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Department of English

Investigating Iraqi EFL Learners' Performance in Using the Non-finite Present Participle and Gerund

A paper

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by

Rihab Salih Jasim

Supervised by

Prof. Dr. Dunya Mohammed Ijam

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DEDICATION

For my lovely family.

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A special feeling of gratitude goes to my loving parents, brothers and sisters whose words of encouragement have helped me to go forward with my studies.

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals investigating Iraqi EFL learners' performance in using the non-finite present participle and gerund. There are mainly three types of non-finite verbs: infinitives, gerunds and participles. EFL students find it difficult in differentiating and using gerunds and present participles and most often confuse between them since they both come from a verb and both end in *–ing*. EFL students find it difficult in differentiating and using gerunds and present participles and most often confuse between them since they both come from a verb and both end in *–ing*.

CHAPTER ١

Introduction

١.١ Problem of the Study

The English verb has two major forms, finite and non-finite. There are mainly three types of non-finite verbs: infinitives, gerunds and participles. EFL students find it difficult in differentiating and using gerunds and present participles and most often confuse between them since they both come from a verb and both end in *–ing*.

This study is trying to provide answers for the following questions:

١.٢ Aim of the study

The study aims at:

١. Shedding light on the concept and types of non-finite verb
٢. Defining gerund and finite present participle and their uses
٣. Investigating the ability of EFL learners in differentiating and using gerund and non-finite present participle.

١.٣ Hypothesis

To achieve the above goals, it is hypothesized that:

١. Gerund and non-finite gerund participle are a problematic area to EFL learner
٢. There are differences in using gerund and present participle.

٣. EFL learners face difficulties in recognizing and using gerund and present participle.

١.٤   Procedures

A test is applied to ٢٠ Iraqi EFL students at their fourth year from the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon during the year ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٢. After collection of students responses, results of the test will be analyzed.

١.٥   Limits

The study will be limited to studying two types of non-finite verbs: gerund and present participle.

١.٦   Value of the study

The study is hoped to be useful to EFL learners, teachers and textbook writers and syllabus designers because it tackles the problematic area of gerund and present participle.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

٢.١ What are non-finite verbs?

Definitions of Nonfinite Verb Leech (٢٠٠٦) indicates that nonfinite verb is a verb that is not finite. It does not concern difference for past tense and present tense. Nonfinite verb concerns three forms, they are infinitive with or without *(to)* , *(-ing)* form which is called gerund or present participle and (ed) form which is called past participle. He adds that all verbs include nonfinite forms except for modal auxiliaries. Nonfinite verb forms always follow the finite verb form in the verb phrase such as has work, has been working and will be working (Leech, ٢٠٠٦: ٧١).

Kreyer (٢٠١٠: ٢٢١) points out that nonfinite verb forms are those that cannot state tense distinction or number agreement. Greenbaum and Nelson (٢٠٠٢: ٦١) show that nonfinite verb is utilized in contrast with finite in the identification of verbs, verb phrase or clauses. A finite verb permits contrast in tense and mood whereas nonfinite verb does not permit contrast in tense and mood. All verb forms are finite except infinitives and participles.

Attarde (٢٠٠٧) reflects that verbs could be finite or nonfinite. Finite verbs are used to make a statement about subject. A nonfinite verb on the other hand, is a verb that cannot by itself make a sensible statement. Finite verb expresses person and number, whereas nonfinite verb does not express person and number, it has only one form. (Attrade, ٢٠٠٧:١٨٥).

Trasck (٢٠٠٧: ١٩٢) visualizes that nonfinite verb is not marked for tense, it indicates no agreement. It is impossible to be the only verb in a sentence. Stevenson (٢٠١٠) on the other hand states that nonfinite verb forms can concern

several functions, noun (gerund) , complements (infinitives) and adjectives (participle) (Stevenson, ٢٠١٠:١٦٧).

٢.٢ Types of non-finite verbs

English has two verb forms: finite and nonfinite. The finite verbs are those that change depending on the person or the number of the subject and the tense. On the other hand, nonfinite verbs do not change depending on the person or the number of the subject. They show no tense (Garner, ٢٠٠٩:٨٩). Non-finite verbs can be in any of the following forms:

٢.٢.١ Present Participle *(-ing)*

The *-ing* form of a verb can be present participle or gerund is an *–ing*; both are non-finite verbs Simon (٢٠٠٠:٩٤). Both a gerund and a present participle come from a verb, and both end in – ing. However, each has a different function. A gerund acts like a noun while a present participle acts like a verb or adjective. Example:

snowboarding *Snowboarding* is fun (gerund).

He is *snowboarding* (present participle).

Snowboarding can be a gerund or a present participle. When snowboarding is a gerund, it acts like a noun. It can be a subject, an object, the object of a preposition, or a subject complement. Snowboarding is a winter sport. [snowboarding = subject]

Present participle or gerund has no tense. They do not indicate the time of action that they refer to. However, they can point out whether this time is the same as or earlier than the time of the verb in the main clause Leech (٢٠٠٩:٧١).

Maclin (١٩٩٦:١٦٤) indicates that gerund expresses actions. Gerund is the form of a substantive representation of process in a verb which show clearly a substantive character. He determines gerund as a verb form, points out its nominal character of functioning. Hartmann and Stork (١٩٧٢: ٩٥) visualizes that gerund is a verb in its -ing (present participle) form that functions as a noun that names an activity rather than a person or thing. Any action verb can be made into a gerund. Gerunds are words that are formed with verbs but act as nouns. They're very easy to spot, since every gerund is a verb with *-ing* tacked to its tail. There are no exceptions to this rule. Leech (٢٠٠٦) visualizes that the form of verb that ends in (*-ing*) is called gerund, when is used as noun. Because its function that of a noun, gerund may be used as the subject of the sentence as in:

Swimming will make you feel better.

Reading requires most of her time during the day. (Leech, ٢٠٠٦:٧٩)

Alexander (١٩٨٨) points out that the use of present tense or gerund in some instances does not change the meaning of a verb, if it is compared with the choice of infinitive as in:

She prefers *going* to the zoo.

She prefers *to go* to the zoo. (Alexander, ١٩٨٨:١٢١)
Gerund is used to identify actions that are factual as in:
Do you like *dancing* to night?
 Parrot (٢٠٠٠) indicates that *-ing* forms are words that end in *-ing* like *driving, reading* and *dancing*. They are utilized to add information to what is expressed in certain verbs + object combination, to add information to what is expressed in a clause and to be as subjects and complements. Gerunds are used after certain verbs such as avoid, *bear, consider, deny, detest, enjoy, involve* and *mind*.

John enjoys *looking* around forest.

The journey involves *changing* buses many times. (Parrot, ٢٠٠٠: ١٤٠)

Gerunds are also used after many multiword verbs, e.g. *give up, look*

forward to, put off and *put up with,* and they are used after a preposition

as in the following examples:
We look forward to *hearing* from her.
Is he still interested in *swimming*?
 Maclin (١٩٩٦) shows that the negation (not) is always placed in front of the
gerund or present participle as in:

Suha says *not having* to do homework today.

Gerunds or present participles are used after the following expression like *worth,*
rather than and *instead of* as in:

Rather than *studying* novel, we decided to study drama. (Maclin, ١٩٩٦:١٦٩)

٢.٢.٢ *-ed* Participles

 Participles are widespread cross linguistically. The term participle is generally
used to refer to the type of nonfinite verbs which primarily co-occur with a finite
auxiliary. Some consider participles as having an intermediate position between
verb and adjective. Another attitude is that participle is a separate part of speech
giving it a special place among the other parts of speech (Hurford, ١٩٩٦:١٧٦).

participles are considered to be verb forms that can also be used in

positions normally filled by nouns (Tallerman, ٢٠١٥:٨٦). The *-ed* participle is the
nonfinite form of the verb. Ballard (١٩٩٠: ٤٠) states that any phrase starts by *–ed*
participle is a nonfinite verb phrase.

Hudson (١٩٩٨:٤٥) indicates that non-finite form which is fairly easy to realize may concern the distinctive ending *en* (as in spoken, been), but it generally looks like a past-tense finite form (e.g. *brought, cut* and all the regular verbs such as stated and looked). In both cases it is called the Verb's en-form. Like the ing-form this one could present a subordinate clause with much the same meaning as a longer one introduced by a separate word. Greenbaum (١٩٩٦ : ٢٠٦) and Radford (٢٠٠٩: ٢٨٨) clarify that –ed participle is a nonfinite verb because it states no tense. The *-ed* participle can function within a finite verb phrase as a perfect participle and passive participle as in the following example:

Egyptians doctors at hospital *have stopped* work in protest and not being allowed to leave Egypt. (Perfect participle)

Everything else *has been finished*. (Passive participle)

 Non-finite verbs are treated as tenseless, because they lack present or past tense morpheme and therefore fail to point out present or past time reference. They show simultaneity or anteriority. Non-finite verbs do not belong to tense system, in which all the temporal relations expressed ultimately find their origin in the temporal zero point which usually the moment of the speech. Non-finite verbs simply relate the time of situation referred to some others, contextually given time as in: (Hurford, ١٩٩٦:١٧٦). Some people *taken in* by these confidence tricksters will lose everything on their own.

The past participle (taken in) means having been taken in, and express anteriority either of the time of the head clause or the time of the speech (Declerck, et al.٢٠٠٦:٩٨).   ٧

Wyldeck (٢٠٠٣) visualizes that nonfinite verbs concern no subject. He states that there are two types of participles which ends in –ing and past participle which ends in –ed or –en or have irregular forms. Wyldeck adds that unless participles are accompanied by an auxiliary verb, they have no subject as in:

Written on the board in big letters was a sign "No smoking". (Wyldeck, ٢٠٠٣:٣٨)

٢.٢.٣ Infinitive

Infinitives are one of the types of nonfinite form of verbs. Valeika and Buitkiene (٢٠٠٣:١٠٤) point out that infinitives consist of double natures; they consist of the features of the verb with those of the noun. Infinitives are nonfinite form of the verbs which join the features of the verb with those of the nouns serving as the verbal name of process. Tenier (١٩٨٨:٤٣٣) states that infinitive is a mixed category, middle member between verb category and noun category. The infinitive is the simplest form of the verb. It is exactly the same as the base that follows *they, I ,* and *we* in the present simple tense of all verbs other than be such as *they write* and *I read*. These verbs are called infinitives when they are not part of the tense of a verb. Sometimes the infinitive follows *(to).* It is called the full infinitive or the infinitive with *(to)* such as *to go* as in:
I want to go. (full infinitive).

Sometimes infinitives do not follow (to), it is called bare infinitive or simple form. It is used in a number of expression to show advice,

making suggestions, requesting, inviting or giving orders. For examples:

Do come!

You may go.   (Richards and Schmidt,٢٠١٠: ٢٨٠)

Infinitives in English language are utilized to add more information to what is stated in certain verbs, verb + object combination, adjective and nouns, or expression including these. It utilizes also as subject, complements and to point out the reasons for something or its goal or function (Parrot ٢٠٠٠: ١٣٦). Trask (٢٠٠٧: ١٩٢) points out that infinitives are utilized after certain verbs such as agree, appear, attempt, fail, get, hope, promise, meet and refuse. As in:

John wanted to meet Ali.

They hoped to get back early.

It can be noticed that infinitives are used after certain adjective. Some of the commonest adjectives are those which describe: personal feeling or attitude such as *sorry, necessary, eager, delighted* and *anxious*:

Sara is sorry (adjective) to be (Infinitive) a nuisance. Is it necessary (adjective) to do (Infinitive) so much din. Parrot (٢٠٠٧:١٩٧) indicates that some infinitives are utilized after too + adjective /much or many + noun and after adjective + enough or enough + noun as in :

His father is too old *to learn* new tricks. (Parrot, ٢٠٠٧:١٩٧)

Infinitives are used after certain nouns and noun expressions. They are utilized to clarify something about personal feelings or attitude, and aspects of possibility, necessity, and ability as in:

Alexander (١٩٨٨: ١٧١) shows that infinitives are used as the subject of clause when it indicates an activity. Although this use is perfectly acceptable, it often prefers not to start sentences with an infinitive:

To leave hopefully is better than *to arrive*.   (Alexander, ١٩٨٨:١٧١)

Attarde (٢٠٠٧) visualizes that infinitive are utilized as the object

of the preposition, as an object complement, to point out a verb to state

purpose and to qualify sentence.

She had no choice but *to give up* her dream.

We heard her *to speak* to her mother.

Tara studies hard *to get* first class.   (Attarde, ٢٠٠٧:١٨٥)

٢.٣ The Differences between Finite and Nonfinite Verb Forms A distinction is
made between finite and nonfinite verbs forms on the basis of the inflectional
features which the verb from admits. Finite forms are those which expresses
person, number, time and mood. They consist of indicative and subjective forms ,
while the nonfinite forms would be characterized by the absence of such features
and would be expressed by infinitive forms with or without to, and participles
forms, present *(-ing)* or past *(-ed)* (Quintero, ٢٠٠٢ :٣١).

Quirk et al. (١٩٩١:١٤٩) explain the criteria which allow to identify whether a verb
form is finite or nonfinite. They indicate the following criteria for identifying the
differences between finite and nonfinite:

١- Finite verb forms could function as predicates of independent clauses.

٢- Finite verb forms concern tense contrast.

٣- There is a person and number concord between subject and predicate.

٤- Finite verb forms express mood which points out whether the predication is
factual, nonfactual or counter factual.

Concerning clauses, Radford (٢٠٠٩) points out that the distinction between finite and nonfinite clauses depends on morphological criteria; thus is finite if the clause consists of a finite verb. It means that verb inflected for tense or agreement, and nonfinite if it lacks a finite verb. It means that the clause is verbless or if it is a clause containing a nonfinite tenseless and agreementless verb (Radford, ٢٠٠٩:٢٩٢).

Hudson (١٩٩٨) indicates that nonfinite verb depends as sharer on a verb just before it, and in most cases this is an auxiliary verb whereas finite verb is the head of the sentence or clauses. He states that verb to be is the most irregular verb in the language. Its various forms actually have very little in common with each other .Be could be finite and nonfinite verb. The finite ones are (are, am, is, were, was) while *being, be,* and *been* are nonfinite (Hudson,١٩٩٨: ٥٤).

٢.٤ Differences between gerund and present participle

Though they are both –ing form of the verb, present participle and gerund have several differences including:

Definition: A participle is a form of verb which works as an adjective, noun, or verbs (with the help of auxiliary verbs) in a sentence. A gerund is a present participle (verb + ing) which works as a noun in a sentence.

Relation: A definite type of present participle can be gerunds. All the gerunds are participles; present participles to be exact.

Function: A participle can function as a verb (with the help of auxiliaries), an adjective, an adverb, and a noun. A gerund can only function as a noun.

Types: Participles are mainly of two types:١. Present Participle ٢. Past Participle. A gerund is a type of present participle itself. However, it can be divided into two types:

١. Subject Gerund ٢. Object Gerund.

Examples:

Present participle:

 I saw him **sitting** there.

They had **broken** up their marriage.

Don't sit on that **spinning** chair.

Playing for this team is an honor.

I will be sleeping at this time tomorrow.

Gerund:

Sitting idly is not in my habit.

Breaking up is easy but **putting** together is not.

Chair-**sitting** is a funny game.

Playing for this team is an honor.

Sleeping at this hour of the day is not good for health. *(www.basic-concept.com/c/difference-between-participle-and-gerund)*

CHPATER THREE

Data Collection and Analysis

٣.١   The Test

٣.١.١ Definition

For Richards and Schmidt (٢٠٠٢:٧) a test is a procedure designed to measure how much of a language learners have successfully learned with specific reference to a particular course, textbook, or programme of instruction; or as Tavakoli (٢٠١٢: ٦٥٧) has defined it that a test is a means of measuring ability, knowledge, or performance. It is a set of instructions presented to an individual to elicit responses as an indicator of the extent to which the subject has been learned. This test is designed to locate the precise area of difficulty faced by Iraqi EFL university students in distinguishing and using non-finite present participle and gerund and identifying causes and types of their errors.

٣.١.٢ Test Description

The test is divided into two parts, each with one question. Starting with the first question, it consists ten items that constitute the recognition part of the test, wherein the subjects are provided with four choices to choose the correct option for every item.

The second question covers the production part which consists of ten items, wherein the subjects are required to identify the subordinate part in a sentence.

٣.١.٣ Test Properties

Validity and Reliability

Heaton (١٩٨٨:١٥٩) declares that the notion "validity" refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is planned to do. For a test to be valid it must meet two criteria: face validity and content validity. The former is secured by submitting the test to a jury of experts before its administration. The latter involves testing the skills that are related to the recognition and production of English prepositions.

Reliability on the other hand, means the consistency with which a test measures the same thing all the time (*Harrison, ١٩٨٣: ١١*).

٣.٢ Discussion of Test Results

Initially, the next subsections are set out to discuss the rates of acquisition achieved by the subjects on each question.

٣.٢.١ Performance of Subjects in the Recognition Question

Question ١ tests the subjects' performance at the recognition level. The following table provides the results obtained on each test item in the question (See Table١).

Table ١: Frequencies and Percentages of the test's items in Q I

Item no.	No. of correct responses	%	No. of incorrect responses	%
١	٨	٨٠٪	٢	٢٠٪

٢	٦	٦٠٪	٤	٤٠٪
٣	٥	٥٠٪	٥	٥٠٪
٤	٧	٧٠٪	٣	٣٠٪
٥	٤	٤٠٪	٦	٦٠٪
٦	٣	٣٠٪	٧	٧٠٪
٧	٩	٩٠٪	١	١٠٪
٨	٢	٢٠٪	٨	٨٠٪
٩	٤	٤٠٪	٦	٦٠٪
١٠	٨	٨٠٪	٢	٢٠٪
Total	٥٦	٥٦ %	٤٤	٤٤٪

The findings of the previous table show that ٥٦٪ of students' responses were correct. ٤٤٪ of students failed in the recognition level. These results indicate that although more than half students could give right answers, there is still a little less than half of them still face difficulty in distinguishing between present participles and gerunds.

The items that were answered correctly by most students were (٤), (٩), and (١٠) rating ٧٠٪, ٩٠٪, and ٨٠٪, respectively. High rate of wrong answers were found in items (٨), (٦) and (٩), respectively.

٣.٢.٢ Subjects' Performance of the Second Question

Question ٢ is prepared to assess the subjects' acquisition at the production level. Their responses on each item are set down in the following table (See Table ٢).

Table ٢: Frequencies and Percentages of the test's items in Q II

Item	Number of correct	%	Number of incorrect	%

	item		items	
١	٧	٧٠٪	٣	٣٠٪
٢	٣	٣٠٪	٧	٧٠٪
٣	٤	٤٠٪	٦	٦٠٪
٤	٢	٢٠٪	٨	٨٠٪
٥	٣	٣٠٪	٧	٧٠٪
٦	٥	٥٠٪	٥	٥٠٪
٧	٦	٦٠٪	٤	٤٠٪
٨	٤	٤٠٪	٦	٦٠٪
٩	٣	٣٠٪	٧	٧٠٪
١٠	٨	٨٠٪	٢	٢٠٪
Total	٤٥	٤٥٪	٥٥	٥٥٪

Findings related to the production question (table ٢) shows that higher percentage of students (٥٥٪) failed to use present participles and gerund correctly. Only ٤٥ responses (٤٥٪) were correct in their responses. These results indicate that students face difficulty in the production level than the recognition level.

The lowest correct answers for items (٤), (٢), (٥), and (٩), respectively. Most of the student tested failed to give correct example for the given items in question ٢. The reason behind that lies in the fact that they do not know the function of the present participle and gerund in a sentence.

Conclusion

Nonfinite verb is a verb that is not finite. It does not concern difference for past tense and present tense. Nonfinite verb concerns three forms, they are infinitive with or without *(to)* , *(-ing)* form which is called gerund or present participle and (ed) form which is called past participle. There are three types of non-finite verbs:-*ing* participle, *-ed* participle and infinitive.

Based on the results of this paper, EFL learners face difficulties in distinguishing and using present participles and gerunds . Results showed that more than half students tested failed to provide correct examples for present participles and gerund in sentences. The result validated the hypothesis that "EFL learners face difficulties in recognizing and using gerund and present participle.", and this achieves the aim of the study.

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Appendix I

Questions

State whether the *–ing* forms given in the following sentences are present participles or gerunds. Write "G" if the form is 'gerund' and "PP" if the form is present participle.

١. Hearing a loud noise, we ran to the window.

٢. She was fatally injured in the accident and is now fighting for his life.

٣. He ruined his sight by watching TV all day.

٤. We saw a clown standing on his head.

٥. Asking questions is a whole lot easier than answering them.

٦. Waving their hands, the audience cheered the winner.

٧. Plucking flowers is forbidden.

٨. Jumping over the fence, the thief escaped.

٩. I was surprised at John's being absent.

١٠. We spent the whole day playing cards.

Q٢: Exemplify:

١. gerund as a subject
٢. present participle as part of a verb
٣. gerund as an object of a preposition
٤. present participle as an adjective
٥. present participle as
٦. gerund as an object
٧. gerund as a subject complement
٨. present participle as an adjective
٩. gerund as a noun
١٠. present participle as part of a verb

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