

## **A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH PAST PARTICIPLE AND THE BULGARIAN PAST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE**

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The paper presents a contrastive analysis of the English Past Participle and the Bulgarian Past Passive Participle in terms of their etymology, usages and functional equivalence. It touches upon the process of grammaticalisation of the linguistic units in both languages and briefly describes their most frequent usages. The analysis also includes a corpus of examples excerpted from the Bulgarian National Corpus (BulNC) and examines translation equivalents in order to elaborate on the differences and similarities of these linguistic units.

*Key words:* *English past participle, Bulgarian past passive participle, contrastive analysis, functional equivalence*

### **English Past Participles**

Contemporary English grammar places participles in the paradigm of the verb. Descriptive grammars provide more or less the following information – regular verbs have 4 forms whereas irregular verbs often have 5, one of which is namely the past participle. Regular verbs and some irregular ones have ended up with 1 form less as their past tense and past participle forms coincide (Quirk 1985: 98). Another linguistic trend<sup>1</sup> foregrounding the historical development and functions of participles – that they present both adjectival and verbal qualities, labels them as (de)verbal adjectives. No matter whether linguists agree on their labelling, however, one thing is certain – there is no controversy about the verbal root/ base of past participles. Due to their verbal origin and the ongoing process of coining new verbs, any attempt to determine the exact number of past participles in any language would be doomed. The only limited number of English past participles, which is available, is that of irregular-verb past participles and even it depends on the criteria according to which

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<sup>1</sup> Haspelmath (1994: 152) among others.

they are arranged. Thus, it could vary between 250 and 700 (that is if we include the prefixed ones as well).

The contemporary distinction between regular and irregular verbs roughly corresponds to the one between weak and strong verbs in Old English (OE). There were about 300 OE strong verbs, which formed their stems by means of ablaut (vowel gradation) and suffixation. Strong verbs were mostly native words from Proto-Germanic (PGmc) descent with high frequency of occurrence and use in derivational processes (Rastorgueva 2003: 115). Much like Modern English (MnE) irregular verbs, they were divided into 7 classes each containing a different number of verbs. The two classifications, however, do not match. OE Class 1 (Rastorgueva 2003: 116) was occupied by verbs like *writan* (inf.) – *wrāt* (past sg.) – *writon* (past pl.) – *written* (past part.) whereas in MnE it is located in Class 4C (Quirk 1985: 110) where all three forms contain different vowels.

Regular verbs form their participles by means of the *-ed* inflection which coincides with the MnE inflection used for the formation of the past-tense form (the preterite). Genetically, however, these two inflections originate from two different OE ones. The entry for the *-ed* inflection in the Online Etymology dictionary states: *-ed* was “a past participle suffix of weak verbs, from OE *-ed*, *-ad*, *-od* (levelled to *-ed* in Middle English (ME)), from PGmc *\*-da-* (cognates: OHG *-ta*, G. *-t*, ON *-þa*, Got. *-da*, *-þs*), from PIE *\*-to-*”. The entry also quotes Watkins who calls it a “suffix forming adjectives marking the accomplishment of the notion of the base”. Other listed cognates are Skt. *-tah*, Gk. *-tos*, L. *-tus*.

An entry concerning the *-en* (*-n*) suffix forming strong verbs’ past participles in the aforementioned dictionary is lacking. There are, however two other entries of *-en*:

1. A word-forming element of verbs from adjectives and nouns. It is deemed to originate from OE *-nian*, from PGmc *\*-inojan* (also source of ON *-na*), from PIE adjectival suffix *\*-no-*.

2. A suffix which when added to nouns produces adjectives meaning “made of, of the nature of” and it corresponds to the following adjectival suffixes: L. *-anus*, *-inus*, Gk. *-inos*; from PGmc *\*-ina-*, from PIE *\*-no-*.

It is very likely that these entries pertain to past participle *-en* (*-n*) as well. We have the following reasons for this conclusion: participles are words which combine both verbal and adjectival characteristics as does the suffix *-en*; apparently both variants of the suffix come from one and the same PIE root; according to Rastorgueva (2003: 113) in OE the past participle functioned primarily as a deverbal adjective, which depending on

the class of the verb it was derived from, could have two different meanings – if the verb from which it originated happened to be transitive, it expressed states and qualities resulting from past actions; and if the verb was intransitive, the participle had active meaning and indicated a past action.

Supporting the argument that participles were closer to adjectives than to verbs, Rastorgueva (2003: 113) also mentions that they appeared in OE both predicatively and attributively as adjectives do; they had the same grammatical categories as adjectives – they agreed with nouns in number, gender and case (more often than not they were declined<sup>2</sup>):

Hie hæfdon hira cyninȝ *āworpenne* – ‘they had their king deposed’ – in this case *āworpenne* agrees with *cyninȝ* and is in the Accusative case.

### **Bulgarian Past Passive Participles**

Turning to Bulgarian participles, one finds a situation quite similar to the one already presented in English. Old Bulgarian (OB) had 5 participle forms – 3 of which were active and 2 – passive. Four of them were declined and only one of the past active participles did not get case inflections. Mirchev (2000: 72) illustrates the declensions of some of the OB participles and mentions that they were very close to the word class of adjectives not only in their declensions but also in their formation. As far as the derivation of past passive participles in OB is concerned, it involved the inflections *-нъ* (*-n*) and *-тъ* (*-t*) which were added to the infinitival base.

The *-нъ* (*-n*) inflection was used with verbs whose infinitival base ended in *-а* or *-ѣ* like the following: *знати* – *знанъ*, *питѣти* – *питѣнъ*, etc. With verbs whose infinitival bases ended in consonants the *-нъ* (*-n*) inflection appeared in a wider variant – namely *-енъ*: *вѣсти* – *вѣденъ*, *нѣсти* – *нѣсенъ*. Verbs belonging to the 4<sup>th</sup> conjugation (*-и* being the final sound in the infinitival base) made use of the same variant of the suffix in which case the base vowel was reduced to *j* and the preceding consonant – palatalized: *хвалити* – *хваленъ*, *избавити* – *избавленъ*.

The *-тъ* (*-t*) inflection was much more widespread than it is now. Currently it is only encountered with first-conjugation verbs which end in a

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<sup>2</sup> Sometimes they remained uninflected. Rastorgueva (2003: 114) mentions the lack of inflections and agreement of participles used predicatively after the verb *habban* as testimony to their gradual transition into compound verb forms. This, however, might as well signal the overall language transformation – from synthetism to analytism.

nasal consonant or in *-p* such as *расплати — расплатъ; пожрѣти — пожрѣтъ*; as well as with some other verbs: *пити — питъ, повѣти — повѣтъ* (Mirchev 2000: 115).

Digging more into the derivation of passive participles and the grammaticalisation of their inflections, we find that 3<sup>rd</sup> p. sg. active forms with *-t* ending and 3<sup>rd</sup> p. pl. active forms with *-nt* ending were originally indeclinable deverbal nouns which were gradually included in the verb conjugations and either transformed into predicates or developed a declension and turned into participles (Dobrev 1982: 170). Initially they did not recognize the category of voice. The Hittite participles ending in *-anza* (akin to the participle suffix *-nt*) had passive meaning if they were derived from transitive verbs (*adanza* – ‘eaten’ – ‘изяден’, but OB nom., masc., pl. *ѣдѣшѣ*, akin to L. *edentes* – ‘ядящи’) and an active one if they were derived from intransitive verbs (*huyananza* – ‘escaped’). Dobrev (1982: 171) states that all this is a trace of an older linguistic phenomenon in which the *-nt* predicates and participles indicated that the active-class nouns functioning as subjects or heads, were supplied with a verbal attribute which did not have a voice characteristic.

The names formed with the suffix *-t* and predecessors of *-т* past passive participles (e.g. *питъ, расплатъ*) denoted verbal attributes without a voice characteristic as well. Similarly to English regular verbs, OB verbs deriving past passive participle by means of the inflection *-t* and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> p., sg., aor. by means of *-тъ* show an almost complete overlap in these forms. There are only a few exceptions whose forms differ in the strength of the root vowel (e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> p., sg. – *просѣрѣтъ*; past passive part., nom., sg. – *просѣрѣтъ*).

The deverbal nouns formed by means of *-t* meant that the person had a certain verbal attribute. A person could possess a verbal attribute only if the activity has already been completed. Thus the ancient names which contain the suffix *-t* and from which the deverbal nouns ending in *-тъ* originated (e.g. *питѣ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> p., sg. aor. – *питъ*; past passive part., nom., sg. – *питъ*), transformed either in aorist forms or in past passive participles. If the subject got a transitive verbal attribute, then the active construction was not in absolute case and the name containing the *-t* suffix turned into an intransitive predicate – the predecessor of the past passive participle. If the object was the one to receive the transitive verbal attribute – i.e. when there was an experiencer in absolute case, the name containing the *-t*

suffix served the role of a transitive predicate – i.e. of a 3<sup>rd</sup> p., sg., aor. form (Dobrev 1982: 172).

The *-n* inflection comes from the efferent index *-n*, which initially had a directive and terminative meaning (Dobrev 1982: 195). It meant a direction and reaching something by means of an efferent movement (in L. *ef-fero* means “to bring out, to carry out”) – i.e. a movement which is initiated by one person and is transferred to another, or a movement from the centre to the periphery. The past passive participle expresses a property resulting from an efferent activity as well – the activity or movement initiated by another person or object. That is why past passive participles are primarily derived from transitive (centrifugal) verbs. Past passive participles with the index *n*<sup>3</sup>, resemble in their derivation the ones with the characteristic *t* (e.g. *оубиѣтъ* – nom. case, masc., sg.). In the first case the participle characteristic *n* is the same as the root of the efferent and respectively the peripheral demonstrative *\*n-* (OB – *оnъ*, Skt. – *ana-*, etc.) whereas in the second case the participle formant *t* coincides with the peripheral pronominal root *t*.

### Functions and Differences

Bulgarian and English are two of the few languages which form their passives following the pattern “*be+ participle*”<sup>4</sup>. Haspelmath (1990: 28) presents a Gramcats sample based on the study of 80 languages only 6 of which form their passives by means of an auxiliary verb and a past participle of some sort. This pattern is most characteristic of Indo-European languages – something previously claimed by Dryer (1982: 55): “the use of a copula plus an adjectival... is rare outside Indo-European”.

Many linguists point out that not only clear-cut cases of passive or active sentences occur in English – there are also intermediary (the so-called “grey-area”) ones in which it is not clear whether the participle’s verbal or adjectival properties prevail. In such instances it is debatable whether the participle is part of a complex verbal predicate (an analytical

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<sup>3</sup> Also in Skt. *gīrna* ‘gulped’ and 3<sup>rd</sup> p., sg., pr. tense – *girāti* ‘he gulps’, cognate to 1<sup>st</sup> p., sg., pr. tense *жѣрѣж*, 2<sup>nd</sup> p. *жѣрѣши*, Got. *gibana* ‘given’ and inf. *giban* ‘to give’.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that Mirchev (2000: 120) distinguishes as specific voice forms in OB the ones containing reflexive verbs. Some remnants of these forms could be witnessed in Modern Bulgarian as well. Thus, forms like – *азъ трѣкоуѣхъ отъ тебе кръстити са* were considered as passive voice markers and all combinations of passive participles and the verb *бѣти* as periphrastic means of conveying passive meaning.

passive verb phrase) or of a nominal predicate and has the function of a predicative (a passive adjective). Thus, linguists nowadays speak of passive gradient and distinguish between central (prototypical) passives, semi-passives and pseudo-passives on the grounds of different tests (Quirk 1985: 167).

It is also worth noting that a passive transformation is not always possible. Quirk (1985: 162) notes that there are certain constraints on the sentence that is to undergo a passive transformation. For the sake of brevity, not all constraints will be discussed here. The one, however, which has a direct bearing on other functions of English past participles, is the verb constraint. According to it, most intransitive verbs and some “middle” ones do not occur in the passive at least in some of their senses<sup>5</sup>. Such verbs do have past participles but they occur in Perfect-aspect verb forms (another major use of the past participle), in noun phrases as adjectives, or in *-ed* participle clauses.

What unites all of the listed usages is their conveyance of some type of result from a previous action that has already been completed. In this line of thought, Haspelmath (1994: 159) proposes: “passive/ unaccusative participles should be understood as resultative participles in this sense. Both past passive participles (as in *the abused child*) and past unaccusative participles (as in *the wilted dandelion*) characterize their head by expressing a state that results from a previous event.” This could easily be said to hold true in perfect-aspect verb forms, as well, as the action or state they denote is characterized by precedence and completeness and often shows some result on the point of reference (be it present, past or future).

It seems quite intriguing that even participles used attributively are under certain restraints as to the type of the verb they are derived from. Bresnan (2016: 29) explains that some verbs (such as *thank*) have verbal but not adjectival passives and that only some intransitive verbs can undergo adjective conversion. We can say *an escaped prisoner*, but we cannot say *\*an exercised athlete*. On the grounds of previous research<sup>6</sup> and her own observations, she concludes that “The state denoted by the adjective appears to be the result state of the eventuality denoted by the past participle” and that is only possible with telic verbs (ibid.: 30).

The Bulgarian past passive participle is more limited in its functions. Apart from the passive-voice construction, it could also be used as an

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<sup>5</sup> See also Jespersen 1940: 419, Bresnan 1982.

<sup>6</sup> Langacker 1991, pp. 202-203; Parsons 1990, p. 236, etc.

adjective<sup>7</sup> – predicatively or attributively. In the former case, in Bulgarian we observe the same ambiguity as to whether a particular instance is an illustration of the Passive Voice or is only a predicative use of a participial. Thus, it seems clear that a set of principles for defining the status of past passive participles is necessary in Bulgarian as well. One has already been drawn up (Chakarova 2013: 70-84) and some of its tests closely resemble those used while distinguishing central passives from pseudo-passives in English.

Like in English, the formation of past passive participles from intransitive verbs is highly defective. K. Kutsarov (2012: 82), however, notes that there are also exceptions. Certain intransitive reflexive verbs having terminative aspect could form such participles (e.g. *възгордя се министърът* → *възгордян министър*), as well as some intransitive verbs that are used without a subject (e.g. *влизано е няколко пъти в зимника*).

Another restriction, which Bulgarian has and English does not, is the formation of secondary passives, as in (1.c) (when the Indirect Object has the role of the structural subject). Bulgarian does not allow such a transformation. This probably follows naturally from the fact that Indirect Objects in English could be introduced without a preposition (3):

- (1.a) Tom gave the book *to Susan*.
- (1.b) Tom gave *Susan* the book.
- (1.c) *Susan* was given the book.

Bulgarian past passive participles' more restricted sense and usage could explain the fact that they are not the only Bulgarian counterparts of English past participles. In some of its uses, the past participle parallels more closely the Bulgarian past active perfective or imperfective ones<sup>8</sup>. The former is often characterized as a resultative participle – as it “denotes a result of some activity” (Kutsarov 2007: 103)<sup>9</sup>. I. Kutsarov (2007: 120) defines the past passive participle as a resultative<sup>10</sup> one as well – when it is used independently, it denotes a passive verbal attribute which usually precedes the activity denoted by the main predicate in the sentence.

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<sup>7</sup> V. Georgiev (1985: 113) claims that the past passive participle has an additional function – the formation of new tense forms – resultative past. This issue is to be discussed in a separate paper.

<sup>8</sup> Nowadays the existence of a past active imperfective participle is questioned (Kutsarov 2012: 103).

<sup>9</sup> See also P. Pashov, 1965; G. Gerdzhikov 1973: 141.

<sup>10</sup> These are introduced as reproductive participles in K. Kutsarov (2012: 49).

### Corpus-Based Analysis

For the purposes of this paper, a corpus of 100 examples with past participles in English and their Bulgarian translations<sup>11</sup> was extracted from BulNC. The examples show an almost even distribution between fiction and non-fiction – 44% belong to fiction genres and 56% are excerpted from non-literary sources including administrative (24%), mass media (21%), popular (9%) and science (2%) texts. They included past participle forms of 2 regular (50 examples) and 2 irregular (50 examples) verbs – *collected*, *selected*<sup>12</sup>, *broken*, *chosen*. This selection was made for two particular reasons: these verbs could be used both predicatively and attributively, both in Active and in Passive Voice.

The present study does not try to distinguish between true passives and predicative constructions containing past participles – what is central, instead, is the formal structure of the constructions. Thus, it could be noted that 36% of the past participles in English occur in passive-voice constructions. 55.5% of these 36 sentences are translated in Bulgarian by means of passive-voice constructions (as seen in (2) below), 22.2% – using reflexive verbs, as in (3), 11% – by means of a noun or a phrase, 5.5% – a subordinate clause with a past passive participle, 2.8% – past passive participle used as an attribute, and 2.8% – verbal constructions containing Bulgarian past active participles.

(2) It was created by Greek artist Andreas Varotsos, whose design was selected from 13 bids. (EN)

Той е създаден от гръцкия художник Андреас Вароцос, чийто проект беше предпочетен пред други 13 предложения. (BG)

(3) He is apparently chosen by the government, but the qualities he is required to display are not those of leadership but those of finely judged outrage. (EN)

На пръв поглед той се избира от правителството, но качества, които трябва да притежава, не са тези на добър държавник, а на човек, способен да върши добре премислени безобразия. (BG)

The second most frequent position in which past participles occur is actually shared by two different usages – past participle attributes (both prepositive and postpositive) and perfect-aspect past participles – each holding 23%. 87% of the attributive uses in English are translated with past passive participles in attributive position, as seen in (4) below, 8.7% are not translated at all and 4.3% are translated by means of a noun or a phrase.

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<sup>11</sup> An authorized translation was found of those lacking one in BulNC.

<sup>12</sup> Preterite forms of the two regular verbs were excluded as they are of no interest to this research.



(4) The Dresden-china woman exclaimed petulantly, examining a broken finger nail. (EN)

Жената с лице като дрезденски порцелан възкликна ядосано и се вгледа в счупения си нокът. (BG)

As far as perfect-aspect verb phrases are concerned, the highest percentage of translation equivalents (82.6%) is held by verbal constructions containing Bulgarian past active participles, as in (5) below.

(5) The four points only formed a diamond because Langdon had connected adjacent points. (EN)

Фигурата, която виждаше, изобщо не бе замислена като ромб. Просто той беше свързал съседни точки. (BG)

The other four linguistic means by which past participles in perfect-aspect constructions are translated have equal percentages – 4.3% each. Two of these translation equivalents are of particular interest to the present study: prepositive past passive participle attributes (6) and passive constructions (7):

(6) Even the type of angel Bernini had selected seemed significant. (EN)

Изглежда, беше важен дори избраният от Бернини вид ангел. (BG)

(7) Despite a compromise reached last week, the process of drafting a new Serbia-Montenegro constitutional charter has broken down again over electing members of the joint parliament. (EN)

Въпреки компромиса, постигнат миналата седмица, процесът на изработване на новата сръбско-черногорска конституционна харта бе преустановен отново заради избора на членовете на общия парламент. (BG)

The last construction in which English past participles occur is the *-ed* participle clause – 18% of all examples. The highest percent of these clauses (72.2%) are translated in Bulgarian by means of subordinate clauses containing past passive participles:

(8) He is also said to have received support from businessmen connected to the Serb Democratic Party. (EN)

Говори се също, че той е подкрепян и от бизнесмени, свързани със Сръбската демократическа партия. (BG)

The rest of the examples of *-ed* past participle clauses are translated primarily by means of past passive participle constructions (16.7% – passive voice and 5.56% – a prepositive past passive participle attribute). Only 5.56% of the translation equivalents do not contain a passive participle but are rather a noun or phrase of some type.

## Conclusions

The linguistic data presented above leads us to the following conclusions:

1. English past participles and Bulgarian past passive participles share the same inflections and the same path of development – from declinable adjectives not recognizing the category of voice to past participles that recognize voice to a different degree.
2. The theoretical information on English past participles and Bulgarian past passive participles is quite similar. In both languages, there is a tendency to call them resultative participles and not passive ones.
3. The major difference between English past participles and Bulgarian past passive participles lies in the fact that the latter are much more restricted in formation and usage. Every English verb can form a past participle, which, however is not necessarily a passive one. Since Bulgarian past passive participles have grown to be much more specific in their meaning, only a restricted group of Bulgarian verbs have such forms, which are only used in passive verb phrases, as attributes and in subordinate clauses.
4. The analysis of the corpus has shown that the majority of English past participles are used in a passive sense – 77%. In Bulgarian more than half of the examples – 62% contain past passive participles, as well.

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