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The Role of the Gerund in Shaping the Pragmatic Meaning of the English Text

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Abstract

The present article examines the role of the gerund in shaping the pragmatic meaning of the English text. The relevance of the study is determined by the growing interest of modern linguistics in the pragmatic potential of non-finite verb forms in English. The article focuses on the functional and pragmatic characteristics of the gerund, its participation in expressing the communicative intentions of the author, and its influence on the interpretation of the text by the reader. The aim of the research is to identify the pragmatic functions of the gerund in different types of English discourse. The study employs descriptive, contextual, functional-pragmatic, and interpretative methods of analysis. The material of the research includes examples taken from fiction, journalistic texts, and modern English communication. The results demonstrate that the gerund possesses significant pragmatic potential and contributes to such functions as information compression, expression of subjective evaluation, creation of implicit meanings, and strengthening of the pragmatic effect of the text.

Key Words: gerund, pragmatics, English language, text, non-finite verb forms, pragmatic meaning, communicative function, implicitness.

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Introduction. Modern linguistics pays considerable attention to the pragmatic aspect of language because language is viewed not only as a system of grammatical forms but also as an instrument of communication and influence. In this regard, the study of non-finite verb forms becomes especially important due to their rich functional and communicative potential. Among them, the gerund occupies a unique position because it combines verbal and nominal features.

The English gerund is a specific grammatical phenomenon that has no exact equivalent in many other languages. Its ability to express both action and substantiveness makes it an important means of text formation and pragmatic influence. By using the gerund, authors can achieve linguistic economy, create stylistic variation, and shape the emotional and communicative effect of the utterance.

The relevance of the study is connected with the necessity to investigate the pragmatic role of the gerund more deeply in modern English discourse. Although many studies have examined the grammatical nature of the gerund, its pragmatic functions remain insufficiently explored. The methodological basis of the study includes the works of Russian and foreign linguists in the fields of functional grammar, pragmatics, and discourse analysis.

Materials and Methods. The research material includes examples selected from English and American fiction, journalistic texts, and modern online communication. The analysis is based on works by John Galsworthy, William Somerset Maugham, J. K. Rowling, and contemporary English-language articles and interviews.

The following methods were employed in the research: descriptive analysis, contextual analysis, functional-pragmatic analysis, interpretative analysis, continuous sampling method.

The functional-pragmatic approach made it possible to determine how the gerund contributes to the realization of the author's communicative intention and affects the reader's perception of the text. The theoretical framework of the research is based on the studies of I. V. Arnold, N. D. Arutyunova, Geoffrey Leech, John Lyons, and other scholars.

Results. The gerund is one of the most functionally rich forms in the English language. Since it combines verbal and nominal characteristics, it can occupy different syntactic positions within the sentence. However, its pragmatic significance goes far beyond grammar. In modern English texts, the gerund is

frequently used to express dynamic actions without creating a full predicative structure. As a result, the text becomes more compact, coherent, and stylistically flexible. For example: "She avoided looking at him." In this sentence, the gerund looking conveys not only the action itself but also the emotional state of the character. The use of the gerund instead of the infinitive intensifies the pragmatic effect of avoidance and psychological tension. The gerund may also create implicitness by allowing the speaker or writer to avoid direct naming of the action or soften the categorical tone of the utterance. For example: "After finishing the report, he left the office quietly." Here, the gerund finishing performs the function of information compression and contributes to the dynamic flow of the narrative.

One of the most important pragmatic functions of the gerund is the expression of subjective evaluation. The gerund often appears after verbs related to emotion, perception, and personal attitude. For example: "I enjoy reading classical literature." In this example, the gerund reading emphasizes the speaker's emotional involvement in the activity. The pragmatic role of the gerund becomes especially noticeable after verbs such as avoid, deny, admit, appreciate, and dislike.

For example: "He admitted stealing the documents." The gerund stealing focuses attention on the process itself rather than the result, which strengthens the pragmatic effect of confession.

In journalistic discourse, the gerund is often used to create persuasive and emotionally charged statements. For example: "Ignoring climate change means risking humanity's future." In this sentence, the gerund ignoring functions as a pragmatic emphasis and increases the evaluative force of the utterance.

One of the characteristic features of the English language is the tendency toward linguistic economy. The gerund plays a significant role in achieving this economy. For example: "Before leaving the room, she smiled politely." Instead of using a complex subordinate clause, the author employs a gerundial construction, making the sentence shorter and more natural. The pragmatic effect of compression lies in accelerating the pace of narration and increasing the informational density of the text.

In modern media communication, the gerund is actively used in headlines and advertisements: "Saving money starts today." Such constructions make the statement more dynamic, memorable, and persuasive.

Implicitness is an important feature of pragmatically rich texts. The gerund contributes to the creation of hidden meanings and allows readers to interpret the message independently. For example: "Without saying a word, she walked away." The gerund saying creates emotional tension and a sense of incompleteness. Such constructions are especially typical of literary discourse, where the pragmatic effect is based on emotional interpretation.

The gerund may also soften communicative intentions: "Would you mind opening the window?" In this example, the gerund makes the request more polite and pragmatically appropriate.

In fiction, the gerund is used to express the psychological state of characters, describe background actions, and create emotional atmosphere. For example: "She sat silently, thinking about the past." The gerund thinking helps create the image of inner reflection.

In journalistic texts, the gerund performs evaluative and persuasive functions. For example: "Protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility."

In everyday speech, the gerund often expresses emotional attitudes and personal reactions. For example: "I hate waiting in long lines." Such constructions make speech more natural and expressive.

Discussion. The analysis demonstrates that the gerund possesses considerable pragmatic potential. Its functional flexibility allows it to express evaluation, emotionality, implicitness, and compression.

Unlike the infinitive, the gerund is usually associated with the processual nature of an action and the speaker's

emotional involvement. This explains its frequent use in literary and conversational discourse.

The results of the study support the idea that the pragmatic meaning of a grammatical form depends not only on its structure but also on the communicative context.

The gerund enhances the pragmatic effect of the text through: expressing emotional attitude, creating implicit meanings, increasing expressiveness, ensuring linguistic economy, shaping communicative dynamics.

Moreover, the use of the gerund enables authors to vary the degree of categoricalness in their statements, making communication more flexible and reader-oriented. The gerund becomes especially important in modern media discourse, where brevity and expressiveness are essential features of effective communication.

Conclusion. Thus, the gerund plays an important role in shaping the pragmatic meaning of English texts. Its dual grammatical nature provides wide functional possibilities and allows speakers and writers to realize various communicative intentions effectively.

The study has shown that the gerund performs the following pragmatic functions: expression of subjective evaluation, creation of implicit meanings, information compression, strengthening emotional influence, softening communicative intention.

The functioning of the gerund depends on the type of discourse and communicative situation. In literary texts, it contributes to psychological depth; in journalistic discourse, it strengthens persuasive impact; and in conversational speech, it creates natural and expressive communication.

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