

Investigating the EFL Learners' Errors In Using the Gerund, Verbal Noun , and Devrbal Noun

Asst. Inst. In'aam Ismail Tahi

MA in Linguistics

University of Diyala / College of Basic Education

inaam.tahir@yahoo.com

Abstract

Gerund, Verbal noun, and deverbal noun are grammatical terms related to nouns formed from verbs. They are different kinds of nominalization and the choice of these nouns for certain structure is not easily predictable and it causes a problem for EFL learners.

This study is designed to investigate Iraqi EFL learners' errors in using gerund, verbal noun , and deverbal noun.

The sample of the study is randomly chosen from the fourth year EFL students of the College of Arts , University of Baghdad , for the academic year 2012-2013.

The theoretical background of the terms under investigation is mentioned with reference to Chomsky 's Remarks on Nominalization (1970) and Quirk et al ' s A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (1985).

The subject's performance indicates that the grammatical terms gerund, verbal noun, deverbal noun are problematic in certain points and difficult to master.

The results of both tests indicate that Iraqi EFL learners cannot distinguish between a gerund and a verbal noun, but they can identify a deverbal noun .

1. Introduction

Gerund, Verbal noun , and deverbal noun are grammatical terms related to nouns formed from verbs. The choice of these nouns for certain structure is not easily predictable and it causes a problem for learners. The choice depends on whether the noun in question is a record of the action or description of the action itself (Quirk, 1985:1290).

Gerund , verbal noun , and deverbal noun are different kinds of nominalization .They are different in their meaning and structure .The following examples show the structures of these grammatical terms:

John's refusing the offer	gerund
John's refusing of the offer	verbal noun
John's refusal of the offer	deverbal noun

2. Nominalization

Quirk et al (1985 : 1288ff) define nominalization as a noun phrase which has a systematic correspondence with a clause structure. The head of such a noun phrase is normally related to a verb , so it is called deverbal noun as in the following example:

His refusal to help *He refuses to help.*

Quirk et al mention other kinds of nominals formed from verbs which are gerund and verbal noun . They are formed by adding (-ing) to the verb as in the following examples respectively:

<i>Writing the book</i>	<i>He wrote the book.</i>
<i>The writing of the book</i>	<i>He wrote the book.</i>

Crystal (1997: 260) defines nominalization as :

1. the process of forming a noun from some other word –class as :
redness (red +ness) .
2. the derivation of a noun phrase from an underlying clause as :
Her answering of the letter ... from she answered the letter .

Chomsky (1970: 215) distinguishes three types of nominalization :

The gerundive nominal , derived nominal , and mixed nominal corresponding respectively to Quirk et al 's gerund , deverbal noun and verbal noun. Chomsky gives the following examples:

John's refusing the offer

John's refusal of the offer

John's refusing of the offer

The derived nominals , according to Chomsky , include nominals derived from verbs or from other classes , as adjectives:

John's is eager to please . adjective

John's being eager to please gerundive nominal

John's eagerness to please derived nominal

2.1 Gerund

It is the –ing form of the verb when it has a nominal function (Close 1975: 78-79). Consider the difference between the following sentences:

<i>Standing</i> here all day , I see some very strange people.	participle
<i>Standing</i> (here all day) makes me very tired.	Gerund

The gerunds in the following sentences are the subject of the sentence , the object of the verb, and the object of the preposition respectively , and in all these sentences the gerunds are followed by direct objects:

Entertaining students is her aim.

She likes *entertaining* students.

She is interested in *entertaining* students.

and before the noun phrase that corresponds to the object if it is expressed:

Their polishing of the furniture = They polish the furniture
The writing of novels (by Smith) = Smith writes novels.

The verbs in such examples are dynamic items and they are nominalized to see the actions as static things (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973: 21).

Crystal (1997 : 410) defines verbal noun as "a noun which is similar in form or meaning to a verb as smoking".

This definition is general and can be applied to gerund, (-ing) deverbial noun and verbal noun.

2.3 Deverbial nouns

Deverbial nouns are nouns derived from verbs either by suffixation or conversion.

Deverbial nouns derived by suffixation

Quirk et al (ibid : 1550) say that nouns derived from verbs by suffixation are either concrete or abstract nouns. The following suffixes combine with verb bases to produce concrete nouns :

- ant : participate – participant ; inform – informant
- ee : pay – payee ; appoint – appointee
- er : teach – teacher ; drive : driver

and the following suffixes combine with verb bases to produce abstract nouns :

- age : breakage , coverage , shrinkage , wastage
- al as : arrival , refusal , revival
- ation : exploration , ratification
- ment : arrangement , amazement , equipment.

The suffix (-ing) combines with the verb to form either abstract nouns as driving or concrete nouns as building (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:438).

Building in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000) has two meanings : concrete and abstract:

1. (c) A structure such as a house or school that has a roof and walls as in : tall, old , historical buildings .
2. (u) the process and work of building as in : the building of the channel , building material , building costs, building block .

The first meaning can be considered a deverbial noun whereas the second one a verbal noun or a gerund.

Stageberg (1981: 97) mentions that. the verbal inflectional suffix (-ing vb) has two homophones. The first one is the nominal derivational suffix(-ing nm) as in : meetings, weddings, and readings, which is the (-ing) deverbal noun in Quirk et al 's terms . The second morpheme is the adjectival morpheme (-ing aj) as in charming, comforting, and exciting.

Deverbal nouns derived by conversion

Conversion is a term used in the study of word formation to refer to the derivational process whereby an item comes to belong to a new word class without the addition of an affix .Some verbs are converted to nouns as : smell, taste, bottle , walk (Crystal , 1997 : 92) .

Verbal nouns VS. Deverbal nouns

Verbal and deverbal nouns differ in their acceptance of modification by prepositional phrases (Quirk et al , 1985: 1290). The verbal nouns can be used with the adjuncts relating to duration , manner, or cause. Using such adjuncts with deverbal nouns seems to be awkward. Compare the following sentences :

Their *arriving* for a month

but not

Their *arrival* for a month

The deverbal noun *arrival* might be described as mere record of an action rather as description of the action itself (ibid):

They arrived on Thursday.

The *arrival* took place on Thursday .

They arrived for a month.

*The *arrival* took place for a month.

The following examples explain the same point :

Their *acting* in a nasty manner

*Their *action* in a nasty manner

Their *contributing* out of kindness

*Their *contribution* out of kindness.

Verbal and deverbal nouns are different functionally in that verbal nouns keep their verbal characteristics whereas deverbal nouns operate as autonomous common nouns (Jagger, 2001: 285).

Quirk et al (1985 : 1290-1291) distinguish between deverbal noun , verbal noun , and gerund which can be explained in the following

examples using " painting" as a deverbal noun, verbal noun, and gerund :

Some <i>paintings</i> of Brown's	deverbal noun
Brown's <i>paintings</i> of his daughter	deverbal noun
The <i>painting</i> of Brown	verbal noun
Brown's deft <i>painting</i> of his daughter.....	verbal noun
Brown's deftly <i>painting</i> his daughter.....	gerund
I dislike Brown's <i>painting</i> his daughter.	gerund

The deverbal nouns in the first two examples can be replaced by concrete count nouns as *pictures* or *photos*.

The verbal nouns can be replaced by abstract nouns as *representation* or *portraiture*.

The differences between verbal noun and gerund according to Quirk et al are :

With the verbal noun , the adjective *deft* and *of- phrase* are used .

With the gerund the adverb *deftly* is used and the noun phrase *his daughter* is used directly after *painting* (without of-phrase) .

Chomsky (1970 : 187ff) distinguishes between gerundive nominals (gerunds) and derived nominals (deverbal nouns) according to the following criteria:

1. The productivity of the process in question
2. The generality of the relation between the nominal and the associated proposition
3. The internal structure of the nominal phrase.

These criteria are explained in the following table:

Criterion	Gerundive nominal	Derived nominal
Productivity of the process in question	can be formed fairly freely from propositions of subject-predicate form	Cannot be formed freely from propositions of subject-predicate form (restricted)

The generality of the relation between the nominal and the associated proposition	has quite regular relation	has quite varied and idiosyncratic relations
The internal structure of the nominal phrase	does not have the internal structure of a noun phrase	has the internal structure of a noun phrase

Table (1)

1. Gerundive nominal can be formed fairly freely from propositions of subject-predicate form whereas derived nominal cannot be formed freely from propositions of subject-predicate form (restricted). This can be explained in the following examples:

John amused the children with his stories.

John's amusing the children with his stories

*John's amusement the children with his stories....

2. Gerundive nominal has quite regular relation with the associated verb whereas derived nominal has quite varied and idiosyncratic relations with their base verb. Consider, for examples, the derived nominals *laughter, marriage, belief, and qualifications* with their ranges of meaning and varied semantic relations to the base verbs.

3. Gerundive nominal does not have the internal structure of a noun phrase whereas derived nominal has the internal structure of a noun phrase. For example, the gerundive cannot be preceded by the definite article nor an adjective, as in the following examples:

4. 1.a The proof of the theorem
but not

b. *The proving the theorem

2.a John's unmotivated criticism of the book
but not

b. * John's unmotivated criticizing the book

Chomsky (ibid. 214-215) refers to the third type of nominalization as mixed nominals because they behave as derived nominals in having the internal structure of a noun phrase because the possessive subject can be replaced by a determiner as in:

John's refusing the offer
gerundive nominal

* *The refusing the offer*

John's refusal of the offer
derived nominal

The refusal of the offer

John's refusing of the offer
mixed nominal

The refusing of the offer

Mixed nominals behave as gerundive nominals in having (-ing) form and in not permitting adjective insertion as in:

* *John unmotivated criticizing the book*

* *John unmotivated criticizing of the book*

In this point Chomsky is different from Quirk et al. Quirk et al(1985 : 1290) accept the occurrence of the adjective with the verbal noun (mixed nominal):

Brown's deft *painting* of his daughter..... verbal noun

Chomsky describes the mixed nominals (verbal noun) as clumsy when a derived nominal (deverbal noun) also exists (ibid.) :

John's refusal of the offer

John's refusing of the offer

Quirk et al (1985:1290) explain the difference between the deverbal and verbal noun. They state that the deverbal noun (derived nominal) might be described as mere record of an action whereas the verbal noun (mixed nominal) as description of the action itself .

3. Data Analysis

3.1 The description of the test

It is necessary to set up a test for the purpose of this study to determine the level of EFL students in understanding and using gerund, verbal nouns, and deverbal nouns and analyze the results of the test.

The choice is intentional in the selection of fourth year students. In this department, the fourth year students are expected to have good knowledge in grammar and especially in the topic under investigation. The population comprise (48) Iraqi EFL students distributed over two sections, A and B, as shown in table below:

College	Fourth-year sections	No . of students	Sample	Population
College of Arts	A	24	25	48
	B	24		

Table (2)

Type of tests	Techniques	Items
Recognition	Identify the gerund , verbal noun , and deverbal noun	6
Production	Use two words in three sentences: in the first one as a gerund , in the second as a verbal noun , and in the third as a deverbal noun.	(2×3)

Table(3)
Description of the text

3.2 The Analysis of the Recognition Test

Table (4) shows that the deverbal noun has been recognized successfully . Items (2) and (4) are related to deverbal nouns. Concerning item (2), twenty subjects (80%) responded correctly, whereas five subjects (20%) failed to do so. Concerning item (4), sixteen subjects (64%) responded correctly whereas nine subjects (36%) failed to do so.

The verbal noun and the gerund have not been recognized successfully. The reason behind this failure may be the formal similarity between them, i.e both are –ing form of the verb.

Item	Correct answer	Percentage	Incorrect answer	Percentage	The correct answer
1	10	40%	15	60	gerund
2	20	80%	5	20	Deverbal noun
3	7	28%	18	72	Verbal noun
4	16	64%	9	36	deverbalnoun
5	5	20%	20	80	Verbal noun
6	zero	0%	25	100	gerund

Table(4)

Statistical Analysis of Items in Task One

3.3 The Analysis of the Production Test

Table (5) shows that the deverbal noun has been used in a sentence successfully ,whereas the verbal noun and the gerund could not be used in sentences. The deverbal nouns meeting and building have been used correctly by sixteen subjects (64%).

Table (5)
Statistical Analysis of Items in Task Two

Item	Grammatical term	Correct answer	Percentage	Incorrect answer	percentage	avoidance	percentage
	gerund	5	20	6	24%	14	56%
meeting	Verbal	2	8	8	32%	15	60%
	deverbal	16	64	1	4%	8	32%
building	gerund	5	20	4	16%	16	64%
	verbal	1	4	3	12%	21	84%
	deverbal	16	64	0	0%	9	36%

Conclusions

The research on the theoretical level has arrived at the following conclusions :

1. The deverbal nouns are nouns derived from verbs either by conversion or affixation .

There are many suffixes used to form nouns from verbs but the most confusing one is – ing suffix because it is also used to form the gerund, -ing participle , and the verbal noun . All these terms have the same form with different functions.

2. Deverbal nouns have their own entries in the lexicon because they are considered autonomous common nouns whereas verbal nouns and gerund keep verbal characteristics.

3. The deverbal noun can be identified by students because it is a pure noun, whereas gerund and verbal noun cannot be identified easily.

4. Chomsky and Quirk et al make a distinction between gerund , verbal noun and verbal noun. They agree on certain points and differ on others.

On the practical level , the research has arrived at the following conclusions :

1. The subject's performance on both tests indicates that Iraqi EFL learners cannot distinguish between gerund and verbal noun , but they can identify deverbal noun.
2. The subject's performance indicates that the grammatical terms gerund, verbal nouns, and deverbal nouns are problematic and difficult to master.

Bibliography

- Alexander, L.G. (1988) . Longman English Grammar. England: Longman group.
- Chomsky, Noam .(1970). "Remarks on Nominalization" in Jacobs , R. A. and P. Rosenbaum (eds.) , Readings in English Grammar . Ginn, Waltham , MA
- Close, R.A. (1975). A Reference Grammar for Students of English. London: Longman group.
- Crystal, David.(1997/1998). A Dictionary of Linguistic and Phonetics. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hornby, A.S. .(2000). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jagger. Philip . (2001) . Hausa : verbal and deverbal nouns, and infinitives . John Benjamins Publishing Company .
- Quirk, R. and Sidney Greenbaum . (1973). A University Grammar of English . England: Longman Group.
- Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech , and J. Svartvic . (1985). A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman.
- Stageberg, Norman C. (1981). An Introductory English Grammar. New York: Holt , Rinehart and Winston.
- Thomson , A.J. and A.,V. Martinet.(1986). A practical English Grammar. Oxford University Press.
- Zandvoort, R. W. (1962). A Handbook of English Grammar. London: Longmans.

Appendix Test

This is a test to determine how well you distinguish between gerund , verbal noun , and deverbal nouns in English:
We expect good and serious cooperation on your part.

Part one (

Identify the gerund , verbal noun , and deverbal nouns in the following sentences:

1. She likes *criticizing* books.
- 2.The *arrival* took place on Thursday.
3. Their *acting* in a nasty manner made me angry.
- 4.The *meeting* will be next week.

5. His *firing* of william wasa mistake

6. He is interested in *writing* novels.

Part Two

Use each of the following words in three sentences in the first one as a gerund , in the second as a verbal noun and in the third as a verbal noun

meeting

building

تقصي أخطاء متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة ثانية

في استعمال المصدر والاسم المشتق من الفعل واسم الفعل

م.م. إنعام إسماعيل طاهر

ماجستير في اللغة الانكليزية / لغة

جامعة ديالى / كلية التربية الاساسية

Inaam.tahir@yahoo.com

المستخلص

ان المصدر الصريح Gerund و الاسم المشتق من الفعل deverbale noun واسم الفعل verbal noun هي مصطلحات نحوية تتعلق بالاسماء التي تتكون من الافعال ، وهي انواع مختلفة من nominalization . ان اختيار احد هذه الاسماء لتكوين معين يشكل احيانا مشكلة بالنسبة لمتعلمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية اذ ليس من السهولة التنبؤ بمعرفة اي منهما الانسب لتكوين معين .

تم اعداد هذه الدراسة لغرض تقصي أخطاء المتعلمين العراقيين في استخدام المصدر Gerund و الاسم المشتق من الفعل deverbale noun واسم الفعل verbal noun .

عينة الدراسة تم اختيارها عشوائيا من طلاب السنة الرابعة في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية في كلية الآداب ، جامعة بغداد ، للعام الدراسي 2012-2013 .

الجانب النظري للدراسة اشار الى الفرق بين هذه المصطلحات في التركيب والمعنى ، واعتمد الباحث بصورة اساسية على :

Chomsky 's *Remarks on Nominalization* (1970)

Quirk et al ' s *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985)

ان اداء العينة يشير الى ان المصدر الصريح Gerund و الاسم المشتق من الفعل deverbale noun واسم الفعل verbal noun هي مصطلحات نحوية تسبب اشكالات لمتعلمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة ثانية وليس من السهل اتقانها والتمييز بينها .

ان المصدر Gerund واسم الفعل verbal noun لهما خصائص الفعل ، و الاسم المشتق من الفعل deverbale noun هو اسم مستقل ليس له خصائص الفعل .