

The present thesis deals with the syntactic structure and complexity of non-finite clauses. In particular, it focuses on two non-finite verb forms which are formally identical for all verbs: the gerund and the present and perfect participles ending in –ing. The aim of this paper is to determine if there are any factors influencing the structure of non-finite clauses and compare the syntactic behaviour of the gerund and the participle since in Modern English they merge into a single category. The theoretical part summarizes information covered in several grammars and describes especially the syntactic characteristics of the forms in question. In spite of their nominal character, non-finite forms keep the verbal characteristic, especially their valency, and they form secondary predications comparable to subordinate clauses. On the basis of these characteristics, the gerunds can be distinguished from nouns and the participles from adjectives. The chapter further describes the syntactic functions of non-finite clauses and focuses on their specific features, for example the attachment rules for determining the unexpressed agent, or the possible realizations of the subject. An important feature of these forms is their ability to function as sentence condensers and thus enable a sentence to do without a subordinate clause. Thanks to the predicative force of the non-finite verb, however, the clauses can convey the same meaning without any losses (this phenomenon is called complex condensation).