Discourse Functions of Predicative Participles

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Predicative participles

Mark 15:36

(Jesus hangs on the cross)

δραµὼν δὲ τις καὶ γεµίσας σπόγγον ὄξους περιθεὶς καλάµJ ἐπότιζεν αὐτόν,

‘Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and was making him drink, saying...’
The corpus

- The PROIEL corpus of the New Testament, with morphosyntactic annotation
- Only Gospels considered in the statistics, some examples from the Acts
The agenda

- My agenda is to show that information structurally, predicative participles come in three groups
- We will have a look at how this translates into semantic differences, but I leave out the formalization (ongoing work with Corien)
- I argue that evidence from corpora can tell us how the difference is represented in the syntax
Outline

1. Participles and Information Structure
   - Overview
   - Diagnostics

2. Semantics of participles

3. Syntax of participles
   - Correlations between position and function
   - Greek word order

4. Conclusion
Participles and Information Structure

- Overview
- Diagnostics

Semantics of participles

Syntax of participles

- Correlations between position and function
- Greek word order

Conclusion
Information structure notions: topic and rheme

The prototypical sentence

Frame topic – Aboutness topic – Rheme
(Opt. adverbial) (Subject) (Verb + other arguments)

Matthew 16:24

Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ
‘And then Jesus told his disciples.’
Information structure notions: focus and background

- Orthogonal to the topic–rheme distinction, there is a focus–background distinction.
- In the prototypical sentence, the entire rheme is focused (broad focus) and the topic is backgrounded.
- Deviations are possible: only a part of the rheme can be focused (narrow focus) and the topic can be focused (contrastive topic).
- In this paper, we concentrate on the topic–rheme dimension.
Topicality - instead of a definition

- Two dimensions of topicality (in the sense of Jacobs 2001) are most relevant to this talk
  - adressation (the information in the rheme is stored as information about the topic in the common ground)
  - frame-setting (the topic specifies a domain of (possible) reality to which the proposition expressed by the comment is restricted

- It is often observed that topical discourse referents are presupposed/anaphoric
Where do participles fit in?

- Frame – Topic – Rheme fits well with simple, monoclausal sentences
- What now with sentences which contain participial clauses in addition to the matrix verb?
- Some possibilities

**IS in sentences with participles**

1. Frame[ptcp] – Topic – Rheme[matrixV]
2. Frame – Topic – Rheme[ptcp, matrixV]
3. Frame – Topic – Rheme[ptcp], Rheme[matrixV]
Events as frames

Matthew 6:7

(Jesus gives instructions to his followers.)

Προσευχόµενοι δὲ μὴ βατταλογήσητε ϊσπερ οἱ ἔθνικοί

‘When you pray, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do’

- We might want ‘anchor’ events to other, known or familiar events
- These events are outside the scope of negation
- Typically they have temporal or conditional readings
Expansions: events as frames

Mark 2:5

(Four people try to bring a paralytic to Jesus. Unable to get through the crowd, they dig a whole in the roof and lower him down to Jesus.)

καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ

'And when he saw their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic’.

- In narratives can typically be preceding events, or events ‘linking’ to preceding events (movement, perception)
Expansions: independent rhemes

Mark 15:36

(Jesus hangs on the cross)

δραµὼν δέ τις καὶ γεµίσας σπόγγον ὄξους περιθεὶς καλάµJ ἐπότιζεν αὐτόν, λέγων

‘Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and was making him drink, saying...’

- Such participles are close to main verbs (cf. the coordination), and are independent rhemes predicated of a theme shared with the finite verb.
- Mostly directly pre-verbal (in which case they are normally narrative) or sentence-final (marked off by punctuation by modern editors, and often with causal interpretation).
Embedded independent rhemes

Matthew 13:28

(There are weeds in the field)
θέλεις οὖν ἄπελθόντες συλλέξωμεν αὐτά
‘Do you want that we go out and collect them’

- The participle is interpreted within the same embedding as the matrix verb
- Such use is generally not possible in English; if possible, the participle will project (like a frame): Do you want that, going out, we collect them.
Expansions: richer rhemes

Mark 1:5

(John the Baptist appears in the desert. People arrive from Jerusalem and the whole of Judea.)

καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο ύπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ ἐξοµολογούµενοι τὰς ἁµαρτίας αὐτῶν

‘They were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.’

- We often want ‘richer’ (more elaborate) rhemes than available in lexical predicates
- There is no single verb for ‘being baptized and confessing sins’
- Typical interpretations are instrument, manner, accompanying circumstances
Frames and modality

Luke 1:22

(They were wondering at Zacharia’s delay in the temple.)

ἐξελθὼν δὲ οὐκ ἐδύνατο λαλᾶσαι αὐτοῖς

‘When he came out, he could not speak to them’

Acts 27:12

(Most of them thought they should sail away, claiming that)

δύναντο καταντήσαντες εἰς Φοίνικα παραχειμάσαι

‘they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there.’
Temporal effects

Adverbials as frames and event modifiers

At ten, he had left
He had left at ten

- The semantic difference between frames and (parts of the) rheme can be rather notable
- Frames set the topic time of the whole sentence
- Rheme elaborations normally relate to the event time of the main predicate in the rheme
Participles and Information Structure Semantics of participles Syntax of participles Conclusion

Pragmatics of frames

Matt 9:9

(Jesus heals a paralytic in front of the crowd)

\( \text{Καὶ παράγων \ ὁ Ἰησοῦς \ ἐκεῖθεν \ εἶδεν \ ἄνθρωπον \ καθήμενον \ ἐπὶ \ τὸ \ τελώνιον} \)

‘As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man sitting in the tax collector’s booth’

- Frames are not explicitly asserted and hence must be somehow accessible in the context.
- Constraints on this accommodation can be weak, but they are nevertheless real...
Pragmatic infelicity

Mark 6:17

(Herodes hears about Jesus and thinks that John the Baptist must have risen again.)

Αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Ἰηρώδης ἀποστείλας ἐκράτησεν τὸν Ἰωάννην

# For when Herod himself had sent out (men), he had arrested John.

For Herod himself had sent out (men) and arrested John

- The fact that Herod had sent out men is completely new in the context and needs to be explicitly asserted.
- No English translation can do this with a subordinate clause, but a participle is OK in Greek
And Jerome

Mark 6:17

ipse enim Herodes misit ac tenuit Iohannem
self for Herodes send.pfv.3s and seize.pfv.3s John

- Jerome chose a main clause to translate the participle
- And this is not an isolated phenomenon, as we will see
- But because of the narrative mode of discourse the temporal relation is the same as if we had a frame (e.g. *postquam misit*)
Summary: Information structural status of participles

- Participles can be
  - frames (aka stage topics, themes etc.)
  - rheme (aka comment, focus etc.) elaborations
  - independent rhemes
Summary: Making the distinction

- It can be hard to make the distinction, but we have some tests involving
  - temporal effects: frames set the topic time and independent rhemes relate to this topic time, whereas rheme elaborations relate to the time of the matrix verb instead.
  - assertion vs. presupposition: frames must be presupposed or somehow accommodatable events, whereas independent rhemes and rheme elaborations are assertions
- Easier to spot in dead languages than IS effects on nominal elements
- Might enable us to get at the syntactic realization of IS
Participles and Information Structure

1. Overview
2. Diagnostics

Semantics of participles

3. Correlations between position and function
4. Greek word order

Syntax of participles

5. Conclusion
The Standard Grammars

Schwyzer/Debrunner

Expression of a verbal content (state, activity, action), which prepared or accompanied that of the governing finite verb

- Prepared/accompanied = aorist/present? or frame/rheme?
- ‘Standard rule’: present participle has a co-temporal reading, aorist participle a ‘preceding event’ reading.
- Catalogue of (adverbial) relations that participles can bear to their hosts: time, cause, manner, means, purpose
- But there is typically no attempt to relate the types of readings to information structure and/or position in the clause
A caveat: Semiticisms

- There are a number of strange things going on with verbs of saying
  - ἐκήρυσσεν λέγων
  - ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν/λέγει
- These are plausible semiticisms
- Being extremely frequent, they could skew statistics
- In this paper I simply ignore verbs of saying, since they deserve a special treatment
Participles and Information Structure  Semantics of participles  Syntax of participles  Conclusion

Narrative progression

- Aoristic participles can move the narration forward - narrative progression
- Both frames and independent rhemes can give rise to the narrative progression inside the sentence
- Independent rhemes also can move the narration between sentences
- Frames don’t – in principle, because they are anaphoric, but there is much accommodation
- Narrative progression between verbs in the same sentence is much more regular than between sentences, and can be said to be a grammaticalized version of it
Frame aorist participle - preceding event

Mark 3:6

(The Phariseans are in the temple watching Jesus doing wonders on the Sabbath.)

καὶ ἐξελθόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι εὐθὺς μετὰ τῶν Ἡρώδιαν ὁμν συμβούλιον ἐποίησαν κατ’ αὐτοῦ ὡς αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν.

‘And when they came out, the Phariseans (right away) make a plot against him together with the Herodians’
Independent rheme aorist participle $=$ preceding event

Luke 5.2

(Jesus is speaking to the crowd by the lake of Gennesaret. There are two ships by the shore.)

οἱ δὲ ἁλεῖς ἀπ᾿ αὐτῶν ἀποβάντες ἔπλυναν τὰ δίκτυα.

‘The fishermen left the them and cleansed their nets.’
Present participle = simultaneity

Matthew 27:32

(They led away Jesus to crucify him.)

᾿Εξερχόµενοι δὲ εὗρον ἀνθρωπον Κυρηναῖον, ὄνοµατι Σίµωνα
‘As they were walking out there they met a Cyrenaean, Simon by name.’

- The frame picks up the previously mentioned event of leading Jesus away and sets a frame without moving the narration forward
- Inside the sentence, the relationship is simultaneity
The more complex cases

- The preceding cases have in common that present participles are interpreted as simultaneous events, and aorist participles as preceding events.

- The notion of simultaneity in traditional grammars hides a distinction between strict cotemporality and cases where one event ‘englobes’ the other.

- Not all aorist participles denote preceding events.
Two kinds of simultaneity

Matthew 27:32

(They led away Jesus to crucify him.)

‘Εξερχόµενοι δὲ εὗρον ἄνθρωπον Κυρηναῖον, ὄνοµατι Σίµωνα

‘As they were walking out there they met a Cyrenaean, Simon by name.’

\[ t_1 \subset t_2 \]
Two kinds of simultaneity

Mark 6:6

(Jesus is in Nazareth, but cannot work wonders in his home town.)

Καὶ περιήγηεν τὰς κώμας κύκλῳ διδάσκον

‘He walked around in the neighbouring towns, teaching.’
Elaborations – Simultaneity with aoristic main verb

Acts 9:8

(On his way to Damascus, Saul falls to the ground blinded.)

χειραγωγοῦντες δὲ αὐτὸν εἰσήγαγον εἰς Δαμασκόν

‘They brought him to Damascus leading him by the hand.’

- χειραγωγοῦντες is not accommodatable in the context and not usable as a frame, so it is part of the rheme

- We cannot imagine it as frame spanning over multiple sentences: its time is directly related to that of the matrix event and not accessible outside it
Simultaneous aorists

Matt 27:4

(Judas sees that Jesus is condemned to death and approaches the priests saying)

ήµαρτον παραδοὺς αἶµα ἀθῆνον
‘I sinned by betraying innocent blood.’

- The participle is not a frame, nor an independent rheme
- It elaborates on the rheme, and gets its temporal reference from the matrix verb
- The aorist means ‘complete during the run time of the matrix event’
Another example

Acts 9:25

(Saul is in Damascus, but the authorities want to arrest him and guard the gates day and night in order to catch him.)

λαβόντες δὲ οἱ µαθηταὶ αὐτὸν νυκτὸς διὰ τοῦ τείχους καθῆκαν αὐτὸν χαλάσαντες ἐν σπυρίδι.

‘But his disciples took him and let him past the city wall at night lowering him down in a basket.’
Sketch semantic analysis

- Two types intervals are involved:
  - the topic time, which is the period the sentence ‘is about’
  - the event time, the ‘run time’ of the event(s) described, one for each of them
  - aspect encodes a relation between these intervals
  - but different participles get their topic times in different ways
Participles which are elaborations (rheme parts) are temporally anchored to the main (‘host’) event

- This explains the simulaneity effects on aorist participles, but also the non-extendability of present participles which are parts of the rheme

Participles which are *frames* set the topic time for the sentence

- Frame aorist participles invariably (?) give rise to narrative progression

Independent rhemes get their topic time from the context (the verb to the left)
Discourse semantics

- The different types of participles also interact with the linguistic context in very different ways.
- Frames are anaphoric and can be used to ‘reset’ the narration to a previous point, though such effects are not found in the simple NT narrative.
- Frames can be carried over to the next sentence, so the event described by a present participle can ‘englobe’ many events in the following narrative.
- Independent rhemes can be ‘stacked’, so that only the left-most verb in a chain interacts with the contexts, while the other verbs (including matrix) get their temporal reference from the verb to the left.
- Elaborations are basically part of the verb clause and do not interact directly with the context at all.
1. Participles and Information Structure
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4. Conclusion
Syntax and semantics

- Frames semantically outscope the rest of the sentence
  - They set the topic time which the main verb relates to
  - They are outside the scope of sentence negation and modality

- The question is now how semantic scope relates to syntactic realization

- We know that the relationship between semantics and constituency is at best indirect in Greek
  - Adjectives can be separated from their nouns
  - Objects can be separated from their verbs

- But must frames scope over their sentences? And should this scope be defined linearly or structurally?
Measuring position in the sentence

- Our treebank data give us precise information about where in the sentence participles occur.
- But we need to group them in some way to do meaningful statistics.
- Here I have chosen to look at position relative to the sentence beginning, the subject and the verb.
- ptcp-X is clearly the biggest group
- next come participles to the right of the matrix
- ptcp-sub, sub-ptcp, and other configurations about equal in size
Some properties to look at

- **Aspect**: frames and independent rhemes are more likely to be aorists than elaborations, especially because of the narrative nature of the text.

- **Frames** are more likely to be predictable, i.e.
  - less lexical variation
  - shorter constituents

- **A bit on the side**: frames are less likely to be translated as main clauses than independent rhemes (but more likely than rheme parts, which depend on their host)
Correlation aspect & position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aorist</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ptcp – X</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.007</td>
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<tr>
<td>ptcp – sub</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.018</td>
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<tr>
<td>sub – ptcp</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Reversal in aspect distribution for post-verbal participles
- ptpc – sub is almost exclusively aoristic
Lexical variation

- There are large differences in how much variation there is in the lexical fillers in the different positions.
- One way of measuring this is to look at how many of the examples belong to the 10 most frequent lemmata.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Ten most frequent lemmata</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ptcp – X</td>
<td>0.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ptcp – sub</td>
<td>0.657</td>
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<tr>
<td>sub – ptcp</td>
<td>0.489</td>
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<tr>
<td>left</td>
<td>0.366</td>
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<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>0.282</td>
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Lexical variation – Ten most frequent lemmata by position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>position</th>
<th>Ten most frequent verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ptcp-Χ</td>
<td>ἐρχομαι, ὑρα, ἐξέρχομαι, ἀνίστημι, ἀπέρχομαι, εἰσέρχομαι, λαμβάνω, πορεύομαι, ἀκούω, προσκαλέω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ptcp-sub</td>
<td>ὑρα, ἀκούω, προσέρχομαι, ἔρχομαι, ἐξέρχομαι, ἁνίστημι, Ἧστημι, στρέφω, γινώσκω, εἰσέρχομαι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sub-ptcp</td>
<td>ἀκούω, ὑρα, ἔρχομαι, λαμβάνω, κρατέω, ἐξέρχομαι, προσέρχομαι, εἰμί, ἁπέρχομαι, ἀφίημι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left</td>
<td>ἔρχομαι, λαμβάνω, προσέρχομαι, ὑρα, πορεύομαι, ἀκούω, ἐξέρχομαι, ἁπέρχομαι, ἀφίημι, εὐχαριστέω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>διδάσκω, εἰμί, ζητέω, κηρύσσω, πειράζω, ἔχω, οἶδα, δοξάζω, ὑρα, βαπτίζω</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Length of participle phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Std.dev</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ptcp-X</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ptcp-sub</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sub-ptcp</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence from Jerome

- Among the New Testament translations in our corpus, Latin is the only language to regularly use other forms than participles to translate the Greek participles.

- This is partly for morphological reasons, partly because Latin was a well-established literary language.

- The most interesting subset are the translations of aorist, active participles, which do not exist in Latin.

- Although Jerome was not a native speaker of Greek, the contrastive data tells us how we conceived of the discourse functions of such participles.
Evidence from Jerome 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ptpc-X</th>
<th>ptpc-sub</th>
<th>sub-ptpc</th>
<th>left</th>
<th>right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>finite adverbial clause</td>
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<td>0.254</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.120</td>
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<tr>
<td>absolutive participle</td>
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<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.080</td>
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<td>0.522</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>0.600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The participle translation is the baseline in all cases
- But participles followed by a subject are more likely to be translated as a finite adverbial clause
- Though not as pronounced, other initial participles are often translated with absolute ablatives
- Finally, other participles to the left of the matrix are rendered as main clauses more than 1 in 4 times
Functions of the participle

- The data clearly supports a difference in function between post-verbal participles and the others:
  - Reversal of aorist/present distribution
  - Large lexical variation in the postverbal position
  - Post-verbal participial phrases are much longer than preverbal ones
  - Almost no rendering as main clause of postverbal participles

- Among the preverbal ones, the ptcp-sub configuration stands out
  - Almost exclusively aoristic
  - Little lexical variation
  - Shorter constituents

- Left, ‘internal’ participles stand out in being often translated with a main clause
The pragmatic approach (Dik, Matić)

- The verb partitions the Greek sentence into foreground (topic and focus) and background
- The order of topic and focus can be reversed
- Topics can be post-verbal in some cases
- Post-verbal material is not always background in a technical sense, so ‘neutral’
Combining syntax and pragmatics
Participles and word order

- Participles basically pattern with the Dik-Matić model when it comes to information structure
- Frames (aka stage topics) are typically sentence initial just like topics
  - But ptcp-sub have much stronger frame properties than ptcp-X
  - Frames more useful whenever there is a subject shift?
Participle position and subject anaphoric distance
Participles and word order

- Participles basically pattern with the Dik-Matić model when it comes to information structure
- Frames (aka stage topics) are typically sentence initial just like topics
  - But ptcp-sub have much stronger frame properties than ptcp-X
  - Frames more necessary whenever there is a subject shift?
- Elaborations occur inside the sentence and are typically post-verbal because non-focused
- The model should be extended to cover several independent comment domains ‘inside’ the same topic
  - This can be done by assuming S adjunction
Participles and word order
Participles and word order

- Not all post-verbal participles are elaborations
- Another common interpretation is a causal indepedent rheme
- This would be right-adjunction to S
Participles and word order

```
CP

XP

topic

C'

C

S

S

Focus  Verb  Background

VP

Focus  Participle  Background
```
Conclusions

- Participles in NT Greek can have three functions, as rheme elaborations, independent rhemes (sharing the theme with other rhemes in the sentence) and frame setters.

- The function has bearings on how the aspectual morphology on the participle is interpreted and how they interact with the discourse context.

- The functional difference is encoded in word order: frame setters are initial, independent rhemes are pre-verbal and rheme elaborations are post-verbal (unless narrowly focussed).

- The participle data corroborate the Dik-Matić model of Greek word order, but also suggest some changes.
Slides available at
http://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/proiel

Data from the PROIEL corpus
http://foni.uio.no:3000