

English [V NP *into* V-*ing*] Construction: A Resultative Analysis

Yook, Cheongmin* and Kim, Yanghee**

Hallym University
Andong National University

*First Author / **Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

The Journal of Studies in Language 36.4, 565-576. The purpose of this paper is to examine English [V NP *into* V-*ing*] constructions. This construction shares quite a few properties with causative sentences. For example, both are to express transitivity relationship such as [cause X to do Y] between the participants. However, corpus data suggest that this transitivity relationship may not be established in some cases (e.g., idiomatic expressions) simply because there is no X to be posited. As an alternative analysis, this paper proposes a resultative construction analysis. In this analysis, the participant X in the form of [cause X to do Y] does not pose any problem because what is important in this analysis is the end-point result. All cases of [V NP *into* V-*ing*] investigated in this paper fall out under the presented analysis. (Hallym University · Andong National University)

Keywords: corpus, [*into* V-*ing*] construction, resultative analysis, resultative construction, causative construction



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1. Introduction

English [V NP *into* V-*ing*] construction, exemplified in (1), has recently been paid much attention to, especially from a corpus-linguistics perspective.

- (1) a. Love at first sight had coerced him *into* marrying a complete stranger.
b. I probably pressured him *into* driving around the barricades.

Rudanko (2006) and Kim and Davies (2015), for example, provide a comprehensive investigation of this construction, using various corpus data. These studies treat the construction under discussion as a causative construction. Kim and Davies (2015: 74) dub it as “into causatives” and claim that “the construction represents the semantic properties, ‘X CAUSES Y TO BECOME Z and BECOME Z happened’.”

In this paper, we focus on the resultative property of the construction and provide an alternative analysis from a broader perspective. To be more specific, we show that the [V NP *into V-ing*] construction is simply one of the many resultative constructions in the form of [V NP PP] and that it can be best analyzed as such.¹⁾ Indeed, Rudanko (2005; 2006) and Kim and Davies (2015) note that a distinctive property of this construction is that it conveys the sense of accomplishment or result. Once we assume that this construction is a case of resultative constructions, then we see that a subset of these constructions cannot be viewed as causative but as resultative. We also show that all the properties of the construction dealt with in these works naturally follow from general properties of resultative construction.

2. Properties of English [*into V-ing*] Construction

2.1 Expansion of the [*into V-ing*] Construction

Judging from corpus findings, it seems that English [*into V-ing*] construction is a fairly infrequent construction. Rudanko (2005) could find only about 20 types and about 65-70 tokens overall in the ‘first-generation’ corpora such as the Brown family of corpora (Brown, LOB, FROWN, and FLOB). Rudanko (2006), based on 144 million words of British English (news, books, and spoken) and 117 million words of American English corpora (news, books, and spoken) in the Bank of English, supplemented by some other newspapers as well, could find about 1,050 tokens of the construction. Kim and Davies (2015) could find 19,765 tokens out of 1.32 billion words from various corpora including the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the British National Corpus (BNC) (via BYU-BNC), the Corpus of Global Web-based English (Glowbe)-US, and the Corpus of Global Web-based English (Glowbe)-UK.²⁾ Davies (2013), examining the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), shows that use of this construction has been gradually increasing, as shown in the table below.

In the table, we see that the construction has more than doubled in frequency from about 1900 to the current time. With the overall increase of this construction, it has spread over various kinds of verbs. Comparing the data from his corpora with those in the corpora used for Francis et al. (1996), Rudanko (2005) found 41 new verbs that take the “*into V-ing*” form, which had not appeared in those previous studies. Kim and Davies (2015) found 335 different matrix verbs with the construction, which have not been reported in previous studies. In short, the [V NP *into V-ing*] construction has been increasing in terms of frequency as well as in terms of spreading over different verbs.

1) A reviewer points out why [V NP PP] is relevant here. Since we consider [V NP *into V-ing*] as one of the resultative constructions in this paper, we assume that *into* is just a preposition. Thus, we see not only *into V-ing* form but also *out of V-ing* for.

2) COCA is so far the largest structured corpus of English, based on various genres (e.g. spoken, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic). It is continually updated and contains 450 million words of text from 1990-2012. The British National Corpus contains 100 million words from spoken data, fiction, magazines, newspapers, and academic data from the 1980s and early 1990s. GloWbE is based on 1.9 billion words of text in English from twenty different countries. All of these corpora are available from <http://corpus.byu.edu>.

Table 1. Frequency of [V NP *into V-ing*] during 1810s-2000s

	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	Total
size	1.7	7.3	15.5	17.3	16.8	18.2	19.6	20.7	21.1	22.3	23.0	25.9	24.7	24.5	24.6	24.2	24.2	25.6	28.4	31.5	406.7
tokens (million)	1	6	14	30	25	57	83	88	90	108	153	197	182	207	274	207	245	266	341	438	3012
frequency	0.6	0.8	0.9	1.7	1.5	3.1	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.8	6.7	7.6	7.4	8.5	11.1	8.6	10.1	10.4	12.0	13.9	

2.2 Telic Property of [*into V-ing*] Construction

Discussing the differences between *to*-infinitive complements and *into V-ing* complements, Rudanko (2006) notes that only the latter, but not the former, allows telic interpretation. That is, the activity denoted by the gerund of [*into V-ing*] construction is accomplishment, or has an end-point, while that of the *to*-infinitive complement may or may not. For instance, consider the following example taken from Rudanko (2006: 316):

- (2) a. He lost touch with his parents, who had *pressured* him *to* join the family business, and only his horrific crash in 1976 prompted a thawing of the frostiness between them. (British News)
- b. ... the government's exams watchdog, the qualifications and curriculum authority, had *pressured* individual boards *into* *manipulating* grades. (British News)

As is clear, the entailment property only holds in (2b), but not in (2a). In other words, in (2a), the person may or may not join the family business, even though the person's parents pressured him to do so. In (2b), the individual boards simply manipulated grades, due to the pressure from the government's exams watchdog, the qualifications and curriculum authority. As Rudanko (2006: 317) notes, the notion of accomplishment that is inherent in the [*into V-ing*] constructions makes the construction telic in nature. This claim seems quite readily understandable because *to*-infinitives inherently refer to a future event, while NPs (including gerunds) refer to some event or activity that has already taken place.

2.3 No Overt Subject with [*into V-ing*]

Consider the following examples:

- (3) a. He fooled Sam into (*him) believing he was fast.
- b. He fooled Sam into (*his) believing he was fast.

Viewed as a resultative construction, the [V NP *into V-ing*] construction poses no problem with regard to the genitive/accusative subject, as discussed in Kim and Davies (2015). Recall that resultatives only allow PRO as the subject of the result phrase.

3. A Resultative Analysis of English [*into V-ing*] Construction

As mentioned earlier, there are nearly 20,000 tokens of the [*into V-ing*] construction in the different corpora. The most frequent matrix verbs in each corpus are the following:

Table 2. Most Frequent Verbs in the Four Corpora

COCA		BNC		GloWbE-US		GloWbE-UK	
talk	742	force	56	trick	633	force	463
trick	390	trick	54	fool	504	trick	452
fool	261	fool	51	talk	422	fool	382
force	171	talk	47	force	255	talk	194
coerce	160	mislead	40	delude	192	bully	173
coax	137	provoke	32	coerce	177	coerce	166
pressure	131	deceive	29	manipulate	171	pressure	164
scare	93	bully	27	deceive	141	push	155
delude	79	coerce	26	dupe	136	dupe	127
lure	78	con	21	scare	130	con	117
mislead	72	lead	21	pressure	126	brainwash	105
bully	70	push	18	brainwash	123	mislead	101
manipulate	66	pressure	17	push	114	delude	92
seduce	65	delude	13	shame	97	manipulate	91
deceive	55	blackmail	13	mislead	93	deceive	82

What this table seems to suggest is that speakers and writers tap into thousands of possible verbs of English in very novel ways to use these verbs in new and unexpected contexts. Without looking at the examples in (4), try to imagine the so-called “*into V-ing* causative” construction with verbs like *carve*, *complain*, *deflect*, *depress*, *edge*, *Google*, *lumber*, *slant*, or *squirrel*, and then look at the sentences given in (4), taken from GloWbE-US:

- (4) a. how did you all even managed to **carve** yourselves into thinking that it’s a right thing to do?
 b. No, it is easier to **complain** your way into getting what you want
 c. and maybe I can **deflect** them into being impressed with that
 d. I think Burger King is trying to **depress** me into getting fat
 e. and the people of Bethlehem saw a good match for Ruth and **edged** her into meeting Boaz
 f. Scott is after a royal title and has **Googled** his way into getting one
 g. but rather my perspective **slanted** me into believing that one
 h. Of course Verizon is trying to **squirrel** me into upgrading

Or consider these sentences with *blag*, *cloud*, *cuddle*, *hack*, *magick*, *muddy*, *randomize*, *style*, and *tug* from GloWbE-UK:

- (5) a. And well done Auntie to **blag** your way into getting some funding from overseas
 b. to **cloud** and deceive us into believing that all hope is lost
 c. He'd been cuddled into doing some work experience by a social worker
 d. Microsoft is forced to **hack** Windows into behaving more like a multi-user system
 e. a hero that the world has been **magicked** into forgetting
 f. When science is **muddied** into being seen as an act of writing
 g. He was told that this blood had been **randomised** into having a HIV test
 h. he teaches some tips for **styling** fine hair into looking like it has some major volume
 i. how far Labour has **tugged** the Tories into engaging with the details

Seeing such a wide range of verbs, Hunston and Francis (2000) take notice of different semantic classes of these verbs and classify them into a couple of categories.³⁾

- (6) a. annoy-class: The verbs in this group are concerned with making someone feel something and typically evoke negative emotion (*annoy, scare, shock, frustrate, embarrass, frighten, intimate, irritate, panic, etc.*).
 b. coax-class: The verbs in this class are concerned with using language cleverly, deviously, or forcefully to make someone do something (*badger, cajole, coax, flatter, persuade, tease, wheedle, etc.*).
 c. fool-class: The verbs in this class have to do with deceiving or misleading (*con, deceive, fool, mislead, etc.*)

A potential problem with this classification, however, is that many verbs do not fit into these simple categories. For examples, verbs like *carve, deflect, edge, Google, cuddle, randomize, and style* are not clear-cut and others (*depress, lumber, slant, squirrel, blag, cloud, magick, and tug*) are twisted into one of these categories.

4. Structure of the [V NP *into* V-ing] Construction

English [V NP *into* V-ing] construction has three syntactic arguments: subject NP, object NP, and *into*-gerundive clause. One principal constraint we can observe is that the gerundive clause cannot be replaced by a simple NP, as discussed in Rudanko (2006).

- (7) a. He fooled Peggy **into believing** he was fast.
 b. *He fooled Peggy into an athlete.
 (8) a. They bribed her **into wearing** the clothes.
 b. *They bribed her into the clothes.

What these examples suggest is that the preposition *into* is different from typical cases where it selects an NP or an

3) Regarding the *into* V-ing constructions, a series of Goldberg papers (Goldberg, 1995, 1997, 2006; Goldberg and Jackendoff, 2004) offer an extensive discussion.

indirect question such as the following.

- (9) a. Mary ran [**into** [the fence]] and scraped her elbow.
 b. There will be an investigation [**into** [who is to blame]].

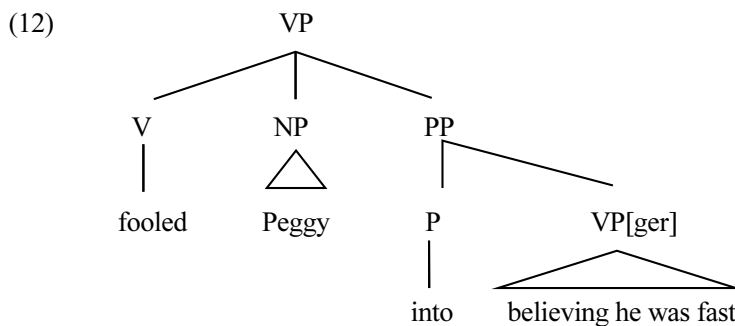
An additional constraint we observe is that the gerundive clause cannot have either a genitive or accusative subject:

- (10) a. *He fooled Sam **into** him **believing** he was fast.
 b. *He fooled Sam **into** his **believing** he was fast.

There is also supporting evidence for the complementhood of the gerundive clause (Rudanko, 2006):

- (11) a. What he fooled you **into** was [believing he was fast enough].
 b. [What] did he fool Sam into? He fooled Sam **into** [believing he was fast enough].
 c. *How did he fool Sam into? He fooled Sam **into** believing he was fast enough.

As illustrated here, the gerundive clause can occur in the post-copular focus position of the *wh*-cleft and can be even *wh*-questioned with the argumenthood *what*. However, the gerundive clause cannot be *wh*-questioned with the adverbial *how*. These grammatical properties challenge the locality of selection in traditional generative grammar. Consider a simple structure of the construction (see Carrier and Randall, 1992):



The matrix verb *fooled* combines with an NP and a PP headed by *into* as its complements. But the problem is that the verb also needs to have access to the prepositional object, the gerundive (*ger*) phrase. That is, the c-selection (category) information of the verb *fool* requires the non-local VP[*ger*] too, which makes the construction syntactically peculiar.

Syntactically, the verbs occurring in the “*into* causative” construction can be classified into three types (see Rudanko, 2006). The first type is object control verbs such as *cajole*, *coax*, *con*, *embolden*, *force*, and *persuade*. These verbs require the object NP as well as the *to*-infinitive phrase:

- (13) a. Throughout history we could never actually **coerce** someone [to reveal information].
 b. They figured we’d **coerced** Jeffrey [into coming with us].

- (14) a. That **forced** him [to get rid of the copper and start over with strips of nickel]
 b. I can use the proxies to **force** him [into giving me those mineral rights]

The second type includes transitive verbs selecting two arguments such as *fool*, *frighten*, *deceive*, *bully*, *provoke*, *tease*, *intimidate*, etc. and they thus introduce the *into*-gerundive phrase as a new argument.

- (15) a. Does it appear they're trying to **deceive** us with these answers?
 b. He had soothed people's fears and **deceived** them into walking docilely to their deaths.
 (16) a. For a long time Mama had **fooled** him anytime she wanted to.
 b. he's an actor we hired to **fool** the girls into believing he's drunk.

The third minor type includes verbs like *talk*:

- (17) Carl Perkins has actually **talked** Scotty into playing again now.

As Rudanko (2006) notes, the verb *talk* does not combine with an infinitive phrase, and even when it is used as a transitive verb, its object is different from the object of verbs like *fool* in that the object is not a patient or undergoer, as seen from (18):

- (18) a. *He **talked** me to do that.
 b. He **talked** politics.

5. Syntactically Ambiguous [V NP *into* V-ing] construction

Investigating various corpus data, we find that there are two ambiguous types of sentences. First, it is not clear whether the gerundive is actually a verb, or whether it is a noun.⁴⁾ It is quite clear that there is a more nominal sense, especially with the embedded noun/verb *being*, although there seems to be at least a hint of a verbal sense:

- (19) a. a humble blog may become the multi-voiced autobiography that **writes** itself into being
 b. [it] appears as if you had willed it, as if you had **imagined** it into being
 c. History belongs to the intercessors, who **believe** the future into being
 d. As if by speaking the words, I could accidentally **speak** a baby into being
 e. who does not need his creation but who, as it were, **desires** it into being
 f. A cigar **boinked** itself into being between my lips

4) A reviewer raises a question as to why the nature of gerundive matters here. The point that we want to make is whether the gerundive has the meaning of causativity. If it is a noun, it is hard to say that it has the meaning of causativity.

This is perhaps more complicated by the fact that some of these verbs that occur with *being* also occur with other verbs:

- (20) a. an image harrowed and nearly consumed by the process that **brought** it into being.
b. I think that's what **brought** me into fighting for civil rights in my own way
- (21) a. and marvel at the God who **called** it into being
b. God had **called** me into training the leaders of the future

There are other cases (besides *being*), where even though the sense is slightly more nominal, a verbal reading is also possible (see the words underlined below):

- (22) a. threatens **sent** her into hiding in a tribal leader's house.
b. a conductor who recognized the potential of his voice **sent** him off into singing
c. since dealers are often **initiated** into trafficking through connections within in the drug business
d. the intoning can **take** you into singing

Second, there is sometimes ambiguity about whether the main clause verb is actually a verb (in a passive context), or whether it is an adjective. Consider the following, which are just a few examples from among hundreds in the corpora:

- (23) a. We're **engrained** into believing that mistakes are bad
b. the message is **distorted** into being about what is required to be a woman
c. you're **hamstrung** into playing as a certain "class"
d. there are a lot of people today who are **addicted** into drinking coffee
e. a lot of the university film programs seem to be more **focused** into playing in mainstream Hollywood films

Note the fairly strong adjectival sense with these sentences, in that we can say for example "very engrained," "very distorted", etc. Then it is not readily explainable why these constructions are causatives. There is no causativity in adjectival constructions.

6. English [V NP *into* V-ing] as a Resultative

In this section, we provide an answer to the question why some verbs are quite rarely used in the [V NP *into* V-ing] construction, while they are much more frequently found with *to*-infinitive causatives. First, consider the following table.

Table 3. Ratio of [*into V-ing*] vs. [to V]

Verb	<i>into V-ing</i>	<i>to V</i>
encourage	15	14,694
inspire	13	4,658
convince	16	3,478
train	10	1,440
motivate	22	2,142
prompt	29	2,689

Table 3 shows that verbs like *convince*, *encourage*, and *inspire* are much more frequently used with [to V] complements rather than with [*into V-ing*] complements. If [*into V-ing*] construction is a simple causative construction, it is not easy to explain why there is such big difference in the frequencies of these verbs. Some examples of the [V NP *into V-ing*] construction are provided below (for a relevant discussion, see Davies, 2013).

- (24) a. to help and **encourage** others into finding that purpose that God has put them on earth
 b. He didn't have to **inspire** others into creating socially conscious corporations.
 c. I was **convinced** into buying our tourer caravan by the phrases, "its so easy"
 d. So in a cumulative way you are **trained** into seeing your sex as public or valueless
 e. we've had to try to **motivate** the school into raising its expectations of him
 f. That sign might be enough to **prompt** you into calling a cab
 g. Earlier we believed, that we could **instruct** us (sic) into creating skillfull players, but we cannot

Once again note that these verbs are quite rare with the [V NP *into V-ing*] construction. For example, in the case of the verb *instruct*, there is only one case per billion words. Furthermore, if we were using a much smaller corpus (only 10-20 million words), the probability is that we would not see any tokens of [*into V-ing*] at all with these verbs.

Another relevant issue is the constructions where reflexives are involved, as in the following.

- (25) a. I began to **immerse** myself into helping create a new wave
 b. I almost **played** myself into passing out
 c. But we must never **resign** ourselves into believing that it has to be that way forever
 d. [I] could **treat** myself into thinking that I was roaming above the gabled rooftops of London
 e. Do you think a gay person could **pray** himself into being not gay?
 f. He didn't want to **chitchat** himself into getting dropped off somewhere
 g. He pretty much **dedicated** himself into getting his game back
 h. I **contemplated** myself into making a decision that would build another pond

All these examples include reflexive pronouns. In a causative analysis, we have to assume that the subject 'causes' him or herself to do some activity by definition. It is much more natural to assume, instead, that the subject ends up

being in some resulting state. This is exactly what resultative analysis predicts (Regarding the structure of resultatives, see Carrier and Randall, 1992).

In addition to the reflexive pronouns, there are idiomatic [V NP *into* V-*ing*] constructions, which pose potential problems to the causative analysis (see Israel, 1996). Consider the following.

- (26) a. how they lie and **cheat** their way into getting passes for the paddock!
 b. John **cajoled** his way into being allowed to dance it at three performances
 c. A CONMAN **tricks** his way into being elected to the US Congress
 d. Mr. Zell **talked** his way into managing some off-campus housing property
 e. trying to figure out how to **wrangle** my way into doing music for their games
 f. Don't ever **force** your way into making out with a girl
 g. Stephanie **blackmails** her way into taking a case that will pay out \$10,000

Under the causative analysis, we have to claim that the subject of the sentence causes the pleonastic expressions like way to perform the activity denoted by the [*ino* V-*ing*] chunk. This is simply nonsense. Once again, way (his way, her way, their way, etc) is used as a 'placeholder'. Perhaps even more unusual are the cases like the following.

- (27) a. "I had to **imagine** my way into being a good mother," she said.
 b. and now I have **lied** my way into having to leave the house altogether
 c. he had **stammered** his way into asking Lois to dance with him
 d. You don't **think** your way into becoming yourself
 e. **Nose** your way into doing extracurricular activity you are interested in
 f. Every civilization ... has always been able to **reason** its way into ... denying the most minimal claims to justice

In these cases, as in the reflexive cases of (27) above, there is no possible Y (separate from X) that could replace the way phrase. In other words, there is no potential cause in these so-called 'causative' sentences. For example, in (27a) it would be difficult to say "I (X) had to imagine Sue (Y) into being a good mother." It is, therefore, quite implausible to claim that these are causative sentences. Under a resultative analysis, however, there are abundant cases where 'fake' complement NP is involved. Take a look at a few representative examples of resultative below.

- (28) a. Sally made her way through the crowd.
 b. We elbowed our way out of the building.
 c. It clawed its way up the ladder.

Given that these examples are resultative sentences, there is no reason why we should not assume that the sentences in (27) are also resultative constructions. We do not see why the preposition *into* in (27) has to be dealt with in a syntactically different way from preposition *out of*.

A resultative analysis seems to provide another advantage. As discussed earlier, majority of the verbs under

consideration allow *to-V* complementation, while they do not [*into V-ing*] complementation. In addition, the same verb allows *to-V* complementation, while it does not [*into V-ing*] complementation. Considering the fact that *to-V* denotes future event/state, while *V-ing* (or gerundive) denotes an activity of the past or present, this follows so naturally. This is why particular verbs such as *inspire* and *convince*, shown in Table 3, are readily combined into *to-V* complementation, while they are not with [*into V-ing*] complementation. Since these verbs denote future event or state, they are easily combined with the future-oriented *to-V* complementation.

7. Summary and Conclusion

English [V NP *into V-ing*] construction is quite interesting in that this expands more and more to various verbs, as shown in the corporal data. This construction is syntactically distinguished from regular gerundive constructions in that it does not allow a subject of the *into V-ing*. Rudanko (2005; 2006) and Kim and Davies (2015) treat this construction as a special type of causative construction, examining a vast amount of corpus data. Under a causative analysis, however, there are some theoretically potential problems. First, it is not clear why the [V NP *into V-ing*] construction is so rare and why the same verbs do not allow this construction while they do *to-V* complementation. Second, it is not clear how the idiomatic [*into V-ing*] constructions are explained because the place holders, such as *way*, of these constructions are not causee in the traditional sense of causatives. Third, it is not clear why some verbs allow the *to-V* complementation but not [*into V-ing*] complementation. Under a resultative analysis, however, these issues do not pose a problem, as discussed in Section 5. Given resultative analysis, some verbs (e.g., *inspire* and *expect*) intrinsically denote future event or state and thus do not naturally allow *V-ing* form that denotes result or ongoing event/state. Furthermore, place holders (e.g., *way*) typically appear in many resultative constructions and they do not pose any problem to resultative constructions in general.

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Yook, Cheongmin, Professor
Hallymdahak-gil 1, Chuncheon, Gangwon-do, 24252, Republic of Korea
Department of English Language and Literature, Hallym University
E-mail: cmyook@hallym.ac.kr

Kim, Yanghee, Professor
Gyeongdong-ro 1375, Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do, 36729, Republic of Korea
Department of English Education, Andong National University
E-mail: kyh2015@anu.ac.kr