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HOW TO PUT AN END TO A THREE-CENTURY OLD CONTROVERSY AND TEACH THE ‘SIMPLE’ PRESENT AND THE PRESENT WITH BE+ING?

Résumé

L’enseignement du *présent simple* a longtemps été réduit aux effets de sens tels que *routines, vérités générales, recettes et habitudes*, etc. pendant que *be+ing*, est associé aux *actions en cours* ou *qui durent* avec leurs lots d’exceptions comme *certaines verbes ne prennent pas de -ing*. La majorité des grammairiens et linguistes semblent se contenter de ce genre de traitements des unités grammaticales, alors que d’autres proposent des voies plus originales et plus cohérentes de traiter ce point de grammaire. Cette polémique semble tirer ses origines de la méconnaissance de la nature même de ces temps grammaticaux. Cette contribution vise à faire la lumière sur la *valeur centrale* qui relie tous les énoncés contenant le *présent simple* et le *présent be+ing* en mettant en avant leur nature et le fonctionnement systémique paradigmatique en vue de mettre fin à la polémique. Elle propose enfin une stratégie pédagogique plus respectueuse et fidèle du véritable fonctionnement de ces deux temps grammaticaux.

Mots clés : temps, valeur, système, énonciation, opérations

Abstract

The teaching of the *simple present* has long been bowled down to such speech effects as *daily routines, general truth, recipes, habits*, etc. whereas *be+ing* is associated with *ongoing* and *lasting actions* with its share of exceptions like some verbs do not take *-ing*. The majority of grammarians and linguists seem to be satisfied with such treatments of grammatical items, but some oppose it and suggest a more genuine and consistent treatment of that grammar issue. This controversy seems to result from the ignorance of the very nature of these tenses. This paper seeks to shed light on the *core value* that connects all utterances in both *simple present* and *be+ing* utterances by putting forward their nature, the systemic and paradigmatic functioning of both tenses in a bid to put an end to the controversy. It shall finally suggest a pedagogical strategy more mindful and iconic to the underlying functioning of both tenses.

Keywords: tense, system, value, enunciation, operations

Introduction

On February 27, 1976, Henri Adamczewski shocked the entire linguistic community including teachers of English, Grammarians and Linguists when he stated and demonstrated convincingly in his imposing thesis of 415 pages that *be+ing* in English Grammar does not refer to any *ongoing or lasting action*. That thesis provoked a storm of heated reactions some of which were more violent than others. The most violent one seems to be that of Claude Boisson (1999) who kept drawing the scientific community's attention during seminars and colloquiums on how dangerous the theory called Metaoperationnal Grammar is, as developed and defended by Adamczewski and his followers. The cry of anger of Boisson appeared in a paper published in *ANGLOPHONIA* 6/1999 as follows: "*why on earth does Adamczewski want to prevent us from understanding in very simple terms what is at stake in be+ing sentences?*"

That controversy definitely contributed to worsening the then dissatisfaction on the teaching of Grammar and prompted Anglo-Saxon researchers to make the difference between "teaching the language" and "teaching about the language". As a consequence, this statement reinforced the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, an emerging approach back then, which put grammar on the back burner in classrooms to the benefit of teaching language as a mere tool of communication.

This paper intends to put an end to that controversy by reaffirming the basic principle laid down by Ferdinand de Saussure which upholds that language is a system. If language is truly a system, then one should understand how the couple *simple present/be+ing* works logically in accordance with the natural functioning of English grammar. The understanding of this logic should help teachers conceive a teaching strategy that is more respectful of the systemic nature of the language. The paper shall first go back to the source of the controversy and then point out the very nature of the functioning of both the *simple present* and *be+ing*. It will then highlight the systemic and paradigmatic choice made by the speaker in using each tense and suggest a possible pedagogical strategy.

1. On the source of the controversy

After Henri Adamczewski (1976) sparked anger through the defence of his Thesis on *Be+ing in Contemporary English Grammar*, the linguistic community thought that, perhaps, he would stop there. But they, surprisingly, discovered a group of researchers who were now convinced of the accuracy of his views and began to talk of natural metalanguage, metaoperations, invariant, relation, double keyboard etc. by upholding the “revolutionary” idea according to which *be+ing* has nothing to do with *an action ongoing* or *a lasting process*. Numerous dissertations were then defended and a research group known as *Centre de recherche en linguistique anglaise* (CRELINGUA, Sorbonne Paris III) was established. At the same time, French universities were overrun with lots of publications that went beyond the country borders. However, to change longstanding, many centuries old traditions does not go without what Hubert Reeves calls “paradigm resistance” Adamczewski (2001).

It is now worth summing up in a few words the demonstrations made by Adamczewski (1976, 1982, 1983) which caused Claude Boisson to hit the ceiling. First of all, Adamczewski demonstrated that in *be+ing* utterances, the nominalising operator “*ing*” falls on the whole verbal group and not on the verb alone. It is an invisible parenthesis that blocks the whole verbal group by turning it into a noun which, can be the subject of the utterance (For example: *My-loving-Gina-so-dearly annoys him so much that he could kill me*). In addition, *be+ing* utterances are binary ones, and as such do not feature the classical basic sentence structure S+V+O. Basically, this finding splits up with the long-lasting tradition which upholds that all sentences are to be made up with the basic S+V+O structure. Therefore, the following presentation is no longer valid:

1. -I leave tomorrow
2. -I am leaving tomorrow

The new presentation is now as follows

3. - I leave tomorrow
4. -I am leaving tomorrow

Adamczewski continues his analysis by outlining that in the structuring process of utterance (3) which is in the *simple present*, the status of

tomorrow is not the same as in the utterance containing *be+ing*. In (3), *tomorrow* belongs to an open paradigm where any other temporal element would have been chosen by the speaker, namely *Monday, next week, at the end of the month*, etc. In the *be+ing* utterance, however, *tomorrow* is no longer free. It is now part of the complex group *leave tomorrow*. It belongs to a closed paradigm where it is no longer possible for the speaker to make any further choice. Thus, utterance (4) has a binary structure *Subject-be-Predicate* in which the predicate (P) is assigned to the subject (S) through the operator *be* which connects the two terms of the predicative relation together. Utterance (3), however, has a ternary type structure in which the free components are structured one after the other, making it possible for the speaker to still make new paradigmatic choices.

Utterance (3) was produced by a Chief Executive Officer talking to his secretary (I leave tomorrow), whereas utterance (4) is an apology (I can't come to the meeting Sir! **I am leaving tomorrow**).

Adamczewski finally reached a disruptive conclusion with two parts. Firstly, all utterances in *be+ing* are centred on the Subject. They say something about the subject. The subject is no longer an agent. For instance, when the speaker says *I am leaving tomorrow* with the purpose of apologising, he is saying it on the grounds of what is happening to him. In this specific case, *leaving tomorrow* is what happens to him, making it impossible for him to “come to the meeting”. There is no action whatsoever going on or lasting in Utterance (4). Ongoing and duration are grammatical concepts that do not apply to “*ing*”, concepts which, according to Adamczewski, have been around for centuries and continue to be used despite the developments of modern linguistics. In Utterance (4), even if someone can mentally project himself to tomorrow and see himself *going*, this is just a mental trick that contradicts the intention of the speaker to apologize.

That basic analysis helps to unveil the functional invariant value of all *be+ing* utterances. The formed binary relation is dominated by the speaker. Therefore, the structuring process is centred on the subject, hence the various speech effects and the grammaticality of the utterance with *be+ing* in the past and the ungrammaticality of the preterit which clashes with the future expressed by *tomorrow* in the following utterances:

5. -I **was leaving** tomorrow, but now I won't

6. * I left tomorrow

The use of *be+ing* helps to date the relation and comment on the validity or non-validity with the segment *but now I won't*. That dating and commenting cannot be done with utterance (6) in which it is impossible for the speaker to date back a relation under construction.

To prove the thesis developed above to be false, Boisson (1999) proposed the following utterances:

7. A-What is he doing?

B- He's mowing the lawn.

For Boisson, it is clear that there is a lasting action in (7), and the action is *mow the lawn*. Unfortunately, he does not analyse either the utterances, or the action, or the lasting process. By doing so, he missed out the scope of “-ing” and obviously could not comprehend that those two utterances are plainly referring to the subject *He*. It is all about *He* and what he does. No need to get involved in that controversy, I hope, at least, that the following utterance would suffice to solve that issue.

8. (Context: Ira wears large glasses of his favourite actor)

A-Look this way, Ira. Who **are** you wearing?

(H. Coben 2012:

15)

The context shows that Ira is mimicking his favourite actor hence the question with *who?* *Who* is about the identity of the actor. Everything revolves around **you** which is the subject of **wear**. The utterance must be understood: *You are wearing who?* The translation is quite explicit in this respect: *C'est de qui, ce que tu portes?* A more effective test for checking the content of *lasting* or *on-going* action is the use of “**en train de**”. It is impossible to say **c'est de qui, ce que tu es en train de porter*, if it happens that He has already worn the glasses. Here is another utterance that shows that the use of *be+ing* has nothing to do with on-going actions.

9. -Every time she chucks anything dirty into it, **she is insulting** the old Republic (H. Adamczewski, 1982, p.58)

This utterance shows quite well that the speaker did not hear the subject (she) pouring insults on the Republic. It is also obvious that the act of

insulting the republic was not going on right in front of the speaker. The speaker, however, is saying something about the attitude of the subject (she). He is making a comment on what the subject did. What is going on in the mind of the speaker has nothing to do with the extralinguistic world. The speech effect of *lasting action* or *action going on* cannot hold water in this context.

2. On the nature of the simple present

First of all, it is worth noting that there is only one present tense in English with various ramifications (H. Adamczewski 1982). The teaching of the *simple present* has always been limited to *daily routines, habits, general things* etc. However, a close analysis of the use of that tense- as used by native speakers- points out that its real nature is far from agreeing with those surface realisations mentioned above. Therefore, the contextual interpretations put forward in a bid to explain the real functioning of this tense is counter-productive. In fact, in *simple present* utterances, the speaker builds a tertiary relation (S+V+O) in which all elements are dynamic and loose; the subject is not the target of the speaker. As the subject is an agent that belongs to an open paradigm, so are the verb and the object. In this perspective, it becomes possible to account for the speech effects derived from the use of the *simple present* which is chosen to describe extralinguistic realities. The following utterances should help us show the tertiary relation mentioned above.

10. -The sun revolves around the earth

11. -I live in Boston

In utterance (10), there is, first of all, the subject (the sun), then the verb (revolve) and finally the object (around the earth). Each component comes after the other in a linear fashion. Classical grammar refers to this utterance as an indication of general truth. The grammatical construction at stake here goes far beyond the surface description. To choose this tense is to present facts for the sake of informing the co-speaker while staying away from the message. This value is also obvious in utterance (11) where the speaker simply provides information as regards to his/her living place (Boston). In this context, the choice of the components is not constrained by the context. It is thus part of an open paradigm. The speaker could have said New York or London,

It is also worth pointing out that native speakers of English often resort to the *simple present* when an action is **really going on** and not "*be+ing*". That is the case of the demonstrator or cook and the reporter.

12. -Then I **add** the hot milk and I **break** two eggs,
one... two, into the bowl

13. -John **passes** the ball to Peters... and he **scores**

(H. Adamczewski, 1982, p.44)

In utterance (12), the action of "adding" and "breaking" are all happening at the same time when the speaker utters the sentence. And yet, the speaker does not choose "*be+ing*". In utterance (12), the speaker presents information in a sequencing order; one comes after the other with all components being autonomous. In utterance (13), the reporter is doing his job mindful of the codes of professional ethics governing the work of reporting of news of general interest which consists in presenting concrete facts on the ground and nothing more. If the reporter had substituted the *simple present* with "*be+ing*", he would have intruded himself into the message and put forward his own comment, judgment or views on John.

These utterances once again confirm the very nature of the *simple present* and the reasons why native speakers choose it instead of its immediate competitor.

(Context: headline showing Barrett with the chief justice swearing in)

14. -Barrett **pledges** to uphold judicial independence

(New York Times, October 27,
2020 consulted at 12.23)

15. - NHS **cancel**s heart patient's September 2022 check-up

(THE HERALD on October 27,
2020 on BBC)

Headlines of Newspapers are full of such utterances as (14) and (15). Utterance (14) corroborates the fact that native speakers resort to *simple present* when things are going on right in front of them. The peculiarity of utterance (15) is that it refers to the future (September 2022 check-up). Yet, the speaker chose the *simple present* to say that what he is talking about is valid at the time of speaking. The future is not expressed

by the verb, but rather by *September 2022*. The purpose of the speaker in all these utterances containing the *simple present* is to “convey new data, for the sake of the data” (J.P. Gabilan, 2017, p.31).

Simple present utterances make it possible to add up new data progressively by orienting the operations on the right. Orientations are therefore important for one to understand the relation between different components of utterances and can help interpret the seemingly identical semantic interpretations. The sentence below shows the orientation of grammatical operations in the *simple present* utterances:

16. -France **launches** mass Covid-19 screening campaigns (France 24, 14/12/2020)

In (16), the “-s” inflected to the verb *launch* indicates the grammatical relation between the subject and the verb. Contrary to the modals where the absence of “-s” implies that there is no connection between subject and predicate. The modal is chosen by the speaker to gauge the predicative relation and at the same time show his/her attitude toward the relation. In utterance (16), however, the components are arranged from left to right as shown in the diagram below:

France **launches** mass Covid-
19....campaigns \longrightarrow

This orientation is key to understanding what is at stake in *simple present* constructions where the speaker does not need to recall any previous structuration because all elements are new and still have their semantic load.

We can at this point summarize the core value of the *simple present* as follows: What the speaker says is considered to be valid here and now and it might concern events taking place now. This value is key to understanding the difference between the *simple present* and the present with “*be+ing*”.

3. On the nature of *be+ing*

The demonstrations made above clarify the very nature of “*be+ing*” form in relation to the *simple present* tense. Contrary to the *simple present*, “*be+ing*” utterances receive a non-assertive status making the

paradigm to be closed. The speaker has his/her eye on the subject as illustrated by this utterance:

17. -As Americans head to the polling booths, Donald Trump and Joe Biden **are taking** one final moment to secure more votes. (legit.ng Breaking News, November 3, 2020)

In this utterance, the VP is already given as in [**-ing** (*take one final moment to secure more votes*)]. The whole verbal group is governed by "**-ing**". The writer assigns the whole verbal group to Donald Trump and Joe Biden through the copula *be*. In fact, the speaker is saying that the two candidates are doing everything they can to convince all sceptical Americans to vote for them. It is what the two candidates are doing that the writer wants to portray. It is no longer a piece of information, the writer is rather commenting on the attitudes of both candidates. The utterances below illustrate the subject-oriented operation performed by "*be+ing*" forms.

18. -The Queen can't see you tomorrow. She **is leaving** for Australia. (J.P Gabilan 2013, p.45)
19. -Hurry up! The bus **is coming**! (J.P Gabilan 2013 p.45)

In (18), "*-ing*" does not concern only the verb *leave*. It is the verbal group *leave for Australia* that has been blocked by "*-ing*" and orientated toward the left hand which can be presented in a diagram form as follows:

She is leaving for Australia

This diagram also applies to utterance (18);

The bus is coming

"*Be+ing*" shows that the verbal group is not new. In (18), the segment *The Queen can't see you tomorrow* makes it possible to understand that the following segment of the utterance is not new. Especially with *I am sorry*, the speaker apologized because he would certainly not be able to satisfy his co-speaker who might have known that [She] would travel. Therefore, the travel of [She] was already planned. As a matter of fact, the segment *the Queen can't see you tomorrow* implies that the Queen is not around. In this context, using the *simple present* would not be appropriate and would sound very strange. For example, ***The Queen can't see you tomorrow. She leaves for Australia* would not be

acceptable for two main reasons; first, because the simple present here cannot allow the speaker to present *leaves for Australia* as already structured, shared by the speaker and the co-speaker while what is at stake is to connect the segment *leaves for Australia* to [she] through the copula *be*. Secondly, the *simple present* would have oriented the operations to the right. “-Ing” is attached to (*she/leave for Australia*) in order to explain and justify the reason for saying the previous segment.

In utterance (19), the use of “*be +ing*” is triggered by *hurry up* which shows that the speaker had already identified the relation between *the bus* and *come* in the context. The speaker is not presenting something in a bid to inform his co-speaker about the bus. Rather, he is commenting on the bus by assuming that he is not joking. The co-speaker is expected to get prepared to embark on the journey. Using the *simple present* here would infer a completely different construction and make the sentence inaccurate as in this substitution ***Hurry up! The bus comes*. The choice of each of these two tenses is guided by the core value upon which rest the systematicity and coherence of grammatical items.

The very nature of “*be+ing*” could be summed up as follows: it does not concern the verb alone but the whole verbal group which “-ing” assigns to the subject through the linking verb *be* by giving it a non-assertive status. It allows the speaker to get hold of the segment in his utterance by putting forward his/her comments, judgement and views on the subject. This is the core value of “*be+ing*” constructions.

4. On the systemic and paradigmatic functioning of the *simple present* and *be+ing*

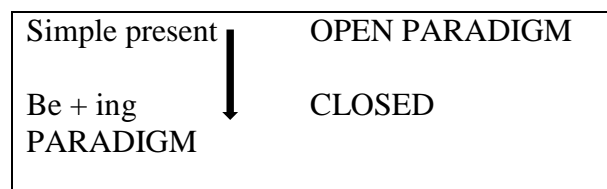
One of the major discoveries of Ferdinand de Saussure was that language is a system of interrelated units with each unit having its own distinctive feature no matter how close they may be semantically. Many linguists such as Gustave Guillaume (1973) and Antoine Meillet (1915) highlighted this systematic and systemic nature of language in their studies. However, Adamczewski (1976) is the one who made clear the systemic functioning of grammatical units by showing that the difference between the *simple present* and *be+ing* would be grasped only when their systemic value is unveiled. As such, the *simple present* and *be+ing* form a consistent whole in which they are opposed through their systemic value.

Moreover, every grammatical unit falls into a category from which the speaker makes his/her choice based on the nature of the context. That category is what Saussure called paradigm, which Y.K.J.F. Kpli (2002, p. 80) defines “*as a group of words captured by the mind that have something in common such that they can commute in the same position in the linear chain*”. Therefore, every speaker chooses words or tenses from a given category during the production of his/her utterance. As far as the *simple present* and *be+ing* are concerned, they belong to the same paradigm; they all express the present tense. But, their difference lies in their systemic value on which the speaker bases his/her paradigmatic choice. As Adamcsewski (2001) shows, the paradigm can be *open* or *closed*. When it is open, as is the case of the *simple present*, the speaker chooses *ic et nunc* a sequence or unit as opposed to another sequence or unit on the same paradigm. He/She makes no personal comment as he/she is providing the co-speaker with some new information. On the contrary, when the paradigm is closed, that is when the information is somehow already known, shared, or acquired, the speaker has full power to make his/her comment or justify his/her sequence. The following utterances should be enough to illustrate these systemic values:

20. -Beckham **waits** patiently for the ball

21. -Beckham **is waiting** patiently for the ball

In (20), the speaker presents facts for the sake of the facts. The newscaster only says what everybody can see, his/her objective being to name what goes on and nothing more. In (21), however, he is talking about Beckham. He is not just saying what Beckham is doing. He is saying much more about Beckham whose attitude is somewhat surprising. In these cases, the segment [*wait patiently for the ball*] does not have the same grammatical status as in the aforementioned analysis. The systemic functioning of the *simple present* and *be+ing* can be illustrated in the following diagram:



In the system of the English language the *simple present* comes first in the metalinguistic structuring of meaning with an assertive status, whereas *be+ing* comes second by signalling a non-assertive status. Therefore, the paradigmatic choice made by the speaker is based on the systemic value of each grammatical entity. When he/she thinks he/she needs to provide some information for the first time, he/she uses the *simple present*. On the contrary, when the information is already known, acquired, indicated in the context, etc. he/she uses “-ing” to make a comment on the subject. These invariant values help discriminate these tenses and allow for a more coherent pedagogical strategy.

5. Possible pedagogical strategy

Once the functioning of the *simple present* and *be+ing* is clear, the following step is how to teach those values to students in a classroom. However, it is not obvious that students learning English as second language will do the same exploits as native speakers do. The major hindrance could be that French students have one possibility (conjugation) whereas English offers two possibilities. The question students learning English keep asking teachers and themselves is about contexts in which they should use the *simple present* and *be+ing*. That is, teaching these tenses in a classroom without providing the context is of no help. Also, teachers should know that teaching a language is nothing less than setting up a system; building up gradually an internal grammar to help students produce utterances similar to native speakers' utterances. Once this grammar is adequately put in place, then one can hope to see students take ownership of the foreign language for effective communication. This idea is clearly expressed by H. Adamczewski (1975, p.31) as follows:

Ce qui me paraît tout aussi important, c'est le fait qu'on sache mieux que jamais, de façon plus explicite pourrait-on dire qu'il y a **quelque chose à construire, un système à monter** et pas seulement des règles à juxtaposer ou à additionner de semaine en semaine et d'année en année. On s'est rendu compte, ne serait-ce que confusément, qu'une grammaire était autre chose de hautement organisé, de rigoureusement structuré et que certains « déclics » devaient nécessairement se produire, que certains éléments devaient se mettre en place, avant que l'on puisse

espérer un fonctionnement de GR2 comparable à celui de GR1 .¹

In addition, approaches as Communicative Language Teaching and Competence-based Approach contributed tremendously to putting grammar on the back burner. How can one use a language effectively for cultural and communicative purposes without grasping its inner functioning? The fact of discarding grammar seems to have driven many teachers of English round the bend. This is the complaint of a teacher of English quoted by Bai Vierge (2017, p.6) in her PhD thesis:

Je ne comprends plus rien. Depuis l'avènement de l'Approche Communicative et de l'Approche par Compétences, le cours de grammaire est devenu plus difficile. Au début, on nous demandait de ne pas enseigner la grammaire aux élèves. Aujourd'hui on nous dit de l'enseigner sans donner d'explication. Nos élèves ne connaissent donc pas leurs verbes irréguliers et sont souvent incapables de construire une phrase avec des temps corrects. Or, nos premiers élèves savaient produire des phrases correctes parce qu'on leur expliquait les règles d'abord. En plus, ayant été nous-mêmes formés à la pratique de cette méthode, les enseignants étaient plus à l'aise dans leur rôle. (2017 :6)²

¹ "What, to me, seems equally important is that we now know more than ever, in a very explicit manner, one might say, *that there is something to build up, a system to set up* and not only rules to place side by side or add up week after week and year after year. We came to realise, only confusedly that grammar is something highly organised, rigorously structured that some "triggers" should come about, that some elements should be set up, before one can hope to see a GR2 working like GR1"

² I do not understand anything anymore. Since the advent of Communicative Language Teaching Approach and Competence-based Approach, grammar courses have become more difficult. We were initially forbidden to teach grammar to students. But today, we are asked to teach it without explanation. Consequently, our students do not know their irregular verbs and are often unable to build a sentence with the appropriate tense. Our first students were able to produce correct sentences because we, first of all, used to explain the rules to them. Moreover, as we were ourselves trained to the practice of that method, teachers used to feel more comfortable with it.

I believe that the reason why grammar has never been on the agenda of Communicative Approach is that it has not been taught properly and presented the way it is supposed to be. Grammar courses are nothing short of enigmas which are far from helping learners gain a clear insight of the functioning of languages. This paper, however, rehabilitates grammar by suggesting a possible pedagogical strategy more faithful to the real functioning of language with a stimulating treatment of grammar. It is now obvious that Grammar constitutes an essential part in effective communication as Helen Bolam (2020, p.9) put it: “*Like any badly set up internet connection which can cause little or no connection to the net, erroneous grammar can affect the accuracy of any intended communication*”.

In the light of the works done by Gabilan (2008), this paper intends to draw a teaching strategy in order to teach grammar in a coherent manner. In this strategy, the introduction of concepts is of paramount importance. Speech effects as *daily routines, habit, objectivity, repeated actions, recipes* which students are expected to learn by memorization must be avoided when it comes to introducing the *simple present*. Why should it be so? The genuine internal functioning of the *simple present* has no connection whatsoever with those speech effects. Again, such extralinguistic concepts are limitless and highly context-bound.

Once the teacher has let out such concepts, he/she is highly likely to prevent students from reflecting upon their subject matter and by so doing they will fail to see the real function of the simple present which consists in presenting data just for the sake of the data and nothing less. To this end, teachers must have adequate training which would help them choose suitable teaching materials for their courses.

In addition, teachers must select utterances actually produced by native speakers along with the context in order to give the reason for choosing that particular tense. One of the benefits of this strategy is the consistency and systematicity that it exemplifies. When grammatical items are presented in such a way that they reflect the internal functioning it will understandably be easier for learners to identify the common feature or value that connects all *simple present* utterances. Once that value is highlighted or found out by learners, then it will be easier to point to the difference in the use of the *simple present* and *be+ing* dominated sentences.

In the pedagogical strategy proposed in this article, the teacher needs to help students to have control over words ordering according to types of utterances. This first step must be worked out, repeated many times, which tacitly suggests that a great deal of time must be devoted to it from the beginning. Teachers have to ensure that students are able to produce sentences of this type:

22. -Do you like tea?
23. -Where does your sister live?
24. - Here comes the bus.
25. -What brings you here?
26. -She smokes French cigarettes, doesn't she?
27. -I do not like cheese.

If it is not certain that a student entering junior high school will be able to build such sentences correctly, then it will be of no use to introduce *be+ing* utterances whose construction is operationally opposed to the *simple present*. In addition, teachers must introduce natural utterances which are as clear as their contextual use.

Yet, teachers may be compelled to use a particular course book for their classes. But still, if the content cannot help teachers teach the *simple present* in a coherent fashion, they are free to resort to other utterances that would help them achieve their objective. As a general rule, teachers must refrain from saying that the *simple present* is used to express habit, for habit is conveyed by the semantic content of the verb. Let us suggest this by way of illustration.

28. He lives in a big house

In (28), only the meaning of the verb "live" displays the idea of permanence or habit. Besides, permanence is not a grammatical notion that can fully account for the underlying operations that govern the *simple present*. Teachers must present students with utterances whose purpose is to present data for the sake of the data. To this end, magazines, newspapers and TV shows or photo albums and legends can be helpful. The common thread between these materials is that they allow the teacher to present facts that are iconic to real life. Students must be accustomed to the truth that reporters name what they see other people doing. In this respect, the *simple present* is necessary because

the speaker gives an account of facts he/she witnesses and nothing more.

When this first step is well worked out, then the teacher can introduce utterances below with full assurance that students will comprehend the functioning of that tense.

29. Her shoulder-length blond hair **is** brushed back to show her classic features. She **is** perhaps not as slender as she once was, and she **seems** at ease with herself. She **jokes** about shooting the bar's pianist, she **is** talkative, she **smiles** easily and, yes, she **laughs**. (J. P. Gabilan, 2017, p.31)

In (29) the journalist only describes or names what the subject does with the purpose of saying only what the subject does. It is like when a reporter comments on a documentary film in order to bring important information to viewers. But still, one should privilege pictures or photographs in order to stay faithful to real life. By doing so, the teacher would direct the mind of learners toward the data which are used to inform. They would end up understanding what is at stake in *simple present* constructions and the reason for choosing it instead of *be+ing*. When the teacher realizes that students understand the reason why English native speakers choose the *simple present*, then he/she can introduce the *be+ing* form. Here again, speech effects as *ongoing* or *lasting* action and “*en train de*” should not be mentioned by the teacher because the purpose for resorting to this tense is only to make a judgment, a comment on the subjects. Moreover, utterances must be provided along with their context. Here are some examples:

30. (Mary talks too much in class (whereas silence is demanded)
- Mary, you're **talki**ng!
31. (A student sings out of tune)
- John, you're **singi**ng /**playi**ng out of tune!
32. (Fred talks louder, annoys)
- Fred, you're **getti**ng on my nerves!

What is expected to be taught to learners in these three utterances is not the interpretation that an action is going on, but rather that the speaker is focussing on the attitudes of Mary, John and Fred. To account for the

reasons for producing such utterances without going through *actions going on* in the world is what the teacher is expected to do. In all the utterances above, the speaker gives a kind of warning by keeping an eye on the subject. Once the *present simple* and *be+ing* are explained in this fashion, then the minimal pairs as *I live / I am living* become obvious and easy for learners. In addition, to resort to exceptions as *hear, love, see* etc. are not compatible with “-ing” amounts to contradicting what native speakers produce on a daily basis. All of these verbs do carry “ing” as Adamczewski (2001) showed by using utterances taken from every day conversations of native speakers of English.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the controversy which has been around for more than three centuries is rooted in the assumption that all linguistic units, including grammatical operators, have tangible references in the extralinguistic world. That assumption has prompted some linguists and grammarians to directly link the *simple present* and *be+ing* to some semantic interpretations. However, it is obvious that grammatical items such as \emptyset , *-s* and *-ing*, do not have any semantic content on their own. The *Simple present* makes it possible to present the information for the sake of the information in an open paradigm by indicating that what the speaker says at the time of speaking is valid. The *Simple present* has an assertive status. On the other hand, *be+ing* is used to say something on the subject in a closed paradigm with a non-assertive status. These values are core values that should, among others, be considered in teaching English. The pedagogical strategy put forth in this paper suggests that the *simple present* should be introduced first through appropriate materials before presenting *be+ing*. When introducing these tenses, teachers must ensure that the resulting speech effects such as *routines, habits*, etc. for the *simple present* and *ongoing* or *lasting actions* for *be+ing* are no longer mentioned.

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