




## Reviews

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**Xin Sennrich**, *The many faces of English -ing* (Topics in English Linguistics 111). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2022. Pp. ix + 203. ISBN 9783110764383.

Reviewed by Andrew Spencer , University of Essex

Xin Sennrich's monograph *The Many Faces of English -ing* comprises an Introduction, Conclusions and seven substantive chapters. Chapter 2 (pp. 13–17) outlines the main assumptions. Word classes are defined in terms of HPSG-style inheritance hierarchies. Gerunds have the external distribution of nouns but the internal syntax (dependents, modifiers) of verbs. However, the noun class as such does not provide any specific set of dependents that must be inherited by gerunds, so that a gerund can be defined as just a rather idiosyncratic type of noun (p. 14). Participles are purely adjectives (again with the internal syntax of verbs). However, in section 2.2 gerunds are argued to be mixed categories, following Malouf (2000), inheriting from the type noun and a supertype relational, which subsumes verbs and adjectives as well as gerunds.

Chapter 3 (pp. 18–28) summarises the lexical, syntactic and semantic properties of the adjective category. Relational adjectives (derived from/motivated by nouns) denote concrete or abstract nominal entities: *financial (advisor)*, *dental (decay)*, from *finance*, *tooth*. Participles are event-denoting adjectives. They can be transitive, just like the (true) adjectives *worth*, *near*, *like*.

Chapter 4 (pp. 29–83) argues that even aspectual participles are (just) adjectives. Hence, *The boy is playing (on) the piano* has the same syntactic structure as *The boy is near (to) the window*. In *The prisoners have escaped*, *escaped* is the predicative complement of *have*. This verb does not take prototypical adjectives because it only selects event denotations: \**She has nice/tired*. Participles function as pre/postmodifiers. This includes the predicative complement of a perception verb with a controlled object: *I saw [the boy][\_\_\_\_\_ smoking in the class room]*. Where the participle is an attributive postmodifier, *I saw [the [boy smoking in the classroom]]*, V-ing does not realise progressive aspect: 'progressive aspect is not expressed by the present participle itself, but is realised as the composition of the predicate verb *be* and the event-denoting semantics of the present participle' (p. 38). In examples such as Sennrich's (17) the participle functions as a free adjunct: (17) *Standing on the chair, Tom can touch the ceiling*.

Section 4.2 argues that participles have the same external distribution as adjectives and so they must be (simply) adjectives. The meaning of participial adjectives, *interesting*, *charming*, etc., cannot be derived from the verb semantics (p. 52), but it is the only thing which distinguishes them from the participles they are derived/converted from. Participial adjectives denote properties, while true participles denote events and hence

are unable to serve as the complement of a verb that selects a property-denoting predicate such as *seem*, *look*, *sound*, *become*. There is a contrast between postmodifying present participles (*the girl reading a book*) and what Sennrich calls appositive postmodification (*You'll have great fun choosing a name for your duck*, example (72a)).

Chapter 5 (pp. 84–95) examines the consequences of treating participles as (just) adjectives. Sennrich argues that there would be problems if we assume that participles and adjectives belong to different categories in that it would entail one of the following: that participial adjectives are (i) derived from verbs via *-ing/-ed* suffixation; (ii) converted from the participles; (iii) diachronically lexicalised as adjectives. Analysis (i) fails to explain adjectives derived from irregular past participles (*drunk*, *broken*, ...). Analysis (ii) would require a derivational process, conversion, to be performed over an inflected form, the participle, in contravention of a putative universal principle of (English) morphology which states that regular inflection cannot appear inside derivation. Analysis (iii) has the problem that it is more productive than lexicalisation usually is, and is morphologically and semantically more transparent than uncontroversial cases of historical lexicalisation such as *cunning*, *gruelling*.

Section 5.1.4 presents Sennrich's account of participial adjectives: an event-denoting participle only has to undergo semantic shift to become a property-denoting term like a prototypical adjective (p. 90): *the boy is very charming* (\**the audience*).

Sennrich devotes section 5.2 (pp. 92–5) to aspect and voice. In the progressive aspect construction the participle is not a verb (pp. 93, 95), rather, in her example (6b) *He is smoking*, *smoking* expresses a stage-level predication, as opposed to the individual-level predication expressed in (6a) *He smokes*. The apparent grammatical categories of perfect aspect and passive voice are analysed 'as a knock-on effect for [sic] other areas of English morphosyntax'. The 'perfect aspect' is no more than the composition of the adjectival 'perfect participle' as the predicative complement to *have*, while passive voice is just the composition of the (homophonous) 'passive participle' with the predicative complement to *be*.

Chapter 6 (pp. 96–129) considers the categorial status of gerunds. They contrast with the associated nominals, *the building of the bridge*, which are entirely nominal. Gerunds have the external distribution of nouns, but 'phrases headed by gerunds have the internal structure of verb phrases', and this 'contrast leads to the explanation for the categorial status of gerunds: the gerund is a mixed category' (p. 97). However, associated nominals, like gerunds, denote events ('eventualities', p. 99), presumably dynamic as opposed to stative situation types. Thus, a stative verb such as *know* does not allow an associated nominal: ??*John's knowing of calculus* (cf. *John's knowledge of calculus*).

Subsection 6.2.2 demonstrates that gerunds have the external distribution of noun phrases: subject, subject complement to *be*, direct object, complement of preposition. This includes indirect or first objects in double object constructions: *Mary gives playing the piano all her energy and time* [sic]. (Cf. also *Mary gives all her time and energy to playing the piano*.) (This appears to be the only distribution that is never available to non-nominal phrases, e.g. finite or *to*-infinitival clauses.) One place where gerunds are disallowed is complements to certain verbs, such as *know*, *promise*: *Mary*

*promised \*writing/to write the letter.* Sennrich suggests that this is because of high-frequency competition from *to*-infinitives (p. 105), though it is hard to know how that would explain the distribution, or why both types are available to other verbs: *Mary continued writing/to write the letter.* One construction which permits gerunds is extraposition with certain adjectives: (22b) *It is pointless buying so much food* (also possible with the infinitive), while a genuine noun is impossible in this position: (23b) *\*It is pointless the purchase of so much food.* It is not clear how this advances Sennrich's claims, however, if gerunds are supposed to be nouns (and if infinitives are verbs).

The contrast between gerunds and *to*-infinitival phrases is addressed in subsection 6.2.3, where Sennrich points out that infinitival clauses can also function as subjects, subject complements, direct objects, though not as indirect objects or complements to prepositions.

Section 6.3 explores the verbal internal syntax of gerunds, contrasting this with the nominal internal syntax of associated *V-ing* nominals. One obvious difference is discussed under heading F, p. 117, 'aspect', which I cite (almost) in full:

gerunds permit aspect markers ..., whereas associated *V-ing* nominals do not.

- (43) a. His having claimed immunity scared us.  
       \*His having claimed of immunity scared us.

Gerunds can also be passivised – *Tom's regularly/\*regular being helped by his colleagues ...* – and can license various types of double object/complement construction – *John's giving Mary his car, her hammering the sheet flat, her expecting/persuading John to see the doctor* – as well as particle/prepositional verbs – *his looking up the information / looking the information up* vs *\*his looking up of the information / looking of the information up*.

After a very short historical survey of the development of the single *V-ing* form, chapter 7 (pp. 130–59) is devoted to establishing that gerunds and present participles are distinct parts of speech. This runs contrary to the position advanced in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston & Pullum *et al.* 2002, *CGEL* henceforth), where the two usages are subsumed under a single category of 'gerund-participle', whose distribution and interpretation is dependent on the morphosyntactic context, not on intrinsic properties of the lexical form. Sennrich enumerates a set of gerund-only contexts and participle-only contexts so as to establish complementary distribution (much of this largely repeats what was said in the previous chapter). She then develops a series of grammatical tests based on the idea that gerunds and participles will behave differently when they follow a verb (section 7.3). Since a gerund is a noun, it should be able to serve as the complement of a verb, and undergo noun phrase oriented processes. A participle, being an adjective, should fail to undergo such processes. Sennrich contrasts gerund complements, as in *They discussed [visiting the museum]* with what for her is a participial complement to the verb *keep*: *They kept [visiting the museum]*. She then looks at sequences of *V-ing V-ing*, listing four possible

combinations: (i) gerund + gerund, (ii) gerund + participle, (iii) participle + gerund, (iv) participle + participle. Of these, all are claimed to be possible except for (iv): (i) *We enjoy celebrating winning the competition*; (ii) *Keeping practising regularly is important*; (iii) *We were celebrating winning the competition*; (iv) *\*We were keeping travelling to Europe*. She concedes that case (ii) is ‘controversial’, in that many speakers reject such examples. This includes me. For speakers such as me the generalisation would be that a participle cannot serve as the complement to any *V-ing* form, though little seems to hinge on this.

In section 7.4 Sennrich considers constructions of the form Verb + NP + *V-ing*. What for Sennrich are gerund complements to verbs such as *dislike*, *appreciate*, *remember* appear in two forms: as *Acc-ing* constructions (31a) or as *Poss-ing* constructions (31b) (Sennrich does not use this terminology):

(31) a./b. Mary dislikes him/his smoking in the classroom

With other types of verb only the *Acc-ing* construction is possible (*CGEL*: 1238, 3Cii):

(32) a./b. I caught them/\*their breaking into my car

With verbs like *catch*, *keep*, etc. we are dealing with a raised object or exceptional case marking construction: the pronoun *him/them* is in the object form as though it were a complement of the main verb, but it also functions as the subject of the *V-ing* form. With a genitive (*his/their*) the pronoun can only be in the subject position of the *V-ing* clause (specifically, the determiner of the *V-ing* nominal) (pp. 148–53 takes us through the standard arguments from the 1970s for distinguishing these cases). The following section then summarises Sennrich’s arguments against the unitary gerund-participle category. *CGEL* takes the gerund and participle uses to be in complementary distribution. Sennrich disputes this on the grounds that both can be the complement of *be*: *My hobby/son is playing the piano*. But note that the authors of *CGEL*, like most grammarians, assume that copular *be* and auxiliary verb *be* are distinct elements and set up distinct grammatical contexts, so for those grammarians the two instances really are in complementary distribution. Sennrich (p. 156) cites some of the examples discussed in *CGEL* (p. 1221), in their critique of the gerund/present participle distinction.

(53) a./b. They seem resentful/\*resenting it  
a./b. He became remorseful/\*feeling remorse

(54) a./b. He stopped \*calm/staring at them  
a./b. He continues \*calm/staring at them

She argues that *seem*, *become*, etc. select property-denoting complements and the present participles are event-denoting. This leaves the examples with the main verb *keep*. Sennrich says of these (p. 156, essentially following *CGEL*): ‘Both *They kept staring at them* and *They kept calm* are grammatical, but their semantics are different. The

present participle *staring* denotes the event that the subject is involved in, whereas the prototypical adjective *calm* denotes a property of the subject.’

Sennrich also takes issue with the traditional assumption (also found in *CGEL*) that the gerund-participle *V-ing* is an inflectional suffix. She claims that *-ing* is always a derivational suffix. As ever, the principal argument is external distribution: only derivational morphology can change the part of speech from verb to noun or adjective. A final alleged problem for the *CGEL* approach, in which the participles are all inflected forms of the verb, arises when they converted to true adjectives: *boring*, *tired*. Sennrich claims that such conversion violates a general principle of (English) grammar, which says that derivation cannot apply to inflected forms.

Chapter 8 (pp. 160–81) looks at constructions in which the *V-ing* form premodifies a noun in compounds and noun phrases. In *drinking water* and similar compounds the *V-ing* form has to be an associated *V-ing* nominal, and not a gerund. The semantic relation between the head and modifier is just as varied as that in any noun–noun compound. Sennrich claims (p. 174) that no ascriptive interpretation is possible, comparable to that found in *boy actor*, *luxury flats*, *steel bridge*. (However, it seems to me that you can get examples of coordinate compounding such as *the writing editing process*, *an acting directing role*. Sennrich does not discuss such cases.) The *dancing girl* example has two stress patterns, the typical compound stress, *dancing girl*, and a phrasal stress pattern: *dancing girl*. For Sennrich this means that the first is a compound, while the second is a case of a participle serving as an attributive modifier to the head noun.

This monograph presents a useful summary of a good many of the facts relating to *V-ing* forms. None of the data are new (and in some cases they are facts which have been discussed for the past sixty years). For the most part the discussion is easy to follow, though it is rather repetitious in places. The analysis claims to be based on Malouf’s multiple inheritance model of gerunds, but there is virtually no discussion of the HPSG background and the HPSG technology is not really utilised, so this cannot be regarded as an HPSG analysis or even an analysis in terms of multiple (or orthogonal, or default) inheritance.

What is novel is Sennrich’s theoretical proposals:

1. No *V-ing* forms are actually verbs: they are either (mixed category) nouns or adjectives.
2. There is no category of aspect.
3. Participles are adjectives that can have exactly the same complementation/modification properties as verbs and can denote (dynamic) events.
4. There is no unitary gerund-participle category. Gerunds and participles are not in complementary distribution.

Point 2 presupposes that there are no aspectual auxiliaries, only lexical *be/have*.

Sennrich’s account leaves unanswered a number of rather difficult questions:

- Why do no other adjectives have the same verb-like properties as participles?
- How precisely does the copular *be* + present participle come to acquire the semantics/grammatical function of the progressive aspect?

- How can perfect aspect be computed? Is the perfect participle really a kind of passive participle? How can *have* take an adjective phrase complement?
- If the gerund-participle is two distinct categories, despite being formally identical, is this also true of the perfect and passive participles?

Perhaps the most important question is this: if gerunds are mixed categories because of their VP-like internal syntax, why are participles equally not mixed categories? Without a convincing answer to *all* of these questions, Sennrich's proposals lose much of their appeal.

It seems that the account in *CGEL* and that of Sennrich can be reconciled to a large degree if we recognise that gerunds and participles are examples of transpositions (Spencer 2013) or category-changing inflection (Haspelmath 1996). This is reflected in the fact that they are mixed categories. It also helps if we distinguish two different types of paradigm, a form paradigm, which lists all the forms of a lexeme and the morphosyntactic properties they are associated with, and a content paradigm, which lists all and only the morphosyntactic and morphosemantic properties that are accessible to syntax/semantics (Stump 2016). The content paradigm would distinguish English verbal categories such as bare/*to*-infinitive, imperative, non-3sg present indicative, but the form paradigm would only list the single base form as the form-correspondent to all of those disparate categories (syncretism). We can then say, with *CGEL*, that the gerund-participle, or 'V-*ing* form', is single member of the form paradigm, but also say, with Sennrich, that it realises several properties at the content paradigm level, including the associated V-*ing* noun (noun), gerund (mixed noun-verb), attributive modifier (true participle, mixed adjective-verb) and converb to the progressive auxiliary *be* (non-finite verb form). Transpositions are frequently converted into other parts of speech, either by the grammar or by lexicalisation processes.

I noticed very few typos: *the predictive complement* for *the predicative complement* (p. 95); *subject, complement* for *subject complement* (p. 107); *\*There is a good change* for *\*There is a good chance* (p. 108); *prediction* for *predication* (p. 122); and on p. 154 the first line accidentally repeats the last line of the previous page.

*Reviewer's address:*

*Department of Language and Linguistics*

*University of Essex*

*Wivenhoe Park*

*Colchester CO4 3SQ*

*United Kingdom*

[spena@essex.ac.uk](mailto:spena@essex.ac.uk)

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**Todor Koev**, *Parenthetical meaning* (Oxford Studies in Semantics and Pragmatics). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. viii + 155. ISBN 9780198869535.

Reviewed by Madeleine Butschety  and Edgar Onea , University of Graz

Which properties should be regarded as the hallmarks of parentheticality? How does a parenthetical interact with its host or root clause? – Is there any such interaction at all? What is the discourse status of parenthetical content? And how can we explain that parenthetical material systematically escapes the scope of structurally higher operators? These are just some of the questions that the literature on appositives and other constructions categorized as ‘parenthetical’ have been concerned with in the past decades, and that have recently been the subject of much discussion. Todor Koev’s new book *Parenthetical Meaning* offers new perspectives on these and related questions, and thereby attempts to clear up some of the mysteries that research on parentheticals has struggled with for many years.

Koev’s investigation into parentheticals starts from the question of what constitutes parenthetical meaning, and how this kind of meaning is related to the meaning expressed by the root clause in (or attached to) whose syntactic structure the parenthetical appears. The intricate factor here lies in the seemingly dual nature of parentheticals; they exhibit a degree of independence, yet simultaneously display instances of interpretive interplay with the root clause. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–16) is mainly concerned with two issues. The first is how to discern parenthetical meaning from other components that contribute to sentence meaning, such as entailment or presupposition. While acknowledging that parentheticals share certain similarities with entailments, such as introducing discourse-new information, and presuppositions, such as having non-at-issue content or projecting under various types of embedding, Koev suggests that parentheticals have a unique distinctive feature: their own illocutionary meaning encoded by an own force operator. The second issue addressed in chapter 1 has to do with the question as to which constructions qualify as parenthetical, and