

# Recent Changes in the Use of the Verb *forbid*<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

Thanks to the development of sociolinguistic and corpus-linguistic methodologies in the past few decades,<sup>2</sup> it is generally accepted today that contemporary variation is a visible aspect of ongoing language change. In 1926, Fowler was aware of the existence of the *forbid* plus *from -ing* construction, but did not regard it as idiomatic. Seventy years later, when Burchfield (1996) revised his *Modern English Usage*, he stated: “Fowler (1926) judged constructions with *from + -ing* to be ‘unidiomatic’ (he believed them to be based on analogical uses of *prevent* or *prohibit*)”. He then continued: “the tide seems to be turning in favour of them [the constructions with *from + -ing*]” (p. 306). The variant construction, which Fowler judged to be “unidiomatic”, had grown to be “idiomatic” by the end of the twentieth century, making the shift of trend or even language change more visible. A further revision of Fowler’s *Modern English Usage* was published by Butterfield in 2015, who again commented on the usage and said: “A construction with *from + a verbal form in -ing* has also been used since the 16c., and is now standard, (despite Fowler’s objections), though less common than the first construction [to-infinitival construction] ...” (Butterfield 2015: 319). Today, *forbid* occurs in three forms, i.e. with infinitives, simple gerunds, and gerunds with *from*, of which the first and

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<sup>2</sup> Siemund (1995) provides a succinct survey of previous research in this line.

the last are often discussed in the literature.<sup>3</sup> Some illustrative examples of the three constructions are:

(1) He has *forbidden* himself to *borrow* for anything other than investment.

(*The Independent*, 17 May 2001)

(2) ..., although European Union rules *forbid* both activities *taking place* on the same day. (*Daily Mail*, 6 June 2001)

(3) The terms of their licences *forbid* them *from contacting* or *attempting* to contact James Bulger's family or each other. (*Daily Mail*, 23 June 2001)

Using the term *complement*, Dixon (2005: 257) refers to the same issue, but views it with some semantic touch:<sup>4</sup>

*Forbid* was originally used with a Modal (FOR) TO complement but nowadays an increasing number of speakers prefer a (FROM) ING complement, which accords better with the negative meaning of this verb. One hears both *She forbade him to go* and *She forbade him from going*, with no difference in meaning.

This passage, in a way, justifies the use of the *from -ing* construction with *forbid*, saying that it “accords better with the negative meaning of this verb”. Dixon (2005: 257) argues that “the (FROM) ING variety of complement clause occurs with negative verbs from the ORDER subtype of SPEAKING and with negative verbs from the MAKING

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<sup>3</sup> The verb *forbid* occurs with *that*-clauses on limited occasions, which will be discussed in later sections.

<sup>4</sup> I use the term *complement* in the present study for *that*-clauses, infinitives, and gerunds which occur as an essential argument of the verb. For definitions of complements, see Greenbaum, Nelson, and Weitzman (1996) among others.

type”, giving additional examples such as *dissuade* and *prohibit*. Dixon denies the existence of explicit meaning differences between the two different forms by saying “[o]ne hears both *She forbade him to go* and *She forbade him from going*, with no difference in meaning”. He abides, however, with the view that different complementation patterns have different meanings. At the beginning of the relevant section of his work, he states: “Each of the seven varieties of complement clause [which he describes in the section] has a meaning” (p. 238). This suggests the possible existence of the influence of other verbs with similar meanings on the recent change of the complementation patterns with the verb *forbid*. In this sense, Fowler’s (1926: 186) view that the newly arising construction of *-ing* with *forbid* is on the analogy of other verbs like *prohibit* and *prevent* is also relevant. The whole implication in previous studies is that verbs with similar meanings are likely to display similar usages, alluding to the influence of other synonymous verbs on the usage of *forbid*.

I have tackled in one of my studies (Iyeiri 2016) the problem of meaning and form by analyzing the verb *forbid* in students’ academic essays written by native speakers in the UK in the 21st century (BAWE, 2004-2008).<sup>5</sup> Comparing the behaviour of *forbid* with that of *prohibit*, whose meaning is quite similar,<sup>6</sup> this study shows that the influence of

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<sup>5</sup> As this work is written in Japanese, I would like to present a fairly detailed description of it in the present section. BAWE (British Academic Written English) is a corpus which consists of various academic essays written by students, including both native and non-native speakers of English, and “which was developed at the Universities of Warwick, Reading and Oxford Brookes under the directorship of Hilary Nesi and Sheena Gardner (formerly of the Centre for Applied Linguistics, Warwick), Paul Thompson (formerly of the Department of Applied Linguistics, Reading) and Paul Wickens (School of Education, Oxford Brookes), with funding from the ESRC (RES-000-23-0800)” (<[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/bawe/how\\_to\\_cite\\_bawe/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/collections/bawe/how_to_cite_bawe/)>). See also the following, where some descriptions of BAWE are available: <<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/BAWE/>>. Iyeiri (2016) is based upon an extract of this corpus, namely an extract consisting of essays written by native speakers of English only. Since most writers were born in the 1980s, the dataset has given excellent and coherent resources for the analysis of English around the turn of the 21st century.

<sup>6</sup> The definitions of the two words in the *OED* (*Oxford English Dictionary*) demonstrate how synonymous they are: the meaning of *forbid* is defined as ‘to prohibit’, and that of *prohibit* is defined as ‘to forbid’ (see *OED*, s.v. *forbid* and *prohibit*).

the usage of the latter verb upon the former cannot entirely be eliminated in the present-day context. There is a notable gap of frequency between the two verbs, *forbid* being very marginal and *prohibit* being much more common. It is only natural if less common words follow the pattern of more common words, when the mechanism of analogy is functional.

At the same time, however, I have also shown that the whole issue needs to be considered in relation to the historical development of these verbs, referring to my still earlier studies (Iyeiri 2010a, 2011),<sup>7</sup> which demonstrate: (1) the verb *forbid* was commonly followed by *that*-clauses in earlier English, which came to be gradually replaced by infinitives in later Middle English and Early Modern English;<sup>8</sup> (2) the shift of complementation is so successful that *that*-clauses are remnant only in the fixed expression *God forbid that ...* in principle in Present-day English; and (3) Later Modern English observes the rise of gerundial constructions (and the subsequent development of the gerundial construction with *from*), but they are always less frequent than *to*-infinitives in the history of English.<sup>9</sup> When viewed in this context, the expansion of the gerundial complement of *forbid* in recent years is in keeping with the overall trend in the syntactic development of *forbid* in the history of English. The increase of the

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<sup>7</sup> These studies are based upon the quotation base of the *OED* and EMEPS (Early Modern English Prose Selections), a collection of Early Modern English texts which I have compiled for my research purposes by extracting material from the Early English Books Online. See <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>>. For further details of EMEPS, see Iyeiri (2011).

<sup>8</sup> From the Old English period onwards, *forbid* was followed by *that*-clauses and *to*-infinitives, but the proportion of the former becomes increasingly smaller throughout the history of English. See Ishiguro (1994) for some statistics of the complementation patterns of *forbid* (OE *forbeodan*) in Old English texts. For the occasional occurrence of bare infinitives after *forbid*, see Iyeiri (2010a: 33). See also Einkenel (1891: 91).

<sup>9</sup> Rohdenburg points out in a number of his publications that various English verbs experience various shifts of complementation in the history of English and gives the term Great Complement Shift (e.g. Rohdenburg 1996, 2006). Iyeiri (2010a) notices that there are two major shifts of complements in the Great Complement Shift in English: the shift from *that*-clauses to infinitives (First Complement Shift) and the shift from infinitives to gerunds (with or without *from*) (Second Complement Shift).

gerundial complement has been observed for the past several hundred years in the history of this verb.

Since *forbid* is no longer a common word in English,<sup>10</sup> at least in comparison to other synonymous words, most of which are loans from other languages, BAWE (native speakers only) does not yield substantial data of it. In the limited data, however, I have observed a fairly steady progress of the *from -ing* construction, especially with *forbid* used in the active voice. The data yields eight examples of *forbid* used in the active voice and accompanied by a complement, of which four illustrate the use of *from -ing*. In the overall data, which includes examples in the passive voice, the gerundial construction is less frequent, but still yields the proportion of approximately 30%, which is not marginal at all. This is why I feel the need to further investigate the complementation of the same verb in contemporary English. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, Burchfield, Dixon, and Butterfield are well aware of the rise of *from -ing* with *forbid*, while some other grammars are still reluctant to accept the newly expanding usage. Patridge's *Usage and Abusage*, even in the revised version prepared towards the end of the twentieth century, retains the contention that gerundial constructions are incorrect (see Patridge 1994: 254).

In order to have a clearer view as to the present state of the usage of *forbid*, the discussion below will explore two British newspapers of different styles, namely *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*. Students' English in BAWE (native speakers only) gives a good insight as to recent linguistic tendencies, but academic writings can occasionally be a little conservative, as it is virtually impossible to delete prescriptive awareness in academic settings. I found it, therefore, necessary to explore English in a different genre, and chose to analyze journalistic English as found in the two British newspapers. I would surmise that the use of *from -ing* shows further expansion in this dataset, as it

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<sup>10</sup> As far as the native speakers' essays in BAWE are concerned, *forbid* (including all forms of *forbid* with or without complements) occurs approximately only once in 91,000 words. *Prohibit* is about twice as frequent. *Forbid* is clearly an infrequent verb in contemporary English.

is generally known that the language of journalism tends to be progressive in nature.<sup>11</sup> The dataset of the present research consists of all 2001 issues of *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* (stored in the database *LexisNexis Academic*).<sup>12</sup> It provides well over 800 examples of the verb *forbid*, although in practice much of the following discussion concentrates upon those examples which include complements of one form or another. I will use the standard search facility provided by the interface of *LexisNexis*. Unless otherwise stated, examples in the present paper are cited from this source.

## 2. The overall expansion of gerundial constructions with *forbid*

Assuming that the expansion of gerundial constructions is a steady feature of the verb *forbid* in contemporary English, I will first explore to what extent this is observable in general in the data under investigation. In the present section, I will deal with all examples of the verb *forbid* so long as it is accompanied either by infinitives or by gerunds in its complement position. This automatically excludes the examples of the fixed form *God forbid ...*, as illustrated below, since it is followed by *that*-clauses when it is accompanied by a complement:

(4) But *God forbid* that as the sun goes down on these summer evenings, your boredom should spill over on to the streets around your home.

(*The Independent*, 3 August 2001)

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<sup>11</sup> The progressive nature of journalistic English has been discussed in the literature. Hundt and Mair (1999: 236) state: “newspaper prose is still first-rate material for linguists interested in ongoing change precisely because it is a written genre unusually receptive to (and in a good many instances also productive of) innovations or changes ‘from below’”. “Change from below” is a well-quoted concept of sociolinguistics with “from below” meaning “below the level of conscious awareness”. Simultaneously, it can be associated with informal style to the extent that it bears some social implications— “below” can also mean “socially below”. See Labov (1966) among many others.

<sup>12</sup> For *LexisNexis Academic*, see <<http://www.lexisnexis.com/ap/academic/>>.

This fixed form will be discussed separately in Section 4.

Returning to those with infinitives or gerunds, examples like the following where *forbid* itself is non-finite are included in the analysis:

(5) *To forbid* them *to do* so would be cruel. (*Daily Mail*, 27 June 2001)

(6) ... an order *forbidding* them *from telephoning* any member of staff.

(*The Independent*, 9 July 2001)

The graph below displays the raw frequencies of infinitives and gerunds occurring with *forbid* in the two newspapers under investigation. As mentioned in the Introduction, gerundial complements can be with or without *from*, but this issue will be discussed later. Figure 1 makes a simple comparison and contrast between infinitival and gerundial complements of all types:

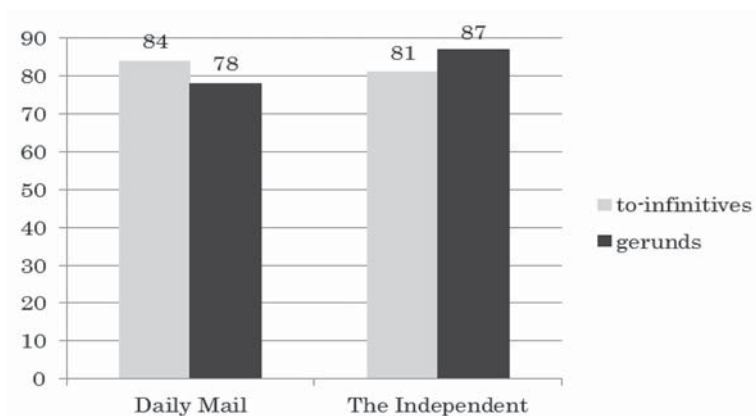


Figure 1. Raw frequencies of infinitives and gerunds (with or without *from*) with the verb *forbid* in *Daily Mail* (2001) and *The Independent* (2001)

It is immediately clear from this graph that the expansion of gerundial constructions has further advanced in contemporary English than suggested in previous studies. Both in *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*, the use of gerunds is almost as frequent as, or even

more frequent than, the use of infinitives.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, gerundial complements are more frequent in the two newspapers than in any of the data so far explored in existent studies including my own work on the native speakers' data in BAWE.<sup>14</sup> This confirms that journalese tends to be most progressive in terms of style. It is safe to conclude that the gerund is far from being "unidiomatic" in newspaper English in the UK. Even Butterfield's (2015: 319) view that *from -ing* is standard but less common than the *to*-infinitival construction in today's English should be modified, at least as far as journalistic English is concerned, since the *-ing* construction is as frequent as, or even more frequent than, the infinitival one.

Interestingly enough, the overall tendency stays largely the same between *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* despite the alleged difference in style, though both are of the same genre: the English of the former is supposed to be less formal than that of the latter. The proportion of gerunds in *Daily Mail* reaches 48.1 per cent and that in *The Independent* 51.8 per cent. Thus, the ratio of the gerundial constructions in *The Independent*, whose language is supposed to be more formal, is in fact larger than in *Daily Mail*. This is significant in that the use of gerunds as complements of *forbid* does

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<sup>13</sup> The raw frequencies of gerunds include nominal gerunds, as in: *Premier League rules forbid the showing of slow-motion replays inside the ground of anything controversial during any game* (*Daily Mail*, 19 April 2001). This is for the sake of consistency with Iyeiri (2010a, 2011), whose statistics include all types of gerunds, excluding only obvious nouns such as *building*. In the course of the history of English, gerunds themselves underwent changes, becoming more verbal than nominal in nature. Since the distinction between nominal and verbal gerunds is not as clear in historical examples as in contemporary ones, the inclusion of all types of gerunds is justifiable especially for historical analyses. In the case of Present-day English, however, it may also be interesting to exclude nominal gerunds, which are comparable in some way to nouns. Fortunately, *Daily Mail* provides only four examples of nominal gerunds and *The Independent* only ten. Hence, the result stays approximately the same even when they are eliminated from the statistics: *Daily Mail* would provide 84 examples of infinitives versus 74 examples of gerunds, whereas *The Independent* would yield 81 examples of infinitives as against 77 examples of gerunds. The proportions of gerunds approximate 50 per cent again in both cases.

<sup>14</sup> It is known that the Freiburg LOB corpus and the British National Corpus, both being standard corpora of British English towards the end of the twentieth century, still display the dominance of infinitival complements with *forbid* (see Egan 2008: 356; Iyeiri 2010a: 28-29).



not seem to be stigmatized any longer in Present-day English, since style differences in English do not seem to affect the choice between infinitives and gerunds.<sup>15</sup>

I have so far dealt with gerundial complements with and without *from* together. The two types, however, represent different stages of development when viewed from historical perspectives. As mentioned in the Introduction, the Second Complement Shift, namely the shift from infinitives to gerunds, is first represented by simple gerunds, which later are increasingly accompanied by the preposition *from*. Thus, “*from* + gerunds” represents a further advanced stage, occurring fairly frequently in the language

<sup>15</sup> *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* display a notable difference in respect of some other linguistic features. Iyeiri (2010b), for example, investigates the concord of the collective proper noun *Panasonic* (*Panasonic* as a company, and not as a product) in three British tabloids (*Daily Star* [2001-2005], *Daily Mail* [1992-2005], and *Daily Mirror* [1995-2005]) and six British broad sheets (*The Times* [1990-2005], *Daily Telegraph* [2001-2005], *The Guardian* [1990-2005], *The Independent* [1900-2005], *The Observer* [1993-2005], and *Scotsman* [1993-2005]), using *LexisNexis Academic*. The results show that tabloids tend to be less formal linguistically, presenting larger proportions of the plural concord, than the broad sheets. The plural concord of *Panasonic* in *Daily Mail*, however, turned out to be the least frequent among the three tabloids explored. Since this research has been published only in Japanese, it is perhaps appropriate to cite the two relevant tables in full below:

*Panasonic* and verbs that follow: singular concord vs. plural concord (from Iyeiri 2010b: 71)

	singular	plural		singular	plural
<i>Daily Star</i>	1	2	<i>The Times</i>	70	3
<i>Daily Mail</i>	10	2	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	2	0
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	14	4	<i>The Guardian</i>	46	3
			<i>The Independent</i>	32	7
			<i>The Observer</i>	6	1
			<i>The Scotsman</i>	9	0
Totals	25 (75.8%)	8 (24.2%)	Totals	165 (92.2%)	14 (7.8%)

*Panasonic* and pronouns that follow: singular concord vs. plural concord (from Iyeiri 2010b: 73)

	singular	plural		singular	plural
<i>Daily Star</i>	0	1	<i>The Times</i>	22	1
<i>Daily Mail</i>	6	1	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	3	1
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	8	8	<i>The Guardian</i>	29	2
			<i>The Independent</i>	11	3
			<i>The Observer</i>	2	1
			<i>The Scotsman</i>	6	1
Totals	14 (58.3%)	10 (41.7%)	Totals	73 (89.0%)	9 (11.0%)

where the use of gerunds is fully established. This applies not only to *forbid* but also to other verbs of similar meanings such as *prohibit*, with which the form with *from* is fully established today (see Iyeiri 2010a: 85-87 for further details). The dataset of the present study yields both types, as in:

(7) which *forbids* the club *discussing* the contract, or the player discussing any part of a contract to third parties. (*The Independent*, 27 September 2001)

(8) The Prime Minister's Code of Conduct strictly *forbids* a minister *from allowing* private financial interests to overlap with official responsibilities.

(*Daily Mail*, 13 February 2001)

Both in *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*, gerunds with *from* are dominant: of the 78 examples of gerunds in *Daily Mail*, 53 examples (67.9%) are accompanied by *from*; and of the 87 examples of gerunds in *The Independent*, those with *from* amount to 59 (67.8%). In theory, the construction with *from* is possible only when the person (or thing) to be prohibited from doing something is existent. When examples are limited to this case, the proportions of gerunds with *from* to the relevant examples become even larger: *Daily Mail* gives 63 relevant examples, of which 53 (84.1%) occur with *from*, while *The Independent* yields 64 examples, of which 59 (92.2%) are found with *from*. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that the use of *from* is well established in the two newspapers under consideration.

For reference's sake, I would like to cite the following example, which illustrates the case where the person (or thing) to be prohibited from doing something is included but the gerund without *from* is used:

(9) The post-war constitution strictly forbade *women* bearing arms.

(*The Independent*, 3 January 2001)

### 3. The complement of *forbid* in the active and passive voices

#### 3.1. Active and passive voices

The discussion has so far dealt with all relevant examples of *forbid* in the 2001 issues of *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*. It has been increasingly known, however, that separate analyses are necessary between the active and passive voices.<sup>16</sup> The analysis of the academic writings in BAWE (native speakers only), which is comparable in date with the dataset of this study, suggests that the preference for gerundial complements is prominent especially when *forbid* is used in the active (Iyeiri 2016).<sup>17</sup> Hence, the present section observes the complementation patterns of *forbid* used in the active and passive voices. Here again, examples as in the following, where *forbid* is non-finite, are considered. Example (10) belongs to the active and (11) to the passive:

(10) The group has told regional managers to sign gagging clauses *forbidding* them from talking about any big moves the company makes. (*Daily Mail*, 11 February 2001)

(11) if we are going *to be forbidden* to enjoy such a simple and time-honoured pleasure. (*The Independent*, 30 January 2001)

It is also important to note that *forbid* in the passive can be either of the following two types: (a) the type in which *something to be forbidden* (the direct object in the active) appears in the nominative position (direct passive); and (b) the type in which *someone to be forbidden from doing something* (the indirect object in the active) appears in the nominative position (indirect passive). See the following examples illustrating the two types:

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<sup>16</sup> The difference between the active and passive voices is well-quoted in the literature. Cf. Rohdenburg (2012) and Iyeiri (2014).

<sup>17</sup> As mentioned above, the number of relevant examples in this corpus is not necessarily large.

(12) Although *fraternising with the enemy was strictly forbidden*, their officers pretended not to notice what was going on. (*Daily Mail*, 22 December 2001)

(13) where *most major fund managers are forbidden* to invest.

(*The Independent*, 22 December 2001)

Example (12) exemplifies the first type or the direct passive, whereas (13) illustrates the second type or the indirect passive.<sup>18</sup> Since the passive of the direct type locates the infinitives and gerunds in the subject position and makes them equivalent to nouns, they are no longer complements in a strict sense. The graph below, therefore, displays the complementation patterns of *forbid* used in the indirect passive only:

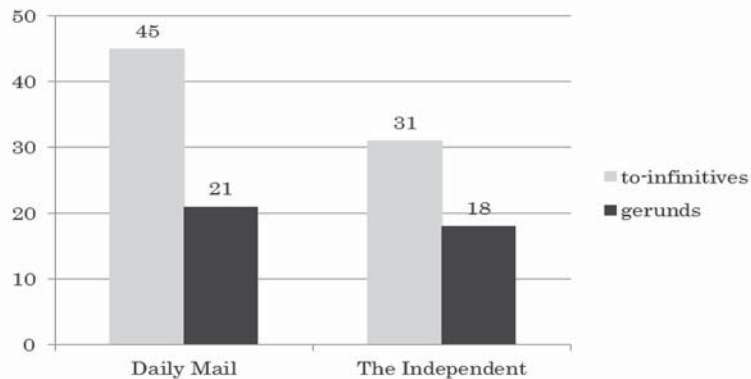


Figure 2. Raw frequencies of infinitives and gerunds with *forbid* in the indirect passive in *Daily Mail* (2001) and *The Independent* (2001)

<sup>18</sup> Although passive sentences of the second types are considered to be a later development in the history of English, they are attested quite abundantly today. It started to rise after the morphological distinction between the accusative and the dative was obscured, which really took place at the turn of the Modern English period. Posse (1999) investigates the passive in Early Modern English by utilizing the Helsinki Corpus, and concludes: “by EModE [Early Modern English] times, the indirect passive was not yet well established in the language” (p. 135). By contrast, the Present-day English situation is totally different. As the above discussion shows, relevant examples are fairly numerous.

Figure 2 displays a fairly common use of gerunds as complements of *forbid*. However, when contrasted with the data of *forbid* used in the active voice, which is shown in Figure 3, the difference between the two voices is highlighted:

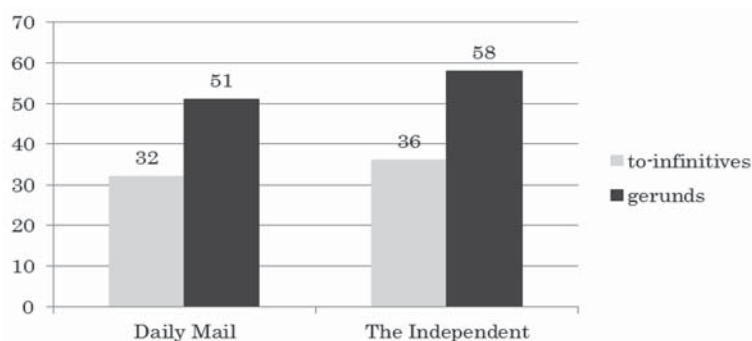


Figure 3. Raw frequencies of infinitives and gerunds with *forbid* in the active voice in *Daily Mail* (2001) and *The Independent* (2001)

The tendencies are consistent between the two newspapers: the expanded use of gerunds has made noticeable progress with *forbid* in general, but it is particularly outstanding in the active voice, where gerunds have already outnumbered infinitives, and by a wide margin. In the passive voice, by contrast, infinitives are still much more common than gerunds. In other words, *forbid* in the active is a step ahead of the same verb in the passive as far as the expansion of gerunds in the complement is concerned. For reference's sake, I would like to refer to my data drawn from the native speakers' data in BAWE, which presents eight examples of the passive, all of which illustrate the indirect passive. And, as many as seven of the eight examples employ the infinitive. Hence, *forbid* in the passive voice in the two British newspapers is markedly more advanced, showing a moderate expansion of gerunds, than in BAWE.

One notable point about the indirect passive is that all relevant examples of gerunds in *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* are observed with the preposition *from*, as the following examples illustrate:

(14) CHILDREN under 16 may soon be forbidden by law *from buying* pets

(*Daily Mail*, 31 December 2001)

(15) ... everyone involved has been forbidden *from discussing* it.

(*The Independent*, 20 September 2001)

As far as the data of the present study is concerned, there is not a single example of the indirect passive where the gerund appears without *from*.

Incidentally, the direct passive, whose examples are not considered above, more freely occurs with gerundial subjects, as example (12) above illustrates. When infinitives are employed as the subject of *forbid*, they are most likely to occur with anticipatory *it*, as in:

(16) *It* is also forbidden *to feed* them to laying hens (*Daily Mail*, 4 June 2001)

(17) ... *it* is forbidden *to be* merciful to them. (*The Independent*, 10 April 2001)

All relevant examples in *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* are of this kind. For reference's sake, the raw frequencies of infinitives and gerunds used as the subject of *forbid* in the passive voice are exhibited in the graph below:



Figure 4. Raw frequencies of infinitives and gerunds used as the subject of *forbid* in the direct passive in *Daily Mail* (2001) and *The Independent* (2001)

Both in *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*, gerunds are almost as frequent as infinitives in subject position.

### 3.2. Discussion

As observed in the above section, there exists an obvious difference between the verb *forbid* used in the active and passive voices. The state of affairs in the active is clearly more progressive than in the passive, although the expansion of gerunds is observed in both cases.<sup>19</sup> As to the difference between the two voices, some possible interpretations are available. Quite generally, the passive voice is slower in adopting new forms: causative *make*, for example, still retains in the passive the *to*-infinitive in the complement, whereas the same verb in the active voice has more or less completed the shift from the *to*-infinitive to the bare infinitive in contemporary English. As discussed by Iyeiri (2012), both were commonly followed by *to*-infinitives in Middle English but *make* in the active voice acquired the dominance and eventual establishment of bare infinitives in the course of the history of English. The slower shift from the infinitive to the gerund in the complement of *forbid* may simply be another illustrative case of the gap between the active and passive voices in terms of the speed of language change.

Secondly, the gap of usage between the active and passive voices may be ascribable to the difference of style. Of the two voices, the passive is usually considered to be more formal (cf. Zwickey 1981), and it is only natural that the more formal style should retain the usage which has a longer tradition in the history of English. Since the recent expansion of gerundial complements with *forbid* is certainly a case of “language change from below”,<sup>20</sup> the newer form is the less formal option. Hence, it is more frequently attested in the active, which is less formal, or rather just neutral in contrast with the passive voice, which is more formal.

Finally, the whole issue is explicable within the framework of Rohdenburg’s

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<sup>19</sup> The discussion in this section is largely in line with Iyeiri (2016).

<sup>20</sup> For “language change from below”, see Note 11.

Complexity Principle, which states:

In the case of more or less explicit grammatical options the more explicit one(s) will tend to be favored in cognitively more complex environments” (1996: 151).

As for the passive, Rohdenburg (1996: 173) remarks that it is the more complex environment when compared with the active voice, and therefore favours the more explicit option. He also makes a comment on the further explicitness of the *to*-infinitive than the gerund (see Rohdenburg 2006: 149-150). In sum, the passive, which is more complex, is in favour of the *to*-infinitive, which is more explicit. It is probable that all these factors are involved in the further expanded use of gerunds with *forbid* in the active than in the passive.

#### 4. Constructions old and new

Before concluding the present paper, I would like to refer to two constructions of *forbid* which are not necessarily accompanied by infinitives or gerunds but which are interesting in their own right. One of them is archaic and the other is relatively new in the long history of English. The archaic one is the type hitherto excluded from analysis, namely *God forbid* and its variant constructions, as in:

(18) And *God forbid* that Alastair Campbell should ever be less than frank with Her Majesty’s Lobby. (*Daily Mail*, 27 January 2001)

Other words with similar meanings can also appear in place of *God*:

(19) *Heaven forbid* we should think such a thing. (*Daily Mail*, 22 August 2001)



(20) *Heaven forbid* you should prang it ... (*The Independent*, 27 September 2001)

*Daily Mail* provides 37 examples of *God forbid* ... (or its variants) and *The Independent* 39 examples. Even in Present-day English, they are always followed by *that*-clauses (or clauses where the conjunction *that* is elliptical) when they occur with a complement, and never with infinitives or gerunds. This seems to be consistent, and the general development of *forbid* as discussed in previous sections does not seem to affect this fixed form at all. When not accompanied by complements, *God forbid* occurs independently, as in (21). This is also fairly common in the data under investigation:

(21) *Heaven forbid*. Yet she is already making enemies

(*The Independent*, 19 April 2001)

Also numerous are cases where *God forbid* occurs parenthetically, as the following examples illustrate:

(22) until, *God forbid*, the next mad storm (*Daily Mail*, 10 March 2001)

(23) we do not sell beer or cigarettes, let alone, *Heaven forbid*, crisps.

(*The Independent*, 25 April 2001)

In these examples, *God forbid* functions almost as a sentential adverb.

When *God forbid* occurs sentence-initially, it is not always easy to tell whether the clause that follows is a subordinate one:

(24) *God forbid* she becomes a rock star. (*Daily Mail*, 2 January 2001)

In this example, it is difficult to tell whether *God forbid* is the main clause, dominating

the following subordinate clause with *that* deleted or whether it functions as a sentential adverb. The difficulty is partly attributable to the fact that the verb form in the subordinate clause is not always subjunctive in Present-day English, while it was usually so in earlier English. Example (24) illustrates the use of the indicative in the subordinate clause, but far more common than this is the use of modal auxiliaries as exemplified by (25) and (26):

(25) but *God forbid* that an American officer *might* one day be called to account.

(*The Independent*, 30 June 2001)

(26) *God forbid* that any of us *should* actually want to take to the streets to protest about it. (*Daily Mail*, 6 May 2001)

There are also examples as in the following, where it is difficult to tell whether the verb at issue is indicative or subjunctive:

(27) Because *God forbid* that you get an actual yes.

(*The Independent*, 15 December 2001)

All in all, *that*-clauses with modal auxiliaries are the most frequent, whereas the subjunctive is much restricted, or at least more so than in earlier English.<sup>21</sup> Still, *God forbid* is continuous, perhaps as a fossilized expression, and the grammatical construction with the *that*-clause is also retained as a fossil in Present-day English. I have documented in my earlier studies the historical development of *God forbid*, where

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<sup>21</sup> The decline of the subjunctive in the history of English is well documented in the literature. From around 1900, a number of scholars have predicted its extinction in due course. Nichols (1987: 140) gives a list of such predictions. It has, however, survived the twentieth century, though it is certainly marginal in Present-day English. See also Hirtle (1964) and Quirk, et al. (1985: 155-158).

I touch upon the same phrase in the twentieth century (cf. Iyeiri 2010a: 35-42; among others). The present study shows that the situation is still intact even in journalistic English at the beginning of the 21st century, where the overall complementation patterns of *forbid* have made a significant departure from the situation that had been dominant for the past few centuries. The verb form in the subordinate clause of *God forbid* has, however, experienced some modification due to the decline of the subjunctive in general.

Finally, I would like to refer to the adjectival use of *forbidding*, which has made a significant expansion in the two newspapers under exploration. Some illustrative examples are:

(28) Greenyards will again be a *forbidding* place for visiting sides.

(*Daily Mail*, 31 August 2001)

(29) But this is to make it sound impossibly *forbidding*.

(*The Independent*, 6 August 2001)

The *OED* notes that this usage of *forbid* is relatively new in the history of English and that it is found only from around Milton. As a matter of fact, *EMEPS* (1500-1700), an Early Modern English dataset of approximately eight million words, provides no clear examples of this usage.<sup>22</sup> Present-day English, by contrast, displays a marked expansion of this form: *Daily Mail* presents 432 examples of *forbid* (all examples with or without complements), of which 32 (7.4%) illustrate *forbidding* used as an adjective; *The Independent* exhibits 439 examples of *forbid* (all examples with or without complements), of which 45 (10.3%) illustrate *forbidding* of this type. Since comparable statistics are not available about earlier English, it is not an easy task to assess if this is a notable expansion. Still, it is at least safe to state that the form is in expansion within

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<sup>22</sup> See also Note 7.

the framework of the long history of English. It is a relatively new usage.

As mentioned in the Introduction, *forbid* is no longer a common word in English, perhaps because of the existence of other verbs with similar meanings such as *prohibit*. As a result, the relative proportion of fixed uses like *God forbid* and adjectival *forbidding* is increasingly large.<sup>23</sup> The infrequent occurrence of *forbid* itself may indirectly be due to the expanded use of other verbs of prohibition, although further research is necessary to prove this.

## 5. Conclusions

The principal concern of the present paper has been to analyze the development of gerunds (at the cost of infinitives) in the complement of *forbid* in Present-day English. I have studied, for this purpose, all 2001 issues of *Daily Mail* and *The Independent* by utilizing the database *LexisNexis Academic*. The results have shown that gerunds have undergone a noticeable expansion at the turn of the 21st century, with gerundial forms almost as frequent as infinitival ones. Interestingly enough, there do not seem to be any differences in terms of the degree of this extension between *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*, hinting at the possibility that the use of gerunds is no longer stigmatized in English. In fact, *The Independent*, which is considered to be more formal in style than *Daily Mail*, displays a slightly further extended use of gerundial complements. Clearly, there are no differences ascribable to the style about this newly expanding construction of *forbid*.

There is, however, a marked difference between the active and passive voices in respect of the complement of *forbid*. The expansion of gerunds is particularly noticeable when *forbid* occurs in the active, whereas the same verb when used in the

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<sup>23</sup> Apart from these expressions, the verb *forbid* also occurs in the past participle form qualifying the noun that follows, as in *forbidden literature*. This is a well-established usage in the history of English, and frequent in the data explored in the present study. Thus, the use of this verb is increasingly confined to some fixed environments in contemporary English.

passive voice displays the expansion of gerunds to a more modest degree. This is particularly the case with the indirect passive, where the original indirect object has become the nominative and functions as the subject of the clause. In the direct passive constructions, by contrast, the employment of gerunds is further extended, which may be attributable, at least to some extent, to the motivation to avoid *to*-infinitives in clause-initial position, although unfortunately relevant examples are not numerous enough to prove this point in practice. One noticeable point about the indirect passive is its frequent employment of “*from* + gerund”, which is in the historical context a further advanced form than the simple gerund.

Finally, I have referred to two constructions, not necessarily used with infinitives or gerunds. The first is the fixed form *God forbid* and its variant constructions, which occur even in Present-day English with *that*-clauses. This is an archaic construction, considering the fact that *that*-clauses were once fairly common as the complement of *forbid*, which however came to be increasingly replaced by infinitives and gerunds in the history of English. *God forbid* alone retains this form of complementation, although there are some modifications, i.e. the notable use of the indicative and modal auxiliaries side by side with the subjunctive in *that*-clauses. *God forbid* also occurs independently without any subordinate clause, which is again a usage available from earlier English onwards.

The second is the adjectival form *forbidding*, which has derived from the verb *forbid*. The *OED* states that this goes only back to the days of Milton, indicating that it is a relatively new usage, at least as far as the long history of written English is concerned. Since relevant statistics are scanty about earlier periods, showing virtually no data in previous studies, accurate interpretation of the history of this usage is not possible at this stage. It is at least worthy of note, however, that *forbidding* of this usage is virtually absent in the Early Modern English period, whereas it counts nearly ten percent both in *Daily Mail* and *The Independent*. It is clearly an expanding usage of *forbid*, which requires further exploration in the future.

The above discussion has demonstrated some current changes with the verb *forbid*, and this has been possible thanks to the availability of large datasets stored in a machine-readable form. Thus, historical interpretations are possible with the most up-to-date data of the English language. As for current changes of English in general, Close and Aarts (2010: 167) refer to some previous studies and state:

A change measured over a short period of thirty years or so, ... , will not necessarily be completed in the time period, and it is impossible to know *how*, *when*, or even *if* a particular change will complete. The danger of attempting to predict these is illustrated by the subjunctive which was believed to be decreasing to the point of extinction (Fowler 1965), but has been shown more recently to be undergoing a revival (Øvergaard 1995; Hundt 1998; Leech et al. 2009).

It is indeed difficult to tell *when* the completion of the shift from *to*-infinitives to gerunds will take place with the verb *forbid*. In fact, the completion will perhaps never be reached, as the decline of *that*-clauses in the complement of this verb has not been completed in the history of English. It is, however, probably safe to surmise that the employment of gerunds will further spread to texts of other genres than journals in the near future.

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