

Looking at *looking*: Functions and contexts of progressives in spoken English and 'school' English

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The paper gives a preliminary account of a more extensive study (Römer, forthcoming) of the use of progressive forms (e.g. *'re looking*, in "let's say we're looking at carbonates") in huge collections of spoken British English and in a small corpus of 'spoken-type' texts from German EFL textbooks. The starting point for this data-driven approach is an examination of 100 high-frequency present participle forms. As a concrete example, the results of a detailed analysis of one of these participles, the lexical item *looking*, its different functions and semantic and syntactic contexts, will be presented. The investigation focuses on the differences observed between English as it is used in natural communicative situations and the type of English pupils are confronted with in a foreign language teaching context. It is argued that if linguists, teachers, and textbook writers aim at achieving a greater degree of naturalness or authenticity in English language teaching, corpus evidence must be taken more seriously and further comparative analyses like the one reported on in this article have to be carried out.

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