

A real-time corpus-based study of the progressive in Ghanaian English

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Introduction

- Research project: "Structural nativization in Ghanaian English"
 - Corpus-based real-time evidence of (socio-)linguistic processes and variation at the beginning and end of the 'nativization' phase in E. Schneider's model (2003, 2007) of the evolution of postcolonial Englishes
- Nativization phase began with independence in 1957
 - Huber (2014: 90) claims that currently Ghana falls between phases 3 and 4.

Diachronic change in English

Progressives

L1 Englishes (e.g. Smith 2002, Leech et al. 2009; Kranich 2010)

- Real-time increase of progressives
- Extension to new contexts
- Colloquialisation

L2 Englishes

- Real-time increase in Black South African English (BSAE; van Rooy & Piotrowska 2015) and Philippine English (PhE; Collins 2015)
- Innovative usages
- Apparent-time increase in Nigerian English (NigE; Fuchs & Gut 2015)

Progressives in Ghanaian English

- Sey (1973: 33-35)
 - Extension to stative verbs common in less-educated speakers
 - Probably no L1 transfer (at least not from Akan)
 - Mainly restricted to spoken registers
- Tingley (1981)
 - Not mentioned as a "deviant" feature in newspaper writing
- Huber (2012: 386)
 - Variable extension to stative and habitual contexts
 - Not a common feature
- A. Schneider (2015)
 - Comparison of current conversational and written Ghanaian (GhE) and British English (BrE)
 - More common in GhE in spoken, less so in written data
 - No general extension to states and habitual contexts

Historical Corpus of English in Ghana (HiCE Ghana)

- Based on written-printed sections of ICE and "Letters to the editor" (600,000 words)
- 1966-1975 – beginning of Nativization phase in E. Schneider's (2003, 2007) terms

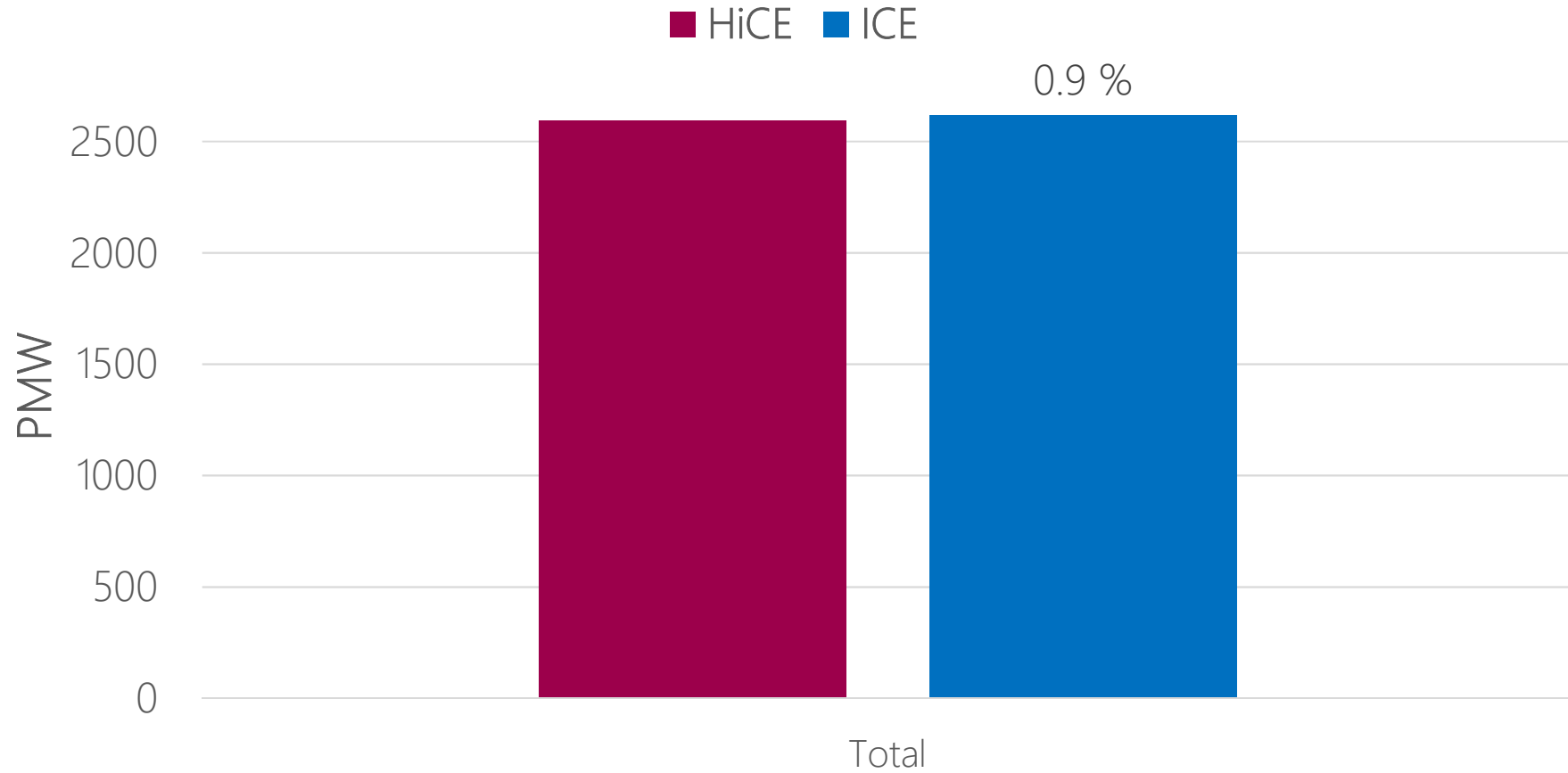
International Corpus Of English Ghana (ICE Ghana)

- Written-printed sections (300,000 words) + 10,000 words of "Letters to the editor"
- Mainly early-mid 2000s – end of nativization phase

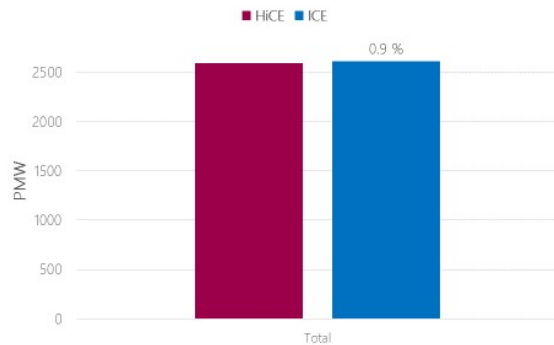
Methodology

- POS-tagged in Treetagger (Schmid 1994)
 - Set of regular expressions to extract potential progressive constructions (≈ 2700)
 - Manual cleaning (e.g. *be going to*, *gerunds*, etc.)
 - 2366 progressive constructions left (HiCE: 1555; ICE: 811)
- Log-Likelihood tests to identify significant real-time change

Overall findings



Overall findings

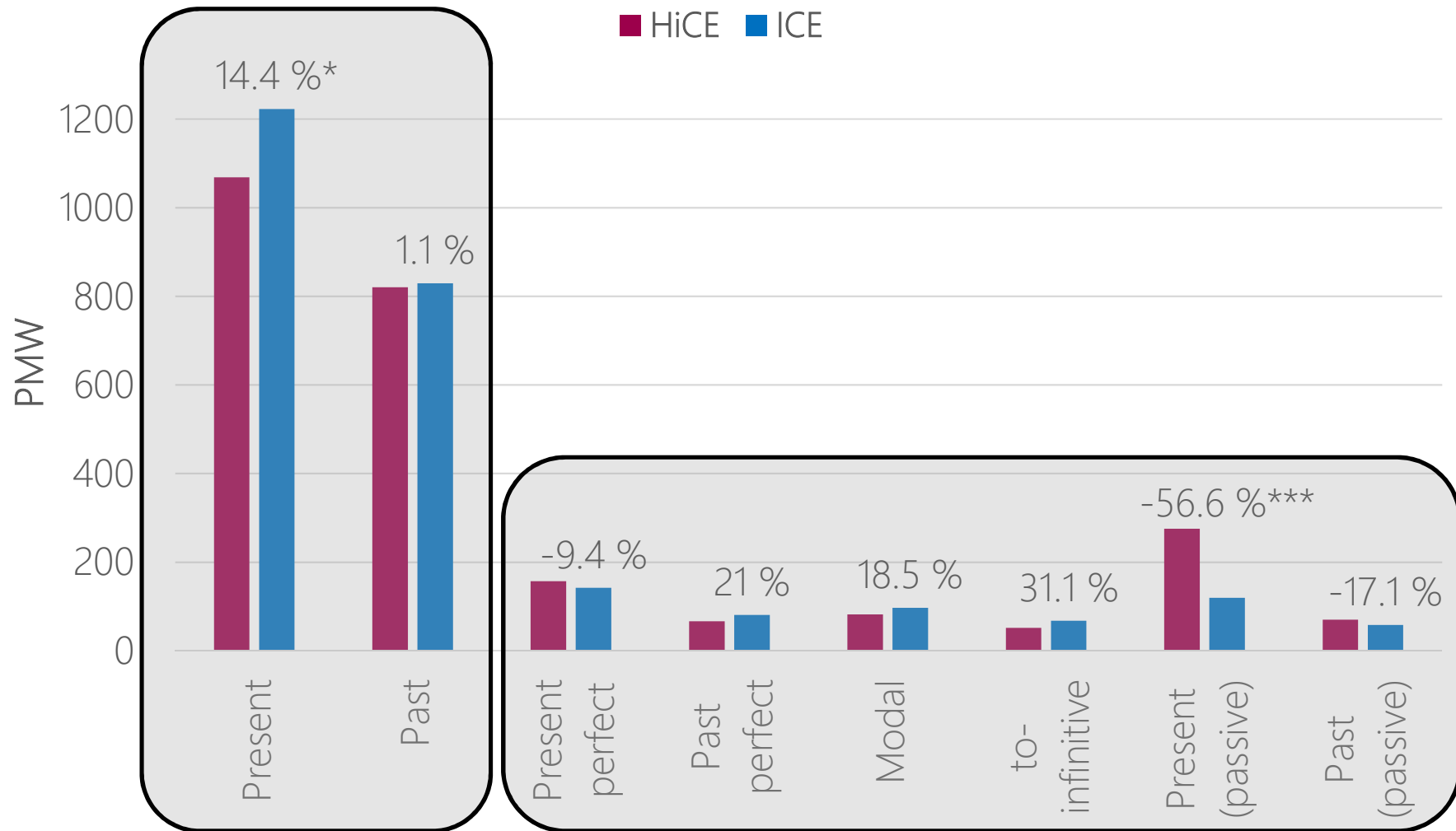


- Virtually no increase in written GhE!
 - HiCE: 2592 pmw
 - ICE: 2616 pmw
- Compare to
 - +9.6% (2946 → 3230 pmw) in written BrE (LOB vs. FLOB; Smith 2002: 319)
 - +9.5% (2417 → 2647 pmw) in written PhE (Phil-Brown vs. ICE-Phil; Collins 2015: 282)
 - +80% (344 → 619 pmw) in newspapers between 1950s and 2000s in BSAE (van Rooy & Piotrowska 2015)
 - Significant differences between speakers 50+ and younger in Nigerian English (Fuchs & Gut 2015: 380f.)

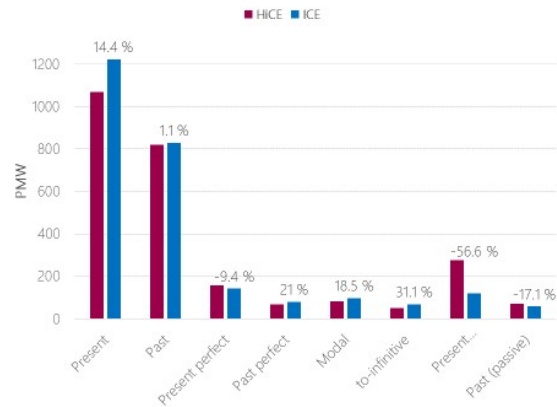
Verb types

- Following Smith (2002: 319), 16 progressive form types were taken into account:
 - Simple forms
 - Present (active/passive)
 - Past (active/passive)
 - Complex forms
 - Present perfect (active/passive)
 - Past perfect (active/passive)
 - Modal (active/passive)
 - Modal perfect (active/passive)
 - *To*-infinitive (active/passive)
 - Perfect *To*-infinitive (active/passive)

Verb types



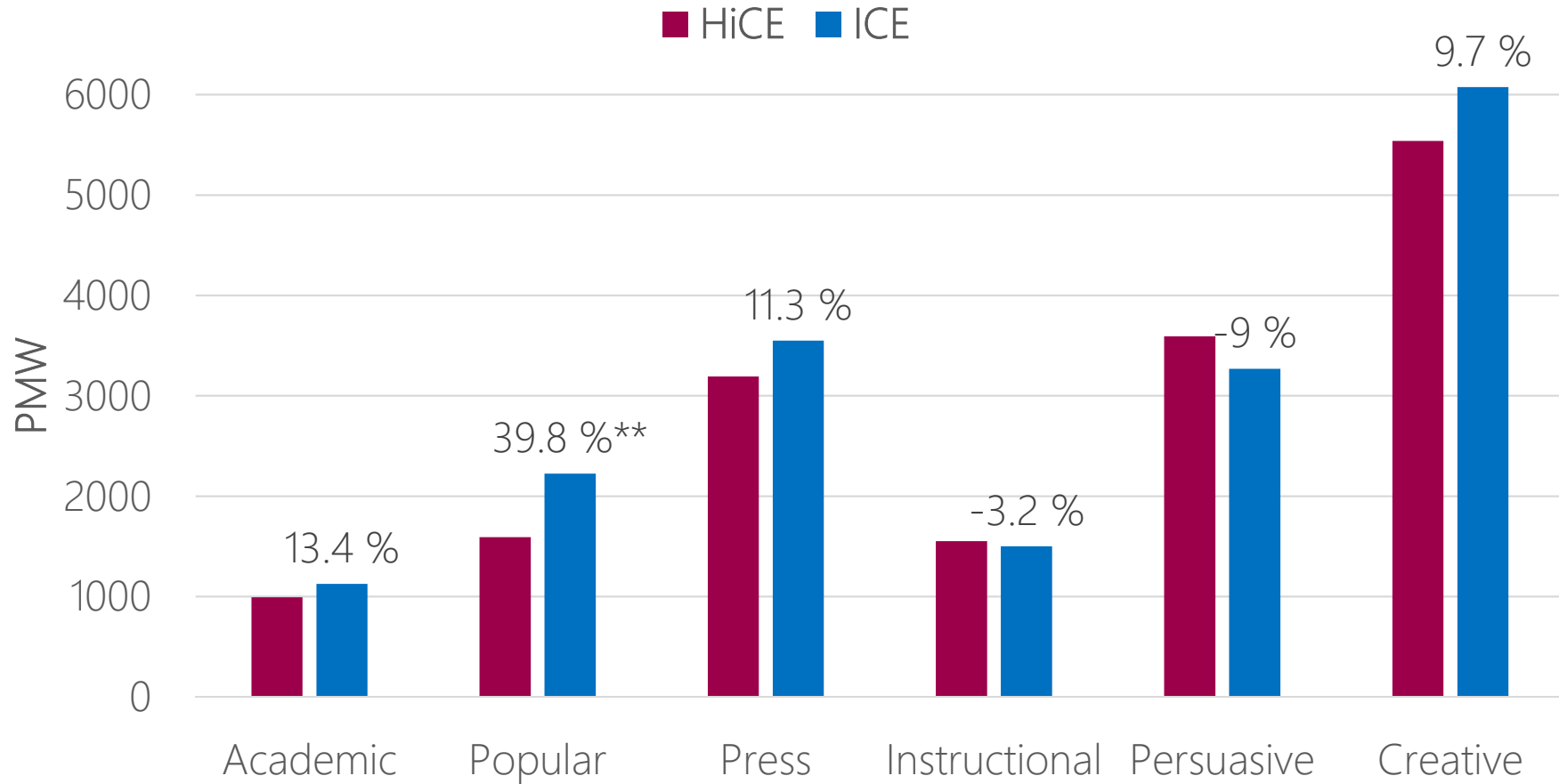
Verb type



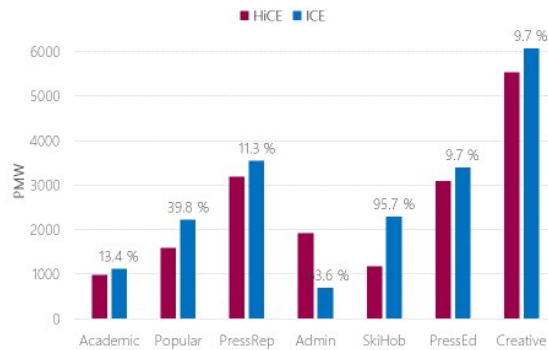
- Simple forms account for about 85% of all progressive constructions in both L1 and L2 Englishes (Collins 2008: 232)
 - HiCE: 86.2%
 - ICE: 85.2%

Type/Real time difference (%)	GhE	BrE	PhE
Present (active/passive)	-0.1	+31.0	+5.5
Past (active/passive)	-0.3	-8.0	+9.0
Present perfect (active/passive)	-9.4	+7.8	-8.6
Past perfect (active/passive)	+21.0	-10.0	-9.2
Modal (active/passive)	+18.5	+29.1	+120.5
Modal Perfect (active/passive)	-	-23.5	-12.5
to-infinitive (active/passive)	31.1	+18.6	+86.2
Perfect to-infinitive	-	-	-

Stylistic variation



Stylistic variation



- Gut & Fuchs (2013:251) provide comparison of ICE Nigeria and ICE GB data
- Compared here to data from HiCE and ICE Ghana (estimated values for Nigeria and GB)

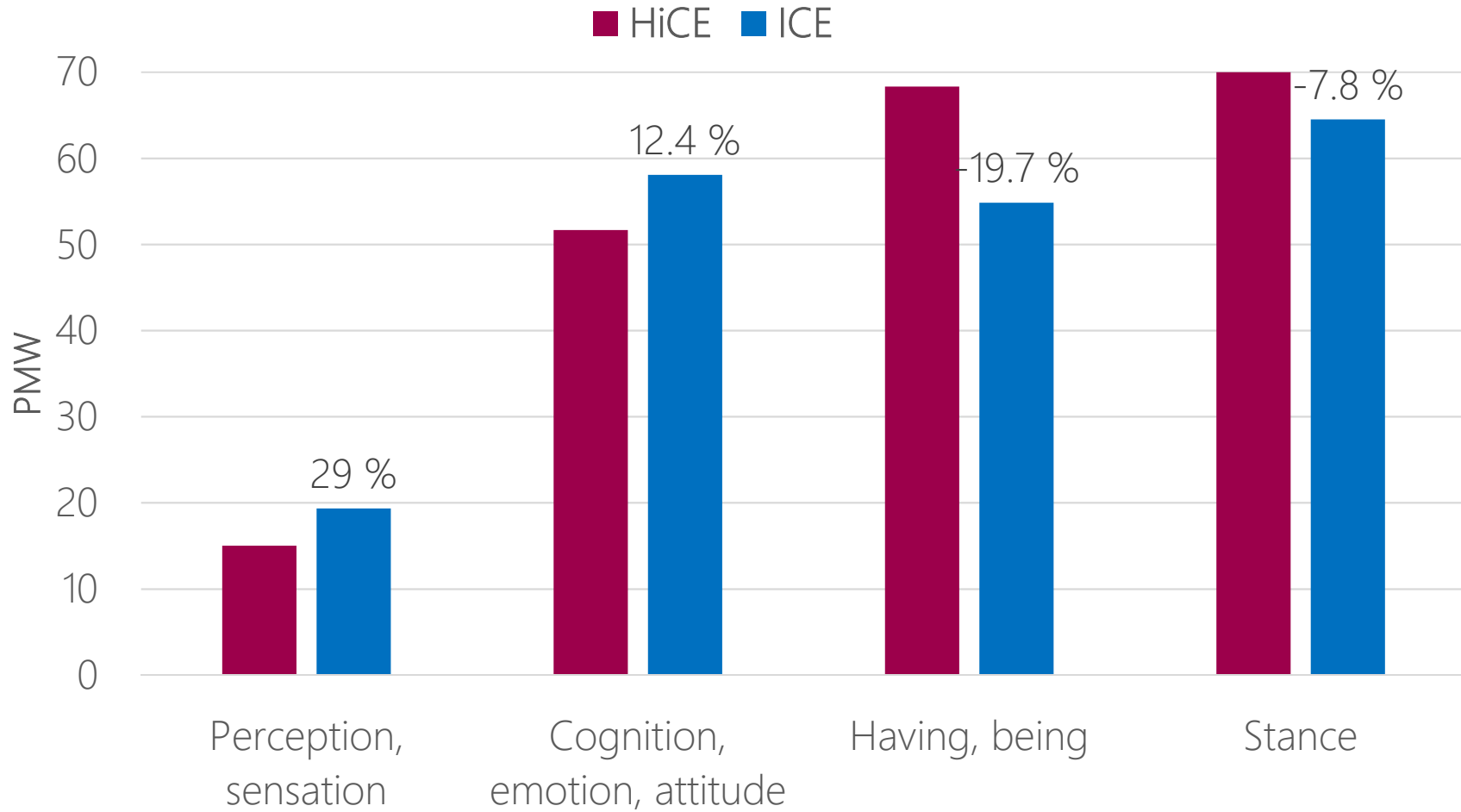
Genre/Variety HiCE ICE GH ICE NIG ICE GB
(pmw)

Academic	992	1125	1049	1600
Popular	1592	2225	2800	2400
Press	3190	3550	3600	3500
Administrative	1925	700	850	1500
Skills&Hobbies	1175	2300	3700	900
Editorials	3100	3400	3000	4300
Creative	5538	6075	4400	5400

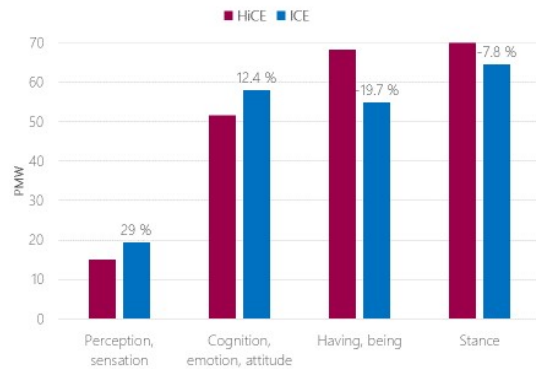
Stative verbs

- Leech et al. (2009: 129) note that stative verbs are increasingly found and accepted in progressive form
- Four categories (based on Leech 2004 and Huddleston & Pullum 2002):
 - Perception & sensation, e.g. *imagine*
 - Cognition, emotion, attitude, e.g. *impress*
 - Having, being, e.g. *exist*
 - Stance, e.g. *reach*

Stative verbs



Stative verbs

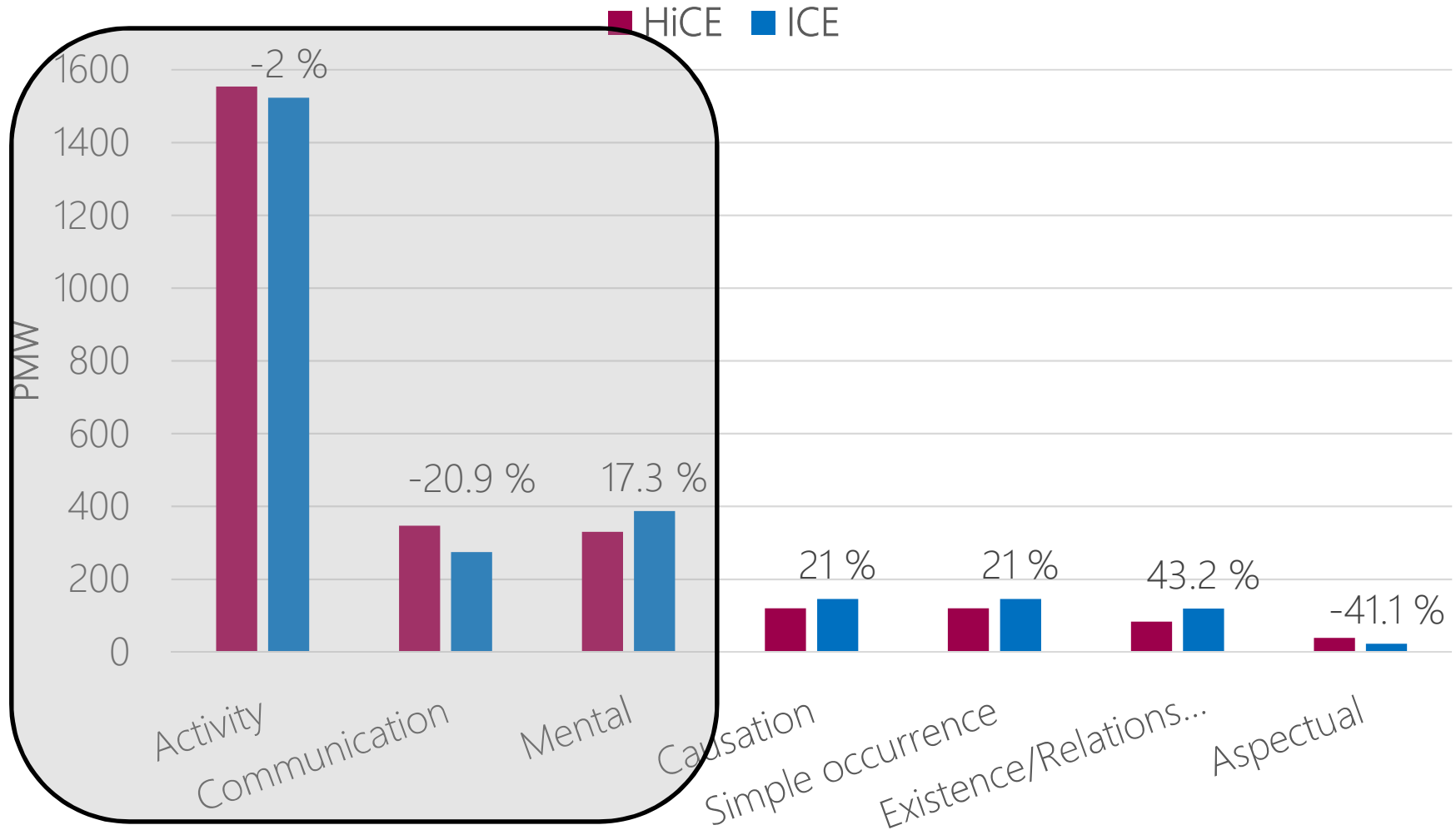


- The usage of stative verbs in progressive contexts is only marginal (about 200 pmw) in both corpora (also cf. A. Schneider 2015)
 - Minimal change: -4.0%
 - Most frequent in creative writing
- However, compared to LOB/FLOB (83/102 pmw) and Phil-Brown/ICE Phi (77/123 pmw) they are about twice as frequent in written GhE

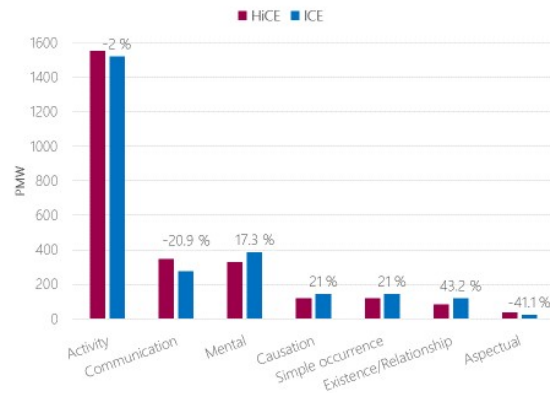
Semantic domain

- Biber et al. 1999:360-364 classify verbs according to seven semantic domains
 - Activity, e.g. *run*
 - Communication, e.g. *speak*
 - Mental, e.g. *consider*
 - Causative, e.g. *enable*
 - Occurrence, e.g. *happen*
 - Existence/Relationship, e.g. *be*
 - Aspectual, e.g. *continue*

Semantic domain



Semantic domain



- Smith (2002: 322) reports results for present progressives (active) only

Domain/Real time difference (%)	GhE	BrE
Activity	+7.4	+17.1
Communication	-12.6	+51.8
Mental	+42.4	+41.6
Causative	+86.4*	+52.2
Simple occurrence	+18	+35.7
Existence/Relationship	+9.4	+9.3
Aspectual	+190.3	+28.6

Summary

- Overall
 - No real-time change in GhE
 - Strong real-time change in both L1 (UK/US) and L2 Englishes (Philippines/South Africa)
- Verb types
 - GhE in line with other varieties as regards simple/complex distribution
 - Variable picture in complex categories, but overall stable
- Style
 - Mixed bag of results
- Stative verbs
 - No change, but far more frequent than elsewhere early on
- Semantic domain
 - Mixed bag of results

Discussion

- Comparison to PhE (Collins 2015)
 - Very similar numbers
 - Both much lower than in the UK and US
 - Colonial lag?
- Nativization in Ghanaian English
 - It seems that in writing Ghanaians remain rather conservative – “[Sign] of exonormative persistence” (Collins 2015: 292) as in PhE or is GhE or endonormative orientation?
 - Quite different in conversational GhE (A. Schneider 2015: Figure 4.1): about 10,500 progressives in GhE compared to about 8,200 in BrE
 - There is little indication that colloquialisation is taking place in GhE despite large increase in users of various social backgrounds

Outlook

- Further analyses
 - Passives
 - Formality
 - “Special uses” (Leech et al. 2009: 131-136)
 - Futurate uses
 - Expressive and attitudinal uses
 - Habitual
 - Interpretative
 - If possible, create subset based on ethnicity



Thank you.

You can download the slides
from <http://tiny.cc/Brato-ISLE4>
or by scanning the QR code.



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HiCE: Corpus Design

- **Academic Writing (120,000)**
 - Humanities (30,000)
 - Social Sciences (30,000)
 - Natural Sciences (30,000)
 - Technology (30,000)
- **Popular Writing (120,000)**
 - Humanities (30,000)
 - Social Sciences (30,000)
 - Natural Sciences (30,000)
 - Technology (30,000)
- **Press Reportage (100,000)**
 - Political (50,000)
 - Cultural (10,000)
 - Regional (20,000)
 - Sports (20,000)
- **Instructional Writing (80,000)**
 - Administrative (Government) (20,000)
 - Administrative (Non-government) (20,000)
 - Skills & Hobbies (40,000)
- **Persuasive Writing (100,000)**
 - Press editorials (50,000)
 - Letters to the Editor (50,000)
- **Creative Writing (80,000)**
 - Novels (40,000)
 - Stories (40,000)