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The Presents

More on the Present Progressive



Sometimes native speakers have an innate hunch about how certain discrete points of their language should be used. This hunch may go against prescriptive rules, but that doesn't bother them; they just want to feel more comfortable with how they use the discrete item in question.

A case in point is how some stative verbs are used as if they were active verbs. Look at the following dialogue to see what I mean:

- A: And that's how it happened.
B: If I'm **understanding** you correctly, you're saying that he intentionally threw the game?
A: That's right.
B: This is horrendous news. I'm **not liking** that one bit.
A: None of us **are**.

Not that this is something new. Most Americans will remember the McDonald's television commercial from some years back that had their motto "I'm loving it!" The jaws of every English teacher dropped when they first heard this and they cringed every time they heard the motto after that. But this unorthodox use of the present progressive form with some stative verbs is becoming more and more common. It seems that "I'm loving it" is synonymous with "I'm enjoying it." Not every stative verb is being used in both the simple and progressive form, but verbs like *understand*, *believe*, *want*, *like*, and *love* are among the ones that have both forms used at times by educated speakers, not just by people who never learned grammar in school.