The Patterns of Use of Foregrounded Hybrid Gerunds in the *It*-Cleft Construction*

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1. Introduction

The following *it*-cleft sentences (henceforth, clefts) with foregrounded gerunds sound natural and/or idiomatic and may go unnoticed (henceforth italics in each example are by the author):

(1) a. *"It is the not knowing that* is awful,"...   (NB--950523)

b. Mum went through agonies wondering what to do when Brian leaves the house. She really wants to be there but *it was the getting there that* was causing huge problems.   (NBA--010722)

c. It's *the taking part that* counts.

From the syntactic point of view, however, these gerundial forms are quite peculiar; a definite article is followed by a verbal gerund. In (1a), the part of *not knowing* is verbal because it contains not *no* but *not*. *Getting there* and *taking part* in (1b, c) are interpreted as verbal because they are modified by

not an adjective but an adverbial:

(2) a. *a means of **quick** *getting there* [cf. a means of *getting there* **quickly**]

   b. *John was annoyed by her **last-minute** *taking part* (in the game).
   [cf. John was annoyed by her *taking part* (in the game) **at the last minute.**]

All the gerunds in (1) have the structure of [the [verbal gerund]] and this mixed/hybrid form (which we call a hybrid gerund) is generally impossible in modern English as in (3a). Either a verbal gerund without *the* should be employed (cf. (3b)), or if *the* is used a nominal gerund must be used (cf. (3c)):

(3) a. *The killing his dog upset John.

   b. Killing his dog upset John.

   c. The killing of his dog upset John.   (b,c-Wasow & Roeper 1972:45)

The gerundial expressions in (1), then, are a kind of anomalous hybrid construction (see Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 1189). Observation of examples, however, reveals that the exceptional gerunds in the focus of clefts have their own noticeable patterns of use, which are distinct from those of the corresponding 'usual' verbal gerunds. The purpose of the study is to identify and understand those unique patterns in comparison with those of verbal gerunds.

In section 2, we examine the distributional pattern of negative hybrid gerunds, focusing on the expression of *it's the not knowing (x) that...*, where interesting differences in the pattern of use from *it's not knowing (x) that...*will be revealed. In section 3 we turn to the pattern of hybrid gerunds in the affirmative form, where it will be shown that intransitive verbs are strongly favoured (as in negative gerunds). Finally in section 4, we consider why intransitive verbs and the affirmative form are preferred as foregrounded

gerunds.

We base our observation upon *the Bank of English* (henceforth BoE), which is a 450 million-word corpus at the time of the preparation of the paper. However, the corpus alone is not enough to understand the pattern of use of foregrounded hybrid gerunds. This is because their form is basically anomalous, and as Collins (1991: 54-57) and Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 1418f.) point out, gerunds only rarely appear in the focus of clefts in the first place. Therefore, we have recourse to the language on the Web with Google Search to confirm and get a clearer picture of what we can initially guess with the BoE data.

2. The negative hybrid gerunds

2.1 Its rarity

In BoE there are only six examples where negative hybrid gerunds appear as foregrounded elements in clefts. *Knowing* is the only attested verb, three of the examples being shown in (4). In (4c) the verb takes the object, *why*[1],[2]:

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(1) There is one example where *never* is used as a negative: *it is the never being ill that....* But since negative hybrid gerunds with *never* are extremely rare (even with Google Search), we do not take this type of negative gerund into account. We briefly see in 2.2 that this type of sentence is judged very poorly by informants and consider its reason in 4.

(2) We follow Collins (1991) as to what count and do not as clefts. For an example where a presupposed relative clause is deleted, see (13) and (15c) in section 3. (i), on the other hand, is one of those which do not count as clefts:

　(i) He had just marched the full length of the Garvaghy Road. It was marvellous. It was a victory for common sense." Leaning on a furled umbrella and holding his rolled Orange Order collaret, his eyes gleamed from a weary face. "We didn't set out to have winners or losers," he explained. "We always wanted to do it peacefully. We just set out to go to church and come home." It was *the coming home* that took two days and allowed him only two hours' sleep.

(NB3–950712)

The last sentence is not a cleft; *It* is used anaphorically probably referring back to his homecoming and the relative clause does not supply a presupposition but modifies the antecedent [head] of the relative clause, 'the coming home'.

(4) a. ..., and every few days they come to the Gleesons and say they think they've found Colin, and then it turns out to have been a mistake and it makes poor Leslie feel worse than ever. I think she and Jim are really sure Colin's dead. But of course *its the not knowing that's* so terrible for them.   (BB------29)

b. His mother, Norma, said: "They are trawling the hospitals to try and find him and the others, but we don't know what has happened. We cling to the news and wait for a telephone call, but none of it is any good. *It is the not knowing which* I think is the worst." (NB1--010914)

c. I no more believe they should torch the Paradise Bay ghetto than you do. But that was how I felt then. It doesn't mean I'm mad. Throughout the car journey into Paradise Bay Johnny knew rage and didn't understand why. *It was the not knowing why that* bugged him most.

(BB----1098)

Because of the very limited availability of the data, we apparently need more examples to decide whether there are other verbs occasionally entering into the construction, and for this purpose we turn to huge data stored on the Web. The language on the Web indeed includes language unsuitable for linguistic studies; some may be written by non-native speakers of English, and others may be from poems or translations, and therefore they are different from ordinary language by adult native speakers of English, which our study intends to deal with. On the other hand, it is a vast collection of language, and it can be used at least as a supplementary/additional corpus as long as we take utmost care to exclude extraordinary language in the above sense at the time of data collection.

I have searched for the relevant examples with the Advanced Search

function. More specifically, I have searched for the results with the 'exact phrase' of 'it's the not' and 'it is the not' followed by the participial form of a particular verb in the past year in any file format. It is the best to search for all participial forms. In the exact phrase search, however, neither wildcards nor characters that can represent any element belonging to a particular POS are available. It is, on the other hand, not feasible to search for all gerunds because of their sheer number. Therefore, I have checked the 180 most frequent (main) verbs in the whole corpus of the British National Corpus reported in Leech et al. (2001)[3]. Table 1 shows the distribution of verbs which appear in the pattern of 'it's the not Ving (present participial form) that...'[4],[5]:

Table 1. Verbs appearing in the pattern of 'it's the not Ving that'

Number of occurrences	verb
190	know
10 + over	---
5 − 9	be (6), have (7)
2	do, get, want, ask, try, play, talk, remember
1	make, go, see, look, tell, work, show, go, pay, sell, eat

*Verbs are ordered in each column in the order of the frequency reported in Leech, et al. (2001).

(3) See Leech, et al. (2001: 282-286) for the complete rank frequency list of verbs in the whole corpus. It is also available in the Companion Website for the book (http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/ucrel/bncfreq/).

(4) The search was conducted on 24 May 2002, and the one for *it is the not knowing* on 26 June 2002. I have excluded from our survey examples with the strings of *it's* [*it is*] *the not-knowing...* and of *it's* [*it is*] *the "not knowing"* ['*not knowing*'].... This is because a hyphen placed between *not* and *knowing* would treat the two elements as a single, probably nominal, unit and thus it no longer seems to be verbal, and because quotation marks would give an impression that the expression is a provisional use (see Gooden 2001: 140). Also (virtually) the same samples are each counted only once in data collection (when it is noticed). Similar consideration has been taken in collecting the relevant data for affirmative hybrid gerunds as well in section 3.

(5) Hereafter the numbers in parentheses following verbs/gerundial expressions in both the tables and the text are meant to indicate the numbers of occurrences of particular verbs/gerundial expressions.

As is clear at a glance, the verbs appearing in this negative pattern are almost limited to *know*. I have searched only the most frequent verbs appearing in the pattern of 'it is the not Ving', but (basically) the same distributional pattern emerges. Among the top 50 verbs in the frequency list, the only verb recurring in the construction is again *know*, which is attested in 43 examples. The next most frequent verb is *be*, which is attested in only four examples, and *tell* and *try* are each observed once. There are no other verbs observed as foregrounded negative gerunds. It could, therefore, be concluded that *it's the not knowing (x) that...* is a semi-fixed/conventionalised expression and that the other verbs are maybe used by analogy.

Negative verbal gerunds in this respect show a rather different distribution. The number of their occurrences is also few in BoE, but verbs other than *know* are apparently readily employed as foregrounded gerunds. When I searched for the string of 'it's [it is, it was] not Ving' followed by 'that' with a span of 0 to 7 word(s), 13 examples of negative verbal gerunds were observed. Among them are eight tokens of *knowing*, whose complete set of tokens we shall see in the next sub-section. It is, therefore, a dominant pattern, but unlike the case of negative hybrid gerunds, there are five other examples where different verbs, i.e. *being, having, staying, understanding* and *using* are employed in each example. (5) comprised two of them[6]:

(5) a. There were those who said that they would never work for her again. But their mistake was in saying "work for her". You worked with Joan, and *it was not understanding that that* led to many a downfall. It is good that her laughter is still with us, the kind of laughter that is full-throated and generous.   (MBX----629)

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(6) We shall see examples of *knowing* in (12). Note in passing that the scope of *not* in each of the sentences in (5) is not the main clause but the gerundial NP.

b. USING your eyes when vision starts to fail does not make them worse, according to an ophthalmology expert. On the contrary, *it's not using them that* makes them deteriorate.   (NA—990420)

We could reasonably conclude from the distributions of gerunds that negatives are basically incompatible with hybrid gerunds except in what seems to be the semi-fixed expression, *it's the not knowing that...*, but they are compatible in principle with verbal gerunds. The dominance of *knowing* in verbal gerunds may be due to the existence and influence of the semi-fixed expression[7]. Having established that *knowing* is the only frequently recurring verbs in the negative hybrid gerunds, let us explore in the next sub-section the properties of the expression, *it's the not knowing (x) that...* in comparison with its 'usual' verbal gerundial counterpart.

2.2 The pattern of use of the expression, *it's the not knowing (x) that...* in comparison with *it's not knowing (x) that...*

We have hinted that *it's the not knowing (x) that...* is a semi-fixed expression, and there are indeed facts suggesting its idiomaticity. First in an informant test, it is difficult to use negative forms other than *not*, although they represent (very) similar meanings. There are no such restrictions for verbal gerundial counterparts (see (7b) and (8b)):

(6) a. It's the not knowing that's worse than anything.

   b. It's not knowing that's worse than anything.

(7) a. *It is the never knowing that worries us.

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(7) We return to the issue of the virtual absence/presence of negatives in hybrid/verbal gerunds later in 4.

b. It is never knowing that worries us.

(8) a. *It is the knowing very little that worries us.

b. It is knowing very little that worries us.

Second, although *knowing* in the construction can take a *whether/if*-clause and a *wh*-clause as its complement, it cannot take a noun phrase as its object:

(9) a. It's the not knowing why he disappeared that is most difficult.

b. It's not knowing why he disappeared that is most difficult.

(10) a. It's the not knowing whether (or not) he arrived safely that is worrying me.

b. It's not knowing whether (or not) he arrived safely that is worrying me.

(11) a. *It's the not knowing local customs that might cause problems.

b. It's not knowing local customs that might cause problems.

The fact that (9) and (10) are possible may indicate that this expression permits some variation, but still the verb lacks a full-fledged complementation paradigm which it should potentially show[8].

This native speaker intuition is reflected in the gerundial complementation patterns in our corpora. Table 2 shows their distribution in BoE and table 3 the one for the results retrieved with Google Search:

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(8) (11a) also reflects the general tendency that the type of hybrid gerunds under consideration favours intransitive uses, which we shall see in sections 3 and 4.

Table 2. The distribution of the complementation patterns of *the not knowing* as foregrounded gerunds: BoE

complementation pattern	number of occurrences
it's the not knowing	5
it's the not knowing wh-clause (finite/non-finite)	1
it's the not knowing if/whether-clause	—
it's the not knowing + lexical/pronominal NP	—
Total number of tokens	6

Table 3. The distribution of the complementation patterns of the *not knowing* as foregrounded gerunds: Google Search

complementation pattern	number of occurrences
it's the not knowing	167 [87.8%]
it's the not knowing + adverbial phrase*	3
it's the not knowing wh-clause (finite/non-finite)	15
it's the not knowing if/whether-clause	3
it's the not knowing + lexical/pronominal NP	1
it's the not knowing + about + wh-clause	1
Total number of tokens	190

*ex. *not knowing [for sure/for two weeks every month]*$_{ADV\ P}$ *that...*

It can be seen from tables 2 and 3 that although a *wh*-clause occasionally follows the verb, the pattern of *it's the not knowing (that/which...)* is absolutely dominant. In only one example does *knowing* take an object NP (*anything*). Notice also that it is even extremely rare that *knowing* is followed by an adverbial phrase, which is probably related to our informants' intuition rejecting (8a).

The complementation patterns of the corresponding verbal gerunds, on the other hand, look very different. Table 4 shows the distribution of the complementation patterns of *knowing* in the *it's not knowing (x) that...*

construction in BoE and table 5 the one for the results retrieved with Google Search for the past year:

Table 4. The distribution of the complementation patterns of *not knowing* as foregrounded gerunds: BoE

complementation pattern	number of occurrences
it's not knowing	3
it's not knowing wh-clause (finite/non-finite)	2
it's not knowing if/whether-clause	2
it's not knowing + lexical/pronominal NP	1
Total number of tokens	8

Table 5. The distribution of the complementation patterns of *not knowing* as foregrounded gerunds: Google Search

complementation pattern	number of occurrences
it's not knowing	29 [34.9%]
it's not knowing wh-clause (finite/non-finite)	33
it's not knowing if/whether-clause	4
it's not knowing that-clause	3
it's not knowing + lexical/pronominal NP	12
it's not knowing + about + NP	2
Total number of tokens	83

(12) are the examples of '*knowing* + NP' and '*knowing* + *whether*' from BoE. Notice that *knowing* is followed by an adverbial phrase in (12a), which is very rare in the case of *the not knowing*:

(12) a. The lovers know everything and nothing about each other. Outwardly they are perfectly matched. *It's not knowing inwardly whether they are*

perfectly matched that the writer Philippe Blasband makes his most

profound point. (NB1--990909)

b. ...pairs of Peace-faced which are so devoted to their offspring that the

cocks have been known to rush over and force-feed their chicks of

several months of age when they have been re-united in a colony

flight a long time after weaning. *It's not knowing all the answers*

which makes bird-keeping interesting. (MBX----888)

The BoE data in table 4 is so small that what we see is only a vague

picture, but we can confirm in table 5 that the distribution of the

complementation patterns of *not knowing* is indeed in stark contrast to that of

the not knowing, which is seen notably in table 3. The expression, *the not*

knowing is used as it is in nearly 90 per cent of the cases and rarely takes an

object NP. *Not knowing*, on the other hand, is often followed by its

complement, and it is not rare that it is followed by an object NP as in (12b).

It is considered that the latter distribution represents the normal distribution

of the complementation patterns of the verb *know* followed by *not*, and that

the former distribution is very special and idiomatic (but see note 8). Note,

however, that the hybrid version is the one usually selected to communicate

the simple meaning of 'what is ... is not knowing'. All this different patterning

between the two forms is reminiscent of Bolinger's (1977) claim that a different

form suggests a difference in meaning.

3. Hybrid gerunds in affirmative form

We saw in the last section that the verb *know* is virtually the only verb that

is substantially employed as foregrounded negative hybrid gerunds. However,

when we observe verbs in the affirmative counterparts, we have both a wider

variety of verbs [types] and the larger total number of examples [tokens]. If

we concentrate on examples with the structure of 'it be the Ving … that', there are a total of 36 tokens from 12 types in BoE and 556 tokens from 89 types retrieved with Google Search[9]. Interestingly there is a peculiarity regarding kinds of verbs employed as affirmative hybrid gerunds as well: intransitive verbs are favoured in the construction. This peculiarity is again absent in the corresponding affirmative verbal gerunds.

Before we see the predominance of intransitive uses in foregrounded affirmative hybrid gerunds, let us see some examples from BoE. In BoE there are 36 examples (with the structure of 'it be the Ving'), half of which are in the form of *the taking part*, probably another semi-conventionalised phrase or cliché. It is sometimes preceded (or less frequently followed) by the expression, *it is not the winning (that counts [matters, is important])* and the presupposed relative clause may be deleted when it is supplied usually in the preceding clause as in (13)[10]:

(13) IT is NOT the winning that counts, *it is the taking part.* That has always

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(9) There is at least another environment where the relevant examples of affirmative hybrid gerunds are observed, i.e. after the correlative *but*:
(i) He has shown that *its* not the winning but *the taking part that* counts.
(NB--010809)
There is another example in BoE where a different gerund is used in the same environment, and as many as 43 *the taking part* examples very similar to or the same as (i) are observed with the Google Search (as of August 2002). For the sake of simplicity, however, we do not take into consideration those examples.

(10) The fixedness of *the taking part* is confirmed with 169 tokens found on Google Search. Firstly, the content of the relative clauses almost fixed; *its the taking part* is followed by *counts* in 126 tokens, by *matters* in 24 tokens and by *is [ś] important* in 13 tokens. There are only six tokens which are followed by other expressions such as *that is the fun* (the deleted relative clauses have been recovered and counted into each count). Furthermore, in roughly 80 per cent of the cases the whole expression is used in the context of 'the important thing is not to win or achieve a particular aim but to (simply) take part'. All of these properties also hold true for the type of examples we have seen in (i) in note 9. See Stubbs (2001) for illustrations of how words and phrases in general are repeatedly used in similar contexts.

been my firm belief when it comes to fighting. (NBA-000122)

There is one token of *taking apart*, meaning 'to beat someone very easily in a game or sport' (*LDOCE3*), but without an object NP. This probably parodies the idiomatic expression, *it is not the winning, it is the taking part that counts*:

(14) Remember the sacred ideal of that gathering of the world's sporting youth? Well, England partly rewrote that in their rampaging destruction of the old foe. Indeed, it is not the winning that is important - *it's the taking apart*. (NBA–010903)

(15) are some examples from BoE where other verbs are employed as hybrid gerunds[11]:

(15) a. We try to go further within the songs, explore them more and more. There always feels like there's more we haven't discovered yet," he goes on. "It holds us back but it also holds us together because, for all of us, *it's the exploring together that* makes it interesting." (MBX–––714)

b. He was unlikely see (*sic*) anything approaching a decent match, but at least he could wear his lapel sticker "I queued at Wimbledon 99" with long-marcher's pride. That's Wimbledon: it's not the game, *it's the being there that* counts. (NB3–990626)

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(11) See also (1b).

c. The doctor says I need to **walk** – every day, he says, for my heart. I would rather not. It isn't the idea of the walking that bothers me, *it's the going out*: I feel too much on show. Do I imagine it, the staring, the whispering? (BC---00--28)

d. <F01> Well (*sic*) the thing is as long as <ZF1> you don't <ZF0> you don't have to do it on a daily basis you now and I'm sure things will improve 'cos things often do when you're at a distance from someone. <M01> I think so yeah. Yeah. <F01> You know *it's the having to do it every day that's* wearing. (SB1----0436)

e. It was the second time that night the siren had wailed the alert. The siren wailed in the daytime too, but *it was the waiting at night for the sound of the "all clear" that* made her so tired. (BB------136)

Now when we examine the type of verbs in these foregrounded affirmative gerundial clauses, it is found that they are predominantly intransitive verbs or ones used intransitively. It is not always self-evident whether verbs are used intransitively or transitively, but if we consider *having to* in (15d) an intransitive use, the division looks like table 6[12]:

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(12) There are as many as six examples in the form of *it's the waiting that...* such as *It is waiting that is the worst* or *It's the waiting that bothers me*. It is impossible, however, to tell whether such a simple form of gerund as *the waiting* is hybrid [verbal] or nominal gerund. Therefore, I have excluded all affirmative gerunds with no element which indicates its verbal properties such as its complement or a particle/an idiom chunk/an adjunct which are related with the gerund. Under the criterion, such gerunds consisting solely of the main verb as (it's) *the waiting* [*knowing, practising, walking*] (that...) are not counted in as hybrid gerunds.

Table 6. Split between intransitive/transitive uses of affirmative gerunds in BoE

intransitive/transitive	intransitive verb/use	transitive verb/use
attested verbs with the number of their tokens in parentheses	taking part (18), taking apart (1), being there (1), getting there (4) [outside (1), out (1)], going out (1), exploring together (1), hanging around (2), camping out (1), having to VP (1)	doing (1), juggle with (1), refusing to VP (1), waiting for (1)
total numbers	32	4

Verbs used transitively comprise only four out of 36 tokens. Indeed, we have only 36 examples available and the expression *taking part* is so dominant in the corpus that it may blur the overall picture. However, if we look at more than 500 examples obtained with Google Search, a similar patterning emerges.

Searches with Google Search have been conducted mainly during June 2002 for the gerundial forms of the 180 most frequent verbs reported in the rank frequency list in Leech, et al. (2001). I have searched for the pattern of 'it's the Ving' in the past year on any file format by using 'the exact phrase' search function in the Advanced Search.

Regarding the sorting of verbs into either intransitive or transitive uses, the following verbs or verbal expressions are counted as intransitive uses:

-various verbs in the string of 'Verb + Preposition + NP' where the preposition is not selected or specified by the Verb as in *coming down the hill*, *moving towards the ideal* and somewhat arguably *thinking about* + NP (see Huddleston & Pullum 2002:272-76)

-*having to* VP (meaning 'necessity'), *being* [*getting*] in *be/get*-passives and *getting started*

I have regarded, however, some verbs in 'Verb + Preposition + NP' as transitive uses, where the Verb and the preposition are semantically (and

syntactically) stuck together so that they form a single phrasal verb, which in turn takes an object NP as in *wait for* NP, *deal with* NP, *come up with the idea* and *go about* (meaning 'approach') something.

I have counted out 13 tokens of the two verbs, *letting* in *letting go* (*of* NP) and *making* in *making sure that...* because it is simply difficult to decide whether they are more like intransitive or transitive uses. Now table 7 shows how the two uses are divided in 543 tokens of the 180 most frequent verbs collected with Google Search. Verbs with more than six tokens in the data are listed with the number of their tokens in parentheses:

Table 7. Split between intransitive/transitive uses of 180 gerunds observed with Google Search

intransitive/transitive	intransitive verb/use	transitive verb/use
more frequently attested verbs with the number of their tokens in parentheses	taking part (169), being (30), getting there (43), going (21), sitting (13), coming (11), staying (9), working + ADV/Prep (9), taking apart (7), holding + ADV/Prep (6)	knowing (21)[13], doing (21), getting + NP (8), waiting for (8), making + NP (7)
total numbers	428	115

Again *taking part* is quite frequent, but even if we do not take into account

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(13) There are 18 examples of *its the knowing that...* observed, which we do not count as either verbal or hybrid gerunds for the reason mentioned in note 12. Among the 21 tokens used transitively, 17 take the form of *its the knowing that* -clause (*that...*), three *its the knowing wh*-clause (*that...*) and one *its the knowing* NP. Different from their negative counterparts (see tables 2 and 3 for their distribution), all are used transitively in one way or another if we ignore the pattern of *its the knowing that....* This seems to be because the single verb *knowing* in affirmative sentences is not so informative and therefore it tends to be followed by a content clause, but far less likely by a noun phrase as in the case of its negative counterpart.

the number of its tokens, the predominance of intransitive use is still striking. This is well mirrored in the following facts:

-getting: Among 79 tokens of *getting*, 71 are used intransitively (*getting there* (43), *getting into* [*to*] (5), *getting out* (4), *getting together* (3)) Used transitively are only eight tokens, either in the pattern of *getting* + NP or *getting* + NP + V (past part.) (causative meaning). Such corpus-based dictionaries as *LDOCE3* and *OALD6* present senses of [Receive/Obtain] before those of [Arrive/Go], which means transitive uses should be more frequent. Still, the examples of the former are attested in only six examples, indicating the tendency for transitive verbs to be avoided as hybrid gerunds in focus positions.

Except *do* and *know*, most of the basic/frequent verbs whose transitive uses should be usually dominant are not employed as transitive verbs as readily as expected. Among others (the meanings of verbs are indicated by quotation marks in parentheses):

-having: *having* + NP ('possession') (3) versus *having to* VP ('necessity') (3) In *LDOCE3*, the former is presented prior to the latter (as homograph 2 and 3 respectively), which means the former is usually more frequent.

-making: *making* + NP ('produce'), *making* as a causative verb, *making a living* (6) versus *making* forming such phrasal verbs as *making up* ('becoming friends again' (*CCED3*)) and *making do*, which are used intransitively as a whole (5)

-putting: *putting* (*away, on, together...*) + NP (5) versus *putting* + particle/ADV [*off, away, together, right*] (5)

-taking: Apart from *taking part* and *taking apart*, which are both used intransitively as a whole, there are only three examples of *taking* considered to be used transitively, i.e. *taking care of...*(2) and *taking apart...* ('separating something into different parts' (*CCED3*)) (1). We could consider *care* in *taking care* to be the object of *taking* and *taking* to retain its transitive force. There

are, however, no examples where *taking* is directly followed by an argument bearing a semantic/thematic role, which should be the prototypical transitive structure.

-holding: All of the six examples are used intransitively; *holding* + ADV [*on, back*]/holding + Prep [*on to, onto*] + NP

-eating: The two attested examples are both used intransitively.

-breaking: All of the three examples are used intransitively; *breaking* + ADV [*up, through*]/breaking + Prep [*out of*] + NP

Notice that there is no such prominent preference for intransitive over transitive use in the corresponding verbal gerunds. I have searched for the string of 'it's [it is/was] + Ving + that' (with a span of one to eleven after Ving) in BoE. There are 117 verbal gerunds with transitive uses and 63 with intransitive uses. Compared with this division, the one found in hybrid gerunds (see table 7) looks extremely peculiar. We have seen above that most examples of *getting* in hybrid gerunds are used intransitively, but those used intransitively in the verbal gerunds in BoE comprise only seven out of 23 examples. All of the tokens of *making* (3), *putting* (7), *taking* (2), *holding* (1), *breaking up* (1) are used transitively in those verbal gerunds.

4. The interpretation of the patterns of use of hybrid gerunds

We have seen so far which verbs tend to enter into both negative and affirmative hybrid gerunds. We have learned that negative hybrid gerunds are rarely used and that there is a strong preference for intransitive verbs or expressions as hybrid gerunds. In this section we shall consider how we interpret these patterns of use.

We have seen in section 2 that negative hybrid gerunds are almost limited to what seems to be a semi-fixed expression *it's not knowing that....* It is usually used as it is, and *knowing* rarely takes *wh*-clauses or *whether/if*-clauses

and it is virtually impossible for it to take an object NP (see tables 2 and 3). This property probably indicates the fixedness of the expression but at the same time it is a reflection of the general preference for an intransitive verb and avoidance of a transitive expression as a foregrounded hybrid gerund in the construction, which we have seen for affirmative hybrid gerunds in section 3.

Where does, then, this preference for intransitive uses and avoidance of transitive uses come from? It appears to derive from the 'nouniness' of hybrid gerunds. Hybrid gerunds can convey verbal meaning, but the fact that they are introduced by *the* gives an impression that the entire phrase is a usual NP, and this seems to prevent hybrid gerunds from fully exploiting their verbal potential.

The property of verbs taking an object NP or NPs is probably the most characteristic of uses of verbs. Object NPs are the arguments of verbs and are assigned such thematic [semantic] roles as 'patient', 'theme' and 'recipient' by verbs. The interaction between a verb and its arguments is, as it were, is very active and strong. Hybrid gerunds have a certain amount of 'nouniness' in the above sense, and it makes a verb less readily enter into an active interaction with its arguments, hence the fewer occurrences of transitive use found in the construction. Hybrid gerunds, on the other hand, are more likely to license 'lighter' elements, i.e. non-arguments/non-thematic elements. These may be idiom chunks of a verb (*taking part, being able to*), a particle which goes with it (*making up, going on*), its adjectival/nominal complement (*being* ADJ), an adverbial/prepositional adjunct (*getting there, going home, getting into...*) or a past participle following passive *be* [*get*], etc. These take the form of intransitive verbal expressions, hence the overall predominance of intransitive uses in hybrid gerunds.

A few recurring expressions such as *it's the not knowing*, and *it's the taking part* are not only used intransitively but also usually in more restricted

patterns. The former virtually rejects such adverbial phrases *a very little* and *never*, and it is rarely followed by an adjunct (see section 2). There are no examples among 169 tokens of *taking part* being followed by such a prepositional phrase as in + NP or by a time/place adjunct. They are used as they are. They are, as suggested earlier, semi-fixed expressions or clichés, and should be treated as such.

The 'nouniness' of hybrid gerunds is also considered to be at least a part of the reason why negative hybrid gerunds are extremely rare except the expression *it's the not knowing (x) that....* Both *never* and *not* are licensed only in clausal/verbal constructions. Notice the contrasts:

(16) a. Not [Never] sighting UFO's disappointed Mary.

b. *Not [*Never, No] sightings of UFO's disappointed Mary.

These verbal negatives are incompatible with the 'nouniness' of hybrid gerunds, hence its virtual absence and avoidance in the construction. Notice, on the other hand, that in foregrounded verbal gerunds *not* is attested not only with *know* but also with other verbs and it would be possible in principle, as we have seen section 2.1. It is true that *never* is extremely rare in verbal gerunds too but it could be used, which we have seen in the contrast in the acceptability judgement in (7).

5. Conclusion

The paper has tried to understand the patterning of foregrounded hybrid gerunds in both negative and affirmative forms. Observation of the data in BoE and the vast language stored on the Web has given us an overall picture of which verbs tend to occur as hybrid gerunds. It has been found that *knowing* is virtually the only verb employed in the negative construction. In the affirmative construction a wider variety of verbs are attested, but there are

preferences for intransitive uses. These peculiarities are absent in the corresponding foregrounded verbal gerunds, and therefore they are unique properties/patterns of the hybrid gerunds in question.

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