

FUNCTIONS OF THE GERUND IN LITERARY DISCOURSE

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The literary text as a special form of speech activity differs from other functional styles primarily in its aesthetic orientation in a way that each grammatical and lexical choice of the author is subject not only to the requirements of accuracy and clarity, but also to the tasks of imagery, rhythm and emotional impact on the reader. That is why the analysis of the functions of individual grammatical categories in the literary text acquires special importance for understanding the author's idiosyncrasy and the mechanisms of artistic expressiveness [1, 302]. The gerund is one of those grammatical means that performs a much broader role in artistic discourse than a purely structural one.

The gerund is a non-finite form of the verb which names a process or a state in a most general way. The gerund as a non-finite form of the verb has nominal and verbal characteristics. The verbal characteristics of the gerund are shown morphologically and syntactically, whereas the nominal features of the gerund are revealed syntactically, mostly through its functioning in a sentence [2, 83]. Thus, the gerund can help the author to perform various functions in the literary text.

First of all, the gerund is an extremely effective means of syntactic compression in a literary text. Due to its ability to combine a process-oriented verbal meaning with a noun-like syntactic position, the gerund allows the author to convey complex, multi-component meanings in an extremely economical form. Instead of the extended subordinate adverbial clause of time (*e.g. After Silvia had read the message, she smiled*), the author can use a short gerundial phrase (*e.g. After reading the message, she smiled*), which preserves the completeness of the content, but provides a dynamic presentation of the material. This property of the gerund is especially important in prose works, where syntactic overload can slow down the pace of the narrative and weaken the reader's attention.

Secondly, the gerund plays an important role in shaping the narrative's tempo and rhythm. The gerund, functioning as an adverbial modifier of time or manner (*e.g. On reaching the place of destination, Greg decided to call Margaret; The morning was spent in taking care of the wounded*), creates the effect of a seamless sequence of actions, lending the narrative segment dynamism and tension. But, on the contrary, when the gerund performs the functions of a subject or predicate (*e.g. Signing up for this course was Andrew's ambition; It was useless lying to the members of the crew; The cousins' favourite pastime was going on the spending spree*), it slows the pace and focuses the reader's attention on a state or process rather than on a specific action, which contributes to a deeper portrayal of the psychological moment.

Thirdly, the gerund plays an important role in conveying the characters' inner world. The characters' internal monologues and streams of consciousness require

grammatical forms capable of conveying lengthy, incomplete or repetitive recollections, intentions and processes. The gerund here serves in the function of a direct object with such phrases as *can't help doing something*, *can't avoid doing something* (e.g. *The audience couldn't help applauding that outstanding statesman; Having entered the conference hall, the manager realized that he couldn't avoid speaking to the head of the department*), or can perform the function of a part of the compound verbal phasal predicate with such a phrase as *keep on doing something* (e.g. *That cold winter evening Steve kept on looking through the window in hope that his mom would return home*). The gerund in these functions focuses not on the result, but on the process of thinking, recollections, doubts, intentions to do/not to do something, observations. It helps to transfer the author's message to the reader through characters' emotions and feelings.

Thus, the gerund plays an important role in the literary discourse. It performs the functions that go far beyond grammatical ones. It serves as a means of syntactic compression, a tool for forming the tempo and rhythm of the narrative, a way of conveying the inner world of characters and creating a psychological atmosphere.

References

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