TEACHING ENGLISH GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES THROUGH CHOICE-BASED SPEAKING TASKS: A LEARNER-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Gerunds and infinitives represent one of the most confusing areas ***of English grammar for second language learners because similar verbs Oktabr*** require different patterns. Students frequently memorize lists of verbs followed by -ing forms or infinitives; however, difficulties remain during spontaneous communication. This article examines the challenges associated with teaching gerunds and infinitives and proposes choice-based speaking tasks as an instructional strategy. The paper argues that learners understand these structures more effectively when grammar is linked to personal decisions, preferences, and experiences rather than isolated memorization activities.

Keywords: gerunds, infinitives, grammar instruction, speaking tasks, communicative methodology, English language teaching

Introduction

English learners often encounter sentences such as:

I enjoy reading novels.

She decided to study abroad.

They avoided talking about the problem.

He hopes to become a teacher.

Although the vocabulary Oktabr be simple, the grammatical patterns create difficulties.

Students commonly ask:

Why do we say enjoy reading but not enjoy to read?

Why is it decide to go and not decide going?

Why do some verbs accept both forms?

These questions show that the challenge is not limited to grammar rules. Learners are trying to understand relationships between verbs, meanings, and intentions. Traditional teaching usually presents long lists for memorization. While this may help during tests, it often fails to support active language use.

The Nature of Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds and infinitives do not function only as grammatical patterns. They often reflect differences in meaning.

Compare:

I stopped smoking.

I stopped to smoke.

The first sentence means ending a habit.

The second means pausing an activity in order to smoke.

Therefore, learners need semantic understanding, not only structural knowledge.

Challenges in Teaching Gerunds and Infinitives

1. Heavy Memorization Load

Students are frequently given categories:

Verb + gerund

enjoy

avoid

finish

Verb + infinitive

decide

plan

hope

This method may create dependence on memory rather than understanding.

2. Similar Structures with Different Meanings

Some verbs accept both forms:

remember doing

remember to do

try doing

try to do

Small changes produce different meanings, which increases confusion.

3. Limited Communicative Practice

Many textbooks rely on sentence completion exercises:

Fill in the blank:

She enjoys _____ (dance).

Although useful, such tasks rarely require genuine communication.

Choice-Based Speaking Tasks as an Alternative

Choice-based tasks place learners in situations where they express preferences, intentions, and decisions.

Gerunds and infinitives appear naturally because these structures often describe:

likes and dislikes;

plans;

goals;

habits;

regrets.

Suggested Classroom Procedure

Stage One: Preference Discussion

Ask students:

What activities do you enjoy doing?

What do you avoid doing during exams?

What do you hope to achieve next year?

Expected responses:

I enjoy listening to podcasts.

I avoid using my phone while studying.

I hope to improve my speaking skills.

Grammar emerges from personal expression.

Stage Two: Decision Cards

Prepare cards:

move to another city;

start a business;

learn another language;

travel alone.

Students explain:

I decided to learn English because…

I plan to travel abroad someday.

Infinitive structures become meaningful.

Stage Three: Problem-Solving Activity

Present situations:

“You cannot focus while studying.”

Students suggest:

Try taking short breaks.

Avoid checking social media.

Remember to rest.

This stage introduces verbs with communicative purpose.

Stage Four: Reflection

Learners review their sentences:

Which verbs were followed by gerunds?

Which used infinitives?

Why?

Grammar awareness develops after communication.

Classroom Observations

During speaking-based activities, students often produce longer responses than during traditional grammar drills.

Several changes become noticeable:

memorization pressure decreases;

learners use grammar more confidently;

personal involvement increases participation;

retention improves through repetition in context.

Interestingly, students begin noticing patterns independently.

Pedagogical Implications

Teachers may improve instruction by:

Introducing meaning before terminology;

Using preference and decision tasks;

Encouraging personal responses;

Delaying rule explanation until after communication.

Gerunds and infinitives are closely connected with human experiences and intentions. Teaching methods should reflect this relationship.

Conclusion

Gerunds and infinitives remain difficult because they are frequently taught as isolated grammatical lists. However, these structures become easier when connected to personal choices, goals, and experiences.

Choice-based speaking tasks provide learners with opportunities to use grammar while expressing real ideas.

As a result, instruction moves beyond memorization and supports meaningful communication.

Future research may explore whether learner-centered speaking activities improve long-term mastery of gerund and infinitive constructions.

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