The purpose of this investigation is to determine how the phrase position contributes to the semantic interpretation of sentences with subordinates composed of the participles (i.e., the participial constructions). Different functions are found to be associated with participial phrases placed in front of the main clause (Pre-PrtPs) and participial phrases placed after the main clause (Post-PrtPs). Only participial phrases headed by a present participle, which are regarded as the basic usage of the participial phrase, are examined here; further research is necessary for phrases using perfect or past participles, the conjunctions, or the participial subjects.

Surveys that included paired sentences (one sentence with a participial phrase in front of the main clause and the other with the identical participial phrase after the main clause) are used to examine the different functions, and based on the results it is concluded that Pre-PrtPs express an action/event/state which overlaps the beginning of the main event, whereas Post-PrtPs express an action/event/state which overlaps whatever point of the main event as an accompanying circumstance.

It is also argued that Pre-PrtPs express the temporal, logical, or perceptual priority to the main clause, and that Post-PrtPs express informative supplements to the main clause regardless of the event order. Pre-PrtPs are thought to help the understanding of the main clause and contribute to the cohesiveness of the sentence as a whole. By contrast, in sentences with a Post-PrtP, the main clause is logically independent and seems complete without the assistance of the Post-PrtP. Accordingly, Post-PrtPs need to supply an informative description to the main clause. Only those Post-PrtPs that are informative could follow the logically completed message.

The choice on the subordination of the clauses in the participial construction reflects the writer/speaker’s intention as to how the situation is to be recognized by the readers/listeners. It is also
suggested that the perception of the actors affects
the inference of the implied subject of the participles.
I propose that the narrative effect of the participial
construction directs the readers to recognize the
situation described from the same viewpoint as the
actors.

I also attempted to observe how the functions
of the participial construction are brought into effect
in literary works. The descriptive effects attained
by using the participial constructions are illustrated
by several examples from literature. It is proposed
that the actor's perception of the current situation is
effectively described by the position of the participial
phrase(s).

The participial constructions succeed in
giving a different sketch of the same situation,
depending on the phrase position. Based on my
findings regarding the different functions of Pre and
Post-PrtP, I argue Pre-PrtP allows the readers to see
into the actor's mind by telling what is prior in his
perception. The argument above may be an
answer to the question raised by Biber et al. (1985):
"Why fiction and academic prose have slightly
higher proportions in initial position," though final
position is clearly "the unmarked choice for
non-finite adverbial clauses in all registers." I also
argue that a potential effect of Post-PrtPs is their
ability to produce lingering images which may
enchant the readers as a visionary depiction.

The participial constructions guide the readers
to capture the situation described and make them
identify with the actor's viewpoint. The readers are
induced to use their own subjective imagination and
participate in the appreciation of the text. The
participial construction may help readers access an
emotional truth which might not be suitably
described by explicit expressions using outside
conjunctions. Thus, the participial construction
intrigues the readers, since its implicitness allows
the readers to sympathize with the emotional
delicacy of the actors. I conclude that the effects of
the participial construction lie in the emotional
interactions between the actor and the reader, which
might be manipulated by the writer.