Abstract

The MA thesis explores finite progressive forms in the academic spoken and written monologue.

The English progressive forms generally appear much less frequently than the simple forms do. In academic spoken language 90 per cent of the finite verb forms consist of simple forms and the representation of simple forms is even higher in academic written language with 95 per cent of the finite verb forms being simple. The reasons for this distribution are related on the one hand to the specific meaning of the progressive forms, and on the other hand to the restricted compatibility of the progressive forms and some semantic verb classes.

The present study considers both of these aspects in the attempt to describe the progressive forms in the academic spoken monologue (university lectures) and in the academic written language (advanced students’ papers). The material is excerpted from two British academic English corpora, namely BASE (spoken language) and BAWE (written texts), 100 examples from each corpus.

The material is analyzed at the formal, functional and discourse levels. The formal analysis deals with the distribution of tense forms, negation, the subject (person and animacy) and clause types. The functional criteria involve the semantic features of the verb and subject, as well as the central and secondary functions of the progressive construction. At the level of discourse analysis, the textual functions of the clauses with the progressive are evaluated. The results of the analyses of both the spoken and the written language are compared, and the factors which influence the use of the progressive in the spoken and written academic monologue are identified.