

On the categorial distinction between ‘verbal’ and ‘adjectival’ participles

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This talk assumes a syntactic approach to word-formation (Halle & Marantz 1993); using primarily Serbo-Croatian (SC) and English as examples, I demonstrate that passive participles are deverbal adjectives and argue that what has been cast as a contrast in lexical category between different types of participles is better understood as reflecting the amount of verbal structure embedded under the adjectival layer. Although a uniform analysis of English passive participles as adjectives has been suggested before (e.g. Freidin 1975), the more common view in the generative literature is to assume a categorial distinction between ‘adjectival’ and ‘verbal’ participles (Levin & Rappaport 1986, a.m.o.).

I first examine the validity of the diagnostics used to distinguish between the two types of participles in English, to conclude that they are in fact unsuitable for establishing category differences. Existing work on English has highlighted an apparent conflict between environments that allow adjectives but not verbs, on the one hand, and the appearance of an agentive *by*-phrase, on the other. On the account pursued here, participles always have adjectival external syntax; the task is therefore to establish an alternative account for the distribution of *by*-phrases.

Based on the impossibility of a *by*-phrase with participles in attributive position, it has been argued that only adjectival participles can appear as prenominal modifiers. However, this restriction in English is better explained as a conspiracy of two independent factors. First, the Head-Final Filter (Williams 1982) requires that a prenominal modifying expression be head-final, thus banning, for example, **the opened by John letter*, but also, crucially, **the fond of Sam boy*. Second, the general impossibility of placing PPs leftward within a prenominal modifier in English accounts for ungrammaticality of **the by John opened letter*. Note that this latter restriction does not hold in closely related German or Dutch (cf. Rapp 2000:396; Sleeman 2011:1574), nor does it hold in SC.

Additionally, the complement position of verbs such as *seem* and *remain* has been analyzed as unsuitable for verbal participles because it precludes agentive *by*-phrases (1a). However, an alternative explanation is that *seem* and *remain* require stative bare complements, whereas the *by*-phrase in English precludes a stative reading with deverbal participles formed from change of state verbs. Data from eventive nominalizations are well-known, and they also show that eventivity is not sufficient for a constituent to maintain the external syntax of a verb (e.g. *the opening of the letter by the teacher*). Note also that the *by*-phrase can reappear if the relevant participle is derived from a stative verb (1b).

- (1) a. The cake seemed baked (**by* the students).
- b. The teacher seemed/remained appreciated (*by* the students).

Finally, Wasow (1977) suggests that some passive participles must be verbs because they, unlike pure adjectives, are followed by subcategorized material that is selected (2). However, this observation is empirically unjustified, given that some adjectives also have selectional requirements (cf. the English *fond* or *keen*). Additionally, the syntactic approach to word-formation provides us with a principled explanation for why the participles in (2) and the verbs they are derived from require the same complement; the participles are deverbal adjectives which contain the verbal structure that is responsible for selecting the internal argument. For reasons of space, I do not discuss the remaining diagnostics here, but I address them in the talk.

- (2) a. John was considered/*obvious as the frontrunner for this position.
- b. [...] I seemed granted the ability to recognize things for what they truly were. (D. Crouse, *Copy Cats*, p. 140)

Next, I turn to SC, whose rich morphology can inform our analysis of passive participles more generally. SC participles largely pattern with their English counterparts, modulo the fact that SC participles are influenced by additional factors, in particular grammatical aspect. All SC passive participles show overt verbal morphology, including a theme vowel which is the exponent of the verbalizing head (Svenonius 2004) and optional aspectual morphology (3). In a nutshell, eventive participles in SC are derived from

imperfective verb stems, while stative ones are derived from perfective stems. Yet, in terms of their external syntax and their morphological characteristics, both eventive and stative passive participles in SC pattern with adjectives. Supporting this claim is adjectival morphology on all participles (4a), their ability to form synthetic superlatives (4b), and the fact that their definite forms are allowed in attributive, but not in predicative position, as with root-derived adjectives (4c-d). I will also provide some positive evidence from German and English for the adjectival status of all passive participles.

- (3) (pre-)maz-a-ti / (pre-)maz-a-n
 PERF-coat-V-INF. PERF-coat-V-SUFF.
 ‘coat/coated’

- (4) a. tuž-n-a / (od strane moje majke) (na)-pis-a-n-a knjiga
 sad-ADJ-F.SG by-side my mother PERF-write-V-ADJ-F.SG book.F.SG
 ‘lit. a sad / (by my mother) written book’
 b. Ova aplikacij-a je naj-korišten-ij-a od strane tinejdžera
 this app-FEM.SG COP.3SG SUP-used(IMPF)-COMP-FEM.SG by side teenagers
 ‘lit. ‘This app is (the) most used by teenagers’
 c. ruž-n-i / (iz-)lomlj-e-n-i kamen
 ugly-ADJ-DEF PERF-break-V-ADJ-DEF stove
 ‘the strong/turned off stove’
 d. Ovaj šport je snaž-n(*-i) / isključ-e-n-(*-i).
 this stove COP.3SG strong-ADJ-DEF turn_off-V-ADJ-DEF
 ‘This stove is strong/turned off’

Having established that the participles under discussion are deverbal adjectives, I then address an interesting difference between SC and English resultative participles. Namely, SC resultative participles allow agentive *by*-phrases (4a), but English ones do not (1a). This cross-linguistic variation has been considered at some length by Alexiadou, Gehrke & Schäfer (2014), who discuss it for Greek (SC-like) and German (English-like). Based on SC data, I show that the conclusions reached in AGS do not stand up to empirical scrutiny, and I offer an alternative analysis for the distribution of agentive *by*-phrases in resultative contexts. I argue that the stative interpretation of resultative participles is arrived at differently in two types of languages. In languages that encode aspectual distinctions on the verb stem (SC, Greek), the perfective aspectual head introduces a relation between an event and its completion. Crucially, grammatical aspect attaches after the verb’s arguments have been introduced, which explains why external argument phrases are possible in this context. The latter type of languages (English, German) will be argued to have a dedicated stativizing morpheme which crucially selects for vP (and not VoiceP) complements.

The analysis presented here casts doubt on the distinction between adjectival and verbal passives cross-linguistically. If participles are simply adjectives which embed varying amounts of verbal structure, this has the desirable consequence of curbing the proliferation of categories (e.g. PartP in various analyses), both in the linguist’s arsenal and in the speaker’s mental grammar.

References: Alexiadou, A., Gehrke, B. & Schäfer, F. 2014. The argument structure of adjectival participles revisited. *Lingua* 149, 118–138. ► Anagnostopoulou, E. 2003. Participles and voice. *Perfect explorations*, 1-36. ► Freidin, R. 1975. The Analysis of Passives. *Language*, 51, 384-405. ► Halle, M. & Marantz, A. 1993. Distributed Morphology and the pieces of inflection. *The view from Building 20*, 111-176. ► Levin, B. & Rappaport, M. 1986. The formation of adjectival passives. *Linguistic inquiry*, 17, 623-661. ► Rapp, Irene. 2000. The attributive past participle: Structure and temporal interpretation. *Audiatur vox sapientiae*, 392–409. Berlin: Academie-Verlag. ► Sleeman, P. 2011. Verbal and adjectival participles: Position and internal structure. *Lingua*, 121(10), 1569-1587. ► Svenonius, P. 2004. Slavic prefixes inside and outside the VP. *Nordlyd* 32(2): Special issue on Slavic prefixes, 205–253. Tromsø: CASTL. ► Williams, E. 1982. Another argument that passive is transformational. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 13(1), 160-163.