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The choice between–*ing* and *to* complement clauses in English as first, second and foreign language?

This paper examines the choice between –*ing* and *to* complement clauses in English as a first (ENL), as a second (ESL) and as a foreign language (EFL) to reveal whether and how speakers from these different backgrounds employ different complementation patterns. Some matrix verbs licensing non-finite complement clauses can control both *to* and –*ing* clauses. While the choice of clause type results in a semantic difference with some verbs, e.g. *remember* or *try (remember to do something* has a different sense than *remember doing something*), this is not the case with other, mostly aspectual, verbs such as *start* (Biber et al. 1999: 758-759).

In a dataset including the complement clauses of this latter type of verbs, we investigate speakers' choice of clause type across different varieties of English and in particular whether this choice is influenced by the way they acquired English. Due to the lack of comparable corpora providing a sufficient amount of data for the study of grammatical variation in EFL vs. ENL vs. ESL, our paper consists of two studies. The first study compares the use of –*ing* and *to* clauses by learners of English in German-speaking countries in the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE) with the use of –*ing* and *to* clauses by native speakers in LOCNESS and in a subcorpus of the BNC. As ICLE, LOCNESS comprises argumentative student essays; the data from the BNC will be restricted to the corresponding genres W:essay:school and W:essay: university.

In the second study, complementing previous research by Deshors and Gries (2016), we draw on written data from the following ICE-components: Canada, Ireland and New Zealand as ENL varieties and Jamaica, Nigeria and Philippines as ESL varieties (applying the distinction between L1 and L2 as in, e.g., Kortmann & Lunkenheimer 2012).

Using a MuPDAR approach in both studies, we conduct regression analyses to first identify the predictors in the ENL varieties, and then compare these with the predictors identified in the EFL and ESL data. The regression analyses will be complemented by decision tree and random forest analyses. The independent variables included pertain to morphosyntactic features of matrix and complement clause, cognitive factors (priming, length of embedded clause, frequency of individual matrix verbs) and speakers' social background (country of origin, sex, age).

Preliminary results show that the overall proportion of –*ing* and *to* clauses is similar in ENL and ESL varieties. The EFL data exhibit a higher proportion of –*ing* clauses. This result is somewhat unexpected, because German lacks a similar grammatical structure, but it reflects that learners know that this construction exists, even if they do not use it as a native speaker would. Furthermore, different matrix verbs are similarly frequent across the ENL and ESL varieties, while there is a difference in their proportions (e.g. of *start* vs. *begin*) in the EFL data.

As different varieties of English become increasingly visible and begin to mix in the wake of globalisation, this paper illustrates how change in society may affect the face of English across the world.

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