The semantics and pragmatics of predicative participles

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Co-predication through participles is very frequent in old IE languages.

But not extensively studied.

Here the focus is on the languages in the PROIEL corpus: Ancient Greek, Latin, Gothic and OCS.
Some examples

Example (Predicative participle)
καὶ οἱ παραπομπόμενοι ἔβλασφήμουν ἀυτῶν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ λέγοντες.
Those passing by abused him wagging their heads and saying…

Example (Attributive participle)
tίς ἐστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ εἶπὼν σοί Who is the man who told you…
### Distributional difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Distance (words)</th>
<th>STDV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attributive participle and noun</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicative participle and noun</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicative participle and verb</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Distribution across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Freq. (‰)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCS</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gothic</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OCS and Gothic basically follows the Greek, whether this is genuine Slavic (possible) or Germanic (unlikely) syntax or not.
The syntactic status of predicative participles

- Essentially adjuncts, although they sometimes appear in complementation as well
- Modifiers, but of what?
- Two possibilities: the event, or the temporal frame of the whole sentence
Event time and topic time

Example (Event time)
John had left at ten.

Example (Topic time/frame)
At ten, John had left.
Imperfective participles as frames and event modifiers

Example (Frame)

Περιπατῶν δὲ παρὰ τὴν ύλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν δύο ἀδελφοὺς (Matt 4:18)
As he was walking along the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers...

Example (Event modifier)

περὶ τετάρτην φυλαχὴν τῆς νυκτὸς ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτοὺς περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς υλασσῆς (Mk 6:48)
At about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.
Perfective participles as frames and event modifiers

Example (‘Frame’)
καὶ εὐθὺς ἀποστείλας ὁ βασιλεὺς σπευσσήλητα τῇ ἐπέταξεν ἐνέγκαι τὴν κεφαλήν αὐτοῦ (Mark 6:27)
And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought.

Example (Event modifier)
ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννη (Rev 1:1)
He revealed (it) by sending message through his angel to his servant John.
Research questions

- Participles as frames in PIE?
- Participles as frames in Greek, Gothic, OCS and Latin?
- Methodologically, we need to focus on Greek first
The position of participial frames

Based on a preliminary study of conjunct participles in the Greek Mark (331 examples)

Two possible positions:

- Sentence-initial
- Second position, preceded by the subject of the sentence (only with nominative participles?)
The position of participial frames

Example (Sentence-initial)
καὶ εἰσελθοῦσα εὐθὺς μετὰ σπουδῆς πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ἦττήσατο λέγουσα:
As she came in to the king, she asked him saying:

Example (Second constituent after shared subject)
ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς παρακοῦσας τὸν λόγον λαλούμενον λέγει τῷ ἀρχισυναγώγῳ:
When Jesus heard the word being spoken, he said to the arch priest.
Greek word order

- Some left periphery structure + a flat S
- Two topic positions
- Frame participles appear in the topic positions; event modifiers in the background positions
Since there is a pre-verbal focus position, there is a possibility of putting event modifiers here.

Example (Focused event modifier?)

πρός δὲν καὶ παρρησιαζόμενος λαλῶ. (Acts 26:26)
to whom I even speak freely

But this is rare, and for statistical purposes we may assume that pre-verbal participles are frames and post-verbal participles are event modifiers.
The semantics of participial frames

Normal aspectual semantics:

**Example (Perfective)**

έχεινοι δὲ ἐξελιθῶντες ἐχήρυξαν πανταχοῦ (Mk 16:20)
They went out and preached everywhere.
(After they had gone out, they preached everywhere.)

- Complete event preceding the main event

**Example (Imperfective)**

Τῇστερον ἀνακειμένοις αὐτῶις τοῖς ἐνδεχα ἐφανερώθη (Mk 16:14)
Afterward, as they were at table, he appeared to the eleven.

- Incomplete event overlapping with the main event
The background status of participles gives rise to some interesting effects on the semantics of aspect.

Example (Imperfective, complete and simultaneous)

ο δὲ Πέτρος ἤγειρεν αὐτὸν λέγων, ἀνάστηθι. (Acts 10:26)

Peter woke him up by saying 'stand up'.

Topic time

wake up

say 'stand up'
Enter information structure

Example (Perfective, simultaneous)

καὶ πάλιν ἀπελυόν προσηύξατο τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον εἶπὼν (Mk 14:39)
’And he again went away and prayed saying the same words’
Information structure and the semantics of aspect

Conclusion

When participles denote background events, completeness is evaluated with respect to the matrix event, not the topic time.
Correlation of function and aspect

Since event modifiers will normally express simultaneous events we expect post-verbal participles to prefer imperfective aspect.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-verbal</th>
<th>Post-verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>1247</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We see that the traditional school rule that aorist participles refer to preceding events hold for the majority of cases, but not all: post-verbal aorist participles do exist and do not normally refer to preceding events.
Substitute strategies

- Slavic and Gothic faithfully reflects the Greek use of participles
- Slavic reflects the Greek anteriority distinction:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Post-verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Slavic and Gothic faithfully reflects the Greek use of participles

Gothic only has one participle, but we find a very interesting correlation between position relative to the verb and preverbation:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Pre-verbal</th>
<th>Post-verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unprefixed verb</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefixed verb</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prefixes participles have a similar distribution to Greek aorist participles
Substitute strategies

- Latin cannot imitate Greek due to morphological limitations
- Substitutes finite, subordinate adverbial clauses
- In Mark:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Latin</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicative participle</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial clauses</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute constructions</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gothic, Latin and OCS do not offer independent evidence for frame-setting participle.

But they show interesting substitute strategies which show that the phenomenon is real.

Note that the phenomenon is old in Greek:

Example (Iliad 4.74)

βῆ δὲ κατ’ Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων ἀίζασα.
She walked down from the Olympus darting.
Vedic

- **Pro**
  - Similar distinction reported by Sanskrit grammarians
  - śāyānā bhuñjate 'They eat lying down'
  - tam devā bíbhya to nōpāyan 'Fearing him, the gods do not come'

- **Contra**
  - The difference does not seem overtly expressed in Vedic; participles normally follow their subjects
Conclusions

- The PIE status of participial frames remains uncertain
- But the phenomenon is well attested in Greek, from Homer to the NT
- Latin, Gothic and OCS are sensitive to frame-setting
- Fronted finite clauses are used in Latin
- Prefixation can be used for the same purpose in Gothic (epiphenomenon of the aspectual value?)
Slides available at

http://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/proiel