

## A Corpora-based Analysis of Go on –ing, Carry on –ing, and Continue–ing

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The ultimate goal of this paper is to provide a frequency analysis of *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC). A major point to note is that *continue –ing* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by the type *go on –ing*, and the type *carry on –ing*, in that order. A further point to note is that the type *go on –ing* is the most preferred one in the fiction genre, whereas the types *carry on –ing* and *continue –ing* are the most preferable ones among Americans in the blog genre. When it comes to the BNC, the type *go on –ing* is the most preferred by the British, followed by *continue –ing*, and *carry on –ing*, in that order. It is interesting to note that *go on –ing* is the most frequently used one in the fiction genre of the BNC, that the type *carry on –ing* is the most commonly used one in the spoken genre, and that the type *continue –ing* is the most widely used one in the newspaper genre except the misc genre. The COCA clearly indicates that the expression *go on living* is the most preferable one among Americans, followed by *go on being*, *go on doing*, *go on talking*, *go on walking*, *go on fighting*, *go on believing*, *go on making*, *go on thinking*, and *go on pretending*, in that order. The COCA clearly shows, on the other hand, that the expression *carry on doing* is the most preferable one among Americans, followed by *carry on being*, *carry on working*, *carry on living*, *carry on reading*, *carry on using*, *carry on making*, *carry on playing*, *carry on believing*, and *carry on fighting*, in that order. Also, the COCA clearly shows that *continue working* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *continue doing*, *continue using*, *continue playing*, *continue making*, *continue being*, *continue reading*, *continue talking*, *continue living*, and *continue taking*, in that order. Finally, this paper argues that the types *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* are slightly different from one another in their preference and use.

**Keywords:** corpus, COCA, BNC, type, token, go on –ing, carry on –ing, continue –ing

### 1. Introduction

The goal of this paper is to provide a frequency analysis of *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue–ing* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC). As Murphy (2016, 2019) points out, “go on doing something means continue doing the same thing” (Murphy 2019: 112). This paper argues that the three types *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* are synonymously used, but they are slightly different from one another in their preference and use. In this paper, we aim to consider the genre frequency of *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* in the COCA. More specifically, we consider which one is the most preferred one in the eight genre of the COCA. On the other hand, we aim to observe the genre frequency of *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* in the BNC. We examine which one is the most preferred one in the seven genre of the BNC. In addition, we compare the results from the COCA and those from the BNC to observe national variation. Finally, we aim to examine the collocations of *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* in the COCA. We visualize the collocations of *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* by using the software NetMiner, which indicates that these three types are slightly different from one another. The organization of this paper is as follows.

In section 2.1, we argue that *continue –ing* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by the type *go on –ing*, and the type *carry on –ing*, in that order. We further argue that the type *go on –ing* is the most preferred one in the fiction genre, whereas the types *carry on –ing* and *continue –ing* are the most preferable ones among Americans in the blog genre. In section 2.2, we contend that the type *go on –ing* is the most preferred by the British, followed by *continue –ing*, and *carry on –ing*, in that order. We maintain that *go on –ing* is the most frequently used one in the fiction genre of the BNC, that the type *carry on –ing* is the most commonly used one in the spoken genre, and that the type *continue –ing* is the most widely used one in the newspaper genre except the misc genre. In section 2.3, we provide a collocation analysis of *go on*, *carry on*, and *continue* in the COCA. We argue that the expression *go on living* is the most preferable one among Americans, followed by *go on being*, *go on doing*, *go on talking*, *go on walking*, *go on fighting*, *go on believing*, *go on making*, *go on thinking*, and *go on pretending*, in that order.

We further argue, on the other hand, that the expression *carry on doing* is the most preferable one among Americans,

followed by *carry on being*, *carry on working*, *carry on living*, *carry on reading*, *carry on using*, *carry on making*, *carry on playing*, *carry on believing*, and *carry on fighting*, in that order. Also, we maintain that *continue working* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *continue doing*, *continue using*, *continue playing*, *continue making*, *continue being*, *continue reading*, *continue talking*, *continue living*, and *continue taking*, in that order. Finally, this paper argues that the three types *go on -ing*, *carry on -ing*, *continue -ing* are slightly different from one another in their preference and use.

## 2. A Genre Analysis of Go on -ing, Carry on -ing, and Continue -ing

### 2.1. A Genre Frequency of Go on -ing, Carry on -ing, and Continue -ing in the COCA

In what follows, we aim to examine the genre frequency of the types *go on -ing*, *carry on -ing*, and *continue -ing* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Table 1 indicates the genre frequency of these types in the COCA:

**Table 1 Genre Frequency of Go on -ing, Carry on -ing, and Continue -ing in the COCA**

Genre	ALL	BLOG	WEB	TV/M	SPOK	FIC	MAG	NEWS	ACAD
Go on -ing	1,912	223	257	315	196	489	187	135	110
Carry on -ing	284	96	53	33	42	21	12	10	17
Continue -ing	11,023	2,128	1,926	546	1,228	625	1,695	1,798	1,077

An important question that naturally arises is “Which type is the most preferred by Americans?” Table 1 clearly indicates that the type *continue -ing* is the most frequently used in America, followed by the type *go on -ing*, and the type *carry on -ing*, in that order. More specifically, the overall frequency of the type *continue -ing* is 11,023 tokens (the highest frequency among three types), that of the type *go on -ing* is 1,912 tokens, and that of the type *carry on -ing* is 284 tokens (the lowest frequency among three types). This in turn suggests that the type *continue -ing* is the most preferable one among Americans, followed by the type *go on -ing*, and the type *carry on -ing*, in that order. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that these three types are different from one another in their preference.

An immediate question is “In which genre is the type *go on -ing* the most widely used one among the eight genres of the COCA? Table 1 clearly shows that the type *go on -ing* is the most commonly used in the fiction genre of the COCA. This may imply that American writers prefer the type *go on -ing* the most. When it comes to the type *carry on -ing*, it is the most frequently used one in the blog genre of the COCA. This in turn indicates that American bloggers prefer the type *carry on -ing* the most. With respect to the type *continue -ing*, it is worth pointing out that *continue -ing* is the most commonly used in the blog genre of the COCA. This indicates that the types *continue -ing* and *carry on -ing* show the same pattern with respect to their frequency in the blog genre (they both show the highest frequency in the blog genre). From this, it is clear that American bloggers prefer using the types *continue -ing* and *carry on -ing*. It should be pointed out, however, that the type *continue -ing* is preferred over the type *carry on -ing* by American bloggers. To sum up, the type *go on -ing* is the most preferred one in the fiction genre, whereas the types *carry on -ing* and *continue -ing* are the most preferred ones in the blog genre. That is to say, *carry on -ing* and *continue -ing* show the same pattern with respect to the blog genre, whereas *go on -ing* shows a different pattern. This in turn implies that the type *go on -ing* is slightly different from the types *carry on -ing* and *continue -ing* in its use.

It is worth noting that the type *go on -ing* is the second most preferred one in the TV/movie genre. More specifically, the frequency of *go on -ing* is 315 tokens in the TV/movie genre. This may imply that American celebs prefer using the type *go on -ing*. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the types *carry on -ing* and *continue -ing* are the second most preferred ones in the web genre. Most interestingly, the types *carry on -ing* and *continue -ing* show the same pattern with respect to the web genre of the COCA, but they are slightly different from each other in their preference. That is, the type *continue -ing* is preferred over the type *carry on -ing* by Americans in the web genre of the COCA. More specifically, the frequency of *continue -ing* in the web genre is thirty six times higher than that of *carry on -ing*. This suggests that Americans prefer using *continue -ing* to *carry on -ing* in cyber space.

It is noteworthy that the type *go on -ing* is the third most preferred one in the web genre. On the other hand, the type *carry on -ing* is the third most preferred one in the spoken genre, whereas the type *continue -ing* is the third most preferred one in the newspaper genre.

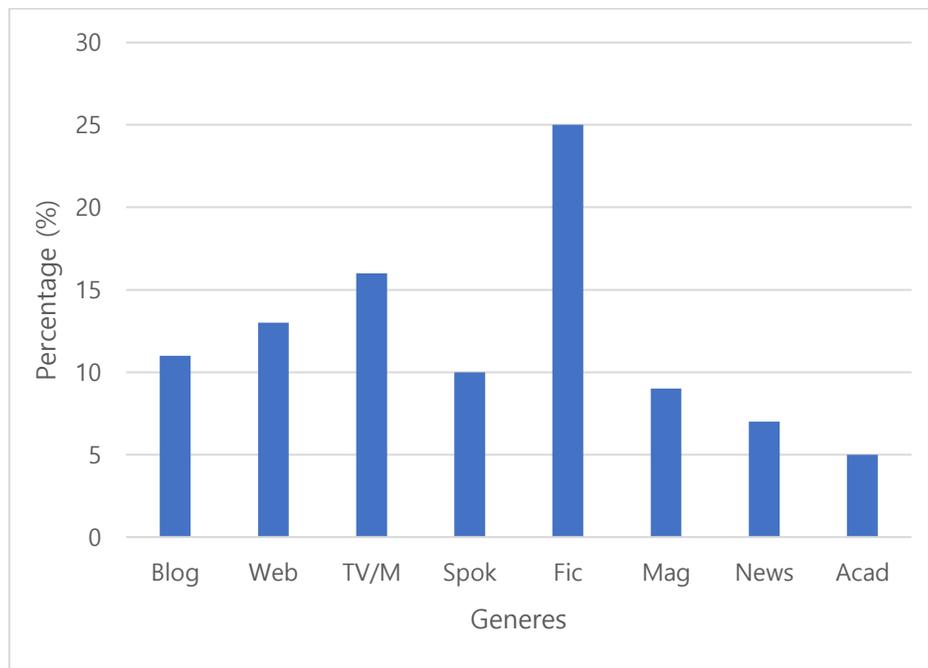
From all of this, it is clear that the type *go on -ing* is much used in cyberspace, that the type *carry on -ing* is the preferred

one in daily conversation, and that the type *continue -ing* is the preferable one for American journalists. This in turn implies that these three types are slightly different from one another in their use. Additionally, it is important to note that these three types rank third in the different genres and that American preference towards these three types is different. That these three types rank third in the different genres suggests that they are used differently by Americans. When it comes to American preference, the type *continue -ing* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by the type *go on -ing*, and the type *carry on -ing*, in that order.

It is interesting to point out that the type *go on -ing* is the fourth most preferred one in the blog genre. The frequency of *go on -ing* in the blog genre is 223 tokens and accounts for almost 11% of eight genres. This in turn suggests that American bloggers prefer using the type *go on -ing*. It should be noted, however, that they do not use it as much as the type *continue -ing* in the blog genre. The frequency of *continue -ing* in the blog genre is almost ten times higher than that of *go on -ing*. It should be pointed out that the type *carry on -ing* is the fourth most preferred one in the TV/movie genre. The frequency of *carry on -ing* in the TV/movie genre is 33 tokens and accounts for 11% of eight genres. This in turn indicates that American celebs like using the type *carry on -ing*. However, they do not use it as much as *go on -ing* and *continue -ing*. The frequency of *continue -ing* in the TV/movie genre is sixteen times higher than that of *carry on -ing*. Interestingly, the frequency of *go on -ing* in the TV/movie genre is nine times higher than that of *carry on -ing*. It is important to note that the type *continue -ing* is the fourth most preferred one in the magazine genre. The frequency of *continue -ing* in the magazine genre is 1,695 tokens and accounts for 15% of eight genres. This in turn implies that American journalists are keen on using *continue -ing*. Most importantly, the type *continue -ing* is the most preferred by American journalists in the magazine genre, followed by *go on -ing*, and *carry on -ing*, in that order. To sum up, *go on -ing* ranks fourth in the blog genre, *carry on -ing* ranks fourth in the TV/movie genre, and *continue -ing* ranks fourth in the magazine genre. From all of this, it is clear that these three types are slightly different from one another in their use.

It is significant to note that *go on -ing* has the lowest frequency in the academic genre, that *carry on -ing* has the lowest frequency in the newspaper genre, and that *continue -ing* has the lowest frequency in the TV/movie genre. This indicates that they are slightly different from one another in their use. Finally, Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 indicate the percentage of the use of these three types in eight genres:

**Figure 1 Percentage of the use of go on -ing in eight genres**



**Figure 2 Percentage of the use of carry on -ing in eight genres**

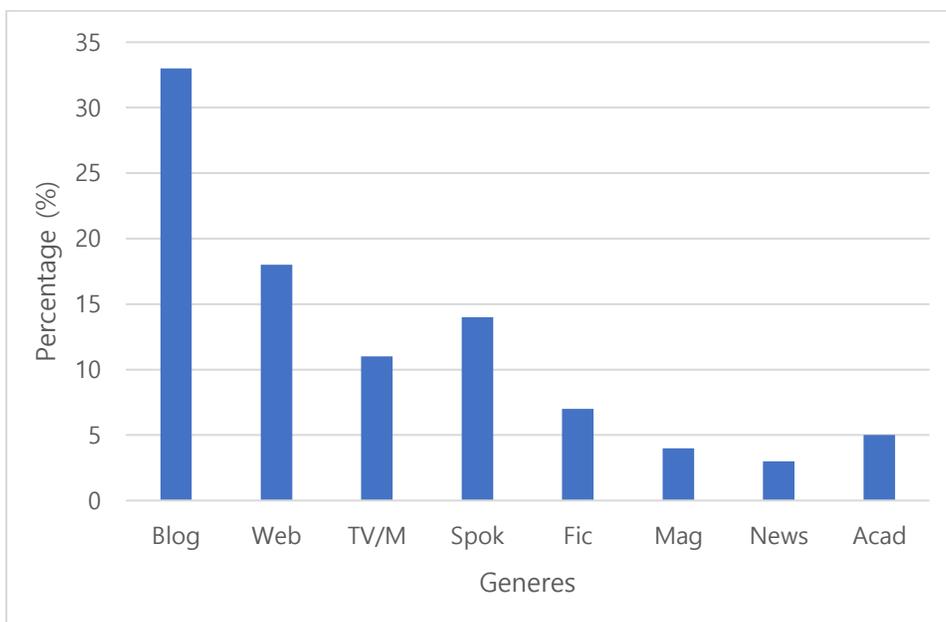
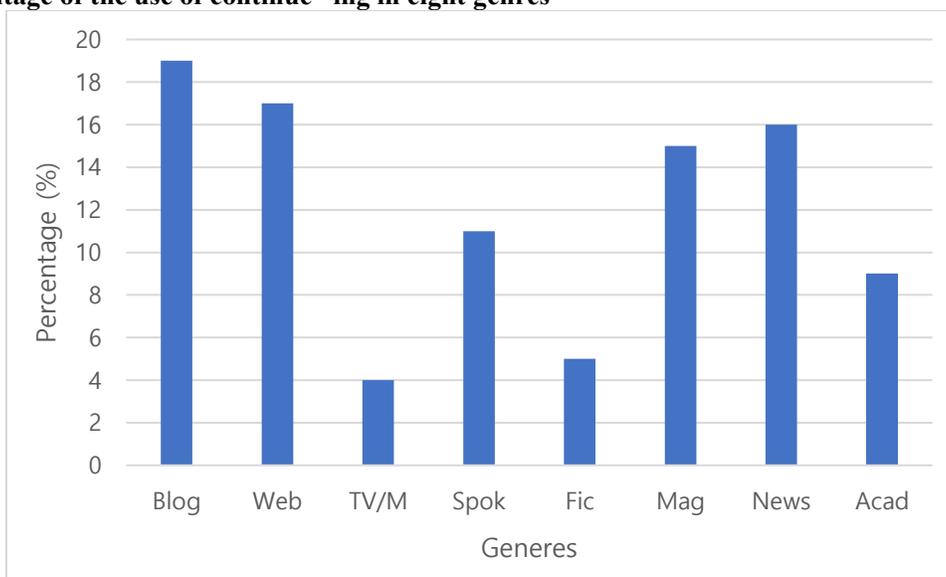


Figure 3 Percentage of the use of continue-ing in eight genres



2.2. A Genre Frequency of Go on-ing, Carry on-ing, and Continue-ing in the BNC

In the following, we examine the genre frequency of *go on-ing*, *carry on-ing*, and *continue-ing* in the British National Corpus.

Table 2 Genre Frequency of go on-ing, carry on-ing, and continue-ing in the BNC

Genre	All	SPOK	FIC	MAG	NEWS	NON-ACAD	ACAD	MISC
Go on-ing	800	57	324	64	60	108	56	131
Carry-ing	348	75	53	41	74	35	9	61
Continue-ing	599	23	68	63	106	103	57	179

An important question is “Which type is the most preferred by the British?” Table 2 clearly shows that the type *go on-ing* is the most frequently used one in the UK, followed by *continue-ing*, and *carry on-ing*, in that order.

This in turn suggests that *go on –ing* is the most preferred by the British, followed by *continue –ing*, and *carry on –ing*, in that order. Interestingly, the British prefer using *go on –ing* the most, whereas Americans prefer using *continue –ing* the most. This suggests that Americans and the British show a different pattern with respect to the use of *go on –ing* and *continue –ing*. It should be noted, on the other hand, that Americans and the British show the same pattern with respect to the use of *carry on –ing*. That is to say, **the type *carry on –ing* has** the lowest frequency in the COCA and BNC.

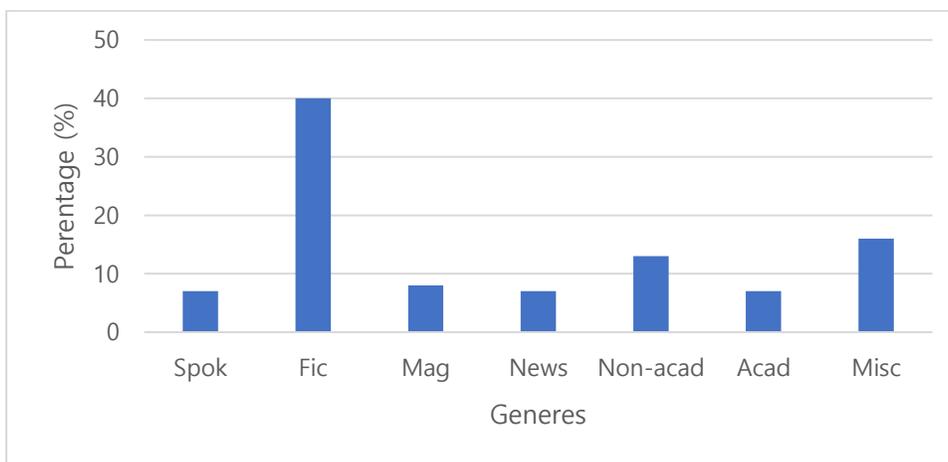
Now an immediate question is “In which genre is the type *go on –ing* the most frequently used?” Table 2 clearly indicates that *go on –ing* is the most widely used one in the fiction genre of the BNC. More interestingly, *go on –ing* is the most commonly used one in the fiction genre of the COCA. Thus, Americans and British people show the same pattern with respect to the use of *go on –ing*. It is interesting to point out that *carry on –ing* is the most commonly used one in the spoken genre of the BNC. This in turn suggests that the British prefer *carry on –ing* the most in the spoken genre of the BNC. It is noteworthy that the type *continue –ing* is the most widely used one in the newspaper genre except the misc genre. This indicates that American journalists prefer *continue –ing* the most. However, we do not consider the frequency of the misc genre since it is the mixture of all genres. Interestingly, the type *continue –ing* is the most preferable one for British journalists, followed by *carry on –ing*, and *go on –ing*, in that order. To sum up, *go on –ing* is the most frequently used one in the fiction genre, *carry on –ing* is the most commonly used one in the spoken genre, and *continue –ing* is the most widely used one in the newspaper genre except the misc genre. This in turn suggests that these three types are slightly different from one another in their use.

It is worth pointing out that *go on –ing* is the second most preferred one in the misc genre. However, we do not consider why *go on –ing* in the misc genre ranks second. The misc genre is the mixture of all genres, so it is difficult to find the property of the genre. On the other hand, *carry on –ing* is the second most preferred one in the newspaper genre. More specifically, there is a difference of 1 token between the frequency of *carry on –ing* in the spoken genre and that of *carry on –ing* in the newspaper genre. This may imply that British journalists are keen on using *carry on –ing* in their newspapers. It should be noted, however, that British journalists prefer *continue –ing* the most in their newspapers. More specifically, *continue –ing* is preferred over *go on –ing* and *carry on –ing* by British journalists. It is interesting to point out that *continue –ing* is the second most preferred one in the newspaper genre. Interestingly, *carry on –ing* and *continue –ing* show the same pattern in the newspaper genre.

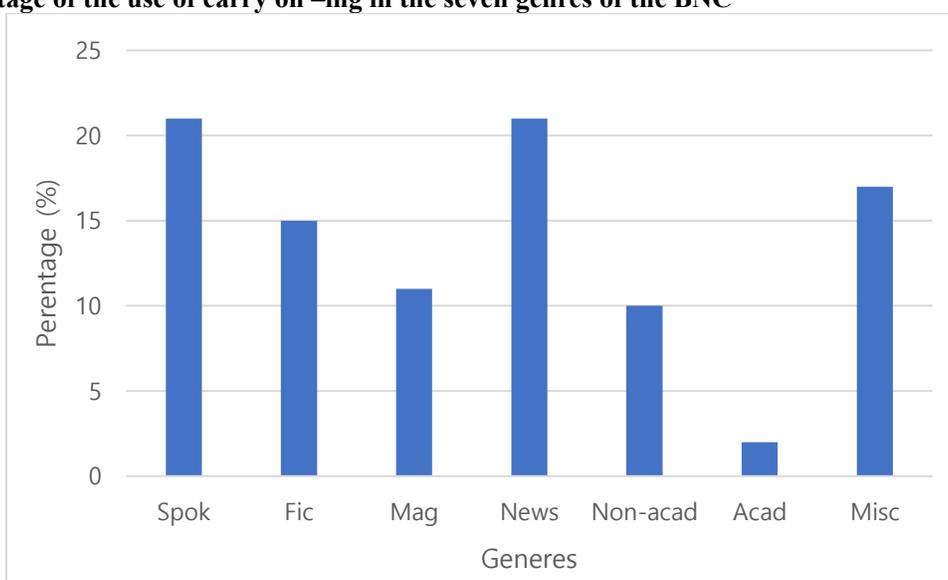
It is noteworthy that *go on –ing* is the third most preferred one in the non-academic genre. On the other hand, *carry on –ing* is the third most preferred one in the misc genre. When it comes to *continue –ing*, it is the third most preferred one in the non-academic genre. As alluded to in Table 2, *go on –ing* and *continue –ing* show the same pattern in the non-academic genre. It should be noted, however, that *go on –ing* is preferred over *carry on –ing* and *continue –ing* by the British in the non-academic genre.

Finally, it is worthwhile noting that *go on –ing* has the lowest frequency in the academic genre. Likewise, *carry on –ing* has the lowest frequency in the academic genre. When it comes to *continue –ing*, it has the lowest frequency in the spoken genre. From all of this, it is clear that *go on –ing* shows the same pattern as *carry on –ing* in the academic genre, but *continue –ing* shows a different pattern. We thus conclude that these three types are slightly different from one another in their use. Now Figure 4, Figure 5, and Figure 6 indicate the percentage of the use of *go on –ing*, *carry on –ing*, and *continue –ing* in seven genres:

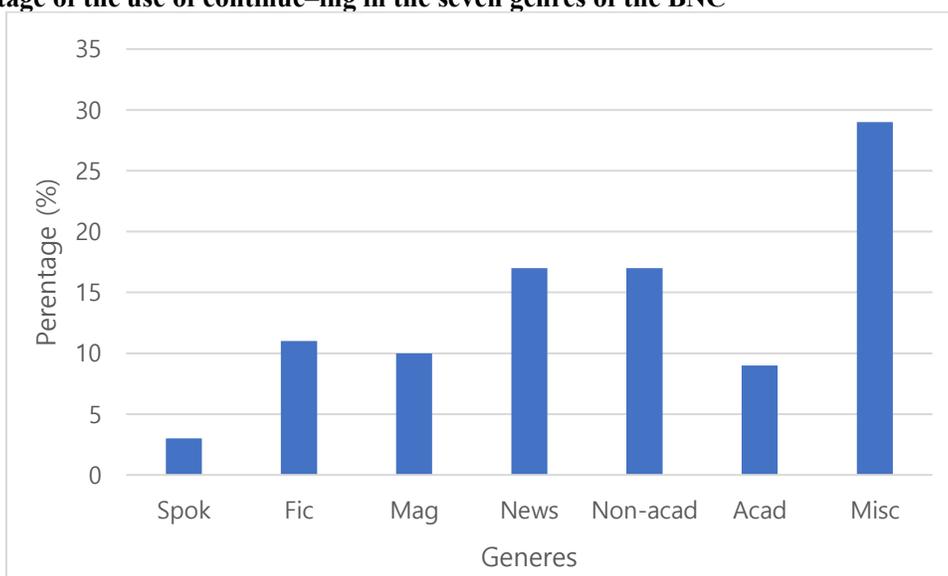
**Figure 4 Percentage of the use of *go on –ing* in the seven genres of the BNC**



**Figure 5**Percentage of the use of carry on –ing in the seven genres of the BNC



**Figure 6**Percentage of the use of continue–ing in the seven genres of the BNC



Number	Collocation of go on	Frequency
1	Go on living	269
2	Go on being	124
3	Go on doing	84
4	Go on talking	56
5	Go on working	48
6	Go on fighting	36
7	Go on believing	34
8	Go on making	34
9	Go on thinking	34
10	Go on pretending	28
11	Go on loving	27
12	Go on killing	25
13	Go on playing	22
14	Go on having	20
15	Go on trying	18
16	Go on using	18
17	Go on looking	17
18	Go on seeing	16
19	Go on singing	16
20	Go on taking	16

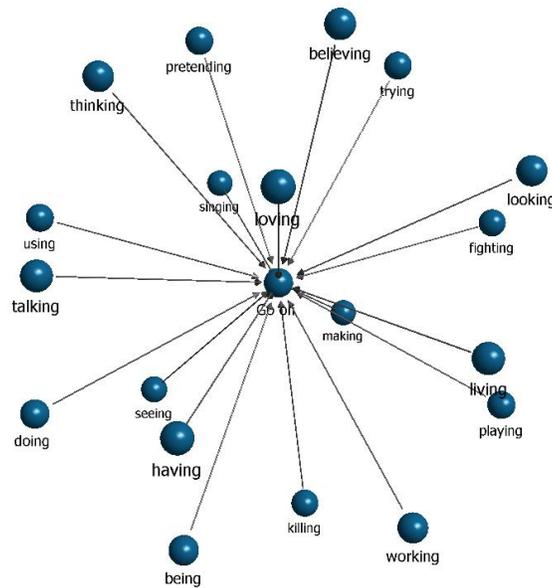
**3. A Collocation Analysis of Go on –ing, Carry on –ing, and Continue –ing in the COCA**

In what follows, we aim to examine the frequency of the collocations of *go on*, *carry on*, and *continue* in the COCA. Table 3 indicates the frequency of the collocation of *go on* in the COCA:

**Table 3 Frequency of the collocation of go on in the COCA**

An important question is “Which gerund is the most frequently used by Americans along with *go on*?” Table 3 clearly shows that the expression *go on living* is the most commonly used one in America. This in turn implies that *go on living* is the most preferred by Americans. As alluded to in Table 3, the expression *go on living* is the most preferable collocation among Americans, followed by *go on being*, *go on doing*, *go on talking*, *go on walking*, *go on fighting*, *go on believing*, *go on making*, *go on thinking*, and *go on pretending*, in that order. It is interesting to point out that the everyday expression *go on talking* is the fourth most preferred one in America. The everyday idiom *go on walking* is the fifth most preferred one in America. The expression *go on singing* that is used frequently ranks sixteenth in the COCA. Now Figure7 indicates the collocation of *go on* in the top 20.

**Figure7 Visualization of the collocation of go on in the COCA**



In Figure7, twenty gerunds have a collocation relationship with *go on*, which indicates that these gerunds are much used with *go on*. As indicated in Figure7, twenty gerunds frequently used are linked to *go on*. These 3-D collocations were performed by the software NetMiner.

Now attention is paid to the collocation of *carry on* in the COCA. Table 4 indicates the collocation of *carry on* in the top 20:

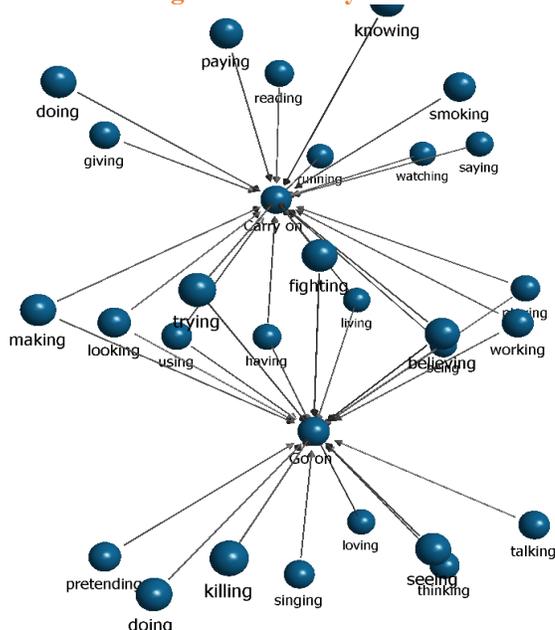
**Table4 Collocation of carry on in the COCA**

Number	Collocation of go on	Frequency
1	Carry on doing	34
2	Carry on being	17
3	Carry on working	11
4	Carry on living	9
5	Carry on reading	9
6	Carry on using	9
7	Carry on making	8
8	Carry on playing	8
9	Carry on believing	5
10	Carry on fighting	5
11	Carry on looking	5
12	Carry on trying	5
13	Carry on watching	5
14	Carry on paying	4
15	Carry on having	4
16	Carry on running	4
17	Carry on saying	3
18	Carry on smoking	3
19	Carry on knowing	3
20	Carry on giving	3

An immediate question is "Which gerund is the most preferred by Americans?" Table 4 clearly indicates that the expression *carry on doing* is the most widely used one in America. This in turn suggests that *carry on doing* is the most preferred by Americans. As illustrated in Table4, the expression *carry on doing* is the most preferable one among Americans, followed by *carry on being*, *carry on working*, *carry on living*, *carry on reading*, *carry on using*, *carry on*

making, carry on playing, carry on believing, and carry on fighting, in that order. Interestingly, carry on doing ranks first in the COCA, whereas go on doing ranks third. On the other hand, carry on working ranks third in the COCA, whereas go on working ranks fifth. The expression carry on living ranks fourth in the COCA, whereas go on living ranks first. From all of this, it is clear that carry on-ing is slightly different from go on-ing in its use. It is noteworthy that the everyday idiom carry on saying ranks seventeenth in the COCA. Again, noteworthy is that the everyday expression carry on trying ranks twelfth in the COCA. Now Figure 8 shows the collocations of go on and carry on. By using the software NetMiner, we visualized the collocations of carry on and go on in the COCA:

Figure 8 Visualization of the collocations of go on and carry on in the COCA



As indicated in Figure 8, there are nine gerunds that are linked to carry on, but not linked to go on. Conversely, there are nine gerunds that are linked to go on, but not linked to carry on. On the other hand, there are eleven gerunds that are linked to both carry on and go on. These gerunds have a collocation relationship with both carry on and go on. From this, it can be inferred that carry on-ing is slightly different from go on-ing in its use.

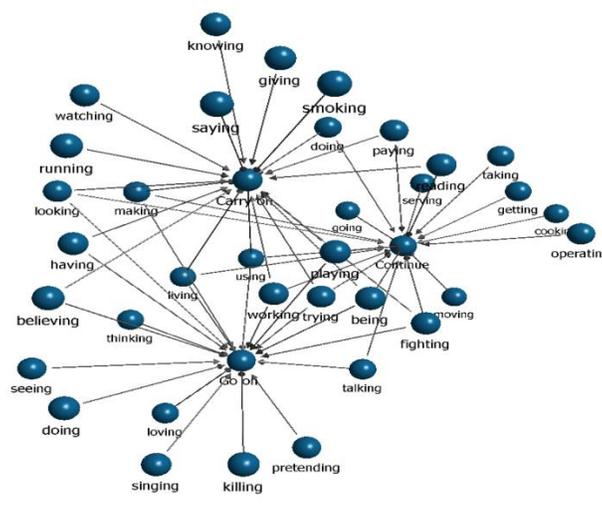
Finally, attention is paid to the collocation of continue in the COCA:

Table5 Collocation of continue in the COCA

Number	Collocation of go on	Frequency
1	Continue working	762
2	Continue doing	527
3	Continue using	308
4	Continue playing	270
5	Continue making	260
6	Continue being	223
7	Continue reading	223
8	Continue talking	205
9	Continue living	176
10	Continue taking	147
11	Continue paying	130
12	Continue fighting	129
13	Continue cooking	121
14	Continue trying	120
15	Continue going	107
16	Continue operating	102
17	Continue moving	99
18	Continue serving	97
19	Continue getting	91
20	Continue looking	87

An immediate question is “Which gerund is the most preferred by Americans?” Table 5 clearly indicates that *continue working* is the most frequently used by Americans. This in turn suggests that *continue working* is the most preferred by Americans. As alluded to in Table 5, *continue working* is the most preferable collocation for Americans, followed by *continue doing*, *continue using*, *continue playing*, *continue making*, *continue being*, *continue reading*, *continue talking*, *continue living*, and *continue taking*, in that order. The everyday expression *continue talking* ranks eighth in the COCA, whereas *go on talking* ranks fourth. Interestingly, *continue working* ranks first in the COCA, *go on working* ranks fifth, and *carry on working* ranks third. On the other hand, *continue doing* ranks second in the COCA, *go on doing* ranks third, and *carry on doing* ranks first. In addition, the expression *continue playing* ranks fourth, *go on playing* ranks thirteenth, and *carry on playing* ranks eighth. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that *go on -ing*, *carry on -ing*, and *continue -ing* are slightly different from one another in their use. Now Figure 9 shows the visualization of the collocations of *go on -ing*, *carry on -ing*, and *continue -ing* in the COCA:

**Figure 9 Visualization of the collocations of go on -ing, carry on -ing, and continue -ing in the COCA**



It is significant to note that the gerunds *looking*, *working*, *trying*, *being*, *fighting*, *using*, *making*, and *living* are all linked to *go on*, *carry on*, and *continue*, which seems to suggest that they are all the collocations of these three types and that they are synonymously used. It should be noted, however, that the gerunds *doing*, *paying*, *doing*, and *reading* are linked to both *carry on* and *continue*. Similarly, the gerunds *having* and *believing* are linked to both *carry on* and *go on*. Most importantly, it is noteworthy that there are many gerunds that are linked to only one type, but not linked to the others. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the types *go on -ing*, *carry on -ing*, and *continue -ing* are slightly different from one another in their use.

#### 4. Conclusion

To sum up, we have provided a frequency analysis of *go on -ing*, *carry on -ing*, and *continue -ing* in the COCA and BNC. In section 2.1, we have argued that the type *continue -ing* is the most preferred by Americans, followed by the type *go on -ing*, and the type *carry on -ing*, in that order. We have further argued that the type *go on -ing* is the most preferred one in the fiction genre, whereas the types *carry on -ing* and *continue -ing* are the most preferred ones in the blog genre. In section 2.2, we have contended that the type *go on -ing* is the most preferred by the British, followed by *continue -ing*, and *carry on -ing*, in that order. We have maintained that *go on -ing* is the most frequently used one in the fiction genre of the BNC, that the type *carry on -ing* is the most commonly used one in the spoken genre, and that the type *continue -ing* is the most widely used one in the newspaper genre except the misc genre. In section 2.3, we have provided a collocation analysis of *go on*, *carry on*, and *continue* in the COCA. We have argued that the expression *go on living* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *go on being*, *go on doing*, *go on talking*, *go on walking*, *go on fighting*, *go on believing*, *go on making*, *go on thinking*, and *go on pretending*, in that order. We have further argued, on the other hand, that the expression *carry on doing* is the most preferable one among Americans, followed by *carry on being*, *carry on working*, *carry on living*, *carry on reading*, *carry on using*, *carry on making*, *carry on playing*, *carry on believing*, and *carry on fighting*, in that order. Also, we have maintained that *continue working* is the most preferable one for Americans, followed by *continue doing*, *continue using*, *continue playing*, *continue making*, *continue being*, *continue*

*reading, continue talking, continue living, and continue taking*, in that order. Finally, this paper argues that *go on –ing, carry on –ing, continue –ing* are slightly different from one another in their preference and use.

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