THE VERBAL ADJECTIVE AND ITS ROMANIAN EQUIVALENTS

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Abstract*: In our paper we propose ourselves to dwell on the special characteristics of the verbal adjective and to make a detailed classification of these adjectives in:* ***qualitative adjectives****, when they describe an effect;* ***classifying adjectives****, when they describe a process;* ***derived adjectives****;* ***adjectives which are not related to a verb****;* ***emphasizing adjectives****. We also analyse* ***compound verbal adjectives****, recording all the possibilities of composing and classifying them according to the same criteria. Finally, we point out several difficulties of translating verbal adjectives into Romanian on account of the fact that none of the Romanian grammarians dealing with verbal adjectives draws one's attention to their being translated by an adjective which might be in our opinion an argument in favour of the theory according to which one cannot call a verbal adjective an indefinite participle since its adjectival features are strong enough to clearly distinguish between them.*

Keywords: verbal adjectives, qualitative verbal adjectives, classifying verbal adjectives

Traditional grammarians refer to the indefinite/present participle, the gerund, the verbal adjective and the verbal noun as **-ing** forms, since all four of them have the same form (infinitive+the **-ing** suffix), while the differences between them in point of their grammatical regimen are sometimes very subtle.

Concerning the number of the **-ing** forms, opinions diverge as follows:

a) Some grammarians such as: A. Bădescu (1984), B. Ilyish (1963), Thomson & Martinet (1997) claim that one can speak of only two nonfinite **-ing** forms, that is: **the indefinite/present participle** and **the gerund,** considering the verbal adjective as a function of the indefinite participle which is said to have the features of both an adjective and of an adverb, and the verbal noun as a variant of the gerund which is treated as a hybrid form having both verbal and nominal features.

b) An opposite point of view is that of L. Levițchi (1970), A. Bantaş (1995, 1996) and W. Collins (1992) who make a clear distinction between the indefinite/present participle and the verbal adjective as well as between the gerund and the verbal noun, distinguishing four **-ing** forms instead of two.

c) A structural view on the matter is given by R. Quirk (1991) and G. Leech (1991) who do not use the traditional denomination of **-ing** forms and choose to speak of **-ing** clauses instead, with the specification that nominal **-ing** clauses are called gerunds by traditional grammarians.

d) K. Schibsbye (1973) as well as R. Quirk (1991) claim the existence of a fifth **-ing** form represented by prepositions and conjunctions such as: **concerning**, **regarding**, **excepting**, **providing**, **supposing**, **considering**, **including**.

The verbal adjective also called participial adjective or **-ing** adjective has the characteristics of an adjective and is not a verbal form.

A. Bădescu[1], A. Bantaş[1], L.Levițchi[2], W. Collins[3], R. Quirk[4] as well as J. Eastwood[5] make a more or less detailed study of verbal adjectives, pointing out their

[1] Bădescu, A., *Gramatica limbii engleze,* Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1984, pp. 335-336.

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full adjectival status which they prove by the fact that **-ing** adjectives may have degrees of comparison (**a very interesting person**), may be preceded by adverbs of degree such as: **very**, **quite**, **rather**, **too**, **as**, etc. (**a rather boring man**) and may discharge the syntactical functions of attribute and predicative.

R. Quirk (1992) also refers to the fact that there are also cases when the difference between a verbal adjective or participial adjective as he calls it and a homonymous present participle form is not clear-cut. According to him, the verbal force of the participle is explicit for the **-ing** form when a direct object is present while the premodification by the intensifier **very**, for example, is an explicit indication that the respective **-ing** form has achieved adjective status. Thus, in the sentences:

*His views **were alarming** her audience* (Părerile ei *alarmau* publicul) and

*You **are frightening** the children* (*Sperii* copiii) - the presence of the direct objects **her audience** and **the children** leaves no room for the interpretation of the two **-ing** forms **alarming** and **frightening** as participial adjectives which means that they are present participle forms helping the formation of the past continuous tense and of the present continuous tense, while in the sentences:

*Her views were very **alarming*** (Părerile ei erau foarte *alarmante*) and

*You are very **frightening*** (Eşti foarte *înfricoşător*), the premodifier **very** indicates that the only interpretation possible for the two **-ing** forms is that of participial adjectives discharging the syntactic function of predicatives within the nominal predicates **were very alarming** and **are very frightening**.

A translation approach to the above pairs of sentences proves that the distinction between them from this viewpoint is clear cut since in the first pair of sentences the **-ing** forms mentioned (*alarming*, *frightening*) are to be translated by Romanian "imperfect" and "prezent" indicative mood forms whereas in the second pair of sentences they find adjectival equivalents in the Romanian adjectives *alarmante* and *înfricoşător*.

A. Bantaş (1997) points out that, since both **-ing** nouns and **-ing** adjectives can be used attributively before a noun, they can very easily be mistaken for one another. According to him, the best way to establish whether an **-ing** form is a verbal adjective or a verbal noun is to check whether the respective **-ing** attribute anteposed to the noun derives from a postposed one with a preposition, a case in which the **-ing** form is a verbal noun.

Thus, in the examples: **measuring instruments** (instrumente de măsurat) and **fencing lessons** (lecţii de scrimă), the two **-ing** forms derive from **instruments for measuring** and **lessons in fencing** which means that they are verbal nouns.

If, on the other hand, such **-ing** forms do not fit the pattern **noun + preposition + noun**, and express a quality of the noun, it means that they are verbal adjectives such

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[1] Bantaş, A., *Essential English - Engleza pentru admitere*, Editura Teora, Bucureşti, 1995, pp. 74-76.

[2] Levițchi, L., *Limba engleză contemporană,* Editura Didactică şi Pedagică, Bucureşti, 1970, pp. 221-236

[3] Collins, W., *English Grammar*, Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1992, pp. 23-25.

[4] Quirk, R., Leech, G., Greenbaum, S., Svartnik, J., ***A** Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, Longman, New York, 1991, pp. 153-154, 998-999, 1325-1326.

[5] Eastwood, J., *Oxford Guide to English Grammar*, Oxford University Press, London, 1994, pp. 159-174.

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as in: **the coming year** (anul următor), **the falling star** (steaua căzătoare), **a working man** (un om muncitor) etc .

Thomson & Martinet (1997), B. Ilyish (1963) as well as K. Schibsbye (1973) do not talk about a verbal adjective and consider that an **-ing** form can act as either a present participle or a gerund.

W. Collins (1992) makes a detailed classification of **-ing** adjectives taking into consideration several criteria:

- whether they describe an effect (a case in which they are called **qualitative adjectives**) or a process or state (in which case they are called **classifying adjectives**);
- whether they are related or not to a common transitive/intransitive use of a verb;
- whether they are derived.

Thus, according to him, verbal adjectives fall into several categories:

a) qualitative adjectives - which are **-ing** adjectives describing the effect that something has on one's feelings and ideas, or on the feelings and ideas of people in general.

The **-ing** adjectives belonging to this category have a related transitive verb which one uses to describe the way someone is affected by something and are similar in meaning to the usual meaning of the related verb. Thus, if somebody speaks of **an alarming increase**, he means that the increase alarms him.

W.Collins gives a comprehensive list of the qualitative adjectives used in contemporary English: **alarming** (alarmant), **amazing** (uluitor, uimitor, surprinzător), **amusing** (distractiv, amuzant), **annoying** (plictisitor, supărător), **appalling** (înspăimântător, îngrozitor), **astonishing** (uimitor, surprinzător), **astounding** (uluitor, izbitor, extraordinar), **bewildering** (tulburător, uimitor), **boring** (sfredelitor; plictisitor), **challenging** (provocator), **charming** (minunat, fermecător, încântător), **compelling** (forțat, constrângător, care forțează), **confusing** (confuz, care te zăpăceşte), **convincing** (convingător), **depressing** (deprimant, apăsător), **devastating** (devastator), **disappointing** (dezamăgitor, care dezamăgeşte), **disgusting** (dezgustător), **disturbing** (tulburător, care tulbură), **embarrassing** (stânjenitor, jenant), **encouraging** (încurajator), **entertaining** (distractiv, amuzant), **exciting** (tulburător, excitant), **frightening** (înfricoşător), **harassing** (obositor, istovitor, tracasant), **inspiring** (inspirator, insuflător, însufleţitor), **interesting** (interesant), **misleading** (înşelător), **mocking** (batjocoritor), **overwhelming** (covârşitor, copleşitor), **pleasing** (plăcut, atrăgător), **refreshing** (înviorător, odihnitor), **relaxing** (care relaxează/odihneşte), **rewarding** (răsplătitor, meritat), **satisfying** (satisfăcător), **shocking** (emoționant, şocant, zguduitor, înspăimântător), **surprising** (surprinzător), **tempting** (tentant), **terrifying** (înspăimântător, înfricoşător), **threatening** (amenințător), **thrilling** (palpitant, incitant), **tiring** (extenuant, istovitor), **welcoming** (binevenit, de bun sosit/de bun venit), **worrying** (îngrijorător).

From the above it is to be noted that the adjectives belonging to this category have in most cases adjectival equivalents into Romanian, proving once again their strictly adjectival grammatical status.

*Venturini had actually built a house illustrating his **alarming**, **thrilling** ideas in a suburb of Philadelphia.* (**Time - February 17 , 1992**)

[Venturini chiar construise o casă la periferia oraşului Philadelphia care ilustra/ etala ideile sale *alarmante* şi *revoluționare*.]

*There is nothing very **surprising** in this.* (**Collins - English Grammar**)

[Nu e nimic foarte *surprinzător* în asta.]

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The syntactic functions that such a qualitative adjective discharges are those of attribute and of predicative:

- **attribute**: *They can still show **amazing** loyalty to their parents.* (**Collins-op.cit**.)
  [Le pot arăta încă părinților lor o loialitate *uimitoare*.]
- **predicative**: *It's **amazing** what they can do*. (**Collins -op.cit**.)
  [Este *uimitor* ce pot face.]

There are also a number of qualitative adjectives which are related to an uncommon transitive use of a verb: **becoming** (potrivit, care avantajează), **bracing** (întăritor, înviorător, întremător), **cutting** (ascuțit, tăios), **dashing** (elegant, arătos; îndrăzneț, cutezător), **disarming** (dezarmant), **engaging** (fermecător, încântător), **fetching** (atrăgător, seducător, captivant), **haunting** (care vine des/care bântuie, obsedant), **moving** (mișcător, mobil), **penetrating** (pătrunzător; perspicace), **piercing** (ascuțit, pătrunzător, pițigăiat), **pressing** (care presează, presant), **promising** (care promite, promițător), **rambling** (rătăcitor, vagabond), **ravishing** (încântător, fermecător, captivant), **retiring** (retras, rezervat, puțin comunicativ), **revolting** (revoltător), **searching** (curios, investigator, scrupulos, atent, sistematic), **trying** (dificil, greu, chinuitor).

*North and South will meet in Rio to confront the planet's most **pressing** ills.* (**Time-June 1, 1992**)

[Nordul şi Sudul se vor întâlni la Rio să discute problemele cele mai *presante/urgente* ale planetei.]

*He had travelled in his younger years , and was held in this part of the country to have contracted a too **rambling** habit of mind*. (**G. Eliot - Middlemarch**, translated by E. B. Marian)

[În tinerețe călătorise mult, dar acum, în colțul acela de comitat, era considerat un om *a cărui minte a cam început s-o ia razna*.]

A translation variant to E. B. Marian's translating the verbal adjective **rambling** by a relative clause is the Romanian adjective **rătăcitor** (cu o minte *rătăcitoare*) which would better suit our theory according to which verbal adjectives belonging to this category are generally translated by their adjective-expressed Romanian equivalents. It is to be noted, however, that in the original version the Romanian syntagm *a cărui minte a cam început s-o ia razna* is stylistically stronger than the adjective + noun construction *minte rătăcitoare*. The English version **rambling habit of mind** is thus an almost perfect semantic equivalent of the original but not a stylistic equivalent as well. A better solution in point might have been the use of the English phrase *to run/rush over stock and block/over hedge and ditch* (**whose mind had begun to run over stock and block**) which would have given the translation the same "colourfulness" specific to the colloquial speech which characterizes the original.

W. Collins illustrates this uncommon transitive use of a verb by the sentences:

*She kept **dashing** out of the kitchen to give him a kiss (Tot ieşea repede/intempestiv* din bucătărie să-l sărute) - in which the verb **dash** means **move quickly** whereas in:

*I used to be told I looked quite **dashing*** (Mi se spunea pe vremuri că sunt foarte *atrăgătoare/*că am o înfățișare *stilată*) - the adjective **dashing** means **stylish, attractive**.

a) classifying adjectives - which are the **-ing** adjectives used to describe a process or state that continues over a period of time: **ageing** (maturizant, îmbătrânitor), **ailing** (suferind, bolnav), **bleeding** (sângerând, care sângerează), **booming** (bâzâitor, huruitor; răsunător, extraordinar), **bursting** (exploziv, de explozie), **decreasing**

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(care reduce, micşorează), **diminishing** (care se micşorează, care descreşte/scade, tot mai mic), **dying** (muribund, pe moarte), **existing** (care există, actual, prezent), **increasing** (crescător, crescând(ă), care sporeşte), **living** (viu, în viață), **prevailing** (predominant, care predomină), **recurring** (repetat, recurent), **reigning** (care e la putere, care conduce, dominator, conducător), **remaining** (care rămâne), **resounding** (răsunător), **rising** (care se înalță, care se ridică, crescând(ă)), **ruling** (dominant, conducător).

The adjectives belonging to this category also find adjectival correspondents into Romanian.

*More substantive fears center on the danger that China's advisory group will grow into a power center to rival the **existing** government.* (**Time - March 16, 1992**)

[Temeri din ce în ce mai concrete au la bază pericolul că grupul de consiliere al Chinei va ajunge să fie un centru de putere/se va transforma într-un centru de putere care să rivalizeze cu guvernul *actual*.]

The adjectives used to identify a process can be submodified by adverbs which describe the speed with which the process happens:

*Justice and objectivity in judging competitive sports performances demand **ever-increasing** precision.* (**Time - February 3 , 1992**)

[Justețea şi obiectivitatea necesare judecării performanțelor din sporturile competitive necesită o precizie *din ce în ce mai mare*.]

These **-ing** adjectives have related intransitive verbs and have a similar meaning to the usual meaning of the related verb.

Unlike qualitative adjectives, classifying adjectives are only used attributively:

*And I have come to prize and to love the **living** structures of the ancient religion of this land.* (**M. Sadoveanu -The Golden Bough**, translated by E. Farca)

[Am ajuns să prețuiesc şi să iubesc aceste alcătuiri *vii* ale religiei vechi a pământului acestuia.]

You magnify Him with bells ringing

*And loud-**resounding** chimes of cymbals.* (**O.Goga-In The Forest**, translated by L.Levițchi)

[Tu-l prăznuieşti cu glas de clopot

Şi *cu răsunet* de chimvale.]

It is to be noted that the rule according to which English verbal adjectives are translated by Romanian adjectives is sometimes broken since in the above example the English verbal adjective-containing syntagm **loud-resounding chimes** represents the translation of the Romanian noun **răsunet** and not of an adjective. Trying to give a perfect syntactic equivalent to the Romanian noun **răsunet** by the English **sound** or even **echo** would prove however a translation failure since the above mentioned nouns do not have in English the poetical power of the original, representing thus only grammatical translation variants and not semantic and stylistical ones.

There are also a number of classifying adjectives which are related to an uncommon intransitive use of a verb: **acting** (în funcție, în oficiu; supleant, delegat, interimar), **floating** (plutitor, care pluteşte, flotant), **gathering** (care adună/strânge/colectează), **going** (în mers, care merge, în funcțiune), **leading** (conducător, care conduce), **missing** (absent, lipsă, care lipseşte), **running** (alergător, care aleargă; neîntrerupt, continuu).

Unlike the other categories of verbal adjectives, most adjectives belonging to this category do not have Romanian adjectival correspondents being sometimes rendered by a Romanian relative pronoun *care* + the equivalent of the English

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uncommon intransitive use of a verb (care adună/strânge/colectează). In other cases, as can be seen from the translation of the above adjectives, they have adjective equivalents into Romanian, their rendering by a Romanian relative pronoun *care* + the equivalent of the English construction sounding sometimes unnatural or disregarding the principle of economy in a language.

*We found the **missing** piece of the jigsaw under the chair.* (**Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English**)

[Am găsit piesa *lipsă/care lipsea* din ferăstrau sub scaun.]

c) -ing adjectives which are not related to verbs at all: **appetizing** (apetisant, care strârneşte pofta de mâncare, gustos), **balding** (care cheleşte/ pe cale să cheleaască), **cunning** (şiret, şmecher, viclean), **enterprising** (întreprinzător, plin de inițiativă), **excruciating** (chinuitor, fioros, groaznic), **impending** (iminent, apropiat, amenințător), **neighbouring** (vecin, învecinat, apropiat), **scathing** (sarcastic, tăios, caustic), **unwitting** (involuntar, nepremeditat, fără voie).

*Pitman glanced at the fat, **balding** man sitting beside him.* (**Collins - English Usage**)

[Pitman îi aruncă o privire bărbatului gras, *pe cale să cheleaască/în pragul calviției/cu părul rar/subțiat/rărit* de lângă el.]

It is to be remarked that the translation of the verbal adjective in the above sentence is not made by another adjective but by the Romanian syntagm **pe cale să cheleaască**, although the other adjectives from this category have perfect Romanian syntactical correspondents. The explanation in point lies in the fact that in Romanian we cannot make the distinction between the English adjectives **bald** and **balding** throughout translation by giving them both adjectival correspondents. This results in the translation of the English **bald** by the Romanian **chel** and of the English **balding** by the Romanian syntagm **pe cale să cheleaască/care cheleşte**, all of which allow us to talk of an action about to happen meaning expressed by the English –**ing** suffix.

*He launched into a **scathing** attack on Gates.* (**Collins - English Usage**)

[El s-a lansat într-un atac *tăios* împotriva lui Gates/l-a atacat *sever/cu vorbe tăioase* pe Gates.]

d) -ing adjectives derived from a verb and a prefix: **forthcoming** (apropiat, care se aproprie), **incoming** (nou venit), **oncoming** (care se aproprie, viitor), **ongoing** (continuu), **outgoing** (care pleacă), **outstanding** (eminent, distins, remarcabil), **overbearing** (autoritar, arogant), **uplifting** (înălțător, care ridică), **upstanding** (în picioare, vertical; drept, cinstit).

*Wouldn't that cause a delay in **outgoing** mail?* (**Collins - English Grammar**)

[Asta n-ar întârzia corespondența care *pleacă*/*plecarea* corespondenței?]

*Jarvis was never very **forthcoming** about his love life.* (**Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English**)

[Jarvis n-a fost/nu era niciodată foarte *deschis* în legătură cu viața sa amoroasă.]

A cursory translation approach to the above sentences enables one to say that in most cases the verbal adjectives belonging to this category find perfect semantic adjective-expressed correspondents into Romanian.

e) -ing adjectives used for emphasis in informal speech: **blinking**, **blithering**, **blooming**, **flaming**, **flipping**, **raving**, **stinking**, **thundering**.

Unlike the other categories mentioned so far, these adjectives do not have exact correspondents into Romanian their translation being made with the help of various Romanian intensifiers meant to lay even more stress on the respective noun they determine.

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These adjectives are always used in front of a noun, never after a link verb:

*If you plan to join the others, you might tell your **blinking** brother.* (**Collins-English Usage**)

[Dacă ai de gând să li te alături celorlalți, ai putea să-i spui *căposului* de frate-tău.]

*I knew that I was carrying on a dialogue with a **raving** lunatic.* (**Collins-op.cit**.)

[Știam că discutam cu un nebun *de legat.*]

R. Quirk also comments upon the possibility of an **-ing** form to be compounded with another element, forming an adjective compound, a case in which the **-ing** form reaches full adjectival status .

Compound **-ing** adjectives are made up of two words, usually written with hyphens between them. Quirk establishes several patterns for the formation of such compound adjectives:

a) object + **-ing** participle: **breath-taking** (care îți taie respirația, uluitor), **record-breaking** (care bate recordul), **self-defeating** (care se învinge pe sine însuși), **self-justifying** (care se autojustifică), **life-giving** (care dă viață/dătător de viață).

b) adverbial + **-ing** participle : **ocean-going** (care merge pe/se-ndreaptă spre ocean), **fist-fighting** (care se luptă cu pumnii), **law-abiding** (care respectă legea/în spiritul legii).

c) adverb / adjective + **-ing** participle: **hard-working** (silitor, care munceşte din greu), **easy-going** (comod, indolent, lasă-mă să te las), **high-resounding** (cu rezonanță mare, faimos, foarte cunoscut), **everlasting** (veşnic, nemuritor, etern), **far-reaching** (cu bătaie lungă, cu/de răsunet), **well-meaning** (bine intenționat), **good-looking** (arătos, chipeş).

W. Collins considers that compound adjectives also may be classified into:

a) **qualitative compound adjectives**: **close-fitting** (strâmt(ă)), **easy-going** (comod, indolent, lasă-mă să te las), **far-reaching** (cu bătaie lungă, cu/de răsunet, de perspectivă (îndelungată)), **good-looking** (arătos, chipeş), **hard-wearing** (şifonabil, care nu se poartă bine), **labour-saving** (care ușurează munca), **long-lasting** (durabil), **long-standing** (de lungă durată), **long-suffering** (îndelung răbdător, care suferă multe, care înghite multe), **mouth-watering** (care-ți lasă gura apă, delicios), **nice-looking** (arătos, care arată bine, chipeş), **off-putting** (deranjant, care deranjează), **smooth-talking** (convingător, cu putere de convingere).

b) **classifying compound adjectives**: **free-standing** (care nu e fix, liber), **never-ending** (interminabil), **record-breaking** (care bate recordul) .

A dictionary based analysis of the translation into Romanian of these adjectives proves that in most cases they are translated by relative clauses since in Romanian the process of composition in language applies more to nouns than to any other part of speech, all of which results in the predominance of compound nouns over compound adjectives which stand either for different shades of colour (*gri petrol, roşu carmin, roşu aprins*, etc.) or for adverb-stressed qualities (*binemeritată, multdorită*, etc.)

*Implant the **never-failing** strength*
Of hate and love into my arms. (**O.Goga-A Prayer**, translated by L. Levițchi)
[Sădeşte-n brațul meu *de-a pururi*
Tăria urii şi-a iubirii.]
Let us arrange in gloomy brotherhood

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*These **pitiable-looking** holy relics.* (**O.Goga-In The Museum**, translated by L. Levițchi)

[Să le-aşezăm în tristă înfrățire
Aceste moaşte *jalnice* şi sfinte.]

*Poor Dorothea , compared with her, the **innocent - looking** Celia was knowing and wordly -wise.* (**G. Eliot - op. cit**.)

[Sărmana Dorotea! În comparație cu ea, *candida* Celia era mult ştiutoare şi înzestrată cu o înțelepciune lumească.]

A final example-based translation remark concerning the verbal adjectives refers to their being used predominantly in literary texts and even in poetry due to their complex semantic charge.

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