

53-512

SS 2018

Seminar II

Titel: Noun, verb, gerund

Dozent: Prof. Thomas Berg

[ENG-4, ENG-4a, ENG-10, ENG-11, AA7, AA9, LAA8, LAA11, AA-WB]

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Nouns and verbs are widely regarded as the most important parts of speech. Unlike adjectives, they are found in virtually all languages of the world. As the backbones of the lexicon, they might be expected to perform quite different jobs, i.e. to be clearly distinguishable. It is one of the more interesting observations about the grammar of English that this expectation is not borne out. English is renowned for its gerund, a grammatical category which straddles the fence between nouns and verbs. In fact, the gerund is not the only category to blur the distinction between nouns and verbs. The conversion from nouns to verbs invites the same interpretation. Against this background, this course pursues a two-fold aim. On the one hand, it examines the remarkable differences between nouns and verbs with a special focus on their phonetic, suprasegmental, syntactic and semantic properties. On the other hand, the hybrid nature of the gerund is subjected to scrutiny. This raises significant issues about the categorical or “squishy” status of word classes. The historical development of the gerund, in particular its relation to the infinitive, will also be considered.

Requirements for full credit:

Regular attendance

Oral presentation

Term paper