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# Peculiarities of the Gerund at present-day English

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## Annotation

*This article discusses main peculiarities of the Gerund as a non-finite form of the verb in the English language at present time. Besides that, the specific features of the use of the English gerund in comparison with the verbal noun and the present participle will be analyzed in this investigation.*

**Key words:** *the verb, verbals, a finite form of the verb, a non-finite form of the verb, a verbal noun, nominal feature, double nature, suffix –ing, the gerund, the participle, verbal noun*

## Introduction

The study of different features of non-finite forms of the verbs in English has always been one of the most important, interesting and disputable matters of linguistic investigations as all of the verbals (non-finite forms of the verb) have a double nature such as verbal and nominal. Unlike the finite forms of the verb they do not express person, number or mood whereas like the verb they have tense and voice distinctions which can be relative, but not absolute as the finite verbs. There are three verbals in English: the infinitive, the participle and the gerund. The gerund is usually defined as a non-finite form of the verb which is developed from the verbal noun that became verbalized preserving its nominal character in course of time. The gerund has nominal and verbal characteristics as any other non-finite forms of the verb in English. The nominal features of the gerund are as follows: a) the gerund can perform the function of the subject, the object and the predicative;

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b) the gerund can be used with the preposition; c) the gerund can be modified by a noun in the possessive case or a possessive pronoun. As for the verbal characteristics, the gerund of the transitive verb can take a direct object, it can be modified by an adverb, the gerund has tense and voice distinctions (the gerund of the transitive verb).

The main aim of the present research is to analyze specific features of the gerund in English in comparison with the participle and the verbal noun in English.

## Literature review

The gerund as a non-finite form of the verb has both theoretically and practically been investigated in the scientific works of different linguists and grammarians such as M.Y. Blokh[1], R. Murphy[2], V. Kaushanskaya[3], K. Kachalova, E. Izrailovich[4] and many others. Their investigations have been used in our research to different peculiarities of the chosen problem. We have analyzed these authors' opinions and came to certain conclusions which will be summarized at the end of the present paper.

## Discussion and Results

Language is usually defined as the most important means of human intercourse which exists in the material form of speech sounds that cannot exist without being spoken. Oral speech is the primary process of communication by means of language whereas written speech is secondary that represents what exists in oral speech. Language is also defined as a means of forming and storing ideas as reflections of reality and exchanging them in the process of human intercourse. Language is social by nature; it is inseparably connected with the people who are its creators and users; it grows and develops together with the development of

[1] Blokh M.Y., Theoretical grammar of modern English – Moscow – 1983
[2] Murphy R , English Grammar in Use – Cambridge - 2012
[3] Kaushanskaya V.L., et.al A Grammar of the English Language –Moscow - 2008
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society. Language mainly consists of three layers such as phonetics which deals with pronunciation, lexicology which studies vocabulary of a given language and grammar that deals with morphological structure of a language.

From grammatical point of view the verb is the most complex part of speech. The complexity of the verb is inherent not only in the intricate structure of its grammatical categories, but also in its various subclass divisions, as well as in its falling into two sets of forms profoundly different from each other: the finite set and the non-finite set. In the sentence the finite verb performs the function of the verb-predicate, expressing different categorical features such as time (tense), aspect, voice, and mood whereas the non-finite verb performs different functions according to its double (nominal and verbal) nature (those of the syntactic subject, object, adverbial modifier, attribute).Verbals (verbids, or non-finite forms of the verb as has been named in different sources) are the forms of the verb intermediary in many of their lexico-grammatical features between the verb and the non-processual parts of speech. They are formed by special morphemic elements which do not express either grammatical time or mood (the most specific finite verb categories).

The gerund is usually defined as the non-finite form of the verb which combines the properties of the verb (verbal) with those of the noun (nominal) and serves as the verbal name of a process. As nouns, the gerund can be modified by a noun in the possessive case or its pronominal, and it can be used with prepositions. The verbal characteristics of the gerund is observed in its combining with nouns expressing the object of the action, with modifying adverbs, with certain semi-functional predicator verbs, but other than modal. The categorical paradigm of the gerund of the objective verb includes four forms: the simple active, the perfect active; the simple passive, the perfect passive. e.g.: taking — having taken — being taken — having been taken. The gerundial paradigm of the non-objective

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verb, correspondingly, includes two forms. E.g.: going — having gone. The tense-aspect property of the gerund is relative (not absolute as the finite verb forms).

Historical development of the gerund as a non-finite form in English helps us to state that the origin of this verbal goes back to the Middle English period which means that the gerund did not exist in Old English period. The late Middle English (ME) period witnessed the growth of the gerund in the English language grammar. According to T. Rastorguyeva, the gerund can mainly be traced to three sources such as a) the OE verbal noun in *–unʒ* and *–inʒ*; b) the Present Participle and c) the Infinitive.

As is known, the gerund is formed by adding the suffix –ing to the stem of the verb in English. Besides the gerund the present participle (Participle I) and the verbal noun have the same way of formation, i.e. they are also formed by means of the suffix –ing. The difference between the gerund and the present participle is much clear as in most cases the differentiation between the gerund and the participle does not make any difficulty. Unlike the participle the gerund may be preceded by a preposition, it may be modified by a noun in the possessive case or by a possessive pronoun, the gerund can be used in the syntactic function of a subject, object, and predicative. Both the gerund and the present participle can be used in the function of an attribute and of an adverbial modifier, but the gerund in these functions is always preceded by a preposition. However, there are certain cases where the differentiation between the gerund and the present participle presents some difficulty, for instance if the gerund is used as a part of compound noun, the person or thing denoted by the noun does not perform the action expressed by the –ing –form, *e.g. a dancing-hall (a hall for dancing), walking shoes, a writing- table*. If we have a participle used as an attribute the person denoted by the noun performs the action expressed by the *ing-* form, *e.g. a dancing girl (a girl who dances), a singing child.*

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In English the verbal noun derived from the transitive verbs took an object in Genitive case, which corresponded to the direct object of the finite verb; e.g. OE **sēo fēding Þara scēapa** equivalent to Modern English ***'the feeding of the sheep'*** with **hīe fēdaÞ Þā scēap** ***'they feed the sheep'***. The earliest examples of a verbal noun resembling a Gerund date from the 12th century when Geoffrey Chaucer used the –ing form in nominal functions in both ways: with prepositional object like a verbal noun and with a direct object; e.g. *in* ***getynge*** *on your richesse and the* ***usinge*** *hem* - "in getting your riches and using them". As can be seen from this example the gerund was formed by the suffixes *–ynge* and *–inge* added to the root of the verb. In early New English the *–ing-* form in the function of a noun is commonly used with an adverbial modifier and with a direct object – in case of transitive verbs.

Here, we would like to point out main differences between the gerund and the verbal noun at present time. As all the verbals the gerund has a double character – nominal and verbal whereas the verbal noun has only nominal character; the gerund is not used with the article where the verbal noun may be used with an article; the gerund has no plural form whereas the verbal noun may be used in the plural; the gerund of a transitive verb takes a direct object as for the verbal noun, it cannot take a direct object (it takes a prepositional object with the preposition ***of***); the gerund may be modified by an adverb, whereas the verbal noun may be modified by an adjective.

Thus, summarizing all above mentioned it is possible to draw a conclusion that the study of specific features of the non-finite forms of the verb, particularly the gerund in English is one of the most important and interesting problems of modern linguistic investigations.

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