is represented as taking place (i.e. its actualization is presupposed, taken for granted), but not exactly as previously assumed. Usually what is being debated is its duration and negation can be argued to pertain to it. However, negation can also have scope over subjects in some cases (*Our neighbours have not been arguing since three o'clock, but their guests have*) – and surprisingly even on

whole clauses or “propositions” as Fryd [1995 : 95-96] puts it (*I’m sorry to disappoint you. He has not been speaking for three hours for the simple reason he never turned up*).<sup>9</sup>

It is also important to note that negation can be conveyed through other means than *not*:

28. I will also state that I am the director of a property company from which I *have drawn* **no** remuneration since June nineteen eighty-seven. [s1b-051 152]
29. I **don’t** think I’ve seen a tie-dye T-shirt since around 1974... [w1b-011 045]
30. Rains *have failed* for four years [in Angola] [w2c-002 073]

The quantifier *no* is used in (28). In (29), although the matrix clause verb bears the negation, it relates to the situation denoted by the embedded clause: ‘*I believe I haven’t seen a tie-dye T-shirt since around 1974*’. In (30), the verb *fail* means ‘*not happen*’.<sup>10</sup>

To summarize then, if the situation is negated, the non-progressive form is used unless the negation scopes over the adjunct expressing duration or some other specific constituent.

### **Statistical data**

Searching ICE-GB, the one-million word stratified, parsed and annotated corpus of British English [Nelson et al. 2002], for occurrences of perfects in their continuative uses with *for/since* (progressive and non-progressive both), I obtained the following results:

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<sup>9</sup> Fryd imagines a speaker commenting on a Castro-like interminable speech that failed to take place. My analysis is that the prepositional phrase *for the simple reason...* makes it possible for the speaker to upend and reject the presupposed proposition ‘*X has been speaking for some time*’. In the same way, *he ceased to smoke* presupposes ‘*he smoked*’, a proposition that can be negated with similar means: *He hasn’t ceased to smoke for the simple reason that he has never smoked*. [KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI 1998 : ch.1]

<sup>10</sup> Conversely the progressive form is acceptable in *I haven’t been feeling well* because it is felt to be equivalent to *I have been feeling unwell/sick* [LARREYA & RIVIÈRE 2010 : 78].

	Occurrences :	% states	% events
STATES	149		
- "negative" situations	23	15.44%	
- others	126	84.56%	
ACTIVITES	64		29.9%
ACCOMPLISHMENTS	0		0%
SEMELFACTIVE	0		0%
ACHIEVEMENTS	1		0.5%
Total	214	69.6%	30.4%

The blatant discrepancy in terms of the numerical representation of the different situation types is striking. There is only one occurrence for the achievement type, (31):

31. in the control room he and colleagues *had been preparing* the raid since 7.30 a.m. [<w2c-011 048>]

The situation is here a special kind of achievement, a degree achievement, for which tests indicate that the situation can be regarded as telic or atelic,<sup>11</sup> as a degree of preparation is achieved. On the other hand, accomplishments and semelfactives are not to be found, even in the form of iterated situations making up an activity. Passives and "negative" situations were counted as states. Discounting them, states are twice as numerous as activities. Including them, states amount to almost 70% of the occurrences. This leads us to expect the non-progressive form to be the more common, since states require the non-progressive while activities – if they are sporadic – are compatible both with the progressive and the non-progressive. The data bears out this prediction:

	Occurrences	Non-progressive perfects	%	Progressive perfects	%
States	149	148	99.33	1	0.67
Activities	64	18	28.13	46	71.87
Achievements	1	0	0	1	100
TOTAL	214	166	77.57	48	22.43

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<sup>11</sup> Tests devised by Vendler [1967] and Dowty [1979] show that both a telic and an atelic interpretation are compatible with (31), as Eric Corre suggested to me (p.c.): (a) *They prepared the raid in 10 days/for 10 days*: both PPs are acceptable; (b) *If they were preparing the raid, then they were interrupted, can you or can you not say they did prepare the raid?*: "Yes" or "No" could be taken as an answer.

More than three quarters of the occurrences found in ICE-GB are non-progressive perfects. They are then, by far, the most frequent in continuative uses with *for/since*, which is something that the initial threefold partition of situations provided in section 1.3 does not naturally lead to expect.

***Occurrences that apparently contradict previous generalizations***

Some apparently telic situations may occur with a non-progressive perfect and *for* or *since*.

32. I feel as if I *have suspended* real life for 3 wks. [<w1b-013 044>]

In (32), the speaker just expresses her sense of relief (being in New York, on holiday), feeling that the pressure of her daily life has gone off. The reader understands that the humdrum and business of daily activity was lifted at (and from) the beginning of the holiday, and that the state of suspension has been going on for three weeks. Although its inception point can be regarded as a telos, suspension can also be conceived of as a situation stretching from it, so that what is actually measured is the duration of the suspension. The perfect can then be understood as resultative, highlighting the beneficial effect of a prolonged, three-week holiday.

The same seems to hold for bounded activities with the non-progressive. Some situations readily construed as (bounded) activities in a continuative use turn out to illustrate a quite different use:

33. Unemployment *has risen* for seven consecutive months. [<s1b-057 036>]

(33) is reminiscent of utterances like: *She's run for two hours (I'm impressed)*. In such cases, the most essential part of the utterance pertains to the result of the situation or an inference that can be derived from it: she's done it, so she's capable of doing it.<sup>12</sup> With a resultative meaning, a perfect can occur with a non-progressive form. In (33) the speaker assesses the global outcome of several months of unemployment growth (and it is

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<sup>12</sup> I would argue that the same resultative meaning is even found with 'loosely' (my term) bounded activities as in *She's run for hours*. The activity is 'loosely' bounded as time measurement is imprecise. The resultant state might be one of exhaustion for the runner. Leaving aside the question of the progressive and non-progressive forms, I have found a few occurrences on Google that substantiate my claim (e.g. "*Must keep going*. She has run for hours now. Branches and thorns occasionally create bruises on her"; <http://www.playdota.com/forums/showpost.php?p=7846083&postcount=112>).

therefore not counted as an occurrence of a “continuative” perfect with *for/since*).

One also finds states expressed with progressive forms. Such states are clearly construed as temporary, and thereby very much akin to activities. They lack the stability that generally characterizes states. In (34) the state ‘*having a belief*’ is demoted to an unstable situation with a transient length.

34. This is a false belief you’ve *been having* for a good few years now and I think it’s time that you got rid of this. (<s1a-069 057>)

The state verb *have* is almost synonymous with *entertain*, which evokes an activity.

The question of how to draw the line between activities and states comes up with verbs like *stand, sit, lie* (position verbs) and *live* in the sense of dwelling:

35. [When in Somalia] I came across Brian Bowden a British water engineer who’s *lived* in Somalia for thirty-three years. [<s2b-023 087>]  
 36. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of the Tibetan people, *has been living* in exile at Dharamsala, India, since 1959. [BNC, K5M 10402]

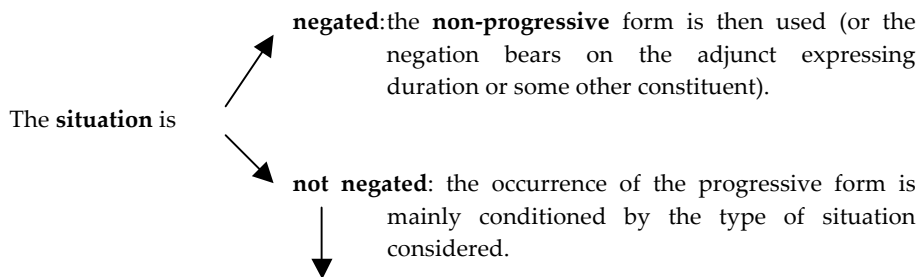
In (35) the speaker insists on the stability of the situation, the fact of living in Somalia having become a property of sort. (36) has been borrowed from the BNC for contrastive purposes: a different situation could have prevailed for the Dalai Lama, whose natural home is Tibet rather than northern India. The continuation of his residence in Dharamsala might perhaps have been brought to an end if negotiations with China had been successful or China less politically assertive. Resorting to the progressive form, the speaker highlights the possibility for the situation to have been different by opting to present it as rather unstable. More generally, for situations that are not purely static states and are not clear instances of activities either, the same alternation between progressive and non-progressive perfects prevails as the one found with sporadic activities. With the progressive form the situation takes on more activity-like features, and more state-like features with the non-progressive form.

### **Conclusion**

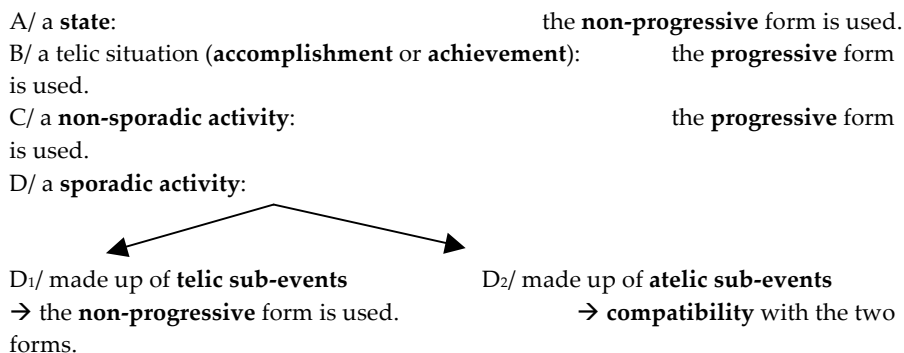
Searching ICE-GB for perfects occurring with *for/since* in a continuative use has not only shown that states are the most common situation type found and that non-progressive forms are by far the most frequent, but also

brought to light occurrences that contributed to refining the account defended here.

The following algorithm predicts when the progressive form appears with a “continuative” perfect and for/since:



The **situation type** is:



For sporadic activities as well as for situations that lie at the boundary between states and activities, the choice between the progressive and the non-progressive is best explained by reflecting on whether the situation is more akin to a state or to an activity. States are essentially stable, static and call for a non-progressive form, while activities are typically dynamic, temporary if not unstable, and are found with the progressive. In some cases, the semantic difference usually induced by choosing of one form rather than the other may be neutralized. The notions characteristically associated with states and activities (stability, staticity, permanency and their opposites) are then evoked by an analogical extension of the (inaccurate) general rule that all situation types call for the progressive, except states for which a non-progressive form needs to be used. The same general trend is called upon to explain why negative situations are expressed without the progressive. It therefore looks very much as if a

simple rule had been stretched to convey additional shades of aspectual meaning.

The general account provided here can presumably be extended to cover all continuative uses of the perfect and not just to those found in conjunction with *for* and *since*. I will simply suggest that it is necessary for this purpose to distinguish cases which look like continuative uses but are not, pay much attention to the role of prepositions competing with *for* and *since*, and refer the reader to the appendix at the end of this article for a short discussion of the issue.

Whether one should assume that there are derived situation types (Smith 1997), consider that situation types and aspectual forms interact while remaining separate [RADDEN & DIRVEN 2007], or that aspectual forms coerce the semantic representations of situation types [e.g. Moens & Steedman 2005 [1988]; de Swart 1998] is an issue on which I remain agnostic. It would also take us beyond the scope of this paper. However, the account I have given here suggests that there is an interaction between situation types and grammatical aspect, since choosing one grammatical form rather than another potentially influences the way situations are represented, making them more akin to a situation type rather than another. This interaction is only to be expected as both aspects are deeply interconnected. In Lyons' words:

The aspectual character of a verb, or more simply its character [i.e. situation type], will be that part of its meaning whereby it (normally) denotes one kind of situation rather than another... It is generally accepted nowadays that any discussion of aspect [i.e. grammatical aspect] from a semantic point of view must also take account of what we are referring to as the character of particular verbs... **Aspect and character are interdependent in this way because they both rest ultimately upon the same ontological distinctions.** ([Lyons 1977, 706] my emphasis)

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