

## Syntactic Interpretations, Semantic Interpretations and Pragmatic Aspects of Present Participial Reduced Relative Clauses in English Novels

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### Abstract

The objective of this study was to 1) examine syntactic interpretations, 2) examine semantic interpretations and 3) examine pragmatic aspects of present participial reduced relative clauses (PPRRC) in English novels. The samples in this study are the materials of English novels. The data collection was based upon a purposive sampling method where three best-seller American novels (amazon.com) were collected to study. The sample in this study is three English novels including *The Lottery* (Jackson, 2015), *The Turn of the Screw* (James, 2021) and *On the Road* (Kerouac, 2022). In regard to research methodology, the data collection was approximately 300,000 words containing a total of 20 tokens, referring to sentences. The data analysis of the syntactic theory of PPRRC follows Radford (2009), whereas the semantic interpretations in this study are based on Kearns' (2011) aspectual classes of events. This study employs descriptive statistical analysis where frequencies were converted into percentages. The equipment to collect the data is Microsoft Excel.

The results of the study show that (1) the syntactic interpretations of PPRRCs are explained by the complexity principle. Using PPRRCs helps the writers reduce the workload of the brain in producing shorter sentences. (2) The semantic interpretations of PPRRCs are explained by the aspectual class of activity. This means that most aspectual of verbs in novels are activity and accomplishments as in the princess waking up at midnight to indicate the ending point. (3) In regard to pragmatic

aspects, PPRRCs mostly occur in the final position to comply with the least effort of requirement. Longer sentences need to be made to read and understand the text.

**Keywords :** Syntactic interpretations / Semantic interpretations / Pragmatic aspects / Present participial reduced relative clauses / English novels

## Introduction

Grammar is considered as an important part of English language study (Radford, 2009), there are a lot of grammatical features in grammar references which are necessary to be studied (Swan, 2016). Nevertheless, it is reported that EFL learners are faced with difficulty in using present participial reduced relative clauses in English (Haryani & Fatimah, 2020; Noviani & Oktavia, 2021). EFL learners, especially lower proficiency of English language learners, tend not know how to make present participial reduced relative clauses (PPRRC) in English, as in (1).

(1)

(a) Peter *who works in the Thai Army* was shot to death yesterday.

(b) Peter *working in the Thai Army* was shot to death yesterday.

In (1a), the clause *who works in the Thai Army* is a PPRRC. This relative clause is a postmodifier to modify the concrete noun *Peter*. Although example (1a) is semantically the same as (1b). Example (1b) is known as PPRRC, where the relativizer *who* is omitted and the verb *work* is changed to be the present participle *working*. PPRRCs are an interesting topic because 63.73 percent of EFL English language learners are face difficulty in using participials (Ismani & Simamira, 2021). For example, Indonesian EFL learners were also discovered to have tremendous problems in using PPRRCs. The example of error production was found in example (2).

(2) \*His book had been published, reading by many people.

(Haryanti, Haryono & Yuwono, 2022)

As demonstrated in (2), Indonesian EFL learners tried producing PPRRC in the initial position; however, their production was ungrammatical. The correct form of example (2) is *having been published, his book can be read by many people*. When

this problem is seen, this study will provide the perspective of theory and practice of PPRRC to support the grammatical notion of EFL and ESL learners.

Previous studies which focusing on the study of PPRRCs in the English language paid attention to the study of PPRRC in EFL writing and academic prose (Noviani & Oktavia, 2021), this study fills the gap by selecting different materials, English novels. This study focuses on English novels as a previous study shows empirical evidence to support that reduced relative clauses mostly appear in novels when making a comparison with other genres (Anastasova, 2017) as presented in Table (1).

**Table 1** Percentage of Participial in Different Genres

Genres	Percentage
Novel	56
Mass Media	21
Popular Texts	9
Science	2
Others	12

Table 1 shows the percentage of occurrence of PPRRCs in different genres. Anastasova (2017) reported that the occurrence of the past participle is highest with the genre of novels at 56 percent. The percentages of past participle in mass media, popular texts, and scientific text are 21 percent, 9 percent and 2 percent, respectively.

In acquiring grammaticality of the English language, English language learners could take advantages of using English novels as their outside reading materials to solve their aforementioned problems. Not only are English novels used as a tool of entertainment, but English language learners can also use English novels to learn language referring to form, meaning and use at the same time. English novels help English language learners to develop their imagination and creativity, which are regarded as significant parts of English language learning (Radford, 2009). Moreover, English novels are considered as suitable reading material for everyone, as all genders and all ages can select English novels which are suitable for their own English level

of proficiency. In regard to pedagogical approaches, using English novels to learn language is an implicit approach, where each grammatical feature is not taken to learn only their form, but language is learned via context. For example, the word *book* can mean either a document or reservation. When this word appears in context as in *the books in the 14<sup>th</sup> century were regarded as luxurious items*. With this information, it leads to the following research questions and objectives of the study.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the syntactic interpretations of present participial reduced relative clauses in English novels
2. To examine aspectual classes of events in present participial reduced relative clauses in English novels
3. To examine the pragmatic aspects of present participial reduced relative clauses in English novels

### Scope of the Study

#### 1. Sample

The data in this study is English novels. There are several reasons as to why English novels were selected to be studied. Firstly, they are types of reading materials that are suitable for everyone, so people who want to improve their English proficiency can select English novels which are suitable to their English proficiency level to read. Second, English novels are reading materials that are available in every house, so English language learners can use them to learn language easily. The advantage for English language learners is that English novels allow them to learn form, meaning and use at the same time. This study selected three English novels which were best sellers. Three novels were written by American novelist as present in Table 2. The numbers of American literature are the most circulated around the world. As a total of approximately 300,000 words, there are 20 tokens, referring to sentences.

Table 2 Selected Novels

English Novels /American Novelists
<i>The Lottery</i> (Jackson, 2015)
<i>The Turn of the Screw</i> (James, 2021)
<i>On the Road</i> (Kerouac, 2022)

From a total of 300,000 words, there are 20 tokens, referring to sentences.

## 2. Variables of the Study

The variables in this study are three American English novels, syntactic interpretations, semantic interpretation, and pragmatic aspects.

## Methodology

This study employs a qualitative method to study syntactic interpretations, semantic interpretations and pragmatics aspect of PPRRC. This study is qualitative because the researchers applied the knowledge of generative grammar to seek system and interpret PPRRC in novels in order to gain insightful information how the syntactic structure of PPRRC is uniquely used in this genre.

## Research Instrument

The research instrument in this study was a corpus of PPRRC. The corpus was manually developed via Microsoft Excel. This corpus was unique as it was the systematic installation of PPRRC in English. As the key to search the PPRRC is present participle and past participle. So, the key search in this instrument is the morpheme *-ed* and *-ing*.

[...] She reached the corner and mixed with the crowd of people, *waiting* to get on the bus, but there were too many and the bus door were shut in her face. [...] (Jackson, 2015)

With this instrument, the annotation of the author's name, year and page was also given in order to recalled the information easily.

## Instrument Validation

Before the data of analysis, the corpus of PPRRC in this study was validated by three linguists in order to check the information keyed inside the corpus. The validation of corpus in this study was based upon *Index of item objective congruence* (IOC). If a linguist agreed with this instrument, he/she gave 100 percent. If he or she partially agreed 66.67 percent were given. If they did not agree, zero percent was given with his/her suggestion. The IOC rate of agreement was reported at 88.90, which was considered to be high.

## Data Collection

The data collection of PPRRCs in this study follows Radford (2009). The morphological inflectional derivation *-ing* is a key to detect the data. The *-ing* form to denote gerund such as *I enjoy running everyday* will be excluded from this study. The way of collecting the data to be analyzed is illustrated and explained as follows:

(3)

Miss Morgan began to hurry. She reached the corner and mixed with the crowd of people *waiting to get on the bus*, (PPRRC) but there were too many and the bus door were shut in her face.

(Jackson, 2015)

Example (3) reveals the data collection. Whole sentences were collected from the English novels. The italic part is an example of PPRRC collected to be study.

## Data Analysis

### Semantic Interpretations of PPRRC

This study follows the analytical framework called *aktionsarten* or aspectual classes of events as given by Kearns (2011). Fundamentally, there are four types of aspectual classes, which are activities, accomplishment, achievement and state.

*Activity or process* refers to ongoing events, such as *run* as *John ran in the park*. The concept of activities is atelic. Accomplishment is defined as an activity that leads to the end point, such as *Peter ate an apple*. With having an end point,

the analysis of accomplishment in aspectual classes is telic. Achievement as in *John won the competition* is classified as telic. Stative as in *Jane knows my older sister* is atelic (Kearns, 2011) and it has a finishing point.

Aktionsarten could be tested by *in* adverbial (Kearns, 2011). This test is applicable with accomplishment as in *Peter ate an apple in 1 minute*. This is inapplicable with state, such as *John knew my older sister in an hour*. However, the analysis of achievement could be tested by the *take* time construction as in *it took two years* to win this competition.

In addition, other studies also provide semantic Interpretations of PPRRC in English, Sonoda (2009) addressed that one of the functions of PPRRC is to provide additional concerning nouns and noun phrases, such as (4).

- (4) The apple tree, *swaying gently in the breeze*, has a good crop of fruit.  
(Sonada, 1996)

In (4), the PPRRC *swaying gently in the breeze* is supplemental information in regard to its head *the apple tree*.

One of the semantic interpretations of PPRRC is subjectivity, referring to providing comments, attitudes or personal viewpoints, as in (5).

- (5). Once there was a man who was lying in a desert-type place, under bright sun, *appearing to be asleep*.  
(Krave, 2012)

In (5), the writer intends to provide his/her own viewpoint in regard to the bright sun which is seen as a head noun of reduced participial relative clause. With this background information, this section presents the ways how semantic interpretation of PPRRC in English novels are analyzed in this current study.

**Table 3** Aspectual Classes of Events in PPRRC in English novels

(6)

Aspectual Classes	Examples
Activity	(a) Would I see strange men <i>walking around</i> ? (Jackson, 2015)
Accomplishment	(b) Had to get rid of my joint clothes and sneaked the neatest theft a shirt and pants from a gas station outside Flagstaff, <i>arriving LA two days later</i> clad as gas attendant and walked to the first station I saw and got hired and got myself a room. (Kerouac, 2022)

Table 3 illustrated semantic interpretation of PPRRC in English novels as written by American novelists. The PPRRC *walking around* in (6a) is semantically interpreted as activity or ongoing events (Kearns, 2011). The activity verb could be tested by the adverb *intentionally*, such as *intentionally wait*. Accomplishment is defined as an activity with an end point which is usually used with temporal termination (Kearns, 2011) such as *in two hour* and *two days*.

## The Results

This section provides the results of PPRRC in English novels as written by American novelists. As a total of approximately 300,000 words, there are a total of 20 tokens as demonstrated in Table 5.

**Table 4** Frequency of PPRSC in English Novels

Novels/Novelists	Frequency
<i>The Lottery</i> (Jackson, 2015)	10
<i>On the Road</i> (Kerouac, 2022)	7
<i>The Turn of the Screw</i> (James, 2021)	3
Total	20

Table 4 shows the use of PPRRC as written by each American novelist. The frequency occurs similarly among the three novels. The frequency of *the Lottery* as written by Jackson (2015) occurs 10 times. Along the same line, the frequency of *On the Road* as written by Kerouac (2022) occurs 7 tokens. The frequency of *The*



*Turn of the Screw* as written by James, (2021) occurs 3 times. The discussion of the results in this study is given in the following session.

## Discussion

### 1. Syntactic Interpretations of PPRSC

The low frequency of PPRSC in English novels as written by American novelists can be explained by the principle of *a least effort account*. It seems that PPRSC is likely to require less effort to produce this structure. However, it is rather opposite. Producing PPRSC involve several linguistic features in our production process, such as feature of deletion and morphological derivation (Radford, 2009). This could be explained via an example (7a) as the original version and example (7b) is a modified version.

(7)

(a) He kept no one there, he explained, preferring, for his reason, to leave the place empty, under a simple arrangement with a good woman *living in the neighborhood*.

(James, 2021)

(b) He kept no one there, he explained, preferring, for his reason, to leave the place empty, under a simple arrangement with a good woman *who lived in the neighborhood*.

It can be seen that PPRSC as in (7a) required the speakers to put more effort in their cognitive process in producing this sentence. Firstly, the speakers are required to apply the feature of *wh*-deletion to eliminate the *wh*-expression *who* from their PPRSC production process. Additionally, the speakers need to apply their cognitive process of morphological inflectional derivation *-ing* to change the finite verb *lived* as show in (1b) to become the present participle *living* as in (18a). With this complexity and higher effort requirement, it could explain the low frequency of PPRSC in novels as written by American writers.

In terms of language and variation, the selected novels in this study are American novelists. American style of writing seems to prefer economical features

and use less feature that need high effort requirement. One of the studies as examine by Wongkittiporn and Chitrakara (2018) could be used to support this reason. They study *to-* infinitive and null infinitive clauses in British and American news articles and they found that the null infinitive is strongly preferred to be used with the verb *help* in American English. This aspect shows if they are two variations, American writers prefers the one with least effort requirement.

## 2. Semantic Interpretations of PPRSC

This section provides the semantic interpretations of PPRSC as written by American novelists. It can be seen that the semantic interpretations in novels as written American novelists is different from other study, such as Krave (2012) PPRSC is used with the semantic interpretation of subjectivity, or personal comments.

One of the distinctive aspects of PPRSC as written by American novelists are activity or ongoing events. The aspectual classes of activity are tested by the adverbs *intentionally*. The empirical data that were found in this study was given in (8).

(8)

(a) Miss Morgan waited through the dirty glass of the phone booth she could see, dimly, the line of the sofa fountain, the busy clerk, the office girl *sitting on the high stools*.

(Jackson, 2015)

(b) Would I see strange men *walking around*?

(Jackson, 2015)

(c) That was Frisco; and beautiful women *standing in white doorways*, waiting for their men; and Coit Tower, and the Embarcadero, and Market Street, and the eleven teeming hills.

(Kerouac, 2022)

(d) On we sped, Dean barechested, I with my feet on the dashboard, and the college boy *sleeping in the back*.

(Kerouac, 2022)

(e) He kept no one there, he explained, preferring, for his reason, to leave

the place empty, under a simple arrangement with a good woman *living in the neighborhood*.

(James, 2021)

In (8), PPRSCs are always used with activity verbs such as *sit, walk, stand* and *sleep*. They are all interpreted as ongoing events. Although most PPRSCs are always interpreted as activities, one token is found to be used with accomplishment, referring as activities with an end point, Kearns (2011) as in (9).

(9) Had to get rid of my joint clothes and sneaked the neatest theft a shirt and pants from a gas station outside Flagstaff, *arriving LA two days later* clad as gas attendant and walked to the first station I saw and got hired and got myself a room.

(Kerouac, 2022)

In (9), it is semantically interpreted as accomplishment. This is because after someone arrives to LA, the mission is completed.

### 3. Pragmatic Aspects of PPRSC

*Horror aequi principle* is one of the distinctive pragmatic aspects to explain the phenomenon of PPRSCs in English novels as written by American novelists. As mentioned in literature review, horror aequi principle is the avoidance of repetitive form in an adjacent area. Example (10a) is an original version, whilst example (10b) is a modified version.

(10)

(a) I took up a conversation with a gorgeous country girl *wearing a low-cut cotton blouse* that displayed the beautiful sun-tan on breast tops.

(Kerouac, 2022)

(b) I took up a conversation with a gorgeous country girl that wore a low-cut cotton blouse that displayed the beautiful sun-tan on breast tops.

In (22b), it can be seen that the relativizer *that* occurs twice in adjacent areas. Applying PPRSC results in the avoidance of the repetitive form of a complementizer phrase *that*.

In regard to the positions of PPRSC, the results of PPRSC agree with Akio (2005) in that the use of PPRSC usually occurs in the final position at 64.71 percent, as in (11).

(11) I came out and found the Court *sitting in the garden in the mild starlight.*  
(James, 2021)

The final position of PPRSC could be explained by end-weight principle where the information is quite long. In addition, it is unnecessary additional information, which is not the focus point of the sentence. This could be a reason as to why it is placed at the end.

## Conclusion

This study examined syntactic interpretations, semantic interpretations and pragmatic aspects of PPRRC in English novels as written by American novelists. This research will answer the following questions.

1. What is the syntactic interpretations of present participial reduced relative clauses in English novels?
2. What are aspectual classes of events in present participial reduced relative clauses in English novels?
3. What are the pragmatic aspects of present participial reduced relative clauses in English novels?

One of the outstanding syntactic interpretations of PPRRC in English novels is that it is the linguistic feature that requires heavier workload of the speakers's brain to produce. Due to this complexity principle, it required the English language user to apply at least to features, which the deletion of *wh*-expression and the morphological inflectional derivation of *-ing form* to change a verb into the present participial (Radford, 2009). This complexity affects the lower frequency of PPRRC in actual use. Semantically, when applying Kearns' (2011) aspectual classes of events, it was distinctively found that about 95 percent of PPRRC in English novels are used with the semantic interpretations of activities. Pragmatically, having PPRRC helps reduces the repetition of the same form in adjacent areas.

### **Suggestions for the Use of the Results of this Study**

As mentioned earlier, this study will be beneficent to EFL and ESL learners. Using English novels to learn PPRRC allows us to English language learners to apply their implicit learning of grammar. So English language could learn form, meaning and use at the same time.

In regard to the form of PPRRC, not only do English language learners could learn the form of PPRRC in grammar books, such as Swan (2016), grammatical form could be acquired through authentic texts, such as English novels. This is because grammar books are likely to provide examples without situations and context. So, learners tend to learn only form such as the *-ing* participial. When it comes to actual situation, they don't know how to apply it.

When English language learners study the form of PPRRCs in English novels, they are also taught the sense of PPRRC concurrently. For example, English language learners will know that PPRRC has a high tendency to be used with activity verbs, such as *walk, wait, sit* and *move* but it is not common with stative verbs, such as *enjoy* and *like*. This semantic perspective is rarely found in grammar books.

In terms of grammatical learning and teaching, English language learner do not feel that they are forced to learn language since they could feel entertained when reading English novels. As mentioned by Hashemi (2011), English language learners could acquire language better when their levels of anxiety are lower.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The results of present participial reduced relative clauses in this study were limited to only novels as written by American novels. So generalizing the results of the study to other types of texts such as newspapers and academic prose may not be applicable to the optimal level. For future research, it is recommended that using other genres to study PPRRCs, such as English newspapers and academic journals will contribute the new thing to the field.

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