TO-INFINITIVE AND GERUND-PARTICIPLE CLAUSES WITH THE VERBS *DREAD* AND *FEAR*

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Abstract. This paper investigates the variation between *to*-infinitive and gerund-participle complements with the verbs *dread* and *fear*. Specifically, it aims to explain the reasons underlying complement selection with these two verbs as well as a number of semantic effects which arise with these complement clause constructions. The approach taken here argues that an explanation of these constructions must be predicated upon an analysis of the semantic content of the items of which each one is composed. Three factors are proposed as being relevant to explaining the issues: (1) the meaning and function of the gerund-participle, (2) the meaning and function of the *to*-infinitive, and (3) the meaning of the main predicate. The findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies which have applied the same approach. This paper is intended as a small contribution to ongoing efforts to crack the complementation issue in English.

1. Introduction

> *"Nay, fly to Altars; there they'll talk you dead;*
> *For Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread."*

This famous cautionary quote by Alexandre Pope (from *An Essay on Criticism*) is a good starting point for the present discussion as it illustrates the issue to be explored in this paper: variation in non-finite complement clauses with verbs expressing fear. The two verbs commonly used in English to express this notion are *fear* and *dread*, both of which select for either the *to*-infinitive or the gerund-participle:[1]

(1) I had the sense that I was being watched, a feeling so strong that I feared to turn and look over my shoulder.

(2) More Americans say they fear losing their sight than any other sense.

(3) The autumn work was over, I was no longer needed in the fields, and a better chance would never offer itself. Still I dreaded to make the proposal.

(4) It's never your job, always someone else's. Everybody dreads getting stuck with you on joint projects.

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[1] Unless stated otherwise, the examples cited in the first two sections of this paper come from the Corpus of Contemporary American (COCA).

In some cases, substitution of one complement form for the other is possible with little change to the overall message conveyed, as in (5) and (6):

(5) I missed confession for 18 years and dreaded going (to go) back.

(6) What's worse is that we don't just fear, we fear talking (to talk) about it.

In others, only one form is possible:

(7) Today, I believe we are again entering into a great war. I fear to make (?making) a comparison as I do not in any way want to diminish the immense costs and sacrifices, that to this day I still can't fathom.

(8) Toby usually dreaded getting (?to get) homework assignments back because his grades were average.

Another issue raised by these constructions is the possibility of verbal polysemy, specifically whether a verb's meaning might shift according to which complement it is used with. Consider the following:

(9)   I dread to think what the panic will be.

(10) I dread going to work every day.

In (9) there is no dreaded object and no actual dread involved: it is a hyperbolic way of saying 'I don't want to think about what might happen because it is too worrying' and is therefore comparable to a statement such as *I hate to think what he might say* where there is also no object hated and so no actual hatred. In (10), on the other hand, something is actually dreaded and there is a real existential angst about going to work on the part of the subject.

   The task of this paper will be to investigate complement selection with *dread* and *fear* and to propose an explanation to account for the facts observed above. First, an analysis of previous work on complement patterns will be undertaken, particularly with respect to what has been said about these verbs. As the subject of variation between the infinitive and gerund-participle has been and still is one of the most frequently discussed topics in English linguistics, it is impossible to review all the literature here and so readers are directed to book-length studies by Duffley (2006) and Egan (2008) for more comprehensive critiques. In light of the shortcomings of previous approaches to the problem, Section 3 presents the approach to be taken here. The latter will be as non-theoretical as possible and will work on the common-sense hypothesis that complement choice is explainable by taking into account the semantic value of each construction's component parts. This should not be confused with the principle of compositionality followed in logical approaches, which posits that "the meaning of a

complex expression is fully determined by its structure and the meanings of its constituents – once we fix what the parts mean and how they are put together we have no more leeway regarding the meaning of the whole (Szabó 2017)." The common-sense hypothesis followed here, which is very much in line with cognitive linguistic theory, recognizes that the meanings of utterances also depends on the intentions of the speaker, the linguistic environment, and the setting in which the utterance is made. However, the most important component determining the message expressed by an utterance is held to be the cognitive content permanently attached to the linguistic forms uttered by the speaker. Consequently, an effort will be made to elucidate the semantic content of the items of which each construction is composed. Section 4 undertakes an analysis of corpus data to explore the various semantic effects of each construction. The use of corpus evidence is intended to lend a sounder empirical basis to the study's overall proposals and also to protect against making erroneous claims about usage, something of which some linguists have unfortunately been guilty in complementation studies.[2] Finally, once the analysis has been completed, the findings of this study are summarized and their implications in terms of the broader complementation problem discussed.

2. Previous Proposals

One longstanding urge has been to distinguish between infinitive and gerund-participle constructions on the basis of their having specific versus general reference (e.g. Stannard 1947:196, Wood 1956:13, Zandvoort 1957:28, Scheurweghs 1959:205, Schibsbye 1970:63, Dirven & Taylor 1991:2, Roggero 2001:302, Hamawand 2002:281). According to this hypothesis, statements with the infinitive are suitable when reference is made to a specific occurrence and the gerund-participle is used when reference is made to an occurrence in general (cf. *I hate to be the bearer of bad news* vs. *I hate being the bearer of bad news*). With respect to *dread*, for example, Hamawand states that the *to*-infinitive is used in statements implying a specific aversion, while the gerund-participle is used in those that express a general abhorrence. He cites the following two examples:

(11) He dreads to go by air. (specific)

(12) He dreads going by air. (general)

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[2] Confusion over use with these verbs is evident in some grammars of English. Both the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary (1999) and the Cambridge Grammar of English (2006) make the strange claim that with *dread* only the *–ing* is possible, a claim not borne out by actual usage.

The inability of these two notions to account for the full range of use is discussed at length in Duffley (2006:75,131), Egan (2008:45–48) and as far back as Curme (1931:491–492). Hamawand's judgements above are questionable: while the notion of generality is indeed applicable to (12), the claim that only a particularity reading is possible in (11) is hardly defendable. A broader survey of actual usage reveals that in actual fact infinitive constructions with *fear* and *dread* are fully capable of being used both in reference to a particular occasion, as illustrated in (1) and (3) above, and in general statements, as seen in the two tokens below:

(13) We no longer enjoy what we are doing. We *dread to go to work*. One wag said, "You know you are bored when it takes twice as long to drive to work in the morning as it does to get home at night."

(14) Anyone talking these days about good things (sheer truth) runs the risk of being silenced! So people *fear to speak out the truth*. That's politics and don't think that's free enterprise either. This is soviet style socialism.

Likewise, gerund-participle constructions, while amenable to general reference as seen in (2) and (4) above, can also be used in reference to a specific occasion:

(15) I was leading up to it slowly. You know how Dad is about these things. I *was dreading telling* him.

(16) The sculpture was placed on display in a student art show, set upon a large platform to avoid direct contact with the glass shards. It took 6 people to move the sculpture, and they all wore protective gloves because they *feared being cut* by the glass.

In addition to the opposition between general and specific reference, another distinction proposed in the literature has been to link the use of the infinitive to the notion of 'not wanting' and the gerund-participle to the lack thereof (e.g. Dixon 1984:590, Wierzbicka 1988:29, Rudanko 1989:45, Langacker 1991:446, Verspoor 2000:221, Huddleston & Pullum 2002:1243). In (13) and (14) above, the constructions elicit "a degree of negative volition, negative desideration against the realization of [the complement event]" (Rudanko 1989:45), meaning that the events *go to work* and *speak out the truth* are things that the subject does not want to happen. Related to the notion of wanting is the notion of 'choice' explored in recent studies by Rudanko (2014, 2015) and Rickman & Rudanko (2018) with respect to the adjectives *afraid*, *scared* and *terrified*. Rudanko proposes that variation in complement forms can be explained in terms of the Choice Principle whereby [+Choice] contexts encode events "such that the subject of the sentence is presented as being volitionally involved in it, as exercising some control over it and as being

in some degree responsible for it" while in [-Choice] contexts "the subject is not volitionally involved" (Rickman & Rudanko 2018:23–24). He finds that although there is a strong correlation linking [+Choice] readings to the *to*-infinitive and [-Choice] readings to the gerund-participle, any categorical rule is not possible due to the existence of cases in which the reverse is observed: his data shows that the infinitive has the capacity to elicit a non-volitional interpretation (*I'm scared to be left alone with it*) and the gerund-participle a volitional one (*She was scared of going upstairs where Sissie was*). The tokens below from the COCA show that verbs of fear with the infinitive are indeed possible in [-Choice] contexts and the gerund-participle in [+Choice] ones:

(17) [...] he will not go out into the town for employment, as he *fears to be assassinated* in the streets.

(18) Nobody should *fear going* to their place of worship.

In addition to the notions of wanting and choice, many authors also differentiate between the two complement forms on temporal grounds, linking the infinitive to the notion of 'futurity' and the gerund-participle to 'temporal coincidence.' Under this view, the infinitive evokes an event which is unrealized with respect to that of the main verb while the gerund-participle is viewed as occurring contemporaneously with it (Wierzbicka 1988:60–69, Langacker 1991:445, Verspoor 1996:436–449). While potentiality does appear to be a stable feature of the use of verbs of fear with the infinitive, the existence of cases such as *He managed to open the door* or *The ice on the road caused him to crash* show that futurity is not sufficiently general to account for the full picture with infinitival constructions, as in these cases the infinitive denotes a fully realized event. Also, the claim that the gerund-participle evokes a contemporaneous event hits a wall when confronted with verbs of fear, as gerund-participle constructions are just as future-oriented as those with the infinitive. In (15) and (16) above, the events *telling* and *being cut* are both unrealized, potential events. In defense of the sameness of time hypothesis, Wierzbicka (1988:69) and Verspoor (1996:439) claim that in such a case it is not the actual event that is simultaneous with the main verb, but rather merely the thought of it. However, this analysis empties the term 'simultaneous' of its meaning and thereby effectively dissolves the contrast with the infinitive. Is it really possible to rule out the existence of a conceptual-temporal overlap with infinitive constructions? In a statement such as *I dreaded to make the proposal*, an argument could be made that the subject is entertaining a thought about making the proposal at the same time as he expresses his dread about it.

Before moving on to the next section, mention should be made of two syntactic factors that have been proposed as having an impact on complement variation. The first is the *horror aequi* principle

(Rohdenburg 2001) which "concerns the universal tendency to avoid the (near-) adjacency of identical grammatical structures."[3] The COCA data used in this study (to be taken up further in Section 4) confirms this tendency for the verb *fear*: of the 91 cases of *fear* in the progressive form, 74 are found with the infinitive (81%). As for *dread*, the data shows a tendency in the opposite direction. Of the 90 examples of this verb in the progressive form, only 17 are found with the *to*-infinitive (19%).

The second factor is the Extraction Principle (Vosberg 2003) which states that "in the case of infinitival or gerundial complement options, the infinitive will tend to be favored in environments where a complement of the subordinate clause is extracted (by topicalization, relativization, comparativization, or interrogation etc.) from its original position and crosses clause boundaries." Rohdenburg (2016:464) links this tendency to the Complexity Principle, according to which in cognitively more complex environments such as extraction more explicit grammatical constructions like the *to*-infinitive are preferred. He refers specifically to the verb *dread* as occurring in only 3% of all uses of this verb with a verbal complement in a corpus of British English, yet representing over 25% of usage in extraction contexts. Once again, the data used in this study confirms this tendency for the verb *fear*: the infinitive is more predominant in extracted contexts (86% of all cases[4]). For the verb *dread* however the situation is somewhat different from that found in Rohdenburg's data. First of all, the *to*-infinitive was just over three times more frequent in COCA, representing 17% of overall usage with *dread* as compared to 5% in Rohdenburg. Secondly, it was only 3 times more frequent in extraction contexts than in non-extraction contexts in COCA, as compared to 9 times in Rohdenburg's British corpus. To get a larger sample, a look was taken at the largest available database of English, the 14-billion-word iWeb corpus, which covers the US, Canada, Ireland, the UK, Australia and New Zealand. The results suggest that Rohdenburg's data is not typical of usage across the globe. In non-extracted contexts, the *to*-infinitive is seven times more frequent in iWeb than in Rohdenburg's corpus – 21% (1517/7355) as compared to 3%. Moreover, the ratio of extracted contexts to non-extracted ones is 4 to 3 in favour of the gerund-participle in iWeb, whereas it is 90 to 8 in favour of the *to*-infinitive in Rohdenburg's corpus! This data is summarised in Table 1.

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[3] Some previous authors have also pointed out the tendency to avoid two consecutive -*ing* forms (Poutsma 1929:858; Jespersen 1965:201; Sinclair 1999:188).

[4] There were a total of 125 cases of extraction found in the COCA with the verb *fear*, 107 of which involved the *to*-infinitive. Of these 107 cases, 75 involved expressions modeled on the expression *where angels fear to tread* (cf. *We go where the big guys fear to tread/Obama stepped up where Republicans feared to tread*). If one takes this influence into account and subtracts these cases from the total, the tendency towards the *to*-infinitive is substantially weaker.

Table 1. Comparison of corpus data for extracted/non-extracted contexts involving *dread*

	extraction	non-extraction	ratio extraction/non-extraction	% of extraction	% of non-extraction	comparative freq extraction vs non-extraction
Corpus of Contemporary American (COCA)						
–ing	16	487	0.03	0.55	0.85	0.65
to-inf.	13	88	0.15	0.45	0.15	3
iWeb Corpus (iWeb)						
–ing	218	5838	0.04	0.83	0.79	1.03
to-inf.	45	1517	0.03	0.17	0.21	0.8
Rohdenburg's British English corpus						
–ing	73	902	0.08	0.73	0.97	0.7
to-inf.	27	30	0.90	0.27	0.03	9

Another problem for the claim that the two syntactic factors mentioned above are the driver of complement choice is the fact that in some cases of extraction, only the gerund-participle complement is possible. Consider the following:

(19) Ironically, she then found it hard to concentrate at work, resulting in the silly slipups she'd feared making (*to make).

In (19), substitution of the *to*-infinitive would present the subject as exercising control over whether a slipup is made or not, a notion which is not normally associated with such an action, a slipup being something one usually wishes to avoid making inadvertently. A final consideration that is relevant to the discussion of the syntactic approach is that extracted and *horror aequi* contexts together represent only 17% of the uses of *dread* in COCA (102/604). This raises the question of what governs the choice of complement in the other 83% of cases in which syntactic considerations do not come into the picture. There certainly does seem to be room for deeper reflection on the role that factors such as the semantics of these constructions might play in the type of complement used after the verbs *fear* and *dread*, a task to which we now turn.

3. The Explanatory Framework

In spite of the extensive literature devoted to the topic, there is still no agreement as to how to go about characterizing the variation in infinitive and gerund-participle complements. Indeed, the notions of general/specific, volitional/non-volitional and future/simultaneous have been shown to be not explanations of the data, but rather linguistic facts-to-be-explained. The account proposed here will test out the explanatory

potential of the framework proposed in Duffley (1992, 1995, 2000) and continued in Duffley (2006). To date, this explanatory hypothesis has been applied to eight sets of verbs and one set of adjectives: verbs of effort, of intent and purpose, of tolerance, of liking, of positive and negative recall, of choice, of risk, aspectual verbs, and adjectives of fear (e.g. Duffley & Tremblay 1994, Duffley 1999, Duffley & Joubert 1999, Duffley 2001, Duffley 2004a, Duffley 2004b, Duffley & Abida 2009, Duffley & Arseneau 2012, Duffley & Fisher 2019). The underlying assumption of this approach is cognitive in orientation: it assumes that linguistic signs are meaningful and that an explanation of complement clause constructions, or any other grammatical construction for that matter, must be predicated upon an analysis of the semantic content of the items of which each construction is composed. Three factors are proposed as being relevant to explaining infinitive and gerund-participle complementation: (1) the meaning and function of the gerund-participle, (2) the meaning and function of the *to*-infinitive, and (3) the meaning of the main predicate. We now turn to defining these parameters.

3.1. *The meaning of the to-infinitive and the gerund-participle*

A recurring temptation among linguists has been to take the *–ing*'s use in the progressive construction as the basis for explaining its use as a gerund-participle. Wierzbicka (1988:68) and Langacker (1991:445), for instance, define this form as imperfective on the basis of uses such as the one below:

(20) She sat talking to her friend.

Characterizing the *–ing* in this way is unsatisfactory, however, as it does not account for cases like (21) where the event expressed by the gerund-participle is depicted holistically, including its beginning and end:

(21) He remembered slamming the door on the cat's tail.

Other authors have ascribed to the gerund-participle the meaning of durativity, claiming that this form evokes an event as extending over a period of time (Dixon 1984, Verspoor 1996, Egan 2008). Egan (2008:65) cites (22) and (23), where the complement events are depicted as dynamic or ongoing:

(22) Like you, I enjoy running my own business.

(23) I wish I had some bread – I feel like feeding the ducks.

The impression of ongoingness that is undeniably present in these examples should not be considered, however, as attributable to the semantic makeup of the *–ing* form: it is, rather, the result the lexical meaning of the verbs used in this form: *running a business* and *feeding the*

ducks are actions which necessarily unfold over an extended period of time. These examples can be contrasted with (21) above in which any feeling of durativity or ongoingness is completely absent. The absence of this impression here is due to the fact that slamming a door requires a relatively short stretch of time for its actualisation (i.e. it is an 'instantaneous' action). Moreover, the fact that this example can be paraphrased by *He remembered that he slammed the door* and not *He remembered that he was slamming the door* illustrates that it is not an imperfective image of the event that the speaker has in mind but a perfective one.

The fact that the *–ing* form is capable of evoking events that are both imperfective/durative and perfective means that its inherent semantic makeup is more abstract than either of these notions[5]. Duffley (2006:19–21) proposes that this form denotes a schematic representation of the interiority of its event. This abstract notion can be actualized in two different ways, one in which the subject is evoked as being at a particular point within the event's interiority and the other in which the interior of the event is evoked as a homogenous whole. The former corresponds to its use in the progressive and the latter to its use in the gerund-participle:

(24) She was reading Brideshead Revisited when I came in.

(25) Reading Brideshead Revisited took her only three days.

In the cases under analysis here, the *–ing* form corresponds to the gerundive actualization of the *–ing*'s generalized, abstract meaning. With the gerundive construal, it is the totality of the event's interiority which is profiled, "which amounts to evoking the event itself as a sort of abstract substance whose nature is depicted by the gerund-participle's lexical content" (Duffley 2006:20). In this respect, Huddleston & Pullum (2002:1243) are correct in comparing the gerund-participle to an NP object: while the latter evokes an abstract substance in space, the former evokes an abstract substance in time.

The meaning of the *to*-infinitive is more complex as it is composed of two words – *to* and the infinitival form of the verb. That *to* should not be considered merely as appended to the infinitive is evidenced in cases of infinitive-splitting:

(26) I've never been afraid to publicly take a stand.

In terms of the infinitival form, or bare infinitive as it will be referred to here, it is proposed that its semantic content is the same as that of the simple form, a form which shares the same linguistic sign in the

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[5] Abstractness is a characteristic of language argued for at length in Ruhl (1989) regarding the lexical meaning of basic verbs such as *take*.

unmarked forms of the present. The simple form simply situates an event in time, evoking an action's full duration from beginning to end, as in (27), or a state in its full-fledged existence at some point within its duration, as in (28):

(27) So I *open* the door and walk in.

(28) You *look* happy.

These two instantiations of the simple form have been termed 'metaphase' and 'monophase' respectively (see Hirtle 2007:87–89). Like the simple form, the bare infinitive also has the expressive capacity of evoking the full duration of an action, as in (29) or a state's existence at some point within its duration, as in (30):

(29) I saw the guy *have* a drink and leave.

(30) He might *have* the car keys in his pocket.

The infinitive being a non-finite form of the verb, this means that the image of integral actualization it evokes is represented in the abstract, i.e. it is not located in either the past or non-past time-spheres. Consequently, it can be used to make reference indifferently to the past or the present:

(31) I am helping Mom *make* cookies.

(32) I helped Mom *make* cookies.

As for *to*, it has been proposed in Duffley (1992) that its meaning is the notion of movement leading to a terminal point. When this notion is applied to the domain of time, it represents one event as being subsequent to another. When used to connect two verbs, the infinitive can be represented either as a subsequent potentiality, as in (33), or as a subsequent actualization (i.e. the result of the process denoted by the main verb), as in (34):

(33) I wanted to open the window.

(34) I managed to open the window.

To serves here to define the relationship between the main predicate and the bare infinitive, more precisely, to represent the bare infinitive as the end-point of a movement, the starting point of which corresponds to the event evoked by the main verb or adjective. This produces a before-after relationship between two events, whereby the main verb's event is conceived as occupying a position in time prior to the infinitive's event, as in the following:

(35) I had nine people to call.

Here *to* makes explicit the subsequence in time between having the nine people on one's list and calling them. In cases where *to* is not used, there is no impression of temporal subsequence and the main verb and infinitive events are conceived as coinciding in time:

(36) I had nine people call.

Here *have* conveys the idea of 'to experience' and the experiencing and the calling coincide in time. This impression of coincident actualization is also observed with verbs such as *see* and *hear*, which both select for the bare infinitive (cf. *I saw John wolf down ten hot dogs* and *I heard someone laugh at his red MAGA cap*).

Although the great majority of the uses of *to* with the infinitive fall within the temporal domain, there are a few which do not. One such use is in contexts involving verbs of seeming and appearing:

(37) The wall seems to be crooked.

Here the domain of application of *to*'s meaning is that of the relation between appearances and reality, i.e. logical rather than chronological. The existence of motional-directional metaphors with other expressions in this domain shows that *to* is not foreign to the way things are conceived in this area of experience: evidence or appearances are often spoken of as 'pointing towards some reality' or as 'pointing in this or that direction.' Thus it is not surprising that in (37) appearances are represented as pointing/leading to the attribution of crookedness to the wall. Another similar case is the use of the *to* + infinitive construction after verbs of belief and knowledge:

(38) I knew/believed him to be a liar.

In this type of construction the idea of movement signified by *to* is also interpreted as applying to a connection-relation in the mind: knowledge and belief are represented as causing a mental connection of 'him' to 'be a liar.' Uses with the verb *claim* are similar in nature: in *She claims to be psychic*, her claim is the basis for the desired connection of 'she' to 'be a psychic.'

Support in favour of viewing *to* as evoking the notion of movement can be found as far back as Curme (1931) and more recently in Rudanko (2014:233), who proposes that *to* has still retained some of its original meaning of 'movement towards' in constructions such as (33) and (34) above. What Rudanko does not see, however, is the implication of construing this movement in the domain of time: when construed in this domain, the *to*-infinitive construction involves some form of a before-after relationship, where the realizer of the main clause is conceived as occupying a position in time prior to the infinitive's event.

3.2. *The function of the to-infinitive and the gerund-participle*

Having explored the meaning of each complement type, it is now possible to look at each one's function. It is proposed here that the gerund-participle form functions as a direct object in main verb + gerund-participle constructions. The direct object simply provides a means of representing that which is "[verb]ed" in the main verb's event. Such a criterion properly distinguishes between direct and indirect objects, as the latter do not denote that which is "[verb]ed" but rather that to which the entity evoked by the direct object is destined. Other tests for a direct object include passivization, pseudo-clefting and pronoun substitution:

(39) Martinez hit the ball.
     a. The ball was hit by Martinez.
     b. The ball is what Martinez hit.
     c. Martinez hit it.

These criteria can be applied to the following example with the verb *enjoy*:

(40) Everyone enjoyed playing chess with you.

Here the event *playing chess with you* represents "that which was enjoyed." That the phrase headed by *playing* functions as direct object in this example is confirmed by the possibility of passivization, pseudo-clefting and pronoun substitution:

(41) Playing chess with you was enjoyed by everyone.

(42) Playing chess with you is what everyone enjoyed.

(42) Everyone enjoyed it/that.

The function of the infinitive is more difficult to establish than that of the gerund-participle. That it does not behave as a direct object is evidenced by its failure to pass the tests established earlier:

(44) Everyone hoped to see him there.

(45) *To see him there was hoped by everyone.

(46) *To see him there is what everyone hoped.

(47) *Everyone hoped it.

It also fails the test of fulfilling the function "that which is 'hoped'", the essential criterion for determining direct objects. It will therefore be proposed that although the *to*-infinitive does have the capacity to function as direct object in some cases (cf. *He said to leave*), in the majority of its uses it functions as a goal- or result-circumstantial (Duffley 2000:231). Analyzing the *to*-infinitive in such a way provides one

with a more unified view of its function, avoiding any separation between two constructions such as (48) and (49) below:

(48) She wanted to see him again.

(49) She longed to see him again.

Here *to see him again* is not conceived as that which is wanted or longed. Rather, it simply denotes the goal towards which these sentiments are oriented.

3.3. *Temporal effects*

By taking into account the meaning and function of each complement, it has been possible to explain their temporal readings with various verb classes in the studies mentioned at the beginning of this section. In infinitive constructions, since *to* represents the realizer of the main clause as occupying a position in time prior to the actualization phase of the event represented by the bare infinitive, it is not surprising that the resultant impression is one of subsequence. In gerund-participle constructions, the relation of the direct object to the main verb is essentially non-temporal in nature, serving merely to identify one of the participants in the main verb's event. This is demonstrated in the following sentences with NP direct objects, which do not stand in any temporal relation whatsoever to the main verb's event:

(50) I remember a cruise on the Caribbean.

(51) I am enjoying a cruise on the Caribbean.

(52) I am considering a cruise on the Caribbean.

The same indifference to temporality impressions is also characteristic of the gerund-participle. It can evoke an event which is viewed as being prior, contemporaneous, or subsequent to the main verb:

(53) I remember getting a massage.

(54) I am enjoying getting a massage.

(55) I am considering getting a massage.

Variation in temporality readings is possible due to the non-temporal nature of the direct object function, which merely represents that which is "[verb]ed." That temporal impressions come into the picture at all is due to the interaction of the complement with the lexical meaning of the main verb. Logically, an event that is remembered will necessarily be understood to have taken place prior to the remembering. An event that is enjoyed is typically savoured during its realization. An event that

is being considered will generally be understood to have not yet taken place. In many cases, however, the gerund-participle stands in no temporal relation to the matrix verb whatsoever:

(56) He described solving the house problem as providing convenient housing for every citizen.

In cases such as these, where the lexical meaning of the main verb is not felt to imply any relation in time to its object, there is naturally no resulting temporal impression.

4. Analysis of corpus data

Having proposed a definition for the meaning and function of the two complement types, the primary objective of this section will be analyze the semantic effects for each verb-complement construction with the two verbs under study. The analysis is based on 2480 tokens from the Corpus of Contemporary American (COCA). This figure represents the total number of to-infinitive and gerund-participle constructions located in the corpus and not just a sampling. Tokens were located using the search strings [dread].[*v] to _v?i*, [fear].[*v] to _v?i*, [dread].[*v] _v?g* and [fear].[*v] _v?g*[6]. Table 2 provides frequency data for the two verbs under study.

Table 2. COCA frequency data for to-infinitive and gerund-participle with dread and fear

	to-infinitive	gerund-participle	Total
dread	101	503	604
fear	501	1375	1876
Total	602	1878	**2480**

In terms of frequency, the data shows a tendency for both verbs to be used with the gerund-participle more frequently than with the infinitive[7]. In infinitive constructions, an impression of unwillingness or reluctance to carry out the infinitive's event is constant. For example:

(57) At each bend we almost dreaded to look down the ensuing stretch of water, afraid of what we were going to see.

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[6] Tokens had to be manually sorted in order to locate and discard those involving nominal and adjectival uses, as well as fear in its 'believe' sense (Many of the files were feared to be lost) and constructions in which the verb of fear was followed by a complementizer-less clause of which the gerund-participle was the grammatical subject (Economists fear introducing a carbon tax will hurt the economy).

[7] Incidentally, this is the opposite of what is the case with adjectives of fear which show a tendency to select the infinitive more frequently than the gerund-participle. See Duffley & Fisher 2019.

(58) Garfield and Ruiz, who nestle in the same chair at home but fear to hold hands in public, are hoping to hold their wedding ceremony there.

(59) That's Anderson Cooper. He goes where others fear to tread.

This impression of reluctance comes out clearly in examples involving the verb *think* which, as mentioned at the outset of this paper, are hyperbolic ways of saying 'I don't want to think about it':

(60) "I dread to think what will happen if they eat what could well be cannabis plants – we could have an outbreak of psychotic sheep rampaging through the village," he added.

(61) They are going to be kidnapped, raped, picked up, sold, bought. I fear to think what will happen if this goes on.

As for the gerund-participle, the notion of unwillingness or reluctance to carry out the infinitive event is not present. With *dread*, the meaning could be characterized as "to anticipate with fear of evil, pain or trouble" (Webster's) or "look forward to with great apprehension or fear" (Canadian Oxford). This anticipatory, forward-looking perspective is present in the following examples:

(62) Throughout the year, our work situation became almost unbearable. I dreaded going to school and sharing an office and a classroom with him.

(63) If you make it unpleasant by trying for faster times each day, you will dread getting up to do your exercise.

In other cases, the anticipatory or forward-looking impression is not discernible, the meaning being more aptly characterized as "to fear greatly; be in mortal fear of" (Webster's):

(64) I dreaded being at the same school as my father, let alone in his class.

As for *fear*, the meaning could be characterized as "to be afraid of" or "consider, expect, or anticipate with feelings of alarm, foreboding, or solicitude" (Webster's):

(65) So if politicians fear treading in the single player arena, why aren't journalists learning and talking about Canada and other foreign experience?

(66) Throughout its history, Australia had feared becoming a culture overly influenced by Asian society.

In terms of volitional and non-volitional readings, the data is provided in Table 3. In *to*-infinitive constructions, there are two possible

interpretations. The predominant impression is one of 'direct voluntari-
ness', whereby the infinitive event is understood to be one the subject
would be volitionally involved in bringing about:

(67)   Nothing has gone right for this island since the raids of Le Balafre
       and his witch-hunters. People from the mainland fear to come here
       anymore, our trade has fallen off to nothing.

(68)   I looked down at my feet to a scarf coiled on the tiled floor. I feared
       to touch it, thinking it might have been dropped by one of the
       concubines on her doomed race to the tower.

(69)   She's trying to shut the motel down, so every chance she gets, she
       stops at the office window where the night manager dreads to see
       her face at the check-in window.

(70)   He wrote to Garrison that of the six weeks he spent in Dublin, he
       often dreaded to leave the house because the exhibitions of "human
       misery" were so painful.

Table 3. Frequency in the COCA of volitional and non-volitional
interpretations

	Voluntary To-infinitive	Indirect voluntary To-infinitive	Voluntary gerund-participle	Involuntary gerund-participle
dread	95	6	418	85
fear	443	58	630	745

On the other hand, there are 64 cases involving events which the subject
is not understood to be directly involved in bringing about. Some of these
cases involve passive constructions such as (71) and (72) below. A closer
inspection of these tokens, however, reveals that some notion of volition
is nonetheless discernible, as in both of them it is possible to paraphrase
the verbs *dread* and *fear* with 'not want':

(71)   For everything that she thought she would feel about her
       firstborn–how she would treasure the moments when he suckled
       at her breast, how she would lie awake at night listening for any
       miniscule shift in his breathing pattern, how she would dread to
       be separated from him and lash out at anyone who pretended to
       offer him more affection, even if it was his father [. . .]

(72)   Between the living who are happy to be alive and the dead who
       are powerful but fear to be forgotten is the deeply felt desire to
       preserve the human family on both sides.

Aside from passive constructions, there are also active constructions involving the verbs *have*, *die*, *make*, *get*, *fall*, *lose* and *offend*. The following is a sample:

(73) Another Chancellorsville veteran spooked his campmates by noting that "the wounded are liable to be burned to death. I am willing to take my chances of getting killed, but I dread to have a leg broken and then be burned slowly; and these woods will surely be burned if we fight here.

(74) Why does your young friend keep silent? I am suspicious of those who stare and stare and say naught." "Falco is newly from the farm," Astolfo explained. "He is unfamiliar with polished society and fears to make a fool of himself.

(75) He is afraid, I thought, afraid for Catherine's life – for indeed, she was always a delicate creature and had never been strong. Now he feared to lose her, and he was so desperate that he had even stooped to asking me for help.

(76) As he bade the congregation pray for the dead girl's soul, he stole an uneasy glance at the Fontclairs, as though he feared to offend them by drawing attention to the scandal hanging over their house.

(77) He judged my worth and also the changes in me since we'd met in that dark alley just over a year ago. "I could make you do this– without reward," he purred. I lowered my voice. "Even though your promise was made and I do not fear to die?" I had power over him just then and I knew it.

(78) Pierre calls the apes "accomplices," and pretends that Eve feared to get lost among them–an allusion to the fact that he suspects her of conspiracy with "the leaders" who want to keep him under control.

As with the passive constructions above, it is possible to discern an element of volition in these uses as well: each of the infinitive events in these examples is presented as an event the subject is reluctant to trigger by performing some other action; in other words, they involve indirect voluntariness. In (73), the subject has control over whether he fights or not, which has a strong bearing on whether his leg is broken or not. In (74) the subject feels that he can control looking like a fool by choosing to remain silent. In (75), the speaker views the subject as being in control of whether he asks for help or not and therefore in control of whether his wife loses her life. In (76), the subject has control over whether he draws attention to the scandal and therefore over whether they are offended. In (77), the subject portrays death as something he has control over, wishing to evoke himself as having power over the other person involved. Finally,

in (78) Pierre views Eve as conspiring against him and therefore as having agency in getting lost. The gerund-participle, on the other hand, can be used when the action feared or dreaded is imposed by the circumstances and not caused by the subject in any way, not even indirectly, as in:

(79) Everybody dreads getting stuck with you on joint projects.

Any idea of lack of volition felt in gerund-participle constructions is inferred from the fact that an action which is the object of fear or dread is not something that a rational agent is going to want to perform. This inference is only active in cases where the subject has decisional control over the action, as in:

(80) If you make it unpleasant by trying for faster times each day, you will dread getting up to do your exercise.

It is this sort of context which probably allowed the spread of the gerund-participle construction historically.

The final semantic effect to be analyzed in this section concerns the temporal relation between the main verb and the complement. One observes a temporal relation of subsequence between the matrix and its complement in all examples of the infinitive in the corpus. For example, in *I dread/fear to think what could happen* or *I dreaded/feared to go home*, the events *think* and *go home* are understood to occupy a position in time which is subsequent to the emotional state expressed in the main predicate. As for the gerund-participle, two temporal readings are possible. In the vast majority of cases, the relation is also one of subsequence, as in *I dreaded telling him* or *We feared making a mistake*, where telling and making are subsequent in time with respect to the fear expressed by the verb in the main clause. In some cases, there can be a relation of simultaneity, however, whereby the main verb is understood as existing at a point in time which is contemporaneous with the complement:

(81) I suppose Mr. Howell figured that my father knew enough about the subject to teach it to the average seat-warmer at McKinley and that what he didn't know, he'd learn. I dreaded being at the same school as my father, let alone in his class.

(82) West said in 2011 that my dear brother Barack Obama has a certain fear of free black men, "because as a biracial child growing up in a white world," he's always had to fear being a white man with black skin.

(83) The minute they'd entered the house, Connie had feared having him there. The moment he'd gone, she wanted him back.

(84) Dove dreaded living in Geneva, yet he worked more fruitfully there at his art.

Here the events *being at the same school*, *being a white man with black skin*, *having him there* and *living in Geneva* are all understood to exist simultaneously with the emotion expressed in the main clause. A total of eight tokens were found in the corpus, all of which involved these three verbs.

5. Explanation of complement choice and semantic effects

Now that the groundwork has been laid, it is possible to offer an explanation of the semantic issues raised in this paper. Specifically, the following questions need to be answered: 1) What determines complement choice with *dread* and *fear*? 2) How does one explain the variation in temporal effects with the gerund-participle and the constant subsequence relation with the *to*-infinitive? 3) How is the gerund-participle capable of being used in both volitional and non-volitional contexts while the infinitive is only possible in volitional ones? 4) Does the verb's meaning shift according to the complement with which it is used?

We will begin by establishing the function of the complement. The gerund-participle clearly functions as direct object with these verbs. In all cases in the corpus, the complement event corresponds to 'that which is dreaded or feared.' Its function is confirmed by the tests of passivization, pseudo-clefting and pronoun substitution:

(85) The girls evidently dreaded/feared looking like women.

(86) Looking like women was evidently dreaded/feared by the girls.

(87) What the girls evidently dreaded/feared was looking like women.

(88) The girls evidently dreaded/feared it/that.

The *to*-infinitive, on the other hand, does not function as a direct object. First of all, it is not felt to correspond to 'that which is *verb*ed' in any of the examples in the corpus. Passivization and pseudo-clefting also yield questionable results:

(89) I dreaded/feared to discover something.

(90) *To discover something was dreaded/feared by me.

(91) ?What I dreaded/feared was to discover something.

Pronoun substitution is also not possible, with *to* being the preferred element for anaphoric reference:

(92) *I dreaded it/that.

(93) I dreaded to.

The evidence is thus in favour of treating the *to*-infinitive as a goal- or result-circumstantial in which the infinitive evokes a perfective view of the realization of its event and *to* represents the movement of the subject from some point before the actualization phase of the infinitive's event.

Putting all of the pieces together allows an explanation of the usage described in this study. A speaker's choice of the gerund-participle can be explained by the fact that one can conceive of a fear or dread as simply having a particular object. The gerund-participle's event, which fulfills the function of direct object in such cases, represents consequently "that which is feared or dreaded." Selection of the *to*-infinitive, on the other hand, can be explained by the fact that dread or fear can also be conceived as involving a negative predisposition on the part of the subject towards moving to the actualization of the infinitive's event.

It was mentioned at the outset that in some cases, substitution of one complement for the other often yields little change in the overall message conveyed. The following two tokens were cited to illustrate this:

(94) I missed confession for 18 years and dreaded going (to go) back.

(95) What's worse is that we don't just fear, we fear talking (to talk) about it.

In (94), it makes little difference whether the notion of going back to confession is presented as an event the subject is reluctant to actualize due to a feeling of dread or whether it is presented as the object of this feeling. Likewise, in (95) it makes little difference as to how the fear is presented with regards to talking about some topic – either as something making the subject reluctant to perform this action or as the object of the emotion of fear. It was mentioned at the outset that in some cases, only one of the two complement forms is possible. The following examples were cited:

(96) Today, I believe we are again entering into a great war. I fear to make (?making) a comparison as I do not in any way want to diminish the immense costs and sacrifices, that to this day I still can't fathom.

(97) Toby usually dreaded getting (?to get) homework assignments back because his grades were average.

In (96), the gerund-participle is not appropriate, as the subject views fear as an emotion preventing him from proceeding to make a comparison and not as an object that is feared. In (97), on the other hand, the subject's dread is conceived not as an emotional state making him reluctant to actualize the action of getting homework assignments back, but rather getting homework assignments back is simply represented as the object of the subject's dread. Moreover, the student in question has

no say in whether the homework is returned or not, as this depends on the teacher's decision.

With regards to temporality, the analysis has shown that the infinitive manifests constant subsequent temporality readings. Taking into account the relation between the bare infinitive and *to* allows one to account for the stability of this relation: since the former represents the endpoint of a movement and the latter denotes the movement in time required to get to this endpoint from the main verb, an impression of temporal subsequence will naturally be produced. As for temporality with the gerund-participle, on the whole one observes a relation of subsequence between the main verb and complement event with the two verbs examined in this study. That temporal relations come into play at all is a result of the interaction between the meaning of the gerund-participle, its function, and the meaning evoked by the main verb. In (94) the holistic view of the event *going back* is represented as 'that which is dreaded.' Since *dread* means here 'to look forward to with fear' and one can only look forward to a future unrealized event, this sequence yields an impression of subsequence. In (95), on the other hand, the holistic view of the event *talking about it* is represented as 'that which is feared.' Since *fear* in this case means 'consider, expect, or anticipate with feelings of alarm, foreboding, or solicitude' and one normally considers, expects or anticipates potential future events, the resulting impression is also one of subsequence.

While subsequent temporality readings appear to be the most common with the gerund-participle, in some cases an impression of simultaneity, whereby the complement event is felt to coincide with the main verb in time, is also possible, as in (82) (...) *he's always had to fear being a white man with black skin*. In such cases the event denoted by the gerund-participle is stative or durative in nature and felt to be ongoing at the moment of speaking. The impression of simultaneity observed here can also be explained using the parameters stated above: the gerund-participle's event is simply represented as 'that which is dreaded or feared,' and since the feeling of fear expressed by the main verb is implied to exist during the feared event's duration, a temporal impression of simultaneity is produced.

One other issue needs to be addressed: volitional readings. It was shown earlier that all tokens of the *dread/fear + to*-infinitive constructions involve some component of volition, where the complement event is understood to be something the subject is reluctant to actualize, whether they have full control over its accomplishment or the latter is imposed on them as a result of their actions. Since in this case the fear represents a negative disposition of the subject towards moving to the actualization of the event denoted by the infinitive, such a construction is naturally incompatible with cases where the event is imposed on the subject no matter what they do, as

in (97). As for the gerund-participle, it was shown earlier that it can evoke both an event that the subject wishes to undertake voluntarily or one that could happen to them against their will, without their consent or control. This can be explained by the fact that the gerund-participle complement merely denotes 'that which is dreaded/feared.' Such a construction is therefore less specified and more open to being construed both with actions that one may perform voluntarily and with experiences that one may undergo involuntarily. Whether the action is interpreted as voluntary or not is a combined result of contextual factors and the nature of the verb itself. Thus in (98) below, because *going out at night* is an action over which one has control, a volitional reading arises:

(98) People fear going out at night.

In the following example, on the other hand, the impression of involuntariness stems from the fact that *losing their money* is an event over which the subjects typically have no control and, in this context, one which they wish to avoid:

(99) Many fear losing their money.

The final issue to be resolved is the semantic effects of the following examples cited at the beginning of this paper, precisely whether or not *dread*'s meaning shifts according to its complement:

(100) I dread to think what the panic will be.

(101) I dread going to work every day.

As already pointed out, there is an impression of actual dread in (101) whereas this impression is absent in (100). The impression of actual dread with the gerund-participle stems from the fact that *going to work* is represented as the direct object of the verb. Since the direct object necessarily implies "something dreaded", an impression of actual dread arises. In (100), on the other hand, thinking of what could happen is not represented as something the subject dreads but as an action the subject is being held back from actualizing due to the way they feel: since there is no direct object here denoting something actually dreaded, there is no resulting impression of actual dread. A similar phenomenon is observed with the verb *hate*, where a use with the *to*-infinitive such as *I hate to bother you* is not felt to convey actual hate, whereas a use with the gerund-participle such as *I hate washing floors* is: actual hate always has an object that is hated; when construed as a disposition towards moving to the actualisation of some action, it is understood merely as a form of strong reluctance. Hence the two impressions of hate, like dread, are not different meanings of the verb, but the effect of construing these verbs with different complements.

6. Conclusion

The approach taken in this study has made it possible to complement the syntactic approach by offering a semantic account of the choice of the *to*-infinitive and gerund-participle with *dread* and *fear*. The main observation to come out of this study is the malleability of each verb: either one can be conceived as a negative predisposition towards the actualization of an event or as an emotional state whose object is the potential (or concurrent) realization of an event. These two different ways of conceiving the verb are what lead a speaker to choose a goal/result-circumstantial in the former case (the *to*-infinitive) and a direct object in the latter (the gerund-participle). As has been seen, in some cases only one complement form is at the speaker's disposal, while in others either one is possible. It is important to note that although the overall message may be roughly the same in these cases, the means used by the speaker to convey this message are not.

 Although the approach taken in this study has proven fruitful, there is still much more research that needs to be done in order to test the model's hypotheses and comprehend its full explanatory potential. In addition to the multiple classes of verbs and adjectives on which the model has not been tested, one area in need of investigation is verbs such as *shudder*, *shiver* and *cringe* which are all used with what has been called the 'infinitive of reaction' (Jespersen 1965:259). It is our belief that an understanding of usage in this area can be understood by delving into the notional content encoded by the linguistic signs of which these constructions are composed. This is territory into which linguists need not fear treading, nor is this territory into which they should fear to tread, as Alexander Pope might say.

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