

No such thing as a 'verbal participle'

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The ‘what’

- I (re-)examine the purported distinction between ‘verbal’ participles (1a) and ‘adjectival’ participles (1b-c)
 - (1) a. The vase was **broken** by Mary.
 - b. The vase is **broken**.
 - c. the **broken** vase
 - I show that the proposed diagnostics for English do not test for a category difference
 - I show evidence from Serbo-Croatian (SC), but also from German and English, that all passive participles in these languages are (deverbal) adjectives
- There is no category ‘participle’
- There is no category distinction between ‘verbal’ and ‘adjectival’ participles

The 'why'

- Honing the methodology

Some of the diagnostics turn out to be invalid or they do not test for what they say they test; we need to be careful about the conclusions we draw

- ★ e.g., prenominal participles are not necessarily always of the same type; they cannot be treated as a homogeneous class

- Theoretical implications (narrow)

With the categorial contrast out of the way, we are able to ask more precise questions about what the (structural) differences are between eventive, resultative and (purely) stative participles (see Bešlin 2020a, 2020b)

- Theoretical implications (broad)

(i) simpler theory of lexical categories, and (ii) "being an adjective" \neq "being stative" or, more broadly, a unified semantics for all members of a category seems unlikely (other than in very schematic terms, perhaps)

The 'how'

§2: The original rationale behind the adjectival/verbal distinction & the picture that has emerged in the more recent literature

§3: The shortcomings of the existing diagnostics for English

§4: What we can learn from SC (and other) passive participles

§5: Conclusion

Background

- Since Wasow 1977, the broad consensus in the generative literature has been that there are verbal and adjectival passive participles, as in (2) (Bresnan 1982, Levin & Rappaport 1986, Kratzer 2000, Horvath & Siloni 2008, Alexiadou et al. 2014, a.m.o.; contra Freidin 1975, Emonds 2006, Lundquist 2013)

- (2) a. The vase was broken by Mary.
 b. The vase is broken.

- Verbal participles are said to be associated with an eventive interpretation and adjectival participles with a stative interpretation (Levin & Rappaport 1986)
- §3 elaborates on the distributional differences between the two

Most recent work still assumes one of the following:

- the adjectival/verbal contrast (Meltzer-Asscher 2011a, Alexiadou et al. 2014, Bruening 2014, Gehrke & Marco 2014)
- the outer layer of all participles is Asp, a verbal projection (Embick 2004, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2008)

- There has also been a long tradition of assuming that *at least* adjectival participles are derived in the lexicon (3); see Meltzer-Asscher 2011a, 2011b for a more recent version of the lexicalist approach

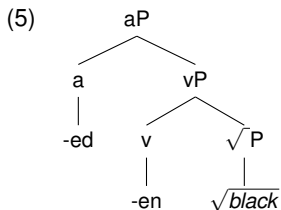
(3) Properties of Adjectival Passive Formation
(Levin & Rappaport 1986:624)

- a. Affixation of the passive morpheme *-ed*
 - b. Change of category [+V, -N] → [+V, +N]
 - c. Suppression of the external role of the base verb
 - d. Externalization of an internal role of the base verb
 - e. Absorption of Case
 - f. Elimination of the [NP, VP] position
- Since all of the operations in (3) are hypothesized to occur in the lexicon, it is predicted that ‘adjectival’ participles should be treated by the syntax as ordinary adjectives

- More recently, various problems have been identified with this position:
 - Word-formation rules that have been proposed to account for the existence of adjectival passives amount to a duplication of operations that are needed in the syntax
 - Adjectival participles can be phrasal in nature and exhibit patterns that are impossible with root-derived adjectives, such as modification by manner adverbials (4), see Kratzer (2000) and Embick (2004)
- (4) a. a hastily blackened wall
 b. *a hastily black wall
- What have been termed ‘adjectival’ and ‘verbal’ participles both have the external syntax and morphology of adjectives in SC

Theoretical assumptions

- I assume that (i) word-formation is syntactic, and (ii) syntactic terminals are populated by acategorical roots and by functional heads, including categorizing heads such as *v*, *n*, *a* (Halle & Marantz 1993, a.o.)
- Barring evidence to the contrary, the simplest hypothesis is that an already categorized element can be recategorized, as schematized in (5)



- The distribution and interpretation of a particular element follow from the amount/featural specification of syntactic structure it realizes

Do the diagnostics test for category differences?

NB: Virtually all of the diagnostics we'll see rely on the assumption that verbal, but not adjectival participles, can be modified by agentive *by*-phrases. We should keep in mind that *by*-phrases are also available with eventive nominalizations, which clearly have the distribution of nouns.

I Prenominal modifiers

Observation: Participles modified by agentive *by*-phrases cannot appear as prenominal modifiers in English (6)

(6) a (*by Justin) baked (*by Justin) cake

Claim: These participles' inability to appear in this position is due to their category status (nouns are modified by adjectives)

Alternative: a conspiracy of two word-order restrictions

Diagnostics cont'd

→ the Head-Final Filter (Williams 1982)

(7) a. *a baked yesterday/in the kitchen cake

b. *the fond of Sam boy

→ English disallows PPs to appear to the left of a prenominal modifier; SC does not have this ban (8) (see also Rapp 2000 and Sleeman 2011 for German and Dutch examples, respectively)

(8) od strane naše učiteljice otvoreno pismo
by side our taught opened letter

'*lit.* the by our teacher opened letter'

Diagnostics cont'd

II Complements of *seem* (and *remain*)

Observation: Verbs like *seem* take adjectival, but not (bare) verbal complements. Participles followed by a *by*-phrase cannot head the complement of *seem* (9).

(9) The cake seemed/remained baked (*by the students).

Claim: The eventive participle in *baked by the students* is a verb.

Alternative 1: Lundquist 2013, based on Matushansky's 2002 claim that *seem* must take gradable complements: the event variable in eventive participles makes them unavailable for direct degree modification; but see (10).

(10) The listed companies were very (much) pursued by investors.

Diagnostics cont'd

Alternative 2: *Seem/remain* require that their bare complements be stative; agentive *by-* phrases in English force an eventive interpretation with participles derived from change-of-state verbs.

Notice that the *by-* phrase can reappear when *seem/remain* is followed by a stative participial complement (11).

(11) The resources seemed/remained appreciated (by the students).

Additional, indirect evidence → *destruction* can appear as the complement of *remain* when it is resultative, but not when it is an eventive, argument-taking nominalization (12).

- (12) a. There remained much destruction throughout the city.
 b. *There remained much destruction of the city by those left behind.

Diagnostics cont'd

III Negative *un-*

Observation: The prefix *un-* can have either a negative or a reversative interpretation. If *un-* attaches to a participle that includes a *by-* phrase, *un-* can only get a reversative reading (13a). If *un-* attaches to a participle that is the complement of e.g. *seem*, *un-* can only get a negative reading (13b).

- (13) a. The truck was unloaded by the workers.
b. The road seemed unmarked and dangerous.

Claim: Only adjectives combine with negative *un-* (14a-b); (13a) is verbal

- (14) a. The child seemed unhappy.
b. *The child unloves school.

Diagnostics cont'd

Notice that reversative *un-* requires a change-of-state; it is not available for participles derived from stative verbs (15)

(15) They were unloved (by their parents).

Alternative: The contrast in (13a-b) is expected given the observations that: (i) one *un-* form is shared by the two meanings, (ii) agentive *by-* phrases in English force an eventive interpretation, (iii) *seem* requires stative complements, and (iv) reversative *un-* requires a change-of-state

Crucially, it **does not bear directly on the issue of category membership.**

★ side note: *an unloaded truck* is ambiguous → it is at least possible for reversative *un-* to appear on a (deverbal) adjective, cf. (13a)

Diagnostics cont'd

IV Selectional requirements

Observation: Some passive participles are followed by subcategorized material that is selected (16a). This is impossible with pure adjectives (16b).

(16) a. John is considered a fool.

b. *John is obvious a fool.

Wasow (1977:341)

Claim: The participle in (16a) must be a verb.

Alternative: The observation is empirically unjustified. There is a whole host of adjectives that have selectional requirements, e.g. *proud of X*, *desirous of X*, *angry at X*, *reliant upon X*; see Merchant 2019.

Diagnostics cont'd

V Degree modifiers

Observation: Verbs and adjectives cannot be modified by the same type of degree modifiers (17a-b); passive participles allow both (17c).

- (17) a. John very *(much) respects your family.
 b. John is very (*much) fond of your family.
 c. Your family is very (much) respected.

Claim: The string in (17c) can stem from two derivations, with two different participles: a verb and an adjective.

Diagnostics cont'd

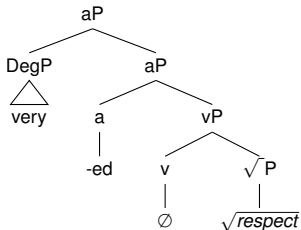
Alternative: The participle is a deverbal adjective in both cases; the two possibilities arise due to different heights of attachment of the modifiers.

The modifier *very* attaches to the adjectival layer, *very much* attaches to one of the verbal layers embedded below.

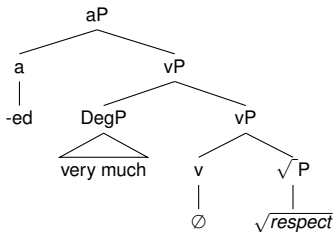
Diagnostics cont'd

Schematically:

(18) a.



b.



Taking stock

(i) none of the diagnostics found in the literature seem to successfully identify contexts that host participles and can independently be shown to host verbs, but not adjectives

(ii) we were able to give alternative explanations for why agentive *by*-phrases are unacceptable in certain contexts

This is compatible with the claim that all passive participles are adjectives, but positive evidence is hard to come by in English...

★ bonus: prenominal participles in German (Rapp 2000)

(19) a. *Der Wein ist vom Kellner eingeschenkt.
 the wine is by-the waiter poured

b. der vom Kellner eingeschenkte Wein.
 the by-the waiter poured wine

Category membership: evidence from SC

Passive participles in English and SC have a similar distribution, modulo the fact that SC participles are influenced by some additional factors, in particular the presence/absence/type of aspectual morphology (Bešlin 2020a, 2020b).

- (20) a. Vaze su svaki dan lomljene od strane huligana.
vases were every day broken by side hooligans
'Vases were broken by the hooligans every day'
- b. Vaze su mi se činile izlomljene.
vases are me SE seemed broken
'The vases seemed broken to me'
- c. izlomljene vaze
broken vases
'the broken vases'

Adjectival properties

→ Both stative (21a) and eventive (21b) participles are derived using adjectival morphology; cf. (21c), a pure adjective

- (21) a. Taj telefon mi se činio ošteće-**n**.
that telephone me SE seemed damage-**ADJ.MASC.SG**
'That telephone seemed damaged to me'
- b. Taj sako je kupova-**n** od strane...
that jacket was buy-**ADJ.MASC.SG** by side
'That jacket was bought by ...'
- c. Kraj ovog romana je tuža-**n**
end this novel is sad-**ADJ.MASC.SG**
'The end of this novel is sad'

NB: The final vowel on the adjectival stem is epenthetic.

Adjectival properties cont'd

→ Both stative and eventive participles show agreement/concord for case, gender and number features (22a-b); purely verbal forms agree with their subjects only in person and number (22c)

- (22) a. Kuća je izgledala nespretno sklepa-n-a.
 house**NOM.FEM.SG** is looked clumsily build-ADJ-**NOM.FEM.SG**
 'The house looked clumsily built'
- b. Ove palate su građe-n-e od
 these palace.**NOM.FEM.PL** are build-ADJ-**NOM.FEM.PL** by
 strane tajkuna.
 side tycoons
 'These palaces were built by tycoons'
- c. Zajedno *pro* pravi-**mo** splav.
 together **1PL** make-**1PL** raft
 'We are making a raft together'

Adjectival properties cont'd

Note: The agreement pattern exhibited by SC passive participles in by no means unique; in fact, it is pervasive among Indo-European languages that have agreeing adjectives (see e.g. Emonds 2006 for French and German, Schoorlemmer 1995 for Russian, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2008 for Greek).

Adjectival properties cont'd

→ SC adjectives may appear in the definite (specific) form when used attributively, but not when used predicatively (23); see Aljović 2000.

- (23) a. tuža-n / tuž-n-i dečak
 sad-ADJ.INDF sad-ADJ-DEF boy
 'a/the sad boy'
- b. Ovaj dečak je tuža-n / *tuž-n-i.
 this boy is sad-ADJ.INDF sad-ADJ-DEF
 'This boy is sad'

Adjectival properties cont'd

→ Exactly the same restriction is observed by both eventive and stative participles (24)

- (24) a. isključe-n(-i) šporet / malterisa-n(-i) zid
 turn_off-ADJ-(DEF) stove plaster-ADJ(-DEF) wall
 'a/the turned off stove / plastered wall'
- b. Šporet mi se na trenutak učinio isključe-n(*-i).
 stove me SE on moment seemed turn_off-ADJ(-DEF)
 'For a moment, the stove seemed turned off to me'
- c. Zid je malterisan(*-i) od strane volontera.
 wall is plaster-ADJ-(DEF) by side volunteers
 'The wall was plastered by volunteers'

Adjectival properties cont'd

→ Both eventive and stative participles can undergo comparison, and form the superlative with the prefix *naj-*, as in (25).

- (25) a. Ova aplikacija je naj-korišten-ij-a od strane
 this app is SUP-used.IMPF-CMPR-FEM.SG by side
 tinejdžera.
 teenagers
 'This app was (the) most used by teenagers'
- b. Njene oči su se činile naj-na-šminkan-ij-e.
 her eyes is SE seemed SUP-PF-made_up-CMPR.FEM.PL
 'Her eyes seemed (the) most made-up'

Adjectival properties cont'd

→ This makes both of them like adjectives (26a), but unlike finite verbs, which may only express superlativity with the adverb *najviše* 'the most' (26b)

- (26) a. Ova devojčica je naj-opasn-ij-a.
 this girl is SUP-dangerous-CMPR-FEM.SG
 'This girl is the most dangerous'
- b. Tinejdžeri najviše korist-e/ *naj-korist-e ovu aplikaciju.
 teenagers the_most use-3PL SUP-use-3PL this app
 'Teenagers use this app (the) most'

Verbal properties

→ There is a clear correlation between the theme vowel on the infinitive, and the vowel on the passive participle stem:

- (27) a. *gled-a-ti* ‘watch’ *gled-a-n* ‘watched’
 b. *šut-nu-ti* ‘kick’ *šut-nu-t* ‘kicked’
 c. *vol-e-ti* ‘love’ *volj-e-n* ‘loved’
 d. *uč-i-ti* ‘teach’ *uč-e-n* ‘taught’
 e. *pas-∅-ti* ‘graze’ *pas-e-n* ‘grazed’

→ The theme vowel is not sensitive to the phonological properties of the word form (cf. *gled-a-n*, *gled-a-n-a*, *gled-a-n-o*)

Verbal properties cont'd

- Slavic theme vowels have been proposed to be exponents of the verbalizing head, *v* (Svenonius 2004, Caha & Ziková 2016, Biskup 2019), because they attach to clearly non-verbal forms to produce verbs (e.g. *crven* 'red' / *crven-i-ti* 'red-V-INF') and may signal argument structure changes in verbs (e.g. *crven-i-ti* 'make red' vs. *crven-e-ti* 'become red').

Verbal properties

→ Aspectual morphology (28), including superlexical prefixes (28b)

- (28) a. Kupola je o-slik-a-va-n-a od
 dome is (PERF)-painted(IMPV)-V-(SI)-A-NOM.F.SG by
 strane talentovanih umetnika.
 side talented artists
 'The dome was (being) painted by (the) talented artists'
- b. Trake su (se činile) is-pre-savi-ja-n-e.
 ribbons are (SE seemed) CUM-PRE-fold-SI-A-FEM.PL
 'The ribbons were/seemed folded in their totality'

Verbal properties

→ Modification by manner adverbs and agentive phrases (29)

(29) Sala mi se činila nedavno / maestralno oslikana
 hall me SE seemed recently masterfully painted

od strane tvog omiljenog umetnika.

by side your favorite artist

lit. 'The dome seemed recently/masterfully painted by your favorite artist'

Wrapping up

- The original reasons for assuming an adjectival/verbal contrast for participles do not hold up to scrutiny
- The characteristics of passive participles in a number of languages can be accommodated if we treat them as adjectives which embed (varying amounts of) verbal structure
- The differences we observe between eventive and stative participles must have a different source
- being an adjective \neq being stative; where does the stativity of root-derived adjectives come from?

Thank you!

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