The English -ing form

The Problem

The usual view: the -ing form in sentences like (1) displays a mixture of verbal and nominal properties.

(1) We object to his joining the club

Problems with analyzing phrases with mixed properties (Bresnan 1997):

• principle of lexical integrity challenged
• principle of phrasal endocentricity challenged

Nominal and verbal properties of the -ing form

Usual Claim: The -ing form has the following verbal and nominal properties:

- verbal properties:
  - governing a direct object
  - modification by adverbs
  - tense and voice distinctions
  - negation by not
  - subjects in non-proitive case

- nominal properties:
  - can function as subject
  - can function as object
  - can be complements to prepositions
  - can be coordinated with an NP
  - can be replaced by at

Different subclasses of the -ing form

Claim: Not all -ing forms display mixed properties:

- POSS-ing
- DET-ing
- ACC-ing
- PRO-ing

Examples:

• POSS-ing: We object to his joining the club.
• DET-ing: No joining the club.
• ACC-ing: We object to him joining the club.
• PRO-ing: We object to joining the club.

Dismissing tests for nominal properties

Claim: The tests proposed to show the nominal character of the -ing form (e.g. Brosnan 2001, Malouf 2000) also work for -ing infinitives and that clauses:

• to infinitives, that clauses or -ing form can function as subject
• the constructions can also function as object
• -ing form and clauses with -ing words can be complements to prepositions
• -ing form and clauses with -ing words:
  - can function as subject
  - can function as object
  - can be complements to prepositions
  - can be coordinated with an NP
  - can be replaced by at

Different properties of the different subclasses

The constructions cannot be conjoined (Malouf 2000), thus have to have different properties:

(7) *John’s joining the club and Peter quitting was not a good idea.

Also, the constructions challenge lexical integrity or phrasal endocentricity

Differen analyses for the different subclasses

Analyses of the -ing form have to take into account:

• ACC-ing and PRO-ing constructions do not challenge lexical integrity or phrasal endocentricity
• POSS-ing and DET-ing constructions challenge lexical integrity or phrasal endocentricity

Thus, the two basic constructions for the different subclasses of the -ing form are:

(12) a. ACC-ing + PRO-ing:

b. POSS-ing + DET-ing:

For a detailed analysis of the POSS-ing construction see Brosnan (2001), Brosnan & Mcguine (2006).

A detailed analysis for the ACC-ing construction

For a detailed analysis of the ACC-ing and PRO-ing forms a lexical entry is needed:

(11) joining: V

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(15) Joining predicate

<table>
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Conclusion:

• POSS-ing and DET-ing forms behave like nominals in these tests
• ACC-ing and PRO-ing forms behave like clauses in these tests

⇒ Different analyses for different constructions needed.