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# A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN GERUND AND INFINITIVE

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## Abstract

*Gerund and infinitive are subjects learned in English Grammar. Many people learning English grammar still get problems to differentiate the use of both gerund and infinitive. Consequently, many English learners still get misunderstanding when using them in English sentences. Knowing that, this paper tries to discuss them by comparing the form, use, function, meaning of both gerund and infinitive. After being analyzed, it is proved that there are some differences between gerund and infinitive, especially in the forms, uses, function and meaning.*

## Introduction

In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language, consequently it is not used as a means of daily communication among people. It is only utilized in a very limited interaction, and it is only learned as a school subject. (especially in elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools).

For the beginners, four basic skills of English namely : speaking, listening , reading and writing are not able to be separated and those skills are still needed to be taught for young learners to understand English comprehensively.

Grammar or Structure which is the one of English component is the most difficult subject to learn for the learners. In this paper, the writer wants to describe about the similarities and differences between



'gerund and infinitive' as the part of Grammar since they have some similarities and differences that are interesting to be compared.

Contrastive linguistics is a branch of linguistics which seeks to compare two or more languages or systems of languages with the aims at describing the similarities and differences between them (Fisiak Jackson, 1981: 77).

In order to describe the language phenomena precisely, the writer focuses the paper on the differences and similarities between the form and function of 'gerund and infinitive' in a sentence.

## Discussion

### Gerund

Gerund is the -ing form of the verb used as a noun. It should be noticed that gerund has the same form as present participle, however, it functions differently in the sentence.

#### a. The Functions of Gerund

The functions of gerund in some positions are as follows:

- 1 Gerund as a Subject
  - a) Reading improves our knowledge.
  - b) Sleeping is a need.
  - c) Making new friends can be difficult.
  - d) Looking at himself makes him nervous.
- 2 Gerund as a Complement
  - a) My favorite sport is swimming
  - b) My favorite thing to do in spare time is reading
  - c) His daily activities are playing and sleeping
- 3 Gerund as Direct Object
  - a) Children usually enjoy playing with animals.
  - b) He enjoys singing in the bathroom.
  - c) The ministers like debating the new issues.
- 4 Gerund as object of Preposition
  - a) Some people are afraid of speaking in the public.
  - b) I am tired of advising him.
  - c) Without practicing, we can not speak English.

#### 5 Gerund as Appositive

- a. His hobby, swimming, is a good habit.
- b. Tom's favorite sport, running, becomes popular nowadays.

#### b. Gerund Phrase

While gerund functions as a noun, It also retains some of the characteristics of a verb. Although it may have adjective modifiers like a noun ( usually before it ), it may also have adverbial modifier like a verb ( usually after it). If a noun or pronoun precedes a gerund , it must be in the possessive or adjectival form.

Example :

- a) Being a good person is difficult.
- b) Swimming in Baron is dangerous.
- c) Before coming to my house, she had bought a parcel.
- d) Reading a good book improves my knowledge.
- e) Without bringing money, you may not buy it.

#### c. The Use of Gerund and Gerund Phrase

Gerund phrases function in the sentence exactly as simple gerunds do. Both are used in noun positions:

1. Reading makes me smart. ( Subject )  
Reading a good book improves our knowledges . (Subject).
1. Teenagers enjoy camping. (Direct Object)  
Teenagers enjoy camping in the mountains, (Direct Object).
2. Tom's hobby is singing. (Subjective Complement)  
Tom's hobby is singing a slow song ( Subjective Complement).
3. His reason, sleeping, is an impossible thing. (Appositive)  
His reason, sleeping in the car, is impossible ( Appositive)
4. I am tired of debating. (Object of Preposition)  
I am tired of debating with you (Object of Preposition).

Although gerunds are used in a clause as nouns, they keep the qualities of verbs. Gerunds can be followed by direct objects, indirect objects, adverb modifiers and predicate adjectives.

1. Gerund followed by direct objects



- a. Learning some old histories is interesting.
- b. Making new enemies can be easy.
- c. Buying this basket makes me disappointed.
2. Gerund followed by indirect objects
  - a. Buying him a new house would please him.
  - b. Giving Tom an advice is not easy to do.
  - c. Teaching students the new vocabularies needs a skill.
3. Gerund followed by adverb modifiers
  - a. Speaking loudly is difficult for her.
  - b. Eating fast is bad for your health.
  - c. Walking slowly makes our body healthy.
4. Gerund followed by predicate adjectives
  - a. Feeling sad makes me cry.
  - b. Being kind may be difficult.
  - c. Becoming rich does not make him arrogant.

#### d. Verb Frequently followed by Gerunds

When gerunds are followed by verbs, they will function as direct objects of those verbs. The sentence pattern form is Noun + Verb + Noun, a pattern that requires a transitive verb, however, only certain verbs can be followed by gerunds.

The followings are the list of some common verbs that can be followed by gerunds:

- a. Appreciate  
The teacher would appreciate hearing your answer.
- b. Admit  
The thief admitted stealing the money.
- c. Consider  
The students have already considered continuing their studies.
- d. Delay  
He delayed sending the package until the last month.
- e. Deny  
When interrogated, he denied cheating on the exam.
- f. Enjoy

After the exam, the students enjoyed spending their holidays on the beach.

- g. Finish  
When the time was up, he had already finished doing the exam.
- h. Imagine  
I can not imagine doing that again.
- i. Practice  
Please practice singing this song beautifully.
- j. Resist  
She can not resist buying every nice dress she sees.
- k. Suggest  
I suggest leaving a message before we leave.
- l. Stop  
After that accident, he stopped driving for a long time.
- m. Try  
You have to try solving your problem by your self.
- n. Mind  
I do not mind doing this for you.
- o. Keep  
It is all right if you still keep loving me.

Some other uses of gerunds are as follows:

#### a) Verb (v) + Preposition (P) + Gerund

No	Verb	Preposition	Gerund
1.	Has Tom succeed	in	finding a job yet?
2.	I don't feel	like	going out tonight
3.	He apologized	for	keeping me waiting
4.	We decided	to	buying this unique motorcycle
5.	He insisted	on	giving me a new car
6.	Are you thinking	about	advising him
7.	I have always dreamed	of	being rich
8.	I am looking forward	to	meeting him soon



**b) Verb (v) + Object + Preposition + Gerund**

No	Verb	O	P	Gerund
1.	They accused	me	of	telling us
2.	Please forgive	me	for	not inviting you to my party
3.	Did they suspect	the man	of	being a thief?
4.	I congratulated	Mary	on	passing the exam
5.	What prevented	him	from	coming to the wedding?
6.	We stopped	everyone	from	leaving the building
7.	I thanked	her	for	being helpful
8.	The teacher wanted	us	for	waiting him

When some expressions are followed by verbs, the verbs end in -ing.

1. It is no use / it is no good...
  - a. It is no use worrying about it, there is nothing you can do
  - b. It is no good trying to persuade me. You won't succeed.
- 2.. There is no point...
  - a. There is no point in buying this dress if you don't need it.
  - b. There was no point in waiting, so I went.
3. It is worth...
  - a. Do you think this book is worth reading?
  - b. You should go and see the film. It is really worth seeing.
4. ( Have ) difficulty...
  - a. Did you have any difficulties getting a visa?
  - b. I had a difficulty finding a house to live.
  - c. He is shy. He has difficulty in talking to public.
  - d. People often have great difficulty reading my writing.
  - e. I am sure you will have no difficulty passing your exam.
5. A waste of money / time...
  - a. It is a waste of time playing that game. It is useless.
  - b. It is a waste of money buying things you do not need.
  - c. I waste a lot of time day dreaming.
6. Spend ( time / money)...
  - a. I spent hours trying to do this paper.
  - b. She spent a lot of money filling her holidays.

**2. Infinitive**

**a. Simple Infinitive**

Infinitive is made up of 'to' + the simple form of the verb', though 'to' may be dropped when the infinitive follows certain verbs.

After verbs of causing such as let, help, make, have, and verbs of sense such as see, watch, hear, feel, nouns and object pronouns are used with the simple verb only, without "to".

- e) Please let me study here.
- f) I helped him pass the examination.
- g) It made me feel down.
- h) I had my brother wash the car.
- i) I saw her take the money.
- j) The teacher watched you cheat in the exam.
- k) I felt her anger increase.
- l) I heard you make a noise.

Infinitive resembles verbs in many ways, but it also functions as other parts of speech. Infinitive can also be combined with 'be' and 'have' as auxiliaries to form tense constructions.

Simple	To write
Perfect	To have written
Progressive	To be writing
Perfect progressive	To have been writing
Passive	To be written
Perfect passive	To have been written

**b. Infinitive Phrase**

Infinitive may have a subject or an object or both. There are:

1. To read a newspaper makes us more educated.
2. To be a good person is difficult.
3. To go abroad must master English well.
4. If you want to succeed in your life, you must work hard.
5. He said he wanted to teach you English.
6. I do not want to marry you now.



Some verbs may be added with an infinitive to complete the meaning of the main verb, but other may be added with 'Ing' form. Deciding whether or not to use the infinitive of the 'Ing' form is difficult. It needs to be put in a person of a pronoun referring to a person. A few verbs use all constructions, but most verbs do not use them all. Using some verbs, a different construction may change the meaning.

### c. Infinitive ( to + verb ) constructions

- 1) An infinitive form can follow the main verb. The subject of the main verb is also the subject of the infinitive.

Subject	Verb	Infinitive
Mary	likes	to go
Naomi	wants	to sleep

- 2) An infinitive form can follow a noun or a pronoun that is not the subject of the main verb.

Subject	Verb	Pronoun of noun	infinitive
Mary	wants	us	to go
Naomi	wanted	him	to stay

- 3) An infinitive form can follow a noun or a pronoun that is not the subject of the main verb (as in before), but the only infinitive form that can be used with these verbs are 'to be'
- 4) Mary considered the book to be useless.
- 5) Naomi declared Paul to be the winner.

### d. More construction that must be followed by infinitive:

#### 1) Purpose

Many verbs can be followed by 'in order to'. Sometimes in order to is shortened to be 'to' in expressing a purpose, both 'to' and 'in order to' are followed by infinitive.

- a. Naomi hired a boat to go on the lake
- b. Naomi hired a boat in order to go on the lake.
- c. The students escaped to avoid punishment.
- d. The students escaped in order to avoid the punishment.

### 2) Complement : be + Adjective + Infinitive

After an adjective following the main verb be (and sometimes after other linking verbs)

Subject	Verb	Adjective	To Infinitive
The result of this experiment	are	difficult	to get
Our friends	were	pleased	to see us
This book	is	easy	to understand

### 3) After Wh- Question words

If Wh-Question words follows the main verb, an infinitive phrase can follow the Wh-Question words and include the meaning of 'can' or 'should'.

The subject of the main verb is also the subject of infinitive.

Subject	Verb	Wh-Question words	To Infinitive
They	asked	which book	to buy
We	are deciding	when	to go

- We can / should buy.
- They should go.

The subject of the main verb is not the subject of the infinitive, but other nouns or pronouns before the Wh-Question words whose the subjects of the infinitive are pronouns use pronouns as objects.

Subject	Verb	Noun / pronoun	Wh-Question words	Infinitive
They	asked	us	which book	to buy
We	are advising	them	what	to do

- We can / should buy.
- They can / should do.



### e. Use of Infinitive and Infinitive Phrase

Infinitive and infinitive phrase may function in the sentence as a noun, and adjective, an adverb or an absolute phrase.

#### 1) Noun

Infinitive and infinitive phrase as subject are often used in two variations at the same sentence pattern. The meaning is the same in both.

- a. To change our habit is difficult.
- b. It is difficult to change our habit.

#### 2) Adjective

- a. Naomi has time to visit her paper (modifies time)
- b. The desire to win is strong in youth (modifies desire)
- c. The books to read this semester are listed (modifies books)

#### 3) Adverb

- a. We came to meet you (modifies came).
- b. Naomi is anxious to hear the news (modifies anxious).
- c. To arrive there on time, you must leave now (modifies leave).

#### 4) Absolute Phrase

- a. To follow the exam, I need the money (modifies the whole sentence).
- b. To tell the lie, he is the expert (modifies the whole sentence)
- c. To be beautiful, she is coloring her hair (modifies the whole sentence).

### f. Verb followed by infinitive

Infinitive and infinitive phrase, like gerunds, can be used after certain verbs, but not after others. The following is a list of verbs frequently followed by infinitive but not by gerunds.

In this case there are two sentence patterns represented:

Noun + Verb + Noun and Noun + Linking Verb + Noun / Adjective

- Agree : I never agree to do that.
- Care : Would you care to join our team?.
- Decide : Have you decided to choose them?.
- Endeavor : She has endeavored to do the exam.
- Hesitate : Do not hesitate to call on me for help.
- Hope : I hope to hear from you soon.
- Like : I would like to meet him.
- Mean : She meant to come to the party, but she forgot.
- Promise : PT. Lapindo Brantas promises to give the fund for the victims.
- Refuse : She refused to receive your money.
- Swear : The government swore to solve the economic crisis soon.

### g. Special Use of Make and Let

These verbs have the structure verb + infinitive ( without to ) :

- Hot weather makes me feel uncomfortable.  
(= causes me to feel).
- I only did it because they made me do it.  
(= forced me to do it).
- She wouldn't let me read the letter.  
(= not allow me to read).  
But, in some passive form 'make' has the infinitive with ' to '
- I only did it because I was made to do it.

### Conclusion

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that gerund and infinitive have the differences and some similarities.

The comparison of them are as follows:

#### 1. The Differences between Gerund and Infinitive:

##### a. Gerund

- 1) The - Ing form of the verb used as a noun.
- 2) Gerund may occur after the preposition
- 3) Gerund (the - Ing form) describes the action in progress.
  - I heard him singing in his bath  
(notice this act in progress).



- 4) Gerund is more general in meaning.
  - I prefer staying quietly at home to going to a cinema.  
( in some occasions / general)
- b. Infinitive :**
  - 1). From the verb that follows 'to' used as noun, adverb, or adjective.
  - 2). Infinitive can not occur after preposition except 'about to' V<sub>1</sub> means by nearly.
  - 3). Infinitive used for a complete act.
    - I see him to cross the road.  
(from one side to the other)
  - 4). Infinitive suggesting some special occasion.
    - Join us to see a film tonight- ' No thanks. I prefer to stay at home  
– (only on this occasion).
- c. Some More Comparisons between Gerund and Infinitive :**
  1. Like
    - a. I don't like waking up so early as this (= dislike).
    - b. I don't like to wake up so early as this ( = don't want to).
  2. Forget
    - a. I forgot to come to her party last night.  
( = didn't remember)
    - b. I shall never forget coming to her party.  
(= will always have this memory)
  3. Try
 

With infinitive it means " make an effort or attempt".  
With gerund it means "to test by making experiment".

    - a. He tried to speak French to us.  
( = He made an effort to do so).
    - b. He tried speaking French to us  
( = He spoke French, hoping that we should understand him).
  4. Need
    - Need to...= it is necessary to...
    - b. I need to take more exercise.
    - c. He needs to work hard.
    - Need \_ Ing = need to be done ( so the meaning is passive).

- a. The batteries in this radio need changing.  
( = need to be changed).
- b. Your motor is rather dirty. It needs cleaning.  
( = need to be cleaned).

### Suggestion

- 1). We need to understand the construction of the gerund and infinitive to know the comparison between them.
- 2). The understanding of the use of gerund and infinitive is highly needed to know the meaning of the sentence.

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