

**THE GRAMMATICAL AND ACCEPTABLE USE OF PRESENT PARTICIPLE VERB-ING AS  
INTRODUCTORY VERBAL MODIFIERS  
(IN COMPARISON WITH *PERAPATAN KALIMAT MAJEMUK TAKSETARA YANG BERUNSUR  
SAMA*)**

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**Abstract**

This paper discusses the grammatical and acceptable use of Present Participle Verb – ing as Introductory Verbal Modifiers which are similar to the use of *Perapatan Kalimat Majemuk Taksetara yang Berunsur Sama* in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Indonesian learners of English often use the Introductory Verbal Modifiers ungrammatically or illogically. Surprisingly, they also do the same with the similar grammar in constructing *Perapatan Kalimat Majemuk Taksetara yang Berunsur Sama* in *Bahasa Indonesia*. This paper presents some insights how to solve the problems.

**Key words** : grammatical, acceptable, present participle verb–ing as introductory verbal modifiers,

**I. Background**

One of the so many definitions of language is that a language is an arbitrary system of articulated sounds made use of by a group of humans as a means of carrying on the affairs of theirs socially (Brown, 2005: 18). From that definition, we know that:

1. Language is systematic.
2. Language is basically oral, and that oral symbols represent meanings related to life situations and experiences.
3. Language has a social function and without it society would not exist.

Among the meanings above, the first one – that language is systematic will be given a greater emphasis in the writers' discussion of the topic above. The following is what is meant by introductory verbal modifiers :

Introductory verbal modifiers are-ing forms, participles, and infinitives. A phrase with an introductory verbal modifier occurs at the beginning of a sentence and is followed by a comma. The subject modified by an introductory verbal modifier must follow the comma. If the correct subject does not follow the comma, then the meaning is not logical (Sharpe, 2005)

The writers choose the above topic because in their teaching experiences,

they often find students of English, Indonesians in general using *BahasaIndonesia* and even us, lecturers use the above grammatical point ungrammatically.

## II. Discussion

To limit the discussion the writers discuss only one type, that is the present participle form of verb-ing. In *BahasaIndonesia* this form is like the use of *PerapatanKalimatMajemukTaksetarayang BerunsurSama*. Pay attention to the following sentences.

1. a. *Kembalikekamarnya, beberapaperhiasannyahilang.*  
b. Returning to her room, several pieces of jewelry were missing.
2. a. *Banguntidur, tiba-tibaseekorkalajengkingmenyengatnya.*  
b. Getting out of bed, a scorpion bit him.
3. a. *Turundaripohon, salahsatutelur-teluritupecah.*  
b. Climbing down the tree, one of the eggs broke.
4. a. *Memasukimasapensiun, waktunyadirasacukupuntukmenolong orang banyak*  
b. Retiring, his time is considered enough to help many people.

The sentences, at a glance, sound or look logical enough. However, if we have a close look at them they, in fact, are nonsense. “Jewelries” cannot return to her room (sentence 1.b) and “seekorkalajengking” is not usually expressed as “banguntidur” (sentence 2.1). The word order in sentence 3.b makes it appear that the egg was climbing, which is nonsense. Structurally, a participle is considered to belong to the noun or pronoun that immediately precedes it – which usually, but not necessarily – is the subject of the main verb. (Thomson and Martinet, 1975). A participle linked, in the way of the word order above, to the wrong noun / pronoun is said to be “misrelated” and therefore, gives unacceptable or insensible meaning since the subject is “dangling”, not giving clear reference.

The above sentences should be rewritten:

1. a. *Ketikakembalikekamarnya, iamengetahui beberapaperhiasan hilang.*  
b. Returning to her room, she found that several pieces of jewelry were missing.
2. a. *Ketikabanguntidur, tiba-tiba iadisengatkanalajengking.*  
b. Getting out of bed, suddenly he was bitten by a scorpion.
3. a. *Setelahturundaripohon, iabarumengetahuibahwasalahsatutelurnya pecah*  
b. Climbing down the tree, he found that one of the eggs was broken.
4. a. *Setelahmemasukimasapensiun, iamerasamempunyai waktu yang cukup untuk menolong orang banyak*  
b. Retiring, he considers having enough time to help many people.

Other examples of this type of errors are given below:

1. While finishing his speech, the audience was invited to ask questions
2. Reading the letter a second time, the meaning becomes clearer.

3. Knowing me to be the fool of the family, the news that I had won the scholarship astonished him.
4. Barking furiously, I led the dog out of the room.
5. Shining in the sky, we saw the first star.
6. When leaving a car in this car park, the brakes must be left off.
7. When carrying a gun, it should never be pointed at anyone.
8. Believing that his last hour had come, his hands began to tremble.
9. Misunderstanding the question, the wrong answer was sent in.
10. Falling from such a height, we thought he would never survive.

There are still many other examples of ungrammatical and unacceptable use of present participle as introductory verbal modifiers, but the writers are of the opinion that the examples above are enough to promote a discussion as to how the problems can be solved so that we ourselves and our students will not use such grammatical and unacceptable sentences or utterances. Stern (1975) states that language is not jibberish: it is always ordered. Any language to the native user, speaker, or listener, forms an ordered kind of network, structure, or system, or even several layers of interconnected systems. This ordered character of language is often overlooked when we learn a second language carelessly, running hither and thither, picking up bits here and there. The native speaker may not be conscious of this ordered system with its rules and regularities, but if you disregard it he knows there is something wrong.

Therefore, students should be given a lot of exercises in this type of grammatical point by, for example, combining sentences such as follow:

1. He got off his horse. He began searching for something on the ground.
2. I knew that he was poor. I offered to pay his fare.

Another way is by telling the students to avoid using a noun immediately after an introductory verbal phrase which may not be logically modified by the phrase, for example (see sentences no. 2 and no. 8 of the ten examples on pages 3 - 4).

1. Sentence no. 2

Incorrect : *Reading* the letter a second time, *the meaning* become clear

Correct : *Reading* the letter a second time, *I* find the meaning clear (er)

2. Sentence no. 8

Incorrect : *Believing* that his last hour had come, *his hands* began to tremble

Correct : *Believing* that his last hour had come, *he* felt his hands beginning to tremble

Still one more thing for the students to be paid attention to is the avoidance of using a passive construction after an introductory verbal modifier like the examples in sentences 1, 6, 7 and 9 of the ten examples on pages 3 - 4.

To make it clear, see the corrections of the four ungrammatical sentences

below :

1. Sentence no. 1

Incorrect : *While finishing* his speech, *the audience* was invited to ask questions.

Correct : *While finishing* his speech, *he* invited the audience to ask questions. (Sharpe, 2005)

2. Sentence no. 6

Incorrect : *When leaving* a car in the car park, *the brakes* must be left off.

Correct : *When leaving* a car in the car park, *one must* leave the brakes off.

3. Sentence no. 7

Incorrect : *When carrying* a gun, *it* should never be pointed at anyone.

Correct : *When carrying* a gun, *you* should not point it at anyone.

4. Sentence no. 9

Incorrect : *Misunderstanding* the question, *the wrong answer* was sent in.

Correct : *Misunderstanding* the question, *the student* sent in the wrong answer.

Through various, routine exercises in this type of grammatical point, it is expected that learners of English will not make such errors and they will always be aware of producing correct grammatical forms even in their own native language as what Larsen – Freeman (1986) states:

It was hoped that through the study of the grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and write their native language better

So far we have discussed some examples of “misrelated participles” (as termed by Thomson and Martinet, 1975) in “introductory verbal modifiers” (to use Sharpe’s term, 2005).

The following is what Quirk et al (1972: 757 - 758) explains about the two terms in the above topic. He uses the term “unattached” or “unrelated” participles for “misrelated participles” and “verbal adverbial clauses” for “introductory verbal modifiers”. In fact, “unattached” or “unrelated” participle is a traditional term, and now he refers to the same thing as “fault of style”. The style arises when the noun phrase with which the understood subject of the verbless clause should be identified does not appear as subject of the main clause, and perhaps does not occur in the main clause at all :

Flying through the air at the speed of sound, a sudden thought struck me.  
Since leaving her, the whole of life has seemed pointless.

Notionally, the subject of each of the subordinate clauses in both examples

above is “I”, but the first person pronoun does not actually occur as the subject of either sentence. Quirk (1972 : 756) states that there is one problem of identifying the “understood” subject of a verbless clause, but the normal rule which may be called the “attachment rule”, is that if the subject is “understood” rather than actually present, it is assumed to be identical in reference to the subject of superordinate clause :

Barking furiously, the dog was led out of the room.

Shining in the sky, the first star was seen.

Arifin and Tasai (2008: 87) support this idea as follows:

*Jikadalamanakkalimattidakterdapatsubjek,  
ituberartibahwasubjekkanakkalimatsamadengansubjekindukkalimat.*

However, the rule of attachment is not always applied so strictly so as to exclude all cases of an “unattached participle”. Particularly, there are three factors which may be used as a basis to determine the acceptability of “unattached participle”, i.e.:

1. If the noun phrase ‘understood’ to be subject of the participial clause is present in a function other than subject within the main clause, the sentence is less objectionable than if the noun phrase is absent altogether. Based on this, the following presents a scale of acceptability ranging from example ‘a’ to example ‘d’ :
  - a. Using similar techniques, one can present the topic in different lights. (Participial clause ‘subject’ = main clause subject)
  - b. Using similar techniques, the topic can be presented in different lights. (Participial clause ‘subject’ has implied agentive role in main clause)
  - c. Using different techniques, one’s result might have been less satisfactory. (Participial clause ‘subject’ is present in non subject function in the main clause)
  - d. Using similar techniques, the topic can appear in very different lights. (Participial clause ‘subject’ entirely lacking from the main clause).
2. In scientific literature (as shown in the choice of examples above) the use of “unattached participles” is such a convenient solecism that it is almost accepted as an institution. The following is a textual example, in which the noun phrase required by the participial clause does not occur in the main clause :
  - e. *When treating patients with language retardation and deviation of language development, the therapy will consist, in part, of discussions of the patient’s problems with parents and teachers, with subsequent language teaching being carried out of hem.*
3. Abbreviated clauses with an “unattached participle” appear to be more acceptable than similar clauses without the introductory subordinator.

Therefore, example 'e' – after it is allowed to be accepted in scientific English – is more acceptable than the same example without the initial 'when'

It is necessary to be noted here that there are exceptions for the rule of attachment, they are the participial forms which have assumed the non-verbal functions of disjunct, conjunction, or preposition:

*Putting it mildly*, you have caused us some inconvenience.

*Frankly speaking*, .....

*Strictly speaking*, .....

*Judging from the appearance*, she seemed to be exhausted.

*Regarding* .....

*Considering how much it costs*, this machine is a failure

Another thing to be considered is that although regarded as unacceptable, examples like 'd' are often found because even in these kinds of sentences the subject is implied in the main clause somewhat like in example 'b' ('.....can appear in different lights to the person using the techniques). Contrast the sentences with the ones below which have more obvious unacceptability:

\* Using these techniques, a wheel fell off.

\* Reading the evening paper, a dog started barking.

### III. Conclusion

To end the discussion of the topic of this paper, the writers draw their conclusions as follow: in sentences containing introductory verbal modifiers or verbless adverbial clauses, the subjects of the main or superordinate clauses should agree or refer to the same 'understood' subjects of the introductory verbal modifiers as is the case in *Perapatan Kalimat Majemuk Taksetarayang Berunsur Samain* order that the meanings of the sentences are making sense or acceptable and the forms are grammatical. If this is not maintained, 'unattached', 'unrelated' or 'misrelated' participles arise causing nonsense meanings and unacceptable, ungrammatical forms. However, 'unrelated' or 'misrelated' participial phrases are not always nonsense, illogical and unacceptably ungrammatical when they have non-verbal functions of disjunct, conjunction, or preposition.

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