

To be or to have? On the syntax of perfect tenses in South Slavic

The paper will examine constructions involving participle fronting in Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, and Macedonian. In all of these languages perfect tenses are formed with the auxiliary ‘to be’, which appears with the so-called *l*-participle. The *l*-participle always agrees in ϕ -features with the subject. Interestingly, Macedonian is the only Slavic language that has an additional option of forming perfect tenses with the verb ‘have’ as the auxiliary. The auxiliary is then complemented by the *n*- (‘passive’) participle. The participle never agrees with the subject in this construction, but it occurs in the default neuter form. Notably, both transitive and unaccusative verbs are allowed as *n*-participles (c.f. 1).

In Bg and S-C the *l*-participle may be preposed across the auxiliary to the sentence initial position (c.f. 2). The displacement has been extensively analysed as either Long Head Movement from V to C (Rivero 1994) or as head adjunction of the participle to the auxiliary in C (Wilder & Ćavar 1994) or in Aux (Bošković 1997). All the previous approaches rejected an XP movement option, mainly due to the impossibility of object pied-piping by the participle (c.f. 2c). However, they face a number of empirical problems. First of all, Wilder & Ćavar (1994) point out that the LHM approach wrongly predicts that the subject may be hosted between the participle in C and the auxiliary in I. In fact, the participle and the subject apparently compete for the same position (c.f. 3). However, it seems that a head adjunction analysis cannot be the right solution, either. For instance, it implies that the participle may not be separated from the auxiliary. Still, as (4) shows, the participle *zabravio* does not have to be adjacent to the auxiliary in pluperfect constructions in S-C. Moreover, a head adjunction approach incorrectly predicts that the fronted participle may be preceded by overt material, whereas in main clauses the participle must be the left-most constituent (c.f. 5). At least in Bg this fact cannot be attributed to the rules of clitic placement, since in Bg clitics are not required to occur in the second position. I will take it to mean that the *l*-participle targets the highest Spec available via XP-raising.

The Macedonian ‘have’ + *n*-participle formation has received little attention in the generative literature so far. Importantly, note that the participle may be fronted across the auxiliary ‘have’ and pied-pipe the object. The reordering always gives rise to a focused interpretation (c.f. 6).

My proposal:

The main assumption is that both in Bg and S-C the *l*-participle may XP-raise to Spec, IP in order to check ϕ -features. Other structural variations concerning the syntax of the participle might be argued to result from the different properties of auxiliary clitics in these languages. Following the insights of Roberts (1987) and Broekhuis & Van Dijk (1995), who suggest that only the auxiliary ‘have’ is able to take an external argument and assign accusative case, I will argue that when ‘be’ is the auxiliary, the subject is generated as the external argument of the participle (c.f. 7a). When ‘have’ is selected, the subject is the external argument of the auxiliary (c.f. 7b). Thus, I will posit that in Bg & S-C the structure of the IP is as in (8). Since both the subject and the participle are marked for ϕ -features, either of them may check the ϕ -features in I by XP-movement to Spec, IP. I will assume that the subject and the participle phrase stay in the canonical Small Clause configuration. The features may be checked on both elements at once due to the predicative relationship between the participle and the subject (c.f. Hoekstra and Mulder’s (1990) analysis of Locative Inversion). Observe that when the participle is fronted, it is only the PartP that can be moved. Movement of a larger constituent (e.g. the vP) would leave the ϕ -features on the participle too deeply embedded for checking the ϕ -features of I. By contrast, movement of the whole PartP would raise the direct object across its case checking position, so the object must be first evacuated for case checking, and this results in the necessity of remnant movement of PartP into Spec,IP. This is A-movement, triggered by the ϕ -features in I.

By contrast, the structure of the perfect tenses with the auxiliary ‘have’ in Macedonian is as indicated in (7b). The subject and the participle phrase are not in the canonical Small Clause configuration, so agreement on the participle is impossible. I will assume that the reordering in (6) is triggered by a Focus feature and proceeds as A’-movement of the VP to Spec, CP. The object may be pied-piped by the participle, because its case can be checked by reconstruction, which is available for A’-movement, but not for A-movement.

- (1) a. Gi imame kupeno knjigite (Mac, Tomić 1996)
 them have_{1PL} buy_{PASS.PART.NEUT} books-the
 “We have bought the books”
 b. Imam dojdeno (Mac, Gołąb 1959)
 have_{1SG} come_{PASS.PART.NEUT}
 “I have come”
- (2) a. Decata sa / bjaxa gledali filma (BG, Lambova 2003)
 kids-the be_{3PL.PRES} / be_{3PL.PAST} watch_{PART.PL} movie-the
 b. Gledali sa / bjaxa filma
 watch_{PART.PL} be_{3PL.PRES} / be_{3PL.PAST} movie-the
 “(The kids) have / had watched the movie”
 c. *Gledali filma sa/bjaxa
 watch_{PART.PL} movie-the be_{3PL.PRES}/be_{3PL.PAST}
- (3) *_{[CP} Gledali [_{IP} decata [_{I'} e [... filma]]]
- (4) Bio je potpuno zabravio na sastanak (S-C)
 be_{PART.M.SG} be_{3SG.PRES} completely forget_{PART.M.SG} about meeting
 “He had completely forgotten about the meeting”
- (5) a. *Kude pročel e knjigata (BG, Caink 1999)
 where read_{PART.M.SG} be_{3SG.PRES} book-the
 b. *Tazi kniga pročel e
 this book read_{PART.M.SG} be_{3SG.PRES}.
- (6) Kupeno knjigite GI IMAME (Mac, Tomić 1996)
 buy_{PASS.PART.NEUT} books-the them have_{1PL}
 “Buy the books, we did!”
- (7) a. ... [BE [_{VP} DP_{agent} V [_{VP} V_{PART} DP_{theme}]]] ‘be’ as aux
 b. ... [_{VP} DP_{agent} V [_{VP} HAVE [_{VP} V_{PART} DP_{theme}]]] ‘have’ as aux
- (8) [_{IP} ... I_[+φ] ... [_{VP} subject_[+φ] v [_{PartP} Part_[+φ] object]]]

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