THE ENGLISH -ING PARTICIPIAL ADJUNCTS IN FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE WRITTEN DISCOURSE

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Abstract
The study reported on in this article shows that the -ing participial adjuncts are used differently by native speakers of English depending on the genre they occur in. A comparison of data from written re-narrations of a film with the data from argumentative essays shows that these constructions are more frequent in narrative texts. The -ing participial adjuncts are typically used to express temporal succession (e.g. Anteriority) in narrative texts, whereas Means is the most frequent function of these constructions in argumentative essays. The native speaker data is then compared to that of Norwegian learners of English. The non-native-like patterns in the L2 data are attributed to L1 transfer and lack of knowledge about the genre-specific uses of the -ing clauses.

Key words
the -ing participial adjunct, written narratives, argumentative essays, English native speakers, Norwegian learners of English

1 Introduction

The present analysis of -ing participial adjuncts (cf. Examples (1) and (2) below) draws on previous studies of these constructions which addressed problems of their interpretation (Kortmann 1991, 1995, Behrens 1998, Haug, Fabiricius-Hansen, Behrens & Helland 2012).

(1) School pupils became disillusioned, seeing the school as an agent of social discrimination. (the LOCNESS corpus)

(2) Hearing drops and the movement of water, Lofnu scrambled frantically in the sand to find the sound’s source, only to fall through the sand to Scarvia’s next level down. (“Quest”, English L1, Heidelberg project)

Example (1) is from an argumentative essay written by a native speaker of English, where the -ing participial clause (underlined) is used in the postverbal position (it follows the main verb of the sentence), and (2) is from a written re-narration of a silent film “Quest” by an English native speaker. In (2), the -ing participial clause is used in the preverbal position, preceding the main verb of the sentence.