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Deconstructing Meaning : a semiotactic approach to gerundival constructions in English

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Chapter 2 – Gerundives in limitation relations and gerunds as entities

2.1 – Introduction

Gerundives are often used to indicate a property. Such a form usually indicates what kind of action a certain entity is performing within the projection presented. In such contexts, they take on certain characteristics of adjectives, but they still display some typically verbal properties as well. It is the aim of the present chapter to inventorise these properties, and to elucidate what they express about the relations between these gerundives and the rest of the sentence. These forms will be discussed first. The group of words in this category will be referred to as *gerundival adjectives* for convenience, because they fulfil a function similar to words commonly referred to as adjectives. Other forms are here considered *lexicalised*, and will be called *adjectival gerundives* as opposed to *adjectival gerundives* for the purposes of the present discussion. These forms will be analysed in section 3 in order to establish what it means for one of these forms to lexicalise on a semantic level, and in what ways these differ from adjectival gerundives. Sometimes attributively used gerundives can also occur in isolation. These forms will be discussed in section 2.4, so that they can be distinguished from *gerunds*, i.e. *-ing* forms taking positions entities would normally take. This category of *-ing* forms will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

2.2 – Characteristics of adjectival gerundives

Gerundives indicating properties usually enter into a *limitation* relation. As stated in chapter 1, *limitation* shows that a meaning is added to the projection of another meaning. In this way, a subcategory of the initial meaning is singled out. For instance, when someone says *I like roses*, the entire category of the word *roses* is projected. That is to say, all things that fall into this category are appropriate: he/she likes them all. However, when someone says *I like red roses*, the picture changes: only those roses that also carry the property that they are red are now appropriate: he/she only likes the things in this subcategory. This is notated in the following way:

(33) I like red roses.
 ‘ Σ / PR
me = [like₁]
 [like₂]; rose – red’

The symbol ‘-’ in the above shows that what is liked are not simply roses, but ones that also carry the property ‘red’. In a similar way, many gerundives help to single out entities by attributing to them an activity they are engaged in. To do so, a single gerundive can take the same position as *red* in the sentence above. This is what most

people would instantly associate with the adjective: an extra property is attributed to the entity in question. Take (34) as an example:

(34) A walking man
 ‘man – walk₁’

This notation shows that the agent role in the walking event is attributed to *man*, meaning that not any man will do: only one engaged in this activity fits the category. Note that this relation is different from that between a subject and a predicate. In a full sentence like *A man was walking down the street*, for example, the full message is the attribution of the agent role to *a man*. As such, the subject *man* is not specified any further before being attributed this role. In the case of (34), however, this is the case. The agent role helps the hearer to access the appropriate subcategory of men: rather than referring to men in general, this phrase singles out a single specimen engaged in the activity of walking. Note that in (33) and (34) the specifying meaning is placed in the *attributive* position, i.e. before the entity they specify. In what is to follow, this position will be contrasted to the *postpositive* position, i.e. in the position following the word referring to the entity.

The adjectival gerundive can also be found in another position, however: after the entity in question, e.g. *a man hunting is a sight to see*, *John driving* etc. On the topic of this position for adjectives, Quirk et al. note the following: “the postpositive structures can of course be regarded as reduced relative clauses” (1985, p. 420). From a semiotactic perspective, however, one cannot speak of constructions in such terms. The structure of the result of this ‘reduction’ is a new construction, with its own relations. The etymology of this form should play no role in the analysis.

The meaning of *a man hunting* is slightly different from *a hunting man*. It does come close to that of *a man who is hunting*, in that the relationship between *man* and *hunting* is temporal rather than constant. However, any element referring to an actual relative clause is missing: there is no relative pronoun and no finite verb. This temporal relationship is expressed through grammatical rather than lexical means. Due to the temporality associated with these constructions then, gerundives following entities would be notated as follows:

(35) A man hunting is a sight to see.
 ‘Σ / PR
 man ~ hunt₁ = sight . . .’

(38) Any man hunting between 10 and 12 will be arrested for disturbing the peace.

Σ / WILL / PR

man ~ hunt₁ > [between₁]. . . = arrest₂'

In (37), the situation described is one in which the men who were engaged in a past hunting event between 10 and 12 will be arrested. In (38), the message is rather that this fate will befall any man who hunts between 10 and 12 anytime this occurs. This is exactly what temporal limitation expresses. Cases in which the participle follows the entity specified will not be analysed as reduced relative clauses in the present work for these reasons.

There are also contexts in which it is impossible to place a gerundive before the entity, in which case it is placed in the postpositive position, just like elements specifying the entity through temporal limitation. However, temporal limitation cannot be used in these cases. Typically, this occurs when this element is itself specified by a modifier adjunct, e.g.:

(39) A man walking in the street.
 'man - walk₁ > [in₁]
 [in₂]; street'

This construction can be contrasted to (40):

(40) A walking man in the street.
 'man - walk₁ - [in₁]
 [in₂]; street'

It is clear that there is a difference: in the second example, it is the man himself who is specified as being in the street, as well as engaged in walking. This presents us with a problem, because in (39), the adjective following the entity specifies it temporally. However, it is impossible for the verb itself to be specified in the attributive position (e.g. **a walking in the street man*) The question, then, is whether or not this position still specifies the entity temporally if there is no alternative. In other words, there is no choice between **a walking in the street man* and *a man walking in the street*, but there is between *a hunting man* and *a man hunting*. Can we still determine which functor is to be used in such a case? It is important to take what Ebeling has written on this topic into account. He states:

A usually dark room is appropriate as a referent of *a dark room*, even if it is brightly illuminated at the moment when it is referred to by this phrase. But also a usually bright room is appropriate, provided it is dark at the relevant moment. In the former event the feature [dark] opposes the room to other rooms (there is non-temporal limitation), in the latter event the feature [dark] opposes the room as it is at a given time to itself as it is at some other time (there is temporal limitation). As demonstrated by the example, the difference need not be reflected in the form. (1978, p. 312)

What this statement by Ebeling shows is that there is polysemy in a great number of these types of constructions. Even the notation that is typically associated with non-temporal limitation can be *interpreted* as temporal. However, when a connection between form and meaning is found (i.e. in the case of *a man hunting* versus *a hunting man*), this relation must be reflected in the notation, and when it is not reflected in the form, it does not warrant notation. The same is true in the case of *a man walking in the street*: whether or not there is temporality present is a matter of interpretation, because no formal distinction can be made. The notations in (39) and (40) take this into account. In the above, the function of *in the street* is determined by the element adjacent to it. In the latter case this is *man*. Therefore, the man in this instance carries the property ‘in the street’ directly: this phrase does not simply refer to the category of ‘man’, but only to that subset of this category that is also ‘in the street’. Furthermore, the word *walking* also attributes its meaning to this form through limitation. This means that the appropriate category is not just ‘man’, nor just the subcategory that is ‘in the street’, but rather those singular men that are both walking *and* in the street.

Although (39) is interpretively identical to (40) in many ways, the fact that *in the street* is adjacent to *walking* in this example therefore means that these two elements enter into a relationship. The only meaning adjacent to *man* (apart from *a*) is *walking*, so this is the only meaning directly specifying the entity *man*. This means that the category of appropriate referents is specified by the agent role of *walking*. However, *walking* itself is specified: the walking occurs in the street. Since it is this specified walking event that the referent performs, it stands to reason that the man himself would be in the street too. However, this is only attributed to the man indirectly, as an aspect of the walking event attributed to him. In short, where the contrast cannot be made explicit though the positioning of the gerundive, atemporal limitation will be used. Adjacent elements specify one another.

Another feature of adjectival gerundives is the fact that they can take arguments, but only when they follow the entity, e.g. *a woman driving a van*, *parents buying groceries*, etc. These must be distinguished from situational gerund constructions. Usually, these constructions can be distinguished from one another on the basis of the sentence as a whole. One could, for instance, make a statement like *The woman driving the van is coming closer*, in which case the subject would not be interpreted as a situation in its own right. Rather, it is the woman, who is specified by the fact that she is driving the van, who is coming closer. Contrastively, *Kids driving cars disturbs me* contains a situational gerund: the subject is a situation in which kids are driving cars. This type of construction will be discussed extensively in chapter 4. For now, it is important to determine whether or not a specifying construction structured like *The woman driving the van* to be analysed as containing temporal or atemporal limitation. Since it is impossible for adjectival gerundives to occur before the noun in cases where they are accompanied by an object, should they be considered temporal? In a way, this question answers itself: if the element can only take a single position, its position cannot be used to indicate different semantic relations. As such, since the form of the construction does not universally lead to the temporal interpretation, this specific meaning cannot be said to be inherent in it. For this reason, the correct semiotactic notation of this construction does not contain temporal limitation:

(41) The woman driving the van is coming closer.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{woman} - \quad [\text{drive}_1] \quad = \quad \text{come}_1 > \text{close} > \text{COMP} \\ \quad \quad \quad [\text{drive}_2]; \text{van}' \end{array}$$

‘ Σ / PROG / PR

The fact that these gerundives can take arguments sets them apart from most adjectives. As Huddleston & Pullum note, for instance: “whereas many verbs take objects, there are only one or two adjectives that are transitive (*worth* and *like*), so NPs [noun phrases] within the predicate are normally related to an adjective by means of a preposition” (2002, p. 527). An example of *worth* being used transitively is given below:

(42) I believe it is an opportunity worth the risk.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{me} \quad = \quad [\text{believe}_1] \\ \quad \quad \quad [\text{believe}_2]; \quad \Sigma / \text{PR} \\ \quad \quad \quad \text{it} \quad = \text{opportunity} - [\text{worth}_1] \\ \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad \quad [\text{worth}_2]; \text{risk}' \end{array}$$

‘ Σ / PR

It seems that the fact that this is common when an adjectival gerundive is used is a characteristic of the verbs themselves that is carried over into this function. Moreover, to my knowledge no non-verbal has yet been presented which can take three arguments in English (i.e. an indirect object as a third argument), whereas, if the verbal form that receives the *-ing* morpheme can take three arguments, then so can the adjectival gerundive derived from it, e.g.:

- (43) The woman giving children candy
 ‘woman – [give₁]
 [give₃]; child
 [give₂]; candy’

The attributive position and the postpositive position are the only positions open to the adjectival gerundive. This limit also sets the morpheme *-ing* apart from other deverbal morphemes, e.g. for the morpheme *-able* almost all positions are open: *so believable a man, a believable man, a man vulnerable to attack* and *That man is believable*. This is because of the meanings that the two morphemes introduce: *-ing* requires the element that is being specified to perform the action at hand, whereas *-able* indicates the possibility of the verb to take the specified element as its object: *a believable story* indicates that the situation *X believes the story* is possible. Possibility is gradable, whereas performance is binary: one either does something or not.¹⁶ Note that *gradability* here has nothing to do with the semiotactic relation of *gradation*. Some words have meanings which specify the amount or extent of something else, such as *very*. *Believable* is a gradable adjective because *very* can be applied to it: *a very believable story*. Contrastively, gerundives which refer to an activity, cannot be graded in this way: **a very walking man*. For this reason, the *-ing* form can only create “absolute adjectives”, which are otherwise rather rare. Even more or less unequivocal cases like *unique* can often be specified by *very*, for example. Only a few adjectives never allow for this, e.g. *ultimate*. The fact that these gerundives do not allow for this, then, can be considered a feature specific to them, which they have due to their verbal semantics.

A special case of temporal limitation is found in cases with a different prosodic structure. In particular, it is interesting to note the following notation:

¹⁶ Naturally, it is possible for verbal forms to be quantified when they are applied predicatively (e.g. *I love you very much*) but this does not quantify whether one does or not, but rather the frequency or intensity with which it is done.

there are no other *yous*, so *you driving your car* cannot refer to a subcategory of *yous*. In other words: autoprominent entities are already maximally specific. The same is true for proper nouns like *John*: whenever one uses them, the autoprominence of the referent is presupposed. The only aspect left to be specified in such a context is the timeframe within which the referent is presented.

However, it is possible to specify a pronoun in the attributive position in a few restricted cases. For instance, when the pronoun is grammatically made into an entity through the use of a determiner, this new entity can take attributive adjectives:

(46) I don't like the drinking you.
 'Σ / PR
 me = [like₁] / NO
 [like₂]; you – drink₁ / SG – DEF'

The definite article is included in the notation here, because it is a necessary condition for this type of specification. This newly created entity takes atemporal specification, but it must be borne in mind that it is just that: a newly created entity. In practice, this does refer to the same person in a different state, but grammatically (46) refers to a different *you*.

2.4 – Lexicalised gerundival adjectives

Although the adjectival gerundive has been shown to take only two positions (i.e. before and after the entity), the attributive and the post-positive, some adjectival *-ing* forms can be found in every position that has been distinguished by Huddleston & Pullum (2002) and Quirk et al. (1985). The reason for this is that these forms have *lexicalised*: they have become single, unified meanings, although they were originally formed out of two distinct meaningful elements. More specifically, the definition of lexicalisation held to in this work is that proposed by Brinton & Traugott (2005, p. 95):

Lexicalization is the change whereby in certain linguistic contexts speakers use a syntactic construction or word formation as a new contentful form with formal and semantic properties that are not completely derivable or predictable from the constituents of that construction or the word formation pattern. Over time there may be further loss of internal constituency and the item may become more lexical.

As the definition above shows, there is a clear contrast between lexicalisation and *word-formation*, which is the process by which two meaningful elements can be put together

to create a new meaning in a wholly predictable and productive manner. Word-formation also describes the way in which an adjective is made out of a verb as described in 2.3: one takes a verb, say *drive*, and adds a derivational morpheme to this verb, *-ing*, and one is left with a new word, *driving*, which has a wholly predictable meaning (in the case of the adjective): ‘taking the *x*-role in the verbal event’. In the case of a lexicalised form, however, the combination yields a result that is not predictably derivable from the two parts: rather than placing the entity specified in the role of performing an action, it is attributed the property of having some unspecified involvement with the verbal action, or perhaps not even that anymore. An example of this would be *A painstaking effort*. In this instance, the effort is not described as taking pains. Rather, *painstaking* describes a property, “acting with, showing, or involving great care and attention” (*painstaking* Heritage, 2011). The word is derived from a gerundive, but it has, in its entirety, attained its own, separate meaning. For such forms, the term *gerundival adjective* is used here instead of *adjectival gerundive*: the fact that it is an adjective is placed on the foreground, rather than its gerundival nature, which it has moved away from.

2.4.1 – Monovalent gerundival adjectives

As stated above, gerundival forms which attain a separate, purely adjectival meaning become *gerundival adjectives* in the terminology used here. A good example of this would be the word *aggravating*, derived from *aggravate*, a purely transitive verb. Consider the following examples:

(47) He is aggravating me.

‘ Σ / PROG / PR
he = [aggravate₁]
[aggravate₂]; me’

(48) That is aggravating.

‘ Σ / PR
that = aggravating’

Example (47) contains a verb, whereas (48) contains a gerundival adjective. This is expressed in the description by writing the word out in full, i.e. with *-ing* attached. This is because every part of its form is now part of a new word, with its own meaning. This is what lexicalisation refers to. The fact that a gerundival form of a transitive verb can occur intransitively can indicate lexicalisation, as the examples above show. Semantically, the difference between the (47) and (48) is that one may say (48) without experiencing the aggravation at the present moment. This is because it is essentially a

stative fact: the autoprominent entity has the property or tendency to aggravate. Contrastively, when one uses (47), this means that the aggravation is taking place at that very moment. In many ways, the analysis presented above resembles that given by Brinton & Traugott (2005), who make a distinction between V-forms and participial adjectives (p. 112). On the topic of the form being used predicatively, they state that “the V-form is aspectual while the present participial Adj is not. In PDE [Present-Day English] V-forms can have objects and complements... while present participial Adjs cannot; complements of present participial Adjs require prepositions” (p. 112). For instance, while it is impossible to say **That is very aggravating me*, it is possible to use a preposition to add this entity via the preposition *to*: *That is very aggravating to me*.

Problems distinguishing the progressive form from the gerundival adjective can arise when the gerundival form in question is not transitive in every context. An example of this type is given by Brinton & Traugott: “Anne was entertaining” (2005, p. 112). This sentence can be analysed in two ways: either Anne was in the process of entertaining someone, or she is ascribed the characteristic that she tended to entertain at that moment. Here we find ourselves faced with an instance of syntactic homonymy. The notations of these two readings would therefore be:

(49) “Anne was entertaining” (Brinton & Traugott 2005, p. 112) (progressive).

‘ Σ / PROG / PA

Anne = entertain₁’

(50) “Anne was entertaining” (2005, p. 112) (property).

‘ Σ / PA

Anne = entertaining’

A technique to distinguish between the two regardless of their homonymy is suggested by Huddleston & Pullum:

One test for adjectival status is the possibility of replacing *be* by other complex-intransitive verbs such as *seem* and *become*. Thus we have *This seems disturbing*, *He became distressed*, *He appeared drunk*, but not **He seemed sleeping*, **He became killed*, **They appeared seen*. A second test is modification by *very* and *too*. (2002, p. 541)

The test that Huddleston & Pullum describe in this quote bases itself on the basic distinction that is also described here: the possibility of grading a property, and the impossibility of grading participation in an event.

A further property of gerundival adjectives is that they can also undergo the other specifications that have been described as typical of adjectives by Quirk et al. above. For instance, something that is *degrading* can also be described as *very degrading*. Moreover, a character trait can be described as someone's *most endearing* trait, whereas it is impossible to say that someone is **very walking*, or **most walking*. As Quirk et al. state: "premodification by the intensifier *very* is an explicit indication that the forms have achieved adjective status" (1985, p. 414). On the basis of this, it appears that temporality and gradability are opposites. Huddleston & Pullum do present gradability as a characteristic of adjectives, but they also note that "there are... a great many adjectives that are non-gradable" (2002, p. 524). As discussed above, however, usually these can also be graded, e.g. *That is very unique*. This being the case, a predicative adjective construction can easily be distinguished from a progressive verb by trying to fit an adverb into the sentence: *I am waiting* / **I am slightly waiting* or *This is astonishing* / *This is very astonishing*.

The constructions here distinguished also show a difference in the way in which they interact with elements specifying them. Consider, for instance, the sentence *He is working hard*. This progressive construction is relatively easy to analyse: in this situation, *he* is the agent of the working action, and the working is hard. The construction *He is hard-working* is rather different: when this is said of someone, he is ascribed the property of having the propensity to work hard. Note, again, that this does not imply that it actually manifests itself in the present. One may wonder whether this incorporated item should be notated as simple gradation or as incorporation (see section 1.4.3.5). As stated, the lexicalised gerundival adjective adds a property to the carrier. In this instance, it contributes the propensity to work. Regarded from this perspective, it is clear that *hard* does not specify this through gradation: it is not the property itself that is hard, but the manner in which the work is performed, which is not predictably derivable from the cross-section of the property and the adjective. As such, incorporation seems more appropriate:

(51) A hard-working man
 'man – working_ hard'

(52) A man working hard
 'man – work > hard'

More examples of this kind will be discussed in section 2.4.2 below.

2.4.2 – Bivalent gerundival adjectives

It may be wondered how the distinction made above is maintained in the case of bivalent verbs. The example sentences *This is heartbreaking* and *This is breaking my heart* show this distinction. Here, the attribution of a property and the attribution of participation in an activity is immediately made clear: the former is not a dynamic sort of verbal meaning, because what is ascribed to the subject is the *property* that tends to break (an) otherwise unspecified heart(s). On the other hand, in the second sentence it is clear that the autprominent entity or situation (i.e. *this*) is in fact taking part in a breaking action that is ongoing, of which *my heart* is the object. Moreover, although interpretively the heart does not take any other role than the object role in *heartbreaking*, this does not necessarily mean that the combination of a noun and a verb in this way can always be considered to indicate such a relation between the verbal meaning and the noun in question. For instance, as Huddleston & Pullum (2002) point out, “it is also possible for the noun to correspond to the complement of a preposition” (p. 1658), as is the case in “ocean-going” and “law-abiding”. In these examples, the entities *ocean* and *law* are not merely the objects of the verbs, but they would usually be described as being in some prepositional relation to these verbal events. *Ocean-going* refers to something going *to* the ocean, and a *law-abiding* citizen is someone who abides *by* the law. These constructions have in common with *heartbreaking* that the noun and the verb within the lexicalised form are in a divergent relation to one another: the breaking is not such that it is a heart, nor is the going an ocean. Rather, the breaking has an indirect relation with the heart, and so does the going with the ocean.¹⁷

¹⁷ The above distinction may have the appearance of being more or less complete, but it seems that gerundival adjectives come in many shapes and sizes, some of which differ from those discussed above in many ways. For instance, although above the example of *heartbreaking* has been analysed to show that lexicalised forms can be used predicatively, there are numerous forms which cannot appear in this position, even though they are structurally very similar. For instance, one cannot say **He is award-winning*, although *an award-winning actor* is acceptable. Interestingly, an award-winning actor is an award-winning actor the moment he wins his first award. As such, the relationship between the entity and the property is unspecified on a temporal level, so the idea that it is a property rather than participation in an event, and hence that it constitutes a lexicalised word, is still upheld here. However, it also shows that the fact that it is a property does not universally make it gradable: not every type of temporally unspecified attribution can lead to gradability, because one cannot say **a very award-winning actor*. In this case, then, we are again faced with an absolute kind of adjective: there is no such thing as winning an award to a lesser or greater degree, and therefore the application of this epithet is binary. It may be for this exact reason that it cannot take the predicative position: because it is neither verbal nor non-binary, it is apt to lead to confusion in the predicative position.

The progressive, the adjectival and the simple aspect may therefore be notated as shown below respectively:

(53) This is breaking my heart.
 ‘Σ / PROG / PR
 this = [break₁]
 [break₂]; heart ↓
 – me’

(54) This is heartbreaking.
 ‘Σ / PR
 this = breaking ↓
 — heart’

(55) This breaks my heart.
 ‘Σ / PR
 this = [break₁]
 [break₂]; heart ↓
 – me’

2.5 – Gerundives describing entities

A property can also occur on its own, to categorise the entity in a syntactic position. A good example of this is found in the following sentence: “Now, too many of the working are still poor” (Walker, 11 July 2015). In this sentence, *the working*, although it does not contain an overt entity, does serve as the subject of the sentence. In this position, as Quirk et al. note, “these adjectives are restricted to generic reference and take plural concord” (1985, p. 422). That is to say, when such adjectives are used to refer to people rather than to other phenomena, they only allow for generic reference. Note, however, that Quirk et al. make a distinction that need not be made from a semiotactic perspective: sentences like “The young students found the course difficult, the older found it easy” are described as “cases of textual ellipsis” (p. 422). Even though interpretively this may have the effect described, there is no formal correlate to indicate this. Although contexts within which the ellipsis analysis can more easily be interpreted, there is no syntactic link between the entity in the first sentence and the second. This is evinced by the fact that this ellipsis also occurs when the same type of entity is referred to in separate sentences. For instance, one may say *The old machine was fast. The new is slow* without any grammatical transgression. It is true that in many cases, when an adjective that usually applies to a human is used in this way, the entity is often interpreted to be human. However, there is no grammatical necessity for this to

nouns (*the young people*) can be noun-phrase heads (*the young*) with plural and generic reference denoting classes, categories, or types of people” (1985, p. 421). It seems, then, that there may be a connection between this position and the attributive position: when a form takes this position, it can occur on its own, but, as has been shown before, when it is specified further, it usually takes the postpositive position (e.g. *the men working hard*), making it impossible for such specified adjectives to occur in isolation. This would explain the fact that certain types of modification can occur in this position: *the very industrious* is perfectly acceptable. Moreover, *the young at heart* may refer to *the young men at heart* (as in, for example, *We are young men at heart*). This seems to indicate that a postpositive modifier may accompany an attributive adjective occurring in such a construction, just so long as the adjective itself takes the attributive position. This would also explain why *the hard-working in the company* is acceptable, even though neither **the working hard* nor **the in the company* are, because it is not postpositive. The correct examples discussed here thus come to look as follows:

(59) The working are still poor.

‘ Σ / PR

work₁ / PL – DEF = poor > still’

(60) The young at heart

‘young > [at₁] – DEF

[at₂]; heart’

(61) The hard-working

‘working_{hard} – DEF’

2.6 – Nominalisations with –ing

One of the most basic functions of –ing is *nominalisation*, i.e. the process whereby a meaning is presented as an entity. There are various ways in which entities can be notated in the notation. For instance, they could simply be notated as a word, e.g. “dog” → ‘dog / SG’, as an abstraction, e.g. “redness” → ‘^red’, or even as a situation. Moreover, as entities, they can be plural or singular, and either definite or indefinite. All of these terms may or may not be relevant in the case of the nominal gerund. This depends in its entirety on the semantic effect that the presence or absence of these elements has on the notation of the gerundival form. It is also interesting to note the semantic variation that can occur within the same syntactic configuration. Some of the semantic and syntactic variation that exists within the class of nominal gerunds will here be inventorised, and a subdivision in the types of gerunds that exist will be proposed.

cases a *universal* seems to be discussed: rather than a specific instance of something happening, what is being referred to here is an abstracted, generic event, as is more often the case when an indefinite article in the divergent meaning is involved: the same would not be said of *the killing of the man*. This comes close to the distinction between a *type* (i.e. the universal reading, the properties of any event referred to using these forms) and a *token* (i.e. a reading in which a single instance of an event is referred to). In both cases, however, the action itself is described as a unified entity: rather than discussing a process taking time, the hearer must take the entirety of the meaning of the word as being in (an undefined) relation to the noun in the prepositional phrase. In both (62) and (63), then, abstraction is at play. I conceive of the meaning of *of* as an undefined divergent relation, like Ebeling (1978, p. 393), because it can relate the subject of the action, or the object, or even more meanings which do not seem related to one another. For instance, *the killing of 1991* does not suggest that the year itself was killed, but rather that there was a killing that took place in that year. This means that some interpretation must be involved, but what they have in common is that they require divergence. This, then, is the only thing that can be notated semiotactically. The notations are therefore given as shown above.

Moving on, it is possible to refer to these types of meanings using an indefinite article in some cases. The interpretation of such a event as a *token* rather than a *type* is invoked: rather than considering the concept of an event occurring, an instance is discussed in (64). It may be tempting to conceive of these examples as semantically different, because our interpretation of them clearly is: we are referring to concrete events, not abstracted meanings. However, every part of the verbal meaning is present in these tokens as well: *a killing* is an event which is construed as an entity (hence the determiner, for example). For these reasons, the gerunds do not contribute any other semantic features than those inherent in the abstractions of the verbs. The notation of (64) still contains abstraction.

The same cannot be said, however, for (65). This sentence, although structurally similar to (63), is ungrammatical. In this instance, I believe it may be said that the construction *a building* immediately invokes the projection of a construction, the result of *building*. This meaning is rather different: unlike *a killing*, *a building* does not contain all the semantic features that the verb does. As such, it seems that polysemy is involved here, and that the interpretive selection of one or the other is predominantly motivated by the surrounding elements. That is to say, the structure of a phrase as a whole can help the hearer identify if what is being discussed is a *type* or a *token*, and it seems that, in the case of *building*, a *token* instance forces the interpretation of the word as

“something built with a roof and walls, such as a house or factory” (Collins 2014), rather than as “the act of constructing something” (WordNet 2012). The meaning referred to in (65) and (66) cannot rightly be considered an abstraction from the meaning of the verb anymore, but rather a specific separate meaning. For this reason, (66) is notated as shown above. This explains a fundamental difference between two types of gerund: on the one hand, we have the gerund that directly derives its meaning from the verb, and another that does not. The latter usually concerns the result of that action rather than the action itself, and as such cannot be considered an abstraction.

In some contexts, a gerund can also be found without any article accompanying it, as is shown in (67). This form shows an interesting property: incorporation with the word *gun*. I would argue that it is impossible for an abstracted verbal form to distribute any of the roles that the verb can normally distribute. This is a verbal property, which must be lost in the process of abstraction. Although it may be tempting, then, to consider this close-knitting to be a separate form used for the purpose of filling the object role, because *illegal gun carrying* seems to imply that the gun is being carried, this is not the case here. Rather, a carrying action is presented as an entity, and in a divergent incorporation relation with the meaning *gun*. This is supported by the fact that compounds of this nature do not universally contribute this specific kind of divergent connection, as examples like *beach-going* indicate. Therefore, this form is notated in the way shown above.

2.7 – Conclusion

In the above, the various ways in which the *-ing* form can specify other meanings through limitations have been explored. In the majority of cases, this will simply occur via atemporal limitation. When such a construction is used, the set of appropriate referents is specified to be engaged in the activity described by the gerundive (e.g. *the walking man* → all those singular men which are engaged in walking are appropriate referents). When a contrast can be made between this form and another (e.g. *the man walking*), this indicates that there is *temporal* limitation, indicating that the meaning does not single out a subcategory, but rather a state for the entity in question to be in, in order to be an appropriate referent (i.e. *the man walking* refers to the same autoprominent man, but in a different state: engaged in the walking activity – as opposed to *the man sitting*, for instance). However, there are also lexicalised *gerundival adjectives*, which, rather than attributing a role in an activity, often seem to refer to the propensity of something to engage in that activity (e.g. *The very frustrating idea*). These meanings are gradable, unlike adjectival gerundives, and they cannot distribute the roles the verbal meaning usually can. Some of these lexicalised forms occur

compounded to another meaning (e.g. *painstaking*), but this does not systematically refer to a single type of connection: all we can glean from this relation is that the two meanings (*pains* and *taking*) are in a divergent incorporation relation. Nominal gerunds have also been discussed in this chapter. Broadly speaking, gerunds which refer to the full extent of the verbal meaning, be it universally or in a specific instance (e.g. *the killing of a man* or *a killing*), are instances of abstraction of the verbal meaning. However, when it refers to the result of such an action (e.g. *a building*), this is a separate meaning.