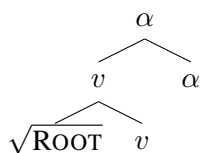


English passive participles: Category, argument introduction, and interpretation

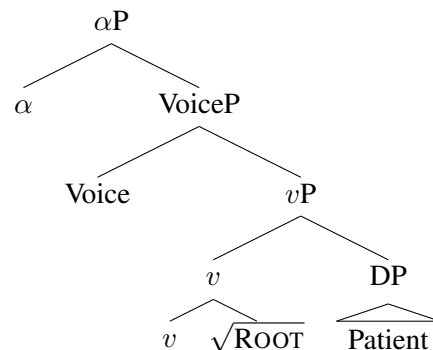
We present an analysis of English passive participles: both stative (a.k.a. “adjectival”) passive, as in *The metal is flattened*; and eventive, as in *The metal was flattened by the smith*. We argue that an explanatory account of what these participles share (and how they differ) requires an *abstract* approach to syntactic category: one in which category features define syntactic distribution, and are interpreted at the interfaces in context (allomorphy, allosemy). We contrast our approach with analyses in which a category label (e.g. Adj) directly pairs distributional instructions (predicative, attributive) with meaning (e.g. state) and form (e.g. *-en*). An additional component of our proposal concerns the syntax of *argument introduction* in participles. We develop an analysis that derives a hitherto unnoticed interpretive asymmetry in English stative passives.

In outline, we adopt and extend an analysis of Stative Passive Participles (SPP) proposed in Embick (2023) in which the participle is built *small* as in (1) (cp. also Wood, 2023); ‘small’ for (1) describes the output of directly adjoining a head (a verbalized Root) to another head (α) via Pair Merge, resulting in internal complexity without internal phrasal structure. We further propose that (1) contains α , which we define as a categorial label that determines ‘non-verbal’ distribution, i.e. appearance in attributive and predicative syntax (cf. Marantz, 2022, and Bešlin *in prep.* on participles). We propose the Eventive Passive Participle (EvPP) is also built with α , as in (2). In our analysis, SPP and EvPP only contrast in internal syntax: α attaches to phrasal structure (VoiceP containing *v*P) in the EvPP (2). (We remain neutral as to whether Voice⁽⁰⁾ is present in the SPP in (1).)

(1) Small Stative Passive Participle



(2) Eventive Passive Participle



We argue that a satisfactory analysis of English passive participles must explain at least the following (new and familiar) facts: **(E1)** the EvPP and SPP have an identical form and the same syntactic distribution. **(E2)** Semantically, the SPP can have a Target State interpretation in both attributive and predicative positions. **(E3)** EvPP is interpreted eventively in predicative syntax, while (we develop a novel generalization that) the SPP has an event reading, but only in attributive syntax.

In detail, E1 refers to the familiar but important observations that in English, the SPP and EvPP invariably show the same allomorphy (e.g. Embick, 2003, a.m.o.). In addition, English passive participles share distribution, for example, EvPP occurs in predicative position and the syntax of the copula (3).

- (3) a. Several people were arrested by the police yesterday at 6:27 p.m.
 b. There were several people arrested by the police yesterday at 6:27 p.m.

E2 and E3 refer to novel evidence that the English SPP has two distinct interpretations: one stative (a kind of caused change-of-state or Target State (TS), as in Kratzer (2001), i.a.), and one purely eventive. However, the availability of the interpretations is sensitive to syntactic distribution.

E2 is straightforward: the TS interpretation of the SPP is insensitive to syntactic distribution, occurring in both attributive and predicative syntax. The TS can be diagnosed via degree modification, among other tests.

E3 requires care. We develop a generalization that (prenominal) attributive SPPs can have both TS *and* eventive readings (i.e. they are ambiguous); predicative SPPs only have a TS (see E2). Many old and new tests identify the asymmetric distribution of the event interpretation. First, event-modifying manner adverbs that are odd with SPPs in predicative position (4a) (in the sense described in McIntyre (2015)) are perfectly acceptable if the SPP is attributive and interpreted eventively (4b). Second, where eventive verbs/Roots that do not have natural End states are deviant out of context in predicative SPPs (5a), the same SPPs are perfectly acceptable as attributives with an event reading (5b). Further evidence for a distributional contrast – as well as evidence that (4b) and (5b) have the SPP syntax in (1) (and not (2)) – comes from temporal modifiers, compounding, and *un-*. Though eventivity is

restricted to the attributive SPP, E3 additionally states the important fact that an eventive readings of participles is otherwise available in predicative syntax, specifically the predicative EvPP.

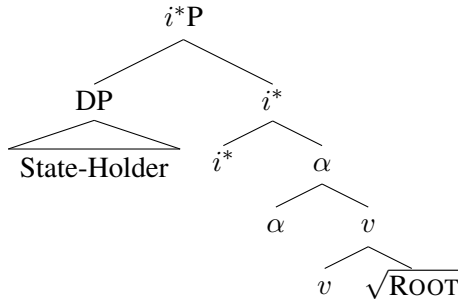
- (4) a. #This tin can is violently/secretly/rapidly flatten-ed.
 b. The violently/secretly/rapidly flatten-ed tin can...
- (5) a. #This tin can is (recently) kicked/examined/poked.
 b. The (recently) kicked/examined/poked tin can...

We develop an explanation for (E1-3) based on two components of the syntactic analysis in (1)-(2). The first is that α is an abstract morpheme, and so can have contextually-determined interpretations that are distinct at the PF and LF interfaces. The second concerns the syntax of (internal) argument introduction.

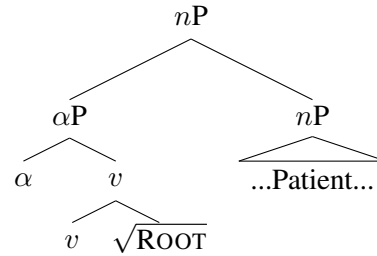
For E1, abstract α defines a shared syntactic distribution; we briefly address EvPP in attributive syntax, including reduced relatives. With respect to form, α can be interpreted contextually, resulting in allomorphy: *beat-en*, *ben-t*, etc. The SSP and EvPP participles are realized identically because α is present in both structures.

We propose that the interpretive patterns in E2 and E3 reflect an interaction between α and argument introduction. In this regard we note that the small SPP in (1) lacks any syntactic position in which to introduce an argument internal to α , in contrast with EvPP in (2) where α embeds phrasal structure (i.e. *vP*). We propose the State Holder argument in the SPP is introduced external to α . In (6) it is introduced by i^* ; cf. Wood and Marantz (2017). Next, we propose a semantic interaction between α and i^* – a kind of *allosemy* (cf. Marantz, 2013; Wood, 2015, 2023) – that conditions whether α receives interpretation. In brief, we argue that when α embeds i^* as in (6), then α requires interpretation, giving rise to a TS semantics. α fails to receive semantic interpretation when i^* is absent.

(6) Attributive/predicative SPP with i^*



(7) Attributive SPP: Attaching α to a noun



With respect to interpretation, the SPP participle in (6) (with i^*) can occur both attributively and predicatively. This accounts for the free distribution of SPP TS readings (see E2). In contrast, α embeds (external argument introducing) VoiceP, not i^* , in the EvPP in (2). EvPP is thus interpreted eventively, not statively (see E3) (even if both (2) and (6) include α). What remains to be explained for E3 is the possibility of the event reading of prenominal attributive SPPs. We propose this is an effect of the syntax of direct attributive modification in English. As shown in (7), in attributive syntax the SPP can directly modify an independently introduced ‘argument’ (i.e. the modified noun), but *only* in (prenominal) attributive syntax. It is just in direct attributive modification that the SPP may lack i^* ([[$\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$ *v*] α]). In the absence of i^* , there is no interpretation for α (see above), and the SPP can have an eventive interpretation. The effect has points that connect with Wood’s (2023) analysis of nominalizations in which a nominalization has eventive properties in a type of small syntax ([[$\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$ *v*] *n*]).

Our proposed analysis of participles departs from many theories of grammatical category (cf. Bešlin, in prep. for recent overview) in requiring only indirect links between category label (here, α) and semantics and argument introduction. We address this and further implications, including why some derivations produce small structures, while others involving similar syntactic pieces derive phrasal structure.

References: Bešlin, M. (2023). Revisiting passive participles: Category status and internal structure. *LI*, 54(4): 729–758. Embick, D. (2003). Locality, listedness, and morphological identity. *Studia linguistica* 57(3):143–169. Embick, D. (2023). Smaller syntax for English stative passives: A first report. *Acta Linguistica Academica* 70(3):285–316. Kratzer, A. (2001). Building statives. *Proceedings of BLS* 26, 385–399. Marantz, A. (2013). Locality domains for contextual allomorphy across the interfaces. In Matushansky, O. et al. (Eds.) *Distributed Morphology today: Morphemes for Morris Halle*, 95–115. MIT Press. Marantz, A. (2022). Rethinking the syntactic role of word formation. In Boneh, N. et al. (Eds.), *Building on Babel’s rubble*, 293–316. PUV. McIntyre, A. (2015). Event modifiers in (German) adjectival participles: Remarks on Gehrke. *NLLT* 33(3):939–953. Wood, J. (2015). *Icelandic morphosyntax and argument structure*. Springer. Wood, J. (2023). *Icelandic nominalizations and allosemy*. OUP. Wood, J. and Marantz, A. (2017). The interpretation of external arguments. In D’Alessandro, R. et al. (Eds.), *The Verbal Domain*, 255–278. OUP.