



A NEW DESCRIPTION OF PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH VERBALS

Abdullah Ferikoğluⁱ

Prof. Dr., Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering,
Technology Faculty of Sakarya University, Esenpetepe Kampüsü,
Sakarya, 54197, Turkey

Abstract:

This paper proposes a new system approach redescribing present-day English verbals, using a novel format and terminology, presenting participles, gerunds and infinitives in tables. According to the present author's observations, currently there is some incoherence regarding the description of verbals, especially participles, due to which students might be having some difficulties. The aim is to try to eliminate the existing ambiguities and inconsistencies regarding the terminology and to group the incoherent and scattered information in easy to refer integrative tables. It is not the purpose of this study to analyse or discuss all peculiarities of English verbals. The objective is rather to propose and present a structurally symmetric and consistent description system which is all inclusive and hopefully contributes to overcoming some ambiguities stemming from terminology. The proposed system is expected to evoke some positive reactions and discussion relating to the topic. And it is also expectedly of pedagogical importance for education of English as a foreign language.

Keywords: English verbals, participles, gerunds, infinitives

1. Introduction

English verbals, participles, gerunds and infinitives are very functional and convenient to use. The problem is that concerning the terminology and classification of them there is some ambiguity and inconsistency. Most authors divide participles as "*present participles, past participles, perfect participles*" [2], [3]. However, when referring to the conventional time – aspect structure of English [1] "presentness" and "pastness" are temporal notions whereas "*perfectness*" is aspectual notion. These non-finite verb forms have no inherent time information and can refer to any time that the context establishes. Besides, the literature defines and use different terms such as "*simple present participle*" and "*simple past participle*" [4]. For another example there appear such terms in grammar

ⁱ Correspondence: email af@sakarya.edu.tr

books as “*present of active (simple) participles...perfect or passive participle...*” [5]. Similarly, some authors offer that the “*past participle*” might better be called the “*perfect participle*” because it says that the action or state is complete at the time of the main verb.

And this kind of terminological controversies are not only of present time but also of deep linguistic history [6],[7].

This paper proposes a new overall system approach redescribing verbals, using a new symmetrical format and terminology, introducing all-inclusive tables. The aim is to try to eliminate the existing controversies and inconsistencies mentioned above and to group the diverse and scatter information in easy to refer integrative tables, which also comprise rarely, if ever, used verbal forms. Participles, gerunds and infinitives are dealt with the same template.

The designed system is expected to be helpful in the education of English as a foreign language.

2. Method

In order to handle the reviewing and redescribing English verbal system, it has been found fitting to avoid terms implying real-world time notions such as “*present participle*” and “*past participle*”. And accordingly the pattern, “*verb form 1 (VF1), verb form 2 (VF2), verb form 3 (VF3) and base form (BF)*”, has been adopted, shown below in Table 1 as a starting point. The verb “to write” has been taken as example through the work.

Table 1: English verb forms

VF1	VF2	VF3	BF
write	wrote	written	write
am/is/are	was/were	been	be
have/has	had	had	have

The verbals in the following chapter have been described in terms of Table 1 entries and using the aspectual notions of “*simple*”, “*progressive or continuous*”, “*perfective*” and “*perfect progressive*”. For participles, two types (type 1 and type 2) simple participles are assumed with same passive form for both. Other aspects and their passive forms are derived as in Table 2. For gerunds and infinitives, parallel approaches are followed as in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

3. Results

The new arrangement of participles, gerunds and infinitives of modern written English, fitting to the objective of the current work are provided below in tables. It is admitted that some forms are rarely, if ever, used but they all are included for sake of overall integrity.

Table 2: The proposed participle arrangement

	Active	Passive
Simple Participle	(type1) BF + ing Ex : writing <i>The boy writing the letter has left.</i> (type2) VF3 Ex: written <i>He has written a letter.</i>	VP3 Ex: written (for both types) <i>The letter written yesterday is here.</i> <i>A letter has been written by him.</i>
Progressive Participle	being + BF + ing Ex: {being} writing <i>The boy {being} writing the letter is very busy.</i>	being + VF3 Ex: {being} being written. <i>The letter {being} being written will be given to you.</i>
Perfect Participle	having + VF3 Ex: having written <i>The man having written the letter is my uncle.</i>	having been + VF3 Ex: having been written <i>The letter having been written is here.</i>
Per. Prog. Participle	having been + BF +ing Ex: having been writing <i>The man having been writing the letter is my uncle.</i>	having been being + VF3 Ex: having been being written <i>The letter having been being written will be given to you.</i>

Note: The words in parenthesis are generally reduced.

The arrangement for gerunds and infinitives are more straightforward than participles. Below Table 3, which is filled only formally, illustrates the proposed gerund system structure, using the same template as participles.

Table 3: The proposed gerund arrangement

	Active	Passive
Simple Participle	BF + ing Ex: writing	Being + VF3 Ex: being written
Progressive Participle	Being + BF + ing Ex: being writing	Being + being + VF3 Ex: being being written
Perfect Participle	Having + VF3 Ex: having written	Having + been + VF3 Ex: having been written.
Per. Prog. Participle	Having + been + BF + ing Ex: having been writing	Having + been + being + VF3 having been being written

And finally, below Table 4 illustrates the proposed infinitive system structure, using the template as participles and gerunds.

Table 4: The proposed infinitive arrangement

	Active	Passive
Simple Participle	BF (to) write	Be + VF3 (to) be written
Progressive Participle	Be + BF + ing (to) be writing	Be + being + VF3 (to) be being written
Perfect Participle	Have + VF3 (to) have written	Have + been + VF3 (to) have been written
Per. Prog. Participle	Have + been + BF + ing (to) have been writing	Have + been + being + VF3 (to) have been being written

From Tables 2 and 3 it is clear that compound participles comprise simple ones together with infinite forms of verb “be”. Although some forms seem too bulky to use, they all are provided for sake of completeness.

4. Conclusion

It was not the purpose of this study to analyse or discuss all peculiarities of English verbals. The objective was rather to propose a new system approach, which is symmetrical, all inclusive and overcome some ambiguities stemming from terminology. The proposed system is expected to evoke some positive reactions and discussion relating to the topic. And it is also expectedly of pedagogical importance for education of English as a foreign language.

References

- [1] Abdullah Ferikoğlu, “A systematic design of time-aspect graphic system for visualising English tenses”, paper under publication
- [2] Assessing Language Grade-8, by Rosemary Hug, e-book by Lorenz Educational Press
- [3] <http://www.english-language-grammar-guide.com/what-is-a-participle.html>
- [4] Meriam Webster Dictionary, © 2018 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated
- [5] A grammar of Language: Adopted to Schools of America, by Joseph Ripey Chandler.
- [6] Adjectival participles or present participles? On the classification of some dubious examples from the Helsinki Corpus Paloma Núñez Pertejo Universidade de Santiago de Compostela)
- [7] “Observations on the opinions of several writers”, Gavin Young, Calcutta, The Hindoostanne-Press, 1817

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of English Language Teaching shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).