

Abstract

The present diploma thesis deals with the “adverbial *ing*-clause network”, comprising free adjuncts, absolute constructions, and adverbial verbal gerunds, as postulated by Fonteyn and Pol (2016). Taking a diachronic perspective, the study examines adverbial *-ing* clauses and their inherent features (i.e. augmentation, position, punctuation, co-reference, complexity, and semantic interpretation) in two manually compiled corpora of newspaper reports from *The Guardian*, seeking to unveil differences between the two corpora as regards the usage of *-ing* clauses that may have stemmed from the shift in medium over the 70-year time span. While the ‘Old Corpus’ features newspaper reports from 1953 in printed broadsheet format, the ‘New Corpus’ consists of news articles from 2023 in online format. Further, this thesis also aims to detect and elucidate trends in the usage of *-ing* clauses, as well as verify correlations between the inherent features of *-ing* clauses as proposed in previous research.

The empirical analysis has uncovered a number of significant differences in the employment of *-ing* clauses between the two periods. The ‘New Corpus’ was observed to have 2.8 times higher incidence of *-ing* clauses, a fact that was argued to boil down to the shift in the medium and its accompanying structural changes of the news reports. These structural changes also triggered a number of other changes in the inherent *-ing* clause features, such as higher presence of augmentation, higher positional unity, higher preference for overt punctuation, and a marked lack of idiosyncrasy in the *-ing* clauses used in online news. The most notable trends were the preference for *with*-augmentation of absolute constructions in the ‘New Corpus’, the shift in the preference for certain augmentors of adverbial verbal gerunds, the positionally determined (dis)preference for punctuation of adverbial verbal gerunds, and a marked increase in use of free adjuncts in initial position. As for the correlations between the individual features of *-ing* clauses, augmentation was verified to be strongly positively correlated with the more informative semantic relations. Further, it was proven that the lower degree of co-reference between the matrix subject and the implied subject of the *-ing* clause leads to higher likelihood of the *-ing* clause being augmented to facilitate processing.

key words: adverbial *-ing* clauses, *ing*-clause network, free adjuncts, absolute constructions, adverbial verbal gerunds, newspaper reports