

## *A comparative analysis of the English and Bulgarian participles with a view to their categorial status*

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Цель статьи – показать, что синтаксические тесты могут быть успешно использованы для избежания двусмысленного глагольно-адъективированного характера причастий. Статья показывает, что мы не можем утверждать будто бы причастия, находящиеся в преноминальной позиции в английском языке, непременно являются прилагательными только потому, что принято считать, что в этой позиции в английском языке могут употребляться только прилагательные. Анализируя данные английского и болгарского языков, мы установили, что преноминальная позиция в английском языке действительно может содержать недвусмысленно глагольные выражения. Просто трудно изолировать и доказать синтаксическим путем их глагольное значение, так как английские причастия могут появляться перед существительным только с препозитивным определением и никогда с постпозитивным

The aim of this article is to show that syntactic tests can be successfully applied in order to disambiguate participles. The work aims to show that we can hardly sustain the view that the prenominal participles in English are necessarily adjectival just because the prenominal position in English can be occupied only by adjectives. Considering data from both English and Bulgarian, we reach the conclusion that the English prenominal position *does* host verbal expressions. It is simply difficult to syntactically isolate the verbal meaning because English participles can occur in front of the noun only premodified but not postmodified.

### **Introduction**

This article presents an analysis of the categorial status of English and Bulgarian participles with special attention to the prenominally used participles. First, we will isolate a group of English participles, which we will call postmodified participles, of which we will show that they are real verbal participles (not adjectival phrases), something that has been, to my knowledge, unnoticed so far. The analysis of these participles will be extended to Bulgarian, where they can occur also in prenominal position. The fact that the prenominal position in Bulgarian can host clearly verbal participles will be used as an argument against the wide-spread view that prenominal participles in English are all adjectival expressions. In particular, we will argue that the impossibility of the postmodified participles to occur in prenominal position in English is simply due to the right recursion restriction (an empirically set rule according to which the prenominal position in English cannot host elements containing a modifier to their right) and not to their being verbal. We will provide also some semantic evidence showing that prenominally used English participles are not necessarily “stative”, as suggested in the literature. Finally, we will analyse some English phrases in which the prenominally used participle can be argued to be a verbal and not an adjectival or an ambiguous expression.

### **1. On the grammatical status of participles**

The difficulty in determining the grammatical status of participles arises from the fact that these words can exhibit both adjectival and verbal properties depending on the context in which they appear. In this sense a bare participle like “written” is ambiguous between a verb and adjective unless there is some other element or a particular context which disambiguates it.

To present a short overview of the existing analyses of English participles we will dwell upon some of the most influential works. For example, Chomsky, in his earlier works, analysed passive participles as transformationally derived (Chomsky 1957, 1965), which entailed that prenominal participles should also be analyzed as reduced relative clauses. Chomsky’s analysis actually entails that all passive participles are verbal. This idea has been challenged more than once throughout the years by Freidin, 1975; Bresnan, 1982, 1995; Wasow 1977; Levin and Rappaport 1986, among others, who claimed that all prenominal participles are adjectival. For more than two decades the most influential works on passive participles rejected the possibility of having verbal participles in prenominal position in English.

Cinque (2003, 2005a, b) offers a detailed analysis of the prenominal modification area. His theory returns to the old idea in terms of the possibility to have verbal participles in front of the noun. It suggests that the prenominal position is not reserved for adjectives only but that reduced relative clauses, including verbal participles, must also be able to occur prenominally in English. English prenominal participles, however, do not provide much evidence on what their character is – verbal or adjectival. Therefore, suggestions about the verbal character of prenominal participles in English have been made mainly on the basis of data coming from other languages (see Laczkó, 2001, who bases his analysis on data from Hungarian). As the reader will notice, we will analyse mainly passive participles since this is the most widely discussed class of participles but our analysis will be extended to all types.

In this article, we will pay special attention to several groups of English and Bulgarian participles, which are bare participles, premodified participial expressions like “carefully written” and postmodified participial expressions like “written carefully”. We will accept the view that bare participles and premodified participles are ambiguous between verbs and adjectives, (i. e. they can be either verbs or adjectives depending on the context) and we will claim that postmodified participles are only verbal expressions and cannot be adjectives since they cannot enter adjectival contexts. We will base our analysis on some well-known tests suggested in the literature on English participles and then we will extend the analysis to Bulgarian. Finally, we will try to present evidence that the prenominal position in English *can* be shown to contain also verbal participles, more precisely, premodified participles which, in the specific context can be shown to behave like verbs.

### **2. On the difference between verbal and adjectival participles**

Passives seem to be the most widely-discussed group of participles in the literature and therefore we will examine them more closely. Initially, they were analysed as obtained as a result of syntactic transformations discussed in detail in Chomsky’s early works (Chomsky 1957, 1965). During the seventies, very influential lexicalist theories were developed, whereby participles were considered a product of lexical processes, which do not involve syntactic transformations (Freidin, 1975; Bresnan, 1982). Wasow (1977) challenges this idea claiming that there is a group of passives which are syntactically derived and another group which are lexical formations, and are derived by means of lexical redundancy rules, without involving transformations. Wasow notes that many of the participles exhibit ambiguity between the verbal and the adjectival reading. For example, the verb *to be* is a context which allows both an adjectival and a verbal interpretation. We suggest below an example in which

the verb *to be* could be interpreted either as an adjectival expression or as a verb.

- (1) *The shop was closed when she went out.*

The example above could mean either “They closed the shop as soon as she went out” or “When she went out the shop was in the state of being closed”. In the first case the verb *to be* is an auxiliary verb and in the second case it is not. Wasow develops several well-defined criteria for distinguishing between lexical rules and transformations – corresponding to the two ways in which participles are derived. According to him the passives which are syntactically derived are verbs, and those which are lexically derived are adjectives. As to the prenominal position, it is used as a test for adjectivality. This is later found also in the work of Levin and Rappaport (1986).

Haspelmath (quoted in Laczkó, 2001) also considers prenominal participles pure adjectives. In his words, “Both past passive participles [...] and past unaccusative participles [...] characterize their head by expressing a state that results from a previous event. The fact that they express a state has to do with the fact that they are adjectives.” (p. 159...)

In this paper, I am not going to take a position as to the derivation of the verbal and the adjectival participles but will limit myself to identifying their distribution within the noun phrase in English and in Bulgarian.

There are a number of tests, proposed in the literature, on the basis of which the distinction between verbal and adjectival participles is drawn. What is usually done is to isolate adjectival contexts and claim that those participles which can enter in the adjectival contexts in question have adjectival reading. This is what we are going to do as well. For this purpose, we are going to present some of the tests proposed in the literature.

### 2.1. *The complement position of some verbs.*

One of the very common adjectival positions is the complement position of verbs like *look*, *remain*, *seem*, *sound* and several others. Therefore, Wasow (1977) and Levin and Rappaport (1986), among others, assume that the participles found after these verbs have an adjectival reading. We present below the examples offered by him:

- (2) a. *John looked eager to win.* (adapted from Wasow, 1977)  
b. *John seemed annoyed at us.*  
c. *John remained elated.*  
d. *John sounded convinced to run.*

### 2.2. *The adjectival prefix un-*

Another test, very commonly cited in the literature (Siegel, 1973; Wasow, 1977; Levin and Rappaport (1986); Bresnan, 1995, among others), concerns the use of the adjectival prefix *un-*. The meaning this prefix holds is “an event that has not taken place”. (This adjectival prefix should be distinguished from the verbal prefix *un-* which has a “reversative” meaning). Wasow reports several examples in which passive participles hold this prefix and states that since this prefix can be attached only to the passive form, it would be strange to call these forms verbs.

- (3) *Our products are untouched by human hand.* (Wasow, 1977)  
(4) *The island was uninhabited by humans.*  
(5) *All his claims have been unsupported by data.*

Notice that the following verbal forms do not exist: \*to *untouch*, \*to *uninhabit* or \*to *unsupport*.

### 2.3. The direct object complement.

As Emonds (2000) says, only verbal participles have the internal structure of a VP and thus only these participles can preserve the direct object complement of the verb. He suggests that, in verbal passives, the lexical head is V and it can assign case within the VP. The V in an adjectival passive is not a lexical head and so case cannot be assigned, hence no internal argument is allowed.

Emonds gives the following examples in support of this claim.

- (6) *Peter was forgiven his sins.* (Emonds, 2000)
- (7) *Ann was given the letter.*
- (8) \**Peter felt forgiven his sins*<sup>1</sup>.
- (9) \**The letter remained unspent all the candidates.*

### 2.4. Concessional phrases beginning with “however”.

This test, used by Bresnan (1995), is still another way to isolate an adjectival context. As she says, only adjectives and not verbal expressions can head concessional phrases beginning with “however”.

(10) *however AP vs. \*however VP: however supportive of her daughter she may have been vs. \*however supporting her daughter she may have been...* (Bresnan, 1995)

Thus, we expect that participles that can enter this construction have an adjectival and not verbal interpretation.

### 2.5. The degree quantifier “more”/“most”.

The use of the degree quantifier is another way to isolate an adjectival context. In English, only adjectives and not verbs can be premodified by “more” and “most”. Emonds (2006) extends this test to all degree words. He says that there is not so much clarity on the question of which adjectival passives can be used with the full range of adjectival modifiers. In footnote 8 he makes a division between two types of adjectival passives, a position that I heartily share, namely that adjectival passives are not a homogeneous group, some of them are real lexicalized adjectives and therefore can be used with all adjectival modifiers, others are, as he puts it ‘ “created anew” at each use’. What is crucial, he says, is that verbal participles cannot take degree words and if we ensure in another way that the passive is really a verbal passive, we can form reliable tests. He does this by using certain verb forms of which he claims that they are incompatible with the stative/resultative interpretation and therefore cannot form adjectival participles. The example he offers is the following:

- (11) \**New York is more avoided by tourists than other cities.* (Emonds, 2006)

## 3. In search for verbal participles.

In this section, we will look at postmodified participles and their distribution. We will discuss those participles which are postmodified by adverbs of manner, like *carefully*, *politely*, *carelessly*, etc. We chose these adverbs because they are typically used with verbs and not with adjectives. We will provide evidence that the participles postmodified by these adverbs exhibit

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<sup>1</sup> The form “felt”, in this case, provides an adjectival context, like “remained”.

verbal properties both in English and in Bulgarian. What is interesting is that, as we will see, in Bulgarian these participles can occur in prenominal position. This gives us the right to question the assumption that the prenominal position in English contains only elements with adjectival properties. It may well be that postmodified participles do not occur prenominally in English for some other reason. Indeed, the impossibility of these participles to occur in front of the noun will be attributed to the right recursion restriction which applies in English and independently bars heads with complements or postmodifiers to appear prenominally.

In order to show that participles postmodified by adverbs of manner like *carefully*, *cleverly*, *well*, *politely* etc exhibit verbal properties, I will use some of the tests enumerated above. I assume that most of the English participles, if taken by themselves, are syntactically ambiguous between the verbal and the adjectival reading (there are others, like *avoided*, which are incompatible with the stative reading and are therefore only verbal).

When we apply the tests, we will see that those participles which are premodified by the above mentioned adverbs are also ambiguous between the adjectival and the verbal readings. On the other hand, those of them which are postmodified by adverbs of manner exhibit only verbal properties, hence they cannot be used in adjectival contexts.

### 3.1. The complements of verbs like "seem".

As was mentioned earlier, only adjectives and not verbs can occur in the complement position of verbs like *seem*. Interestingly, only pre-modified and not post-modified participles can appear in this environment.

- (12) *The floor has not been waxed and the curtains are still dirty, but the silver, at least, seems carefully polished.*
- (13) \* *The floor has not been waxed and the curtains are still dirty, but the silver, at least, seems polished carefully.*
- (14) *The red lentils still have pieces of dirt and stone in them, but the green ones seem carefully sorted.*
- (15) \* *The red lentils still have pieces of dirt and stone in them, but the green ones seem sorted carefully.*
- (16) *The present seems carefully wrapped up.*
- (17) \* *The present seems wrapped up carefully.*
- (18) *The room seems carefully cleaned.*
- (19) \* *The room seems cleaned carefully.*
- (20) *The issue seems carefully explained (in a suitable context it sounds fine)*
- (21) \* *The issue seems explained carefully.*

### 3.2. The adjectival negative prefix un-

The adjectival prefix *un-* can attach only to adjectives and never to verbal forms. What is

of interest for us here is that passives containing this prefix, can be pre-modified but not post-modified by adverbs.

(22) *The invitations, politely unaccepted, lay strewn upon the table.*

As shown below, it is impossible to reverse the order adverb-participle.

(23) \* *The invitations, unaccepted politely, lay strewn upon the table.*

The same contrast can be observed in the examples below:

(24) *The king's argument, respectfully unquestioned, rang throughout the room.*

(25) \* *The king's argument, unquestioned respectfully, rang throughout the room.*

This piece of evidence shows that adjectival passives can be premodified but cannot be postmodified by adverbs. From the examples above, we can draw the conclusion that post-modification by adverbs of manner creates a verbal context.

### 3.3. Concessional phrases with "however".

Another way to test the verbal character of the postmodified participial expressions is to see whether they can head concessional phrases with *however*.

Unmodified participles clearly can head such a phrase, as we see below.

(26) *However **polished** the floor was, it didn't seem completely clean.*

The same holds true for the premodified participial expressions:

(27) *However **carefully polished** the floor was, it didn't seem completely clean.*

It is, however, completely impossible to place a postmodified participial expression in this environment.

(28) \* *However **polished carefully** the floor was, it didn't seem completely clean.*

It was pointed out to me that example (27) could be irrelevant since, in this case, *however* actually modifies the adverb and not the whole piece. It should be noted, however, that, according to the native speakers' intuition, in examples like (27), the phrase containing *however* is actually ambiguous between the two readings:

1. *however [carefully [polished]]*
2. *however [carefully polished]*

For this reason, I continue to consider the results obtained from the example with the

premodified participle relevant to the present discussion. Even if they were not, the fact that the unmodified participle is perfectly acceptable as part of the concessional phrase and the postmodified one is not, is already quite significant.

#### 3.4. *Stative vs. Eventive use of the participles.*

As it is widely accepted in the literature, the main semantic difference between verbal and adjectival participles is that the former refer to an event and the latter to a state obtained as a result of some event. In this subsection, we would like to explore this semantic contrast in order to provide further evidence for the verbal status of the postmodified participles. What we would like to show with the following examples is that postmodified participles cannot enter, call it, a “stative” context. As I said earlier, the verb “to be” provides an ambiguous context. Notice that, if we want to insert a postmodified participle after the verb “to be”, we can do it only if that participle takes part of a clearly “eventive” context. If the context is “stative”, the examples are not acceptable. If, for example, we describe what is happening in a movie, as in the following example, the postmodified participle *can* be used.

- (29) *First, the man asks Marie to help him out. Then, the room is cleaned carefully.*

However, if we are just describing the state of a room, it is perfectly out of place:

- (30) \**The table is set, the flowers are gorgeous, and the room cleaned carefully.*

At the same time, a premodified participle sounds perfectly acceptable in the same “stative” context, as we see below.

- (31) *The table is set, the flowers are gorgeous and the room carefully cleaned.*

The same incompatibility between postmodified participles and “stative” contexts is observed in the following examples:

- (32) *Now that we have finished cleaning the house, the floor is carefully cleaned.*

- (33) \**Now that we have finished cleaning the house, the floor is cleaned carefully.*

- (34) \**When he entered the house, the room was already cleaned carefully.*

- (35) \**The room is already cleaned carefully.*

Examples (32) and (33) present another pair of a premodified and a postmodified participle, which display a different behaviour with respect to the “stative” context. In (34) and (35), on the other hand, the presence of *already* creates a “stative/resultative” context, in which a postmodified participle cannot be placed.

In sum, we have isolated a group of participial expressions, those which are postmodified by adverbs of manner, which behave as verbal forms. As was stated above,

postmodified participles cannot occur prenominal in English. In Bulgarian, however, as we will see below, the right recursion restriction does not apply and postmodified participles *can* occur in front of the noun.

#### 4. Bulgarian prenominal participial expressions.

Bulgarian has the following three types of participial expressions occurring in prenominal position – passive participles (traditionally called past passive participles), past perfect participles (traditionally called past active participles) and what can be called progressive participles or present participles (traditionally named present active participles).

- (36) *отвореният вчера магазин* (Passive participle)  
*opened-the yesterday shop*  
*“the shop that opened yesterday”*
- (37) *прстигналият вчера търговец* (Past perfect participle)  
*arrived-the yesterday merchant*  
*“the merchant who arrived yesterday”*
- (38) *изучаващият физика студент* (Present participle)  
*studying-the physics student*  
*“the student who is studying physics”*

The passive participle form is quite common across languages. As to the perfect participle, in many languages it has the same form as the passive participle (English, Italian, German, etc.). Bulgarian and Slovenian, for example, have a separate form for this participle, distinct from the form for the passive participle, as reported by Marvin (2002). The progressive participle is not uncommon across languages.

An important peculiarity of the Bulgarian perfect and progressive participles is that they can take a direct object also in prenominal position, as shown below.

- (39) *защитилото сестра си момче* (Perfect)  
*defended-the sister his boy*  
*“the boy who defended his sister”*
- (40) *четящият доклада професор* (Progressive)  
*reading-the report-the professor*  
*“the professor who is reading the report”*

There is a group of verbs in Bulgarian which obligatorily require a direct object complement.

- (41) *скривам \*(ценните предмети)*  
*hide precious-the objects*  
*“hide the precious objects”*
- (42) *набеждавам \*(приятелката си)*  
*accuse (falsely) friend-the my*  
*“accuse (falsely) my friend”*



The participles deriving from such verbs also require a direct object complement (of course we exclude the group of passive participles, which cannot have a direct object complement).

- (43) *изпразнилият* \* (*касата*) *служител* (Perfect)  
*emptied-the cash-box-the man*  
*“the man who emptied the cash box”*

There are verbs which, apart from being obligatorily transitive, could also be used as intransitive (unaccusative or unergative) verbs:

- (44) a. *изключилият* *напрежението* *механизъм* (Perfect – Transitive)  
*switched off the tension-the mechanism*  
*“the mechanism that switched off the tension”*
- b. *изключилият* *механизъм* (Perfect – Unaccusative)  
*switched off the mechanism*  
*“the mechanism that switched off”*

We would like to keep apart the cases in which a verb is realized as transitive and those in which it is intransitive. We will attribute this phenomenon to the lexical ambiguity of the verb.

Another group of participles are those deriving from verbs which are unambiguously intransitive.

- (45) *падналият* *снощи* *сняг* (Perfect – Unaccusative)  
*fallen-the yesterday night snow*  
*“the snow that fell down yesterday”*

As was mentioned above, those participial expressions that preserve the direct object of the verb will be considered verbal participles. The “bare” or unmodified participial forms, we will consider ambiguous between the participial and the adjectival reading. We will suggest the same about the premodified participial forms. As to the postmodified participial expressions, we will try to show that they exhibit verbal and not adjectival properties.

## 5. Tests showing the verbal character of the postmodified participial expressions in Bulgarian.

In this section, we will try to use some of the test suggested for English in order to show that the postmodified participial expressions in Bulgarian share common properties with verbs and not with adjectives.

### 5.1.1. The degree quantifier.

In the following example we have a non-modified participle used with the degree quantifier.

- (46) *Най-надрасканата* *тетрадка* *е тази на Петя.* (Unmodified  
 participial expression)  
*most scribbled-the notebook is that of Petya.*

*“Petya has the most scribbled notebook.”*

Bulgarian transitive participles (which are verbal participles) are never compatible with the degree modifier.

- (47) \**Най-надраскалото тетрадката си момче.*  
*most scribbled-the notebook-the his boy*

As we see below, the same holds true for the post-modified participial expressions. Examples (48) – (50) show that unmodified participial expressions can be compatible either with the degree quantifier or with a post-modifying adverb, but never with both of them at the same time.

- (48) *По-наточеният нож реже по-добре.*  
*more grinded-the knife cuts better.*  
*“the more grinded knife cuts better”*
- (49) *Наточеният внимателно нож се поставя върху....*  
*grinded-the carefully knife should be placed upon the...*  
*“the carefully grinded knife should be placed upon the...”*
- (50) \**По-наточеният внимателно нож се поставя върху...*  
*more grinded-the carefully knife should be placed upon the...*

If an expression is compatible both with the degree quantifier and with a postmodifying adverb but never with both of them at the same time, there must be a difference in the grammatical status of these two combinations. The tests applied below seem to further support this conclusion.

#### *5.1.2. Complements of some verbs.*

It seems that the Bulgarian analogue of the verb *remain* – *оставам* requires an adjectival complement as well.

The examples from Bulgarian show that premodified and unmodified participial expressions can occur in this position but participles taking a direct object complement and postmodified participial expressions cannot. We see here that, as we suggested above, the premodified participial expressions can behave like adjectives.

#### ***Unmodified participial expression.***

- (51) *трите останали непочистени след партито помещения*  
*three-the remained uncleaned after party-the rooms*  
*“the three rooms that remained uncleaned after the party”*

#### ***Premodified participial expression.***

- (52) *Останалите внимателно подредени върху бюрото документи*  
*remained-the carefully ordered on bureau-the documents*  
*“the documents that remained carefully ordered on the bureau”*

- (53) *Останалото внимателно разпечатано писмо*  
*remained-the carefully unsealed letter*  
*“the letter that remained carefully unsealed”*

**Transitive participles:**

- (54) \**останалият подреждащ документите служител*  
*remained-the ordering documents-the attendant*  
*“the attendant that remained ordering the documents”*

**Postmodified participial expression**

- (55) ?\**останалите подредени внимателно върху бюрото*  
*документи*  
*remained-the ordered carefully on bureau-the documents*  
*“the documents that remained carefully ordered on the bureau”*

(The relevant meaning of the participle *останалите* has to be distinguished from the meanings: “remained at that place” and “the rest”)

- (56) \**останалото разпечатано внимателно след проверката писмо*  
*remained-the unsealed carefully after examination-the letter*  
*“The letter that remained carefully unsealed after the examination”*

Here we have to mention that due to the long premodifying sequence, examples like (51), (52) and (53) sound a little heavy in Bulgarian, though being acceptable. What we are trying to show is rather the clear contrast between those examples and the ones in (54), (55) and (56). The latter sound definitely bad and we claim that the reason for this is that the verbal participles that those examples contain are used in an adjectival context.

Below we apply the same test in a predicative context.

Predicative use:

**Unmodified participial expression.**

- (57) *Книгата остана непрочетена.*  
*book-the remained unread*  
*“The book remained unread.”*

**Premodified participial expression.**

- (58) *Дори след обиска документите на бюрото ѝ останаха*  
*внимателно подредени.*  
*Even after perquisition-the documents-the on bureau-the her*  
*remained carefully ordered.*  
*“Even after the perquisition, the documents on her bureau*  
*remained carefully ordered.”*

**Post-modified participle.**

- (59) \*Документите на бюрото ѝ останаха подредени внимателно.  
*Documents-the on bureau-the her remained ordered carefully.*  
“The documents on her bureau remained carefully ordered.”

***Transitive participle.***

- (60) \*Служителят остана подреждащ документите.  
*Attendant-the remained ordering documents-the*  
“The attendant remained ordering the documents.”

5.1.3. *Concessional relative phrases with “however”.*

Indeed, neither the Bulgarian analogues of the English concessional phrases with *however* can be headed by a verb. Thus, we can make the prediction that only unmodified and premodified participial expressions but not postmodified ones can head concessional phrases like *колкото и Adj да .../however...*. The examples below show that this expectation seems to be correct.

***Unmodified participial expressions.***

- (61) *Колкото и надраскана да е тетрадката, пак ще ми свърши работа.*  
*however and scribbled DA is notebook-the still will to me serve*  
“However scribbled the notebook is, it could serve me.”

***Premodified participial expressions.***

- (62) *Колкото и внимателно подбрани да са съставките ...*  
*however and carefully selected DA are ingredients...*  
“however carefully selected the ingredients”

***Post-modified participial expression.***

- (63) \**Колкото и надраскана невнимателно да е тетрадката,*  
*пак ще ми свърши работа.*  
*however and scribbled carelessly DA is notebook-the still will*  
*to me serve*  
“However carelessly scribbled the notebook is, it could serve me.”

In prenominal position:

***Unmodified participial expression.***

- (64) *колкото и надраскана тетрадка да има Иван...*  
*however and scribbled notebook DA has Ivan*  
“However scribbled Ivan’s notebook...”

***Premodified participial expression.***

- (65) *колкото и внимателно подбрани съставки да използват...*  
*however and carefully selected ingredients they use*  
“No matter how carefully selected ingredients they use...”

**Postmodified participle.**

- (66) \**колкото и подобрани внимателно съставки да използват...*  
*however and selected carefully ingredients they use*  
*“No matter how carefully selected ingredients they use...”*

The examples above clearly show that the postmodified participial expressions cannot fill the slot of the adjectives. The premodified and the unmodified ones, on the other hand, can qualify as adjectives.

We have seen so far that the participles modified by an adverb of manner of the relevant type pattern with verbs and not with adjectives. We mentioned above that premodified and non-modified participles, in contrast to the post-modified ones, are ambiguous between verbs and adjectives, which means that they can be either one or the other depending on the context in which they are found. The following examples show the ambiguous nature of the latter two types of participles.

We have already seen above that premodified participial expressions can pattern with adjectives. We present below some more examples from Bulgarian in support of this claim.

- (67) a. *добре сложен човек.*  
*well-built person (= has a fine physique)*  
 b. \**сложен добре човек.*  
*built-well person*
- (68) a. *силно замърсена дреха*  
*strongly daubed piece of clothing*  
 b. \**замърсена силно дреха*  
*daubed strongly piece of clothing*  
*“the strongly daubed piece of clothing”*

What the examples above show is that, with premodified participles, it is possible to form fixed expressions or fixed idiomatic expressions. The meaning which emerges in these examples is not a real combination of the meaning of the verb and that of the participle-looking word. In examples like (67) and (68), the participial expression does not convey the real meaning of the verb it derives from. What has happened is that the verb has been adjectivalized. As we can see, once we place the adverb in postposition, the original meaning of the verb reemerges and the example no longer sounds acceptable. This observation comes in support of the claim that the premodified participial expressions can be adjectival while the postmodified ones are only verbal. We said, however, that the premodified participial expressions are actually ambiguous, which means that they can also be verbal. In other words, the premodifying adverb does not necessarily signal the verbal status of the expression it modifies but it does not necessarily signal its adjectival status either. This can be seen in the following example, in which the real verbal participles can also be premodified by an adverb.

- (69) *внимателно обработилият данните служител*  
*carefully processed-the data-the attendant*  
*“the attendant who carefully processed the data”*

The above example contains a participle which, due to the direct object it contains, cannot be anything else but a verbal expression. Nonetheless the participle *can* be premodified by and adverb.

As shown above, Bulgarian postmodified participles can occur both prenominally and postnominally. Moreover, participles containing a direct object complement can also occur prenominally. Therefore, we can hardly claim that the prenominal position is reserved for adjectives only. Of course, this is a clear-cut situation only in Bulgarian. We have seen, however, several examples like “the evacuated house” showing that the prenominal position in English can hardly be declared adjectival. Another argument against the adjectival nature of the prenominal position is that English is a language in which the right recursion restriction operates. Thus, we can hardly expect that the prenominal position can be filled by a postmodified element. These two considerations point to the conclusion that not only in Bulgarian but also in English, the prenominal position can host both adjectival and verbal (or ambiguous) elements, in other words, it is not necessary for an element to be adjectival in order to appear in front of the noun. Therefore, those English participles which can be found in prenominal position are not necessarily adjectives.

In what follows, we will try to isolate a real English verbal participle in prenominal position. Since it is not possible to use a postmodified participle, we will use a premodified one, forcing its verbal meaning. We will try to do that with the help of the *by-* phrase.

Since the *by-* phrase actually introduces the agent we could assume that it would be compatible with a verbal and not with an adjectival participle. The literature gives two opposite opinions as to its possibility to isolate verbal contexts. There are authors who claim that the *by-* phrase introduces a verbal context (Laczko 2001, Embick 2004 among others). There are a lot of authors, however, who present evidence against this view, showing that the *by-* phrase can be used also with adjectives. Wasow’s examples, which I introduced in section 2, illustrate exactly this – the *by-* phrase can combine with participles that use the adjectival prefix *un-*. The examples are repeated below:

(70) *Our products are untouched by human hand.* (Wasow, 1977)

(71) *The island was uninhabited by humans.*

(72) *All his claims have been unsupported by data.*

What we can notice in these examples is that the agent the *by-* phrase introduces is a generic agent. We could assume that adjectival passives can be used with the *by-* phrase only under this condition. Therefore, we would expect that in those cases in which the *by-* phrase is used with a concrete (non-generic) item, it will not tolerate adjectival passives. I will limit myself to simply mentioning these characteristics of the *by-* phrase without suggesting any conclusion. The matter seems, actually, not that simple since Bresnan (1982) provides the following example.

(73) *One fact is unexplained by this formulation.* (Bresnan, 1982)

At the same time she herself admits that “*by-* objects are more restricted with adjectival passives than with verbal passives”.

I will conclude here that the properties of the *by-* phrase deserve a more profound analysis, which is outside the scope of this paper.

With the following test I would like to present the observation that certain premodified participles, which are otherwise ambiguous between the adjectival and the verbal reading, when used with the *by-* phrase fail to enter adjectival contexts. There is a construction in which the prenominal premodified participle can appear with the *by-* phrase (the *by-* phrase remaining in

postnominal position)<sup>2</sup>.

(74) *The cleverly selected topics by the university committee showed that...*<sup>3</sup> (in the sense that the topics were selected by the university committee)

(75) *The beautifully cared for garden by the university students was an example of...*

The next step would be to make sure that the modified participle can become the complement of a verb like LOOK. This is also possible:

(76) *The topics look cleverly selected.*

Now we know that the piece “cleverly selected” can also be an adjectival expression (something that we have already mentioned in the previous sections). Now notice that, if we add the *by*- phrase to this example, it degrades considerably.

(77) \* *The topics looked cleverly selected by the university committee.*

Notice the same thing once again below:

(78) *The floor looked carefully polished.*

(79) \* *The floor looked carefully polished by the proprietor.*

What examples (74) – (79) show, is that there is a sharp incompatibility between the piece “cleverly selected by the university committee” and the complement position of the verb LOOK. What this incompatibility shows is that, in this environment, the premodified participial expression is a verbal expression and, crucially, in (74) and (75), the premodified participial expression is in prenominal position.

## 6. Conclusion.

This work addressed the categorial status of several types of participial expressions, special attention being paid to prenominal participles. We argued against the opinion that the prenominal position in English is only adjectival. We saw that the postmodified participles, which pattern with verbs, can be found also prenominally in Bulgarian. We saw also that there is some clear semantic evidence showing that the prenominal position in English does not seem to be only adjectival. Finally, we tried to find examples of English verbal participles occurring prenominally. Our general conclusion about the English prenominal position is that it can host both adjectival and verbal elements, the latter being more difficult to isolate, but this difficulty is not related to the verbal or the adjectival nature of the elements that occupy the prenominal position. In our case, this difficulty is due to the right recursion restriction which does not allow

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<sup>2</sup> It seems that examples like (74) and (75) sound more acceptable to British than to American speakers. It seems also that younger speakers accept them more easily.

<sup>3</sup> Notice that in this example the participle is in prenominal position while the *by*- phrase occurs after the noun. This discontinuity is not supposed to create problems, however, since the *by*- phrase continues to be interpreted as the agent of the passive construction. I attribute this discontinuity to the right recursion restriction. Notice that in Bulgarian, a language in which this restriction does not hold, the *by*- phrase occurs in prenominal position.

postmodified elements to occur preominally in English.

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### Съпоставителен анализ на английските и българските причастия с оглед на категориалния им статус

Целта на тази статия е да покаже, че синтактичните тестове могат да бъдат успешно приложени с цел да се избегне двусмисленият глаголно-адиективен характер на причастията. Статията разглежда причастията с предпоставено определение, причастията със задпоставено



определение, както и тези без никакво определение, с цел да покаже, че не бихме могли да твърдим, че причастията намиращи се в преноминална позиция в английски са непременно прилагателни, само защото е прието да се смята, че тази позиция в английски може да бъде зета само от прилагателни. Целта е да покажем, че единствено синтактичният тест е в състояние да ни покаже ясно дали конкретното причастие е само глаголно, дали е прилагателно или е просто граматически двусмислено.

Първо се опитахме да изолираме група от английски причастия, за които твърдим, че са глаголни изрази (а не прилагателни). Анализът на тези причастия приложихме и към примери от българския език, където те могат да се поставят и в позиция пред съществителното. Фактът, че глаголни причастия могат да се появят в преноминалната позиция в българския е използван като аргумент срещу общоприетото твърдение, че всички причастия стоящи пред съществителното в английски са непременно прилагателни. Анализирахме също и някои английски фрази, в които за преноминалното причастие може да се твърди, че е глаголен израз и не е нито прилагателно, нито граматически двусмислен израз. Нашето заключение е, че преноминалната позиция в английски действително може да съдържа недвусмислено глаголни изрази. Просто е трудно да се изолира и докаже по синтактичен път глаголното им значение, тъй като английските причастия могат да се появят пред съществителното само с предпоставено определение и никога със задпоставено определение.