



GERUND IN ENGLISH: A Morpho-Semantic Note for EFL Learners in Indonesia

GERUND DALAM BAHASA INGGRIS: Sebuah Catatan Morfo-Semantik untuk Pelajar Bahasa Bahasa Asing di Indonesia

Jufrizal¹ and Lely Refnita²

¹English Department, FBS Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

²English Department, FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang, Indonesia

juf_ely@fbs.unp.ac.id

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Abstract

A gerund is simply defined as the *ing-form* of a verb grammatically functioning as a noun and refers to *an action, process, or state; denoting an action or states*. Many EFL learners, particularly in Indonesia, are still unfamiliar with the verbal properties and uniqueness of English gerunds. Moreover, research focusing on the characteristics of the gerund has received less attention. This study aims to investigate whether English gerunds belong to nominalization or verbalization and discuss why EFL learners in Indonesia academically need to understand the morpho-semantic properties of the English gerunds. The data presented and analyzed in this study were collected by means of a library study and supported by writers' experience as the lecturers of English Grammar and Linguistics. The theoretical bases are the relevant linguistic theories of gerunds and those which belong to the principles of Pedagogical Grammar of EFL. The result of data analysis reveals that gerund in English is nominalization, verbalization, and unique. Thus, the EFL learners in Indonesia undoubtedly need linguistic-grammatical knowledge and they are proceeded to have the ability to use gerunds grammatically.

Keywords: *gerund, English, morpho-semantic aspects, nominalization, verbalization*

Abstrak

Kata kerja-benda (*gerund*) didefinisikan secara singkat sebagai kata kerja yang secara gramatikal berfungsi sebagai kata benda yang merujuk ke tindakan, proses, atau keadaan; mendenotasikan sebuah tindakan atau keadaan. Banyak pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing yang masih belum terlalu familiar dengan sifat-perilaku sebagai verba dan juga unik dari *gerund* bahasa Inggris. Disamping itu, penelitian yang berkaitan dengan karakteristik dari gerund juga masih mendapat sedikit perhatian. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi apakah apakah gerund bahasa Inggris itu nominalisasi atau verbalisasi dan mendiskusikan mengapa pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di Indonesia perlu mengerti secara

akademis sifat-perilaku morfo-semantis gerund bahasa Inggris. Data yang disajikan dan dianalisis pada makalah ini dikumpulkan melalui studi kepustakaan dan didukung oleh pengalaman penulis sebagai dosen tatabahasa bahasa Inggris dan Linguistik. Teori dasar pengkajian adalah teori linguistik tentang gerund dan prinsip-prinsip tatabahasa pedagogis. Hasil penelaahan data menunjukkan bahwa gerund bahasa adalah nominalisasi, verbalisasi, dan unik. Dengan demikian, pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di Indonesia memerlukan pengetahuan ketatabahasaan dan mereka didorong untuk memiliki kemampuan menggunakan gerund tersebut secara gramatikal.

Kata kunci: *gerund, bahasa Inggris, aspek morfo-semantik, nominalisasi, verbalisasi*

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics and language teaching (-learning), for many aspects and aims, are in close interrelationship; they may work hand in hand as a couple of theory-practice systems. This idea lets theoreticians and practitioners be in mutual collaboration for certain targets and processes of language teaching and learning programs. The relations between linguistics and language teaching may be described as dual: ‘application and implication’ and linguistic aspects becomes a concern for teachers in classrooms (Johannessen, 2019; Kindenberg, 2021; Nor & Rashid, 2018; Spolsky in Stern, 1994). It may be argued that the description of language made by linguists can be ‘applied’ in the sense that they provide the data needed for learning materials of language such as writing teaching grammars, course books, dictionaries, etc. In a simple model of relations between language sciences and language teaching practice drawn by Campbell in Stern (1994:36).

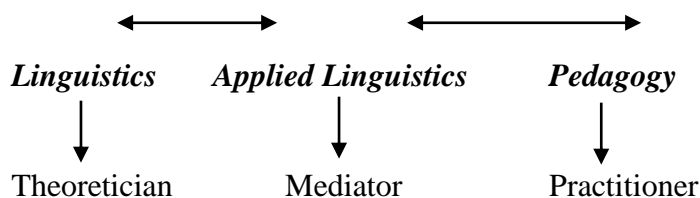


Figure 1. Simple model of relation between Linguistics and Language Teaching

The simple model above tells that linguistics is mostly for a theoretician, applied linguistics is as s mediator, and pedagogy is for a practitioner. It may be argued as well that language teaching is the mutual-collaboration of Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, and Pedagogy.

Although modern methodologists and practitioners of language teaching and learning focus more on communicative language learning and best practices in language uses in real-natural communication with certain communicative competence items, it does not means that the principles and relations of linguistic and language teaching can be simply left behind, moreover for foreign language learning, such as Teaching-Learning English in Indonesia. This is in line with what has been claimed by Kindenberg (2021) and Nor and Rashid (2018) that the linguistic aspect has been integrated in teaching English as a second or foreign language. The content-linguistic features may be neglect in certain numbers for beginners and pre-intermediate, but for intermediate and advanced learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) main and

important linguistic features must be intentionally involved, taught, and academically evaluated, as well. Theoretically, learners' knowledge of linguistic features and their ability to apply for practices help them to create, to use, and to understand the learnt language, let's say English.

A lot of linguistic-grammatical features of English must be learned and understood by learners of EFL in Indonesia, especially for those who are in intermediate and advanced levels. One linguistic-grammatical feature that the EFL learners have to learn is gerund. The studies on (English) gerunds are basically initiated and developed as linguistic studies. However, further studies on gerunds have been becoming the topics of applied linguistics and language education. It is also common that the presentation and discussion of gerunds in a grammar class are designed to be in the same time with or close to the presentation and discussion of (to) infinitive, present participle, or nominalization. Such ways are logic because form, meaning, and grammatical categories (morpho-semantic properties) among them are the same and/or similar. As English gerunds are linguistically unique, many interesting and challenging studies in relation to gerunds based on various perspectives were conducted by researchers.

Duffley (2007), for example, did a study to analyze the phenomena of infinitival and gerund-participial complementation in English. This study used the natural-language semantics approach as the theoretical foundation for data analysis. The researcher claims that the explanatory capacity of a natural-language semantics approach to English complementation has been demonstrated. The approach had been tested on data concerning aspectual verbs in English which other frameworks had been unable to account for. In the study, it is argued as well that the study of semantic meanings may also relate to the pragmatic meanings as the consequence of types and properties of meanings communicated in various speech events.

Then, Khamis (2012) studied the properties of nominal and verbal gerunds with genitive subjects in present-day English. It was the study in the form of a comparative corpus study. This study reports that nominal and verbal gerunds in present-day English are unique and they lead us know that genitive subject may influence the category of gerunds as nominal or verbal one. It seems that the comparative corpus study proved that English gerunds may come to noun and/or verb depends on the morpho-semantic properties in a sentence. In relation to this, the morpho-semantic properties of English gerunds need to be introduced to the EFL learners due to the fact that they are unique and sometimes complicated.

Another interesting study dealing with gerunds was conducted by Veselovska and Emonds (2014). They studied the categorical status of infinitive and gerunds in English and Czech. This study was a comparative one related to infinitive and gerunds in English compared to Czech. The categorical status of infinitive and gerunds in these two languages must be traced in the level of morpho-syntax because in this level the categorical status may be determined. Again, this study proved that gerunds are unique, not only in English but also in Czech.

Thaher (2013) learned and discussed the problematic forms of nominalization in English with the objects of analysis are gerund, verbal noun, and deverbal noun. In this study, it is linguistically proved that forms of nominalization in English dealing with gerund, verbal noun, and deverbal noun are problematic because they are constitute complex linguistic features both in forms and meanings. Some important points found in his study. For instance, he claimed that the gerund, verbal noun, and deverbal nouns are distinct terms and they are different in structure and meaning. He also indicated that there are many discrepancies concerning the terminology of the

three forms of nominalization in question. Besides, gerunds are fusions of a true verb and a distinct nominal inflection. Next, gerund are verbs by form and nominals by position. Last, he also claims that verbal nouns belong to the noun category. They are abstract noncount nouns with one form and one meaning;

In relation to (English) gerunds, it can be stated that they possess morphological-semantic properties as noun and verb, but gerund itself belongs to nominalization as verbal noun and deverbal noun. In other form of study, Grimm and McNally (2015) discuss the *-ing* dynasty in order to have framework and conceptual idea on rebuilding the semantics of nominalizations in English and other related languages. This study focused on the semantics of nominalization and it particularly concerns with gerunds. The *-ing* dynasty may be determined by and consulted to morpho-syntactic forms and semantic roles of the forms in certain grammatical constructions.

One more study dealing with the phenomena of gerunds was conducted by Lowe (2016). He studied the phenomena of gerunds in line with participles, gerunds, and syntactic categories. This study, in more specific point, discusses the phenomena of so-called 'mixed' categories, whereby a word heads a phrase which appears to display some features of one lexical category and some features of another. In the work, Lowe (2016) critically assesses some recent works in LFG which provides 'mixed category' analyses. In relation to the English gerunds, the 'mixed' categories are only when the internal syntax of a phrase is mixed, as in the case of the English type C gerund, but that a mixed category analysis is not necessary when the internal structure of a phrase is uniformly of one category.

Although the studies on gerunds and other related grammatical features in Duffley, (2007) and Lowe (2016) are mostly based on linguistic analyses, it may be argued that the findings and conclusions concerned with (English) gerunds are needed and useful in constructing and developing learning materials for gerunds in pedagogical grammar. The uniqueness and grammatical complexity of gerunds are brought as the 'raw materials' into the processes of constructing pedagogical grammar by language teachers and language learning methodologists. The learning material about gerunds needs further information of grammatical-linguistic properties in order to serve and 'fill in' the learning needs of EFL in intermediate and advanced level

The analysis and discussion on some cases of gerund-centered syntactic condensation in English was the work of Grancharova (2016). The study was about the potentialities and the realization of the gerund as a condenser of English clause structure. Based on the study, it is claimed that since the analysis focused on complex syntactic condensation and was conducted on the syntactic level, the verbal character of the gerund is highlighted as playing an important role in realizing secondary predication. The syntactic functions, the distributional, and selectional properties the gerund determine the condensing potential of the whole gerundial complex.

Therefore, the syntactic analysis on (English) gerunds leads to the cases that gerunds possess both verbal and nominal properties. Gerunds are grammatically derived from a verb form may come to the grammatical-semantic functions as a noun and/or a verb. These linguistic-grammatical properties need to be informed to EFL learners and certainly included into the learning materials of English grammar for intermediate and advanced levels, especially in the section of gerund.

Then, an analysis on the nominal roles of gerunds and infinitives was also linguistically executed by Ibrahim (2019). In this study, Ibrahim focused on the nominal roles of gerunds and infinitives with more specific presentation on the nominalization of grammatical processes, in which expressions that are semantically associated with properties are transformed into noun-like expressions. The results of

the study tell that though gerund, like any other noun, could freely occur, in principle, with any of the verbs under analysis. This study also found that at the stage infinitives are far more numerous than gerunds. Examination of a significant number of verbs leads to the conclusion that an adequate grammar of English must allow for both gerunds and infinitives derived nominal role. It is also a conclusion that whether or not a verb has gerundive or infinitive, the nominal roles depends on how the nominal is formed.

The results of various relevant studies on the phenomena of (English) gerunds bring about a lot of linguistic-grammatical and practical features of gerunds. The morpho-syntactic (grammatical) forms of gerunds and their semantic properties are of course unique and complex as well. In the frame of pedagogical grammar, the grammar of EFL for learning processes, further details of morpho-semantic properties of gerunds need to be introduced and involved in the learning materials, particularly at the intermediate and advanced level. The arguments and logical thinking to elaborate the morpho-semantic properties as the notes for EFL learners in Indonesia are the main idea of this paper in fact.

Literature Review

Gerund itself belongs to one of linguistic-grammatical features that must be learned earlier in EFL learning programs. In many course books of English grammar, gerund is simply introduced as (Parrott, 2000; Werner & Nelson, 2002, Werner & Nelson, 1985; <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/>) a kind of verbal noun that exist in some languages;

- (i) An *-ing* form of English verb functions as a noun;
- (ii) Any of various non-finite verb forms in various languages, most often, but not exclusively, one that functions as a noun; in English, it has the properties of both verb and noun, such as being modifiable by an adverb and being able to take a direct object;
- (iii) A noun formed from a verb which refers to an action, process, or state. In English, gerunds end in suffix *-ing*.

The type of definitions above is probably useable for beginners, but they do not work well for the learners at intermediate and advanced level. The definition (iii) and (iv) seem more details, but they still need additional and further conceptual-grammatical explanation, then. In this sense, notes for grammatical features in the level of morpho-semantic points are academically needed.

In pedagogical grammar, the definitions of linguistic-grammatical terms are mostly drawn in simple-practical ones in order that they are easily understood for pedagogical and practical goals. Such definitions sometimes are not sufficient enough for higher levels of learners due to the needs of learning and better understanding on subject matters learned. In the programs of language teaching and learning, pedagogical grammar is certainly used. It is impossible to use and apply descriptive grammar as linguists used into a language classroom. However, the appropriate linguistic grammatical contents must be inside the learning materials.

In general, there are three types of grammar based on related literatures. In one side, there is descriptive grammar, grammar of theoretical works and paradigm for linguistic theories developed and used by linguists. It is the grammar of '*what it is*'. In other side, there is prescriptive grammar, grammar for normative-ideal uses. It is the grammar of '*what it should be*'. Between the two poles, there is pedagogical grammar, the grammar for learners and teachers, the grammar for the programs of the

teaching-learning processes in language classrooms. It is a kind of grammar which combines the principles of descriptive and pedagogical grammar for educational purposes and academic programs of language learning (see Bygate, Tonkyn, & William, 1994; Odlin, 1994; Dirven, 2008).

Learning materials of English grammar should be developed by using the principles of pedagogical grammar in accordance to the levels and goals of study. Coming back to gerund, it is one important and essential learning material at any program of EFL learning in Indonesia. As it has been mentioned above, the practical-simple definitions of gerund, especially the English gerund, are not sufficient yet for EFL learners at intermediate and advanced level. Therefore, further linguistic-grammatical information of English gerund must be introduced to the learners and accommodated in the learning materials. This argumentation is based on both theoretical and practical needs of EFL learning programs particularly at the intermediate and advanced level.

As the phenomena and nature of English gerunds are essential in English grammar, a lot of studies on English gerunds, both in linguistic and language teaching perspectives, were conducted and discussed by linguists and language teaching practitioners. The studies and discussion conducted by Duffley (2007), Khamis (2012), Veselovska and Emonds (2014), Taher (2015), Grimm and McNally (2015), Lowe (2016), Grancharova (2016), and Ibrahim (2019) are some of closed-related previous studies talking about gerunds English. The review of previous-related studies are argumentatively presented in the paragraphs after the review of related theories below.

In relation to the grammatical complexity of English gerund, the linguistic and pedagogical studies on it are academically needed. This paper, which is based on and developed from the results of a short-limited form of library research and supported by researchers' notes in experiences as lecturers of English Grammar and Linguistics during 2019 - 2021, discusses the linguistic-grammatical properties of English gerunds. The analysis and discussion are limited to the morpho-semantic aspects. Two questions are to answer as the basis for data analysis and discussion, namely: (i) *does English gerund belong to nominalization or verbalization?*; and (ii) *why do EFL learners in Indonesia academically need to understand such morpho-semantic properties?*

The answers for those questions may give significant information as the notes to EFL learners in Indonesia concerning with morpho-semantic aspects of English gerunds in order to lead the learners to have the knowledge and the ability to use the gerunds in language skills and for effective communication, especially in reading and writing. The analysis and discussion begin with the need for Pedagogical Grammar at schools, the linguistic-grammatical properties of English gerunds, and why the EFL learners in Indonesia academically need to understand the morpho-semantic properties of English gerunds.

The programs and processes of EFL teaching and learning in many non-English speaking countries need particular methodologies and practical treatments. Teachers and/or instructors need to design and to use relevant learning materials, methods, and strategies in classroom practices. Among the others, the use of grammar books and other learning materials which are relevant to learners levels and goals of program should be academically considered. In general view, the use of references under the label of *Pedagogical Grammar* is highly recommended. The basic idea of Pedagogical Grammar, as slightly mentioned above is the type of grammar (books, learning materials) composed in such a way that it contains the ideas and features of

descriptive linguistics and prescriptive linguistics. Indeed, a working definition of Pedagogical Grammar has been proposed by Dirven (2008: 6). According to him, Pedagogical Grammar is a cover term for any learner- or teacher-oriented description or presentation of foreign language rule complexes with the aim of promoting and guiding learning processes in the acquisition of that language. He adds that this definition leaves room for various types of pedagogical grammar, i.e. a learning grammar, a teaching grammar, a reference grammar, school grammar, and even some linguistic grammar. It may be stated as well that in relation to EFL learning, pedagogical grammar is a school grammar (book) aims to be a true for everyone concerned with EFL (see also Chalker in Bygate et al., 1994); Odlin, 1994; Alduais, 2013 for similar and related ideas). The following diagram may give illustration on the types of grammar in general view:

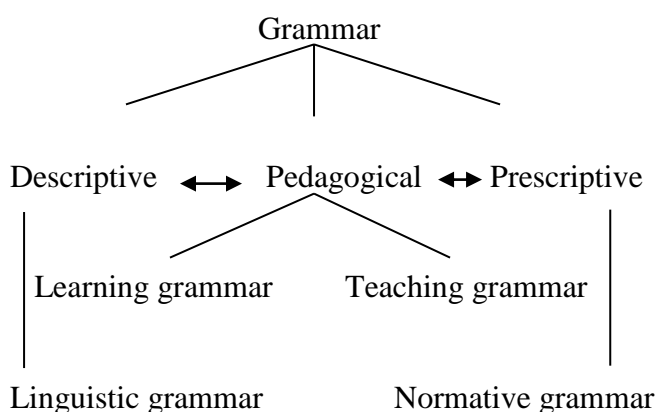


Figure 2. Types of grammar

Dirven (2008: 6) further states that by incorporating the notion of a learning grammar, the term Pedagogical Grammar may also refer to the grammar within a given text-book or syllabus; it leaves room for grammar as an activity (presentation), as a learning process and as part of a competence to be acquired, particularly for learners. Then, Pedagogical Grammar may be descriptive, though it need not be. In this respect, in fact, it is fundamentally opposed to a (purely) descriptive grammar, which may be either a linguistic grammar or another type of reference grammar. In English the term ‘pedagogical grammar’ usually covers both learning and teaching grammar.

The grammatical rules formulated by linguists are mostly descriptive, the rules as what they are. In other side, prescriptive rules are those formulated based on normative-ideal logics by linguists and others in order to have what they should be. General review toward the grammatical rules, however, can be classified into pedagogic and non-pedagogic rules (see Swan in Bygate et al., 1994). The non-pedagogic rules are those formulated and proposed based on descriptive-linguistic studies. They are also generally called the linguistic-grammatical rules. The pedagogical rules are rules which are designed to help foreign language learner understand particular aspects of the languages they are studying.

According Swan in (Bygate et al., 1994), at least there are six ‘design criteria’ for pedagogical language rules:

1. *Truth*; rules should be true;
2. *Demarcation*; a pedagogical rule should show clearly what are the limits on the use of a given form;

3. *Clarity*; rules should be clear;
4. *Simplicity*; a pedagogical rule should be simple. There is inevitably some trade-off with truth and /or clarity;
5. *Conceptual parsimony*; an explanation must take use of the conceptual framework available to the learner. It may be necessary to add to this. One should aim for minimum intervention;
6. *Relevance*; a rule should answer the question (and only the question) that the student's English is asking;

In relation to the principles of Pedagogical Grammar and criteria or pedagogical rules, especially for EFL learners in Indonesia, it is a need to include more details of linguistic-grammatical properties of English gerunds presented based on the principles of pedagogical grammar into grammar books or related learning materials at intermediate and advanced levels.

METHODS

This paper is based on and developed from the results of a short-limited form of library research and supported by researchers' notes in experiences as lecturers of English Grammar and Linguistics during 2019 – 2021. Therefore, this paper is a form of research report based on library research and supported by researchers' notes collected during their activities as lecturers of English Grammar and Linguistics at English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang and FKIP of Universitas Bung Hatta. The data were the English clauses and/or sentences containing gerund(s) and they were collected by means of note taking and library study. The instruments used were tables, note formats, and written equipments. The data analysis used descriptive ways of argumentation based on the relevant theories referred to. The theories referred to are the linguistic ones and the principles of pedagogical grammar as proposed by experts in Bygate et.al (eds.) (1994), in Odlin (ed.) (1994), and those summarized by Rhalmi (2020). In some cases, the analysis might be in linguistic bases, and the others are based on Pedagogical Grammar. The result of data analysis is presented in the form of a descriptive-argumentative explanation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Need for Pedagogical Grammar

EFL learners, especially in Indonesia, have unique socio-cultural characteristics. Most learners come from multi-lingual society and they have particular local language(s) as their mother tongue or first language (L1) in daily communication. When they come to schools, they begin to learn and to speak small letter Bahasa Indonesia as their second language (L2). When they learn English as a foreign language (FL), at least, they speak in local language(s) and bahasa Indonesia as the national language, as well. Teaching and learning English grammar, for instance, needs 'extra' approaches, methods, and techniques as the features of English grammar are mostly different from those of theirs.

One thing, among the others, we need for learning grammar of EFL is that the present of *Pedagogical Grammar*. It is the fact that it is too hard to bring prescriptive and/or descriptive grammar into EFL classrooms, particularly in Indonesia. As a foreign language, the sense and environment of language uses are rarely factual; most of them are synthetic or fabricated. However, the type of pedagogical grammar for beginners may be simpler and more practical than that at intermediate and advanced level. The design and level of complexity of Pedagogical Grammar used in different levels of programs must be academically, educationally, and psychologically

considered, then. In the case of gerunds in English, detailed and further grammatical-linguistic information are needed at the EFL learning for intermediate and advanced learners.

In general, as slightly mentioned above, there are three types of grammar – prescriptive, descriptive, and pedagogical grammar. In addition to the ideas of Pedagogical Grammar exposed above, it is also helpful to pay attention to the ideas proposed by Rhalmi (2020) about the practical differences between descriptive, prescriptive, and pedagogical grammar. He states that the definition of grammar based on traditional grammarians is that grammar is about distinguishing correct from incorrect sentences. This is exactly prescriptive grammar is all about: “prescriptive grammar’ refers to a set of norms governing how sentences should or should not be formed rather than describing how language is really used”. Thus, prescriptive grammar is concerned with what the grammarians think to be right or wrong. This definition implies that all sentences are strictly classified into *right* and *wrong* qualifications. This concept, of course, is too hard to bring into the EFL classroom, including in teaching and learning English gerunds. The EFL learners will probably be afraid of grammar and they neglect some ‘difficult’ grammatical features they are learning.

In other side, according to Rhalmi (2020) (see also Bygate et al., 1994; Odlin, 1994), descriptive grammar focuses on describing the language as it is actually used, not as it should be used. It is based on the language used by its speakers. This is the grammar of linguists. Descriptive linguists try to analyze real language data so that they can formulate rules governing its use. The aim is not to distinguish good from bad language users. Many forms of language that prescriptive grammarians think are not grammatical may be included in the data the descriptive linguists analyze. The following example is a form that prescriptive grammarians believe to be wrong:

(1) *Amir is older than her.*

Even though (1) is used by actual speakers, prescriptive grammar considers it is an example of bad language, contending that the right form should be (2):

(2) *Amir is older than she.*

Further argumentation may be raised concerned with the different opinions. Prescriptive grammarians believe that the word ‘than’ is used as a conjunction that should be followed by a subject pronoun. The correct form according to this approach should be ‘*he is older than she (is)*’. Meanwhile, descriptive grammarians argue that since the above form is used by actual language speakers and writers, it should be included in the data and studied. Accordingly, the word ‘than’ in this analysis is viewed as a preposition, and for that reason, it can be argued that the sentence ‘*Amir is older than her*’ is correct as well and ‘her’ in this case functions as the object of the preposition. It is right to say that descriptive grammar describes language forms objectively and non-judgementally. The aim is to study the principles and patterns that underlie the actual language use. This type of grammar is too hard and too ‘linguistic’ for foreign learners. Thus, this is not highly appropriate to bring into the teaching-learning process of EFL in Indonesia.

Following Rhalmi’s (2020) and others such as Chalker’s and Swan’s (both in Bygate et al., 1994; Odlin’s (1994) and Westney’s (2008), teaching EFL grammar in Indonesia needs Pedagogical Grammar. In most classroom practices, both prescriptive and descriptive grammar are hard to carry out, except for linguists. The type of Pedagogical Grammar is a more teachable grammar. This grammar is helpful in language teaching and learning and it takes into the consideration of level and learners’ need, and the nature of practical classroom, as well.

In relation to gerunds as the grammatical feature of English, the principles of Pedagogical grammar should be involved and followed. In other words, these are all reasons for the need Pedagogical Grammar. Therefore, the learning materials concerned with gerunds, in this case, in addition to Swan's (1994), the following designing criteria for grammatical rules concerned with (English) gerunds should be:

- (i) **meaningful**; the rules of gerunds should be contextualized and should make sense;
- (ii) **simple**; lengthy explanations of grammar (gerunds) rules may be counterproductive; short and easy to formulate rules can be more effective;
- (iii) **true**; the simplicity of grammar (gerunds) rules should not be at the expense of truthfulness;
- (iv) **grading**; grammar (gerunds) rules have to sequence in such a way that easy structures be taught before complex one. It refers to the level of learners and aims of program.

In relation to the criteria of grammatical rules criteria, the need for pedagogical grammar at EFL learning programs, especially for the teaching and learning of English gerunds should not be questioned anymore. It is argued that the learning materials dealing with English gerunds constructed and developed based on the principles of pedagogical grammar is an academic need.

English Gerunds: Nominalization or Verbalization?

What should the EFL learners in Indonesia at intermediate and advanced level know about the nature of English gerund? The answers for this question are also the answers for question (i) of this paper. Moreover, they become grammatical-pedagogical notes for the students in achieving better results of learning program. The key idea of question (i) is that whether gerund in English is a noun, the result of nominalization, or it is a verb, the result of verbalization, or event it can be both noun and verb, unique grammatical properties, in fact. The following points are derived and summarized from related literature studies that can be noted for EFL students, especially at the intermediate and advanced levels.

It must be understood that English gerund, in extremely non-technical terms, is a word-type that looks like a verb with an *-ing* suffix, but also looks like a noun because it can be the subject or a verb. Thus, the simple-practical definition, such as gerund is the *-ing* form verb functions as a noun, is not sufficient anymore; English gerund is more than that such simple definition. Understanding gerunds is often messy; gerunds have weird mixed behaviour that makes them a little bit like verbs, a little bit like nouns. In addition, they also have unique properties of their own that they do not share with either nouns or verbs.

Therefore, the followings are notes concerned with the nature of English gerunds:

1. English gerunds are nouns due to the facts that:

(i) Gerunds can serve as subjects of verbs which is something that otherwise only noun can do. This is the first thing to know about morpho-semantic property of English gerunds function as nouns. See the followings to have better understanding!

- (a) *Milk is good for you.* (Noun)
- (b) **Carefully is good for you.* (Adverb)
- (c) **Smart is good for you.* (Adjective)
- (d) **Might have eaten is good for you.* (Verb)
- (e) *Singing is good for you.* (Gerund)

(ii) The second point understood about English gerunds as a noun is that conjunctions only joint phrases of the same type, but gerunds and noun phrases (NP) can be joined together. See the following sentential constructions!

- (a) *Eat and drink and be merry* (all verbs)
- (b) *Red and green are beautiful colour.* (all adjective)
- (c) **Red and drink are beautiful colour.* (mismatch)
- (d) **Eat and drink and green* (mismatch)
- (e) *The game was lost because of heavy poor weather and Bobby taking a red card at that time* (noun/gerund, not a mismatch)

(iii) Another proof to state that English gerunds are noun is that slightly more specific example is in the sentence frame: *I believe X bothers you.* It is possible to put an NP in the X position, but not a verb phrase (VP). Pay attention to the followings!

- (a) *He believes that **the colour of the new car** bothers you.* (X=NP)
- (b) *He believes that **your nut allergy** bothers you.* (X=NP)
- (c) **He believes that **Tommy took a vacation** bothers you.* (X=VP)
- (d) *He believes that **Tommy taking a vacation** bothers you.* (X=Gerund)

(iv) Then, it should be understood that gerunds can optionally have a possessive marker on the initial noun. Possessive is normally only marked on NP, and we cannot do this with a normal subject /verb pair. The followings are the examples for this case.

- (a) *They know that Betty wasting the budget bothers you.*
- (b) *They know that Betty's wasting (of) the budget bothers you.*
- (c) *They know that you're bothered Betty had wasted the budget.*
- (d) **They know that you're bothered Betty's had wasted the budget.*

2. English gerunds are verbs due to the facts that:

(i) The most obvious connection is that gerunds are made from verb roots. Non-verbs cannot form gerunds; gerunds can be made from a verb 'to construct' but it cannot be formed from the noun 'construction'. The following examples may give idea for better understanding.

- (a) *The noise from the builders constructing the tower annoyed many people.*
- (b) **The noise from the builders **constructioning** the tower annoyed many people.*

(ii) Gerunds have an apparent "subject" and "object". If a verb is transitive (has an object) or intransitive (has no object), then so is the gerund. For example, 'fall' is always intransitive, and 'devour' is always transitive. See the following ones!

- (a) *They fell.*
- (b) **They fell the chair.*
- (c) *Falling can be bad.*
- (d) **Falling the chair can be bad.*
- (e) *Jenny devoured a hot pizza.*
- (f) **Jenny devoured.*

- (g) *James was disgusted by Jenny devouring the pizza.*
(h) **James was disgusted by Jenny devouring.*

(iii) Gerunds can be modified by adverbs, just like verbs. Pay serious attention to the followings!

- (a) *They do not like the idea of Carl soon quitting his job.*
(b) *Quickly dividing the treasure will be a best idea.*

(iv) Gerunds can take a negative “not”, which normally does not negate nouns; it is used with verb in some cases. The followings are the sentential constructions to identify the case.

- (a) *Eddy not attending meetings annoyed the steering committee.*
(b) *Eddy could not attend the meetings which annoyed the steering committee.*
(c) **The not meeting attendance annoyed the steering committee.*

Based on explanation and examples above, it is obvious that English gerunds are both nouns and verbs; gerunds are resulted as the process of nominalization and verbalization, as well. In other words, gerunds have linguistic-grammatical properties both as nouns and verbs. In addition, gerunds have the internal properties and characteristics of a VP, but they are distributed in sentences like an NP. Morphologically, English gerund takes the same form, namely: **root verb + -ing**. But semantically, gerundive forms (gerunds in short) contain the linguistic-grammatical properties together as nouns and/or as verbs depending on grammatical function and semantic features they have.

3. English gerunds are unique due to the fact that:

(i) The negative imperative of a verb is usually formed with **don't**. But, a prohibitive (negative imperative) formed with a gerund uses **no** instead. This morpho-semantic property is one of important fact possessed by English gerunds. Please see and pay serious attention to the followings!

- (a) *Don't drink the coffee!*
(b) **No drink the coffee!*
(c) *No walking on this new park!*
(d) **Don't walking on this new park!*

(ii) Next, it is also the grammatical fact that English gerunds are used with a special expression **there's no + gerund** to express general state of affairs. The followings are the examples for this case.

- (a) *There is no delaying it.*
(b) *There is no cheating in this examination.*

(iii) Gerunds in English additionally appear with **it's** in expressions of futility. This is also one unique grammatical property of English gerunds which need EFL learners' special attention in learning English grammar. The following examples may give illustration in order to support theoretical knowledge.

- (a) *It is no use testing.*
- (b) *It is meaningless arguing.*
- (c) *It is not worth talking.*

(iv) Then, unlike verbs, gerunds cannot take any tense marking, but they can take perfective auxiliary (in some expressions=?). This is a challenging statement since it is not fully supported by high-formal English, but it is sometimes found in daily life communication and in corpus-based data. Let's see the following ones as the comparison!

- (a) *Rashed arguing annoyed many people there.*
- (b) **Rashedarguinged annoyed many people there.*
- (c) **Rashedwill arguing annoyed many people there.*
- (d) ?*Rashedhaving argued annoyed many people there.*

Further linguistic-grammatical exploration on gerundive forms (gerunds) in English tells that they are unique as well. Even though they possess properties both as nouns and verbs, they do not always follow all semantic properties of English NP and VP. The explanation and examples presented in (iii) above prove such unique morpho-semantic properties. It must become notes for EFL learners, as well.

The Need for Understanding Gerund's Morpho-semantic Properties

Most English Grammar learning materials used at the English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang and English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang contain practical-simple definitions telling that gerunds is verb in *-ing* form functions as a noun. Then such type of definition is followed by extra practical explanations and examples of their uses in texts or in some sentential constructions. For intermediate and advanced level of EFL learners in Indonesia, learning materials designing based on the principles of Pedagogical Grammar and the knowledge or understanding on gerund's properties based on linguistic-grammatical studies, especially in the category of morpho-semantic properties are highly needed. This paper, however, only focuses on the need for linguistic category of morpho-semantic. Based on the data collected during the teaching-learning processes of English grammar and Linguistic subjects, at least, there are three reasons why EFL learners in Indonesia need to know and to understand the English gerund's morpho-semantic properties.

Firstly, morphological forms (surface forms) of gerundive forms in English has specific system which may be relatively different from gerundive forms possessed by the learners' native language. The gerunds formed by using formula root **verb + -ing** might be not found to form the same or similar word type in their native language. Gerundive forms might be found in many languages but the morphological systems and forms of such word type are probably different. Therefore, the knowledge and academic understanding on morphological forms of English gerunds are essentially important and needed.

Secondly, English gerundive forms (gerunds) are unique and in some cases are complicated. The linguistic processes of having gerunds may be categorized as nominalization and verbalization, as well. As the result, English gerunds can be nouns and/or verbs. Thus, the EFL learners cannot simply think that all gerunds function as nouns, but some function as verbs. This point appears as the results of semantic

analyses toward the gerunds themselves in various types of sentences containing them.

Thirdly, English gerunds are, in fact, more than as nouns and/or as verbs both in morphological and syntactical level. Gerunds are unique because in some cases they do not always follow the grammatical-semantic properties of noun (NP) or verb (VP). This is a high level of understanding on gerund and this note is more appropriate for advanced EFL learners and for those who are interested in having linguistic knowledge to support the skills of language teaching, then.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In brief, it may be stated that English gerunds are both noun and verb, and moreover they are unique, as well. “Unique” in this case means that gerunds in English deviate as a noun and/or as a verb in grammatical categories. It is reasonably stated that in some cases, English gerunds appear as themselves. This is one of important morpho-semantic notes for EFL learners in Indonesia. Moreover, the phenomena of gerunds make certain difficulties in traditional grammar and in modern linguistics, as well. As far as traditional grammar is concerned, gerunds are problematic because they do not fit into the classic eight parts of speech; gerunds have mixed and unique linguistic-grammatical behaviours and morphosemantic properties. For modern linguistics, gerunds are still problematic for syntactic theory because they require positing phrase structure that does not always fit neatly with the way that English is otherwise described. If a gerund is something with overall noun-like distributions in the syntax, then the top-most node in the gerund phrase must be a noun phrase. But, in sentential analysis, the gerund clearly contains a verb-like thing inside.

Although the EFL learners in Indonesia are not to be linguists in higher level, they are suggested to know the morpho-semantic properties of English gerunds because they are mostly involved in the uses and in understanding gerunds in four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The analysis and discussion on grammatical and morpho-semantic properties of English gerunds presented in this paper require teachers and learners of EFL at intermediate and advanced level to have much more linguistic-grammatical knowledge and understanding on gerunds. They also need to include additional-further explanation concerning with gerunds as discussed in this paper and to have relevant exercises for practical and communicative uses. As the phenomena of English gerunds are not only problematic for linguists, but also for learners either, it is suggested to other researchers to have researches on (English) gerunds both in linguistic and language teaching perspectives.

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