

The Use of Gerunds and Reported Speech in Academic and Informal Texts

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the use of gerund and reported speech in academic and nonformal texts, as well as to identify common errors in their usage. Using a literature review approach, data were analyzed from various sources such as academic journals, grammar books, and related research articles. The findings indicate that gerunds are widely used as subjects, objects, or complements in both formal and informal contexts, while reported speech plays a key role in conveying indirect information in a formal and structured manner. However, several common errors were found, including incorrect tense shifts, pronoun usage, and sentence structure transformations. These findings imply the need for contextual and practice-oriented grammar instruction to help learners understand and apply these grammatical forms accurately across diverse communication settings.

Keywords: Gerund, Reported Speech, Academic Texts, Nonformal Texts, Grammar Instruction

INTRODUCTION

English, as an international language, has a complex and diverse grammatical structure. One of the fundamental components in constructing accurate sentences is grammar (Mulyanti & Febriani, 2024). Among the essential grammatical elements, gerunds and reported speech are two topics that often cause confusion for English learners, particularly in both academic and informal contexts. The correct use of these forms not only affects the meaning of a sentence but also reflects the speaker's level of linguistic competence (Ifadah et al., 2024).

A gerund is a verb form that functions as a noun, typically ending in -ing. Although it may seem simple, this form carries a complex morpho-semantic role (Sucipto, 2021). Research by Jufrizal & Refnita, (2021) emphasizes that gerunds combine characteristics of nominalization and verbalization, which often confuses EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in Indonesia. Errors in its use may stem from a lack of understanding of the function and position of gerunds in sentences, as well as differences in the Indonesian language system, which lacks an equivalent form.

On the other hand, reported speech, or indirect speech, is a transformation of direct statements into third-party reported statements. This transformation involves changes in sentence structure, such as tense, pronouns, and time expressions. A study by Gerhanawati et al., (2019) shows that students still frequently make mistakes in forming reported speech, especially regarding misinformation and misordering.

Issues in the use of gerunds and reported speech arise not only in academic contexts but also in everyday communication, including informal texts such as social media, online conversations, and other forms of personal expression. Mistakes in

applying these structures can lead to ambiguity or even misunderstandings in communication.

Previous studies have highlighted the types of errors that occur in the use of both gerunds and reported speech. Rahayu et al., (2017) identified eight types of errors in gerund usage, with the most common being the misuse of gerunds as direct objects of certain verbs. Meanwhile, errors in reported speech mostly relate to the understanding of grammatical changes, such as shifts in tenses and pronouns.

Research by Gerhanawati et al., (2019) on students' errors in constructing reported speech revealed that the complexity of grammatical changes, such as shifts in time and pronouns, is often a major source of difficulty in understanding indirect sentence structures. This suggests that differences in syntactic systems and rules between languages can pose significant challenges for learners. Therefore, it is crucial for both teachers and students to understand the morphological and syntactic characteristics of gerunds and reported speech, especially in applying them accurately and contextually across various types of texts.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the application of gerunds and reported speech in academic and informal texts. The focus of the study includes identifying common types of errors, analyzing the contexts of their use, and exploring the pedagogical implications for teaching English as a foreign language.

By analyzing these two grammatical forms comprehensively, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and contextual grammar teaching methods. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will enrich academic references in the field of applied linguistics and English language education, particularly in the context of learning in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a literature review method as its primary approach. This method was chosen to examine and analyze various theories, findings, and expert perspectives related to the use of gerunds and reported speech in academic and informal texts. The literature analyzed includes scholarly journals, grammar reference books, undergraduate theses, and articles relevant to grammatical focus in English as a foreign language learning. The selection criteria for the literature are based on topic relevance, academic validity, and publication recency, covering the last 10–15 years (Adlini et al., 2022).

The analytical procedure consists of several stages: topic identification, classification of sources based on the study focus (gerunds and reported speech), and narrative synthesis of content. Information from various sources is compared and analyzed to identify common patterns, differences, and gaps that may serve as a reflection point in the context of language learning. The results of this review aim to provide a deeper conceptual understanding and serve as a foundation for future empirical and practical research in English language education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Use of Gerunds and Reported Speech in Academic and Informal Texts

The use of gerunds in English plays a significant role, especially in constructing effective and meaningful sentences in both academic and informal texts. A gerund is the -ing form of a verb that functions as a noun. In academic writing, this form is often used to express activities or general concepts without directly mentioning the actor. For example, in the sentence *Improving writing skills requires consistent practice*, the word *improving* functions as the subject, denoting an ongoing process. This usage contributes to a more formal and objective sentence structure, in line with the characteristics of academic language (Jaelani, 2022).

In contrast, in informal texts such as personal blogs, social media comments, or everyday dialogue, gerunds are used more flexibly and expressively. Examples such as *I hate waiting in long lines* or *They enjoy hiking on weekends* illustrate how gerunds can be used to convey feelings, preferences, or habits without strict adherence to formal structure. This allows speakers to communicate more freely while still maintaining clarity of meaning (Sucipto, 2021).

Reported speech, or indirect speech, serves a different function in academic and informal contexts. In academic writing, it is commonly used to convey ideas or quotations without directly quoting the source. This is important to avoid plagiarism and allows for interpretation. For instance: *The author argues that the method is ineffective*. This sentence not only conveys information but also reflects the writer's engagement in interpreting someone else's statement. This structure typically involves changes in tense, pronouns, and time expressions, in accordance with the rules of sequence of tenses in English grammar (Jaelani, 2022).

In informal texts, reported speech tends to appear in a more relaxed narrative form. For example, in the sentence *He said he was going to be late*, there is less emphasis on perfect grammatical transformation, as the focus is on quick and practical communication. In such contexts, speakers may not always strictly follow grammatical rules but can still convey messages effectively. Research by Gerhanawati et al., (2019) indicates that many learners struggle to transform direct speech into reported speech, particularly in changing tenses and pronouns.

Analysis from various literature sources reveals that gerunds and reported speech often serve as markers distinguishing academic and informal language styles. In academic texts, these forms help maintain logical coherence between ideas and support arguments systematically. Meanwhile, in informal texts, their flexible use reflects the spontaneity and personal style of the writer or speaker (Jufrizal & Refnita, 2021; Pauzan, 2021).

Thus, it can be concluded that gerunds and reported speech are essential structures in English that are applied contextually depending on the type of text. A clear understanding of their functional differences and applications in both domains can enhance communicative competence, whether in academic discourse or in everyday interactions.

B . Common Mistakes in Using Gerund and Reported Speech

The use of gerunds often presents a unique challenge for English language learners, particularly native speakers of Indonesian. One of the main causes of errors in using gerunds is learners' lack of awareness that gerunds function as nouns, which

distinguishes them from present participles that function as adjectives. Although both share the same form verb + *-ing* their grammatical roles and meanings differ. For example, in the sentence *Swimming is good for your health*, *swimming* acts as the subject, while in *The swimming boy is my brother*, *swimming* functions as an adjective. Failure to distinguish between these forms often leads to confusion and sentence construction errors (Sucipto, 2021).

In addition, learners frequently make errors when using gerunds after certain verbs that syntactically require a gerund form. Verbs such as *enjoy*, *consider*, *avoid*, and *suggest* must be followed by a gerund, not an infinitive. However, errors like *I enjoy to read* instead of *I enjoy reading* are commonly found. This mistake reflects a lack of mastery over verb-specific grammatical rules and vocabulary. According to Karim, (2013) many learners tend to ignore these specific rules and instead rely on what sounds “natural” based on the logic of their first language.

Another common mistake occurs when gerunds follow prepositions. In English, when a verb follows a preposition, it must be in gerund form. Yet learners often mistakenly place the base form of the verb after the preposition. For example, *She is good at dance* (incorrect) should be *She is good at dancing*. This problem arises because there is no equivalent rule in the Indonesian language, leading learners to transfer sentence structures directly from their mother tongue into English (Pauzan, 2020).

A more complex error involves the use of gerunds in passive constructions (*being + past participle*) or in negative forms (*not + gerund*). Many learners struggle to form these structures correctly. For instance, the sentence *He was accused of being dishonest* is often incorrectly written as *He was accused to be dishonest*. The correct form requires a gerund after the preposition *of*, and since the meaning is passive, the structure *being + adjective/past participle* must be used. This indicates that learners have not yet fully grasped the more complex functions of gerund structures.

In the case of reported speech, the most common error is failure to apply tense shifting correctly. When converting direct speech into indirect speech, the verb tense must reflect the time the event occurred. For example, *She said, “I am hungry”* should be transformed into *She said that she was hungry*, not *She said she is hungry*. Research by Gerhanawati et al., (2019) highlights that tense shifting is the area most prone to error, as students often retain the original tense without applying the required transformations.

Another frequent error involves incorrect pronoun changes, particularly when learners fail to adjust the point of view of the speaker. For instance, *He said, “You are late”* should become *He said that I was late*, not *He said that you were late*. Such errors reveal that learners have not fully understood how the speaker's perspective influences grammatical structure in indirect speech. This is often compounded by the tendency of students to translate sentences literally from their native language without adapting to the English context (Sudana et al., 2016).

Errors also frequently appear in questions and commands within reported speech. For example, the direct question “*Where do you live?*” is often incorrectly reported as *She asked where do you live*, whereas the correct form is *She asked where I lived*. Similarly, in reporting commands such as “*Close the door!*”, students often say *She said close the door* instead of the correct form *She told me to close the door*. These errors

indicate a lack of understanding of the structural differences between statements, questions, and commands in reported speech, as well as the appropriate transformations for each.

In summary, errors in the use of gerunds and reported speech generally stem from insufficient syntactic understanding and a lack of contextualized practice. Other contributing factors include first language interference and a lack of emphasis on sentence structure differences in grammar instruction. To reduce these errors, a more contextual and exploratory approach to teaching is needed one that encourages students to understand the function and position of each grammatical structure within a sentence, rather than relying solely on rote memorization of rules without application.

B. Implications for English Language Learning

The findings from this review of the use of gerunds and reported speech in academic and informal texts highlight the need for a more contextual and applied approach to grammar instruction. The common errors identified, as discussed by Gerhanawati et al., (2019) serve as indicators that highly structural grammar teaching methods are not fully effective in developing learners' communicative competence. Thus, the first key implication is the importance of shifting from rule-memorization approaches toward the application of grammatical forms in authentic, real-world contexts.

In the teaching of gerunds, instruction should place greater emphasis on their syntactic functions—as subjects, objects, complements, or objects of prepositions. Gerunds are not only used as nouns but also appear in passive, negative, and more complex constructions such as *possessive adjective + gerund*. Therefore, students should be encouraged to explore gerund usage in a variety of authentic texts such as academic articles, fictional dialogues, or narrative essays. Activities such as reading and underlining -ing forms, followed by function analysis, can help strengthen students' structural understanding (Karim, 2013).

For reported speech, conversation-based simulations or tasks involving rephrasing video content or interviews can serve as effective methods. Common errors in reported speech such as incorrect changes in tense, pronouns, and sentence types (questions or commands) highlight the need for progressive exercises that transform direct speech into indirect speech. Gradual practice from statements to questions and commands will help students develop flexibility in recognizing reported speech patterns (Gerhanawati et al., 2019).

One significant challenge in learning -ing forms lies in distinguishing their morphological function as nouns, verbs, or adjectives. This kind of morphological awareness cannot be developed through memorization alone but must involve practical usage, sentence structure analysis, and contrastive exercises with the learner's native language. Teachers should, therefore, integrate morphosyntactic approaches in grammar instruction to help students connect form and function effectively (Sucipto, 2021).

It is also essential for teachers to adopt error-based learning strategies, where students not only learn from correct sentence models but also from analyzing incorrect

ones (Muammar et al., 2018). Grouping -ing forms based on their function in sentences gives students a more complete understanding of how these structures operate dynamically in academic writing.

As such, English language instruction in EFL classrooms must move beyond traditional grammar teaching methods. Teachers and curriculum designers should develop learning activities that enable students to observe, analyze, and apply gerunds and reported speech actively in various contexts. Furthermore, incorporating authentic materials such as academic journals, popular articles, and conversational texts can enrich students' awareness of grammatical variation according to register and communicative purpose.

Mastery of grammatical forms like gerunds and reported speech not only improves students' writing and speaking skills but also enhances their ability to think critically and organize ideas systematically. The accurate use of these structures becomes a strong indicator of comprehensive English language proficiency both in academic and everyday communication.

CONCLUSION

Gerunds and reported speech are two essential grammatical structures in English that serve distinct yet complementary functions in constructing accurate and meaningful sentences. In academic texts, these forms are employed to convey ideas in an objective and formal manner, whereas in informal texts, they are used more flexibly and communicatively. A solid understanding of both is crucial, as errors in their use can affect the clarity and accuracy of the intended meaning.

However, numerous studies and literature reviews reveal that learners frequently make mistakes in using gerunds and reported speech. Common errors include misidentifying the function of gerunds in sentences, incorrect usage after certain verbs or prepositions, and mistakes in converting direct speech into indirect speech. These issues often stem from limited grammatical knowledge, lack of contextual practice, and interference from learners' first language in their grammatical reasoning.

Therefore, English language instruction should adopt a more contextual and application-based approach, incorporating authentic texts and error-based practice. Teachers are encouraged to provide deeper morphological and syntactic explanations, guiding students to apply these structures across various communicative contexts. With a strong command of gerunds and reported speech, students will be better equipped to express ideas and convey information effectively, both in academic settings and in everyday communication.

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