

The Use of -ing, -ed Adjectives Derived from "Emotive" Verbs: How Are They Treated in Grammar Books?

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Here are the structures of the grammatical problem under discussion:-

inanimate	{	The T.V. program interests me	→	The T.V. program is interesting .
animate		She interests me.	→	I am interested in the T.V. program.
			→	She is interesting .
			→	I am interested in her.

By the term "emotive"¹ we refer to verbs such as the following:-

bore	interest	amuse	irritate
annoy	puzzle	surprise	excite
exhaust	disappoint	shock	embarrass

(see the Appendix for a detailed list of these verbs)

The use of -ing, -ed adjectives derived from "emotive" verbs has proved confusing for most ESL students even at the advanced level. Since these adjectives have a rather high frequency of occurrence and the misuse of them often affects comprehensibility or causes problems in communication (e.g. to say "You're boring, aren't you?" when what one intended to say is "You're bored, aren't you?" might

¹ This term is taken from Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's *An English Grammar for Teachers of English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Burt and Kiparsky call these verbs "reverse psychological verbs". I think this term is more appropriate than "emotive" since "emotive" can be taken to cover such verbs as *like*, *enjoy*, *love* etc. Since these two types of verbs do not behave in the same way, it is important to make some distinction between them. Burt and Kiparsky call the '*like*' type verbs "straightforward psychological verbs".

cause some misunderstanding on the part of the listener.), it is important that the distinction between the -ing and -ed adjectives be made clear to the students.

Usually, the uses and meanings of the -ing and -ed adjectives are not properly treated in traditional grammar. Only a long list of sentences that contain these adjectives are given, along with other types of participles, according to their inflectional endings. Such description is not helpful from a pedagogical point of view because it implies that the teacher can concentrate on teaching inflectional endings alone for adjectives, which is not true. The teacher also has to take into account such other factors as the behavior of these adjectives in the sentences, their relationships to the nominals with which they appear and also the predicate complements which follow them.

In order to see how the -ing and -ed adjectives have been treated in transformational grammar, I went through Paul Schachter's *Some Problems in the Transformational Analysis of English Verbs (1961)*. The problems concerning the use of -ed adjectives are described in great detail in this article. Unfortunately, no mention was made about the -ing adjectives. The author first points out that the structure that has a past participle following *be* has been touched upon to a very slight extent in the grammars of Chomsky and Lees. Sentences like "The glass was broken.", "The crowd was excited.", are generated, in these grammars, as passives with deleted agents. "The crowd was excited.", for example, is generated by deletion of the *by* phrase from such a sentence as "The crowd was excited by the game.", itself in turn a transformation of "The game excited the crowd." Schachter argues that this treatment, while adequate in itself, sheds no light upon the structure of a quite similar set of sentences in which a past participle is preceded by some copulative verb other than *be* e.g. "The glass looked broken.", "The crowd grew excited." In the case of these sentences, there seems to be no deleted agentive *by* phrase, since the addition of such a phrase usually produces a non-sentence, e.g. "*The glass looked broken by the child.", "*The crowd grew excited by the game." Also, in such sentences as "The student was worried about the test.", "The woman was annoyed at the child.", "John became involved in the dispute.", "I've become tired of delays.", the deletion of an agentive *by* phrase does not seem possible since "*The student was worried about the test by the teacher." etc. are non-sentences. It might seem that, instead of deletion of a *by* phrase, what is involved is *replacement* of *by* by another preposition: i.e. "The student was worried *by* the test." becoming, by transformation, "The student was worried *about* the test." Schachter argues that there are numerous counter-examples to such a solution: "He has become tired of promises." but not "*He has become tired by promises." He then suggests that what seems to be involved instead is an adjectival participle with a prepositional phrase complement, the axis of which corresponds to the subject of the verb that underlies

the participle. It is this analysis that the five subclasses of V_{t_2} have to be incorporated in his rule: $V_{t_{2a}}$ is a class of verbs that form adjectival participles followed by *about* phrases, and the others in order by *at*, *in*, *of*, and *with* phrases. Schachter's analysis is well-taken. However, it is too complicated for classroom teaching. I think it is enough to tell the students that these adjectives have underlying passive meanings. The use of prepositions should not be over emphasized because it might confuse the students instead of helping them to understand the structure under discussion.

The explanation given in Peterson's *Transformational Analysis of Some Derived Verbs and Adjectives in English* (1967) is more applicable for classroom teaching than Schachter's. He makes a distinction between active and passive adjectives, for example:

The book amuses him.

The book is *amusing*. (active adjective)

He is *amused* by the book. (passive adjective)

He also points out that since the -ing and -ed forms are used as adjectives, they can be modified by such degree adverbs as *quite*, *rather*, *terribly*, *very*.

In my opinion, the distinction between the members of such pairs as 'bored'/ 'boring' can be best explained in terms of Fillmore's case grammar. Under this system, the deep structure is reduced to a series of propositions realized as NP's which are governed by feature specifications imposed by verbs and their adjectival forms. The predicates which select dative arguments will have a corresponding adjective form realized as -ing, as in "The program was interesting *to* me." The -ed inflections, on the other hand, will represent predicates which have selected an instrumental argument as subject NP, as in "*Her behavior* was annoying *to* him." "He was annoyed *at her behavior*."

Such an analysis provides a clearer understanding of some forms which otherwise seem ambiguous. Thus the sentence "Strangers frightened our little chihuahua." has two possible interpretations: (a) "Strangers caused our chihuahua to become afraid." and (b) "Our chihuahua became afraid at the sight of strangers." In the first paraphrase, the subject NP is assumed to have an agentive function, whereas in the second, *frightened* serves as an "inchoative predicate", that is, a form which simply designates the beginning of an action *not* caused directly by the subject NP. These two interpretations can then be compared with the unambiguous dative form, "Strangers were frightening *to* our chihuahua." (Langedeon, 1969, 119-122)

A full application, then, of case grammar produces extensive specification of the arguments which an adjective may select. Eventually, such a system may

provide greater understanding of the behavior of adjectives which will result in more efficient teaching. At a minimum, such an approach suggests a new method of grouping items to be taught in a classroom, according to their behavior in transformations and the constraints they place on selection of NP's. The specific class of adjectives chosen for this study fits the description above.

Analysis of a sample of books dealing with -ing and -ed adjectives

Lado and Fries, in *English Sentence Patterns (1957)*, a book designed for beginning, intermediate and advanced students, introduce the -ing and -ed adjectives by first reviewing the previous sentence pattern students already learned:

e.g. John is young. (that is NP+be+adj) He is a young man. (NP+be+adj.+NP)

A new pattern is then given:

e.g. Paul is tiring. He is a tiring man.

I think this is a good strategy. The -ing and -ed adjectives are relatively difficult (due to their inflectional markers and their contrasting meanings) and should be introduced only after students have learnt simpler, non-inflected forms such as *young, tall, happy*. The book contrasts a few -ed and -ing adjectives, giving a short explanation of the difference in meaning, for example: "John is a bored man." means that "other people (or things) bore John." "Paul is a boring man." means that "Paul bores other people." However, it includes words like *broken* along with *tired, tiring* with a short note to the effect that words like *broken* cannot take the intensifier *very* before them. e.g. "He is a very interesting man.", "*It's a very broken glass." In the absence of further semantic rules this is a bit confusing.

Since *English Sentence Patterns* was written in the structural tradition, it tends to concentrate on repetition and substitution drills rather than on giving explicit rules or explanations. Also, the terminology in this book might be confusing for people not used to structural grammar, e.g. the use of class 1 words, class 2 words, frame 1, etc. The exercises, on the other hand, are more applicable to classroom teaching than the explanation. Here are some examples:

John was tired after he played tennis.

(Describe tennis) Tennis was tiring. It was a tiring game.

John was tired after he played tennis.
 (Describe John) John was tired. He was a tired man.

Using these exercises, the teacher may want to point out to the students that in *Tennis was tiring.* and *John was tired.*, *tiring* and *tired* are used predicatively i.e. after linking verbs such as *be*. In *It was a tiring game* and *He was a tired man.* the adjectives are used attributively i.e. modifying nouns.

The second book I went through is *Modern English : A Practical Reference Guide* by Frank (1972). There is a very detailed chapter on gerunds, infinitives and participles. Unfortunately, the book only makes the contrast between the -ed and -ing adjectives at one point where it gives an example and a short rule for deciding which form to use:-

.... the -ing form often represents the original **subject** of a simple sentence, the -ed form, the original **object**..

Sentence-*The game excited the audience.*

Participles used with:

the subject **game**-*The exciting game.* (=the game was excited)

the object **audience**-*The excited audience.* (=the audience was excited)

The explanation, although brief, is clear enough to be used for classroom teaching. The book would have been more useful if it had had some exercises for the students to practice their understanding of the lesson.

Danielson and Hayden in *Using English : Your Second Language (1973)* present the same kind of explanation at about the same length. Giving just one example, the authors explain that the -ed adjectives indicates that the noun is the receiver of the action e.g. the people *were bored* by the lecture. ; the -ing adjectives indicates that the noun is the giver, actor or instigator of the action e.g. the lecture *was boring* to the people. The exercises in this book are also limited ; only six sentences are given for practice. The exercises are of the type 'change the verb forms to the -ed and -ing adjectives.' e.g. The tennis match which obviously interested the spectators lasted for nearly two hours. The interesting tennis match..... To make use of this book, the teacher might have to supplement the exercises from some other source.

Hayden et al in *Mastering American English (1956)* treat the -ing and -ed adjectives under verbals. (The three forms of verbals are infinitives, gerunds and participles., The authors explain that the present and past participle may precede the noun or may follow the verb as a complement. The meanings expressed by the present and past participle usually differ :

This is *tiring* work.
The work *is tiring* to us.

He is a *tired* boy.
The boy himself *is tired*.

The exercises are not very helpful. The authors include only three sentences for the students to practice using these forms. The majority of the exercises have to do with other types of verbals.

In *A Concise Grammar of Contemporary English* by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973), the contrast between forms like *bored/boring* is not explicitly made, although the authors do point out the active counterparts for sentences using the -ed forms, e.g. John *is interested* in English grammar./English grammar *interested* John. Since it is a reference book, no exercise is given.

The treatment of -ing and -ed adjectives in Thomas' *Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English* (1965) is also poor. The author gives only four examples of these adjectives without explaining where they are derived from although he does mention earlier in the book that "the embedding process is, in a transformational grammar, the source of all adjective modifies." Bolinger (1967), on the other hand, explains that such attributive adjectives are derived transformationally from predicate adjectives that originated in restrictive relative clauses:

e.g. Mary made some amusing remarks.

derived from

Mary made some remarks that were amusing.

The process of moving these adjectives to the prenominal position through relative clause reduction might well be pointed out if relative clauses have already been taught. If not, students should be given only minimum explanation that these adjectives can be used either predicatively or attributively without any change of meaning.

Rutherford in *Modern English* (1968) explains that a number of -ed and -ing verb forms may function as adjectives. In general, the verbs from which adjectives of this kind can be derived are those which can take a non-human subject and a human object.

The last book I went through is *The Gooficon* by Burt and Kiparsky (1972). Chapter six of this book (Psychological predicates) provides a very good insight about the -ing and -ed adjectives. The authors explain that there are two types of English verbs: 1. straightforward psychological verbs e.g. The students *liked* the lecture. 2. reverse psychological verbs e.g. The lecture *bored* the students. The straightforward verbs have an experiencer-verb stimulus word-order while the reverse verbs have a stimulus-verb-experiencer word-order i.e. the students are the experiencers, while the lecture is the stimulus). Once students have learned to make the distinction between the experiencer and the stimulus, they can make the following application:

1. If the experiencer of the feeling is the subject in a sentence, it will be followed by be+verb-ed e.g. *They were bored* by the lecture.

2. Reverse psychological verbs can be paraphrased by using be+ing after the stimulus e.g. *The lecture was boring* to the students.

3. The experiencer will be preceded by the past participle adjective e.g. *the bored students*.

4. The stimulus will be preceded by the present participle adjective e.g. *the boring lecture*.

The authors also cite some errors students often make and give pedagogically useful and accurate (though sometimes not complete) explanation for the source of those errors.

Summary

If I were to teach my students about the use of -ing and -ed adjectives, I would give the following the first priorities:

1. I would first follow Burt and Kiparsky's distinction between straightforward and reverse psychological verbs. Students often make such errors as "Do you surprise me?", "Call your mother; she worries you." Errors like this with the wrong order of elements are the basis of all the other problems with reverse verbs. This is an important reason for giving these goofs priority in the hierarchy.

2. I would then explain the underlying meanings of -ing and -ed adjectives using Danielson and Hayden's explanation: the -ing form has the active meaning; the noun is the one who causes the feeling/the -ed form has the passive meaning; the noun is the one who receives the feeling. Students often confuse the -ed and -ing forms of reverse verbs because they don't understand the meanings underlying them.

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APPENDIX

A list of "emotive" verbs :

delight	surprise	bother	disgust
thrill	interest	worry	shock
charm	fascinate	disappoint	scare
amuse	satisfy	depress	frighten
excite	relieve	annoy	horrify
elate	reassure	bore	appall
impress	overwhelm	confuse	insult
please	flatter	mislead	offend