

The Grammatical Meanings of the Adjectival Participle in English¹⁾

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1. Introduction

The paper aims to reveal the various grammatical meanings of (pre- and postmodifying) adjectival participles in English, breaking them down into eight patterns: (i) the simple¹⁾ premodifying present participle (a *barking* dog); (ii) the compound premodifying present participle (a *studious-looking* girl); (iii) the simple premodifying past participle (a *closed* door); (iv) the compound premodifying past participle (a *well-written* book); (v) the simple postmodifying present participle (for the time *being*); (vi) the compound postmodifying present participle (a window *overlooking the street*); (vii) the simple postmodifying past participle (the people *concerned*); and (viii) the compound postmodifying past participle (a door *held open for him*).

The traditional explanation of the role of the premodifying participle (across these patterns) is that it conveys a meaning of 'permanence' or 'characteristicness'; conversely, the postmodifying participle is said to convey 'temporariness' or an 'actual action' (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: 1242, 1325, 1326, 1328; Bolinger 1967: 3). However, such explanations are based on vague concepts such as 'permanence' and 'temporariness', into which different shades of meaning seem to me to be classified.²⁾

In section 2, I will present my own hypotheses on adjectival participles, which are distinct from earlier explanations in that I deal with adjectival participles based on grammatical categories inherent in the predicate verb, namely, mood, tense, aspect, and voice.

In section 3, we will look at each of the grammatical meanings that

can be conveyed by adjectival participles, using examples from contemporary British novels.

2. Hypotheses

2.1. My grammatical tools for explaining adjectival participles

The most important point about the traditional explanation of the role of adjectival participles in the previous section is that premodifying participles do not refer to actual actions, whereas postmodifying ones do. To indicate reality is a significant aspect of postmodifying participles, and never to indicate reality a noteworthy aspect of premodifying participles.¹⁾

As far as I know, adjectival participles have never been dealt with in a way that is systematically based on grammatical categories connected with the predicate verb—mood, tense, aspect and voice. Because of the relevance of grammatical concepts such as progressive and passive and some relative-clause paraphrases in which different tenses appear, as in De Smet and Heyvaert (2011: 474) and Quirk et al. (1985: 1263–1265, 1326, 1328), adoption of tense, aspect and voice seems clearly reasonable here. However, as far as I know, mood has never been employed in explanations of adjectival participles. The reason for my adoption of this category is that the (especially indicative) mood of predicate verbs is related to the reality of what they describe, which is a key part of what is communicated by postmodifying participles, as stated above. Traditionally, three moods have been admitted in English grammar: indicative, subjunctive and imperative. I think that only the first is relevant to that existence or non-existence of the reality which is expressed by adjectival participles.²⁾ Consequently, in the paper, the term *mood* means indicative mood, and discussion of the presence or absence of mood refers to that mood only. If we take into consideration mood as well as tense, aspect and voice, I hope we will be able to deal with the grammatical meanings conveyed by adjectival participles better and more systematically than ever.

2.2. Hypotheses

I will put forward two hypotheses on pre- and postmodifying participles. The first is as follows:

Hypothesis I: The premodifying participle expresses the connotation of unreality and the grammatical meanings of aspect and voice, while the postmodifying participle expresses the connotation of reality and the grammatical meanings of aspect and voice. The connotation of reality here is taken to be conveyed by the 'grammatical meaning of the (indicative) mood' plus the 'grammatical meaning of tense', and the connotation of unreality by the non-presence of these.

First, let us analyse two examples of the postmodifying participle. (Grammatical meanings attributed to the participles are shown in square brackets [].)

- (1) Who is the man *wandering down the street*? (Quirk et al. 1985: 1326) [mood: *indicative*; tense: *present*; aspect: *progressive*; voice: *active*]
- (2) The car [...] *repaired by that mechanic* [...]. (Quirk et al. 1985: 1265) [mood: *indicative*; tense: *present/past*; aspect: *simple*³; voice: *passive*]
- (2') The car *that will be repaired/is* [...] *repaired/was* [...] *repaired by that mechanic* [...].

The indicative mood indicated by the postmodifying participles in (1) and (2) shows that the actions pointed to by them are actual ones. From the context, we can judge the tense of the participle in (1) to be the present tense,⁴ and the aspect to be the progressive aspect. As the paraphrases in (2') by Quirk et al. (1985) clearly show, the tense of the participle in (2) can be interpreted as present or past tense according to the context; the aspect can be said to be the simple, or non-progressive, aspect. Finally, present participles always carry active voice, as in (1), and past participles of transitive verbs passive voice, as in (2).

Next, we proceed to premodifying participles, which lack the grammatical meanings of (indicative) mood and tense. (Henceforth, the symbol 'φ' means there is no such grammatical meaning in the partici-

ple in question.)

- (3) Survivors were pulled from the *sinking* vessel. (De Smet and Heyvaert 2011: 483) [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *progressive*; voice: *active*]
- (4) The *wanted* man was last seen in Cambridge. (Quirk et al. 1985: 1328) [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *simple*; voice: *passive*]

Both premodifying participles here do not indicate mood or tense, that is to say, do not point to any actual action. Admittedly, we can often easily interpret the actions referred to by premodifying participles as actual ones; but such interpretations are no more than *inferential* ones based on the function of the anaphoric definite article *the* or on the context in which the premodifying participles occur. (We justly decide that it is an actual fact that the vessel was sinking in (3), but the interpretation is caused by the anaphoric definite article which refers the reader to the description prior to (3) of the actual event.) My view is that premodifying participles *in themselves* never express reality, that is, the grammatical meanings of indicative mood and tense.

Indeed, the argument contrary to my explanation that premodifying participles can be paraphrased into a relative clause (e.g. ‘an *interesting* book’ and its paraphrase ‘a book *which is interesting*’) and therefore can be said to show the grammatical meanings of (indicative) mood and tense seems plausible; but, on my hypothesis, the premodifying participle and the relative clause corresponding to it are different from each other in that the former lacks mood and tense and the latter, which includes a predicate verb, indicates them. Take a ‘*revolving* door’ for instance. Under my hypothesis, the premodifying present participle *revolving* lacks mood and tense, in other words, it does not express what really occurred, occurs, or will occur. Let us suppose a case of extreme kind: if a revolving door never revolved and were scrapped, we could nevertheless still call the door a revolving door. In this sense, we can conclude that premodifying participles in themselves do not denote any actual event or state—that is, they lack mood and tense. As mentioned above, if premodifying participles seem to refer to an actual

action in context, it is only due to inference. De Smet and Heyvaert (2011: 484) point out two readings allowed by the premodifying *exploding* in this sentence: While the *exploding* cigar that was intended to blow up in Castro's face is perhaps the best-known of the attempts of his life, others have been equally bizarre. The first is the 'inherent potential' reading ('the cigar is the kind of cigar that explodes'), and the other, the 'single specific bounded event' reading ('the cigar did explode'). My view is that the second reading is caused by inference based on the anaphoric definite article *the* (which allows the reader to identify the event in context) but not by the grammatical meaning conveyed by the premodifying participle; grammatically speaking, the premodifying *exploding* refers to the actual action on neither reading.

Hypothesis II: The premodifying participle presents an act or state it refers to as a 'characteristic' of the head noun. The postmodifying participle presents an act or state it refers to as an 'accident'⁵ of the head noun.

- (3) Survivors were pulled from the *sinking* vessel. [characteristic]
- (4) The *wanted* man was last seen in Cambridge. [characteristic]

Both premodifying participles—present *sinking* in (3) and past *wanted* in (4)—show characteristics of the head noun.

- (4') jobs *wanted* [accident]

Judging from the way in which Quirk et al. (1985: 1330) present (4'), the noun phrase *wanted jobs* would be unacceptable. The reason why the past participle *wanted* must be placed after the head noun in (4') is given by Hypothesis II: the state of 'being wanted (by people)' is not considered (unless in some special context) by English-speaking people to be a characteristic of, but merely an accidental state of, a *job*. Then, why is (4) acceptable? The reason is that, unlike the *wanted* in (4'), the *wanted* in (4) ('wanted by the police') is thought to be a characteristic of a particular *man*.

3. Mood, tense, aspect and voice as attributed to the adjectival participle

In this section, we will look at each of the grammatical meanings of adjectival participles using examples from contemporary British novels.¹⁾

3.1. Mood

Hypothesis I postulates that premodifying participles do not bear the grammatical meaning of mood at all. Further, as I stated in section 2.1, the only mood that is attributed to postmodifying participles is the indicative mood.

- (5) *Barking* dogs seldom bite. [proverb] [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *simple*; voice: *active*]
 (6) The dog *barking next door* sounded like a terrier. (Quirk et al. 1985: 1263) [mood: *indicative*; tense: *past*; aspect: *progressive*; voice: *active*]

The premodifying *barking* in (5) does not indicate dogs' actual act of barking; instead, it expresses a characteristic intrinsic to the head noun: to bark often. By contrast, the postmodifying *barking* in (6) indicates a dog's actual act of barking, taken to be accidental to the head noun.

- (7) Two oil lamps [...] shed a calm creamy light upon the *scratched* [...] surface of what was once a fine rosewood table [...]. [SS: 16] [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *perfect*; voice: *passive*]

Note that *scratched* here does not mean the table's past act of scratching itself or something else, but the state resulting from having been scratched.²⁾ That is to say, it lacks reality, that is, the meanings of mood and tense.

- (8) His reward for service *rendered* turned out to be the Czar's icon. [MH: 200] [mood: *indicative*; tense: *past*; aspect: *simple*; voice: *passive*]

Why does this simple past participle *rendered* postmodify the head noun even though the rule is that simple participles premodify the

head noun?³⁾ My answer is that, because the action indicated by the past participle *rendered* must be presented as an actual one, the writer has chosen to place the participle in the position after the head noun.⁴⁾ We can conclude that this *rendered* refers to an actual action of 'his' in the past ('service which was rendered by him'). In this light, the phrase *rendered service* is redundant: we take it for granted that service is rendered, in other words the noun *service* in itself includes the meaning of *rendered* connotatively.

3.2. Tense

As Hypothesis I postulates, premodifying participles do not bear the grammatical meaning of tense, while postmodifying participles represent present or past tense,⁵⁾ depending on the semantic context in which they occur. Let us look at some paraphrases in Quirk et al. (1985: 1263):

- (9) The person *writing reports* is my colleague.
 (9') The person *who will write|will be writing|writes|is writing|wrote|was writing reports* is my colleague.

Depending on the context, we can interpret the participial phrase *writing reports* in (9) as equivalent to one of the relative-clause paraphrases in (9'). From this pair of examples, we easily conclude that postmodifying participles represent tense.

- (10) Miss Kenton would prove the perfect solution to the problem *at present besetting us at Darlington Hall*. [RD: 49] [mood: *indicative*; tense: *present*; aspect: *progressive*; voice: *active*]

Here, the interpretation of the tense of the postmodifying participle is unambiguous: the adverbial *at present* unmistakably shows that the tense is the present.

- (11) [...] he said he thought it might be by one of the Huguenot silversmiths *working in London in the mid-eighteenth century* [...]. [LB: 315] [mood: *indicative*; tense: *past*; aspect: *simple*; voice: *active*]

In contrast to the adverbial *at present* in (10), the adverbial *in the mid-eighteenth century* in (11) demonstrates indubitably that the tense of the participle is the past tense.

3.3. Aspect

3.3.1. Simple aspect

In general, there have been two formal aspects—as realised in predicate verbs—admitted in the English language: the progressive and perfect aspects; however, I will count the simple form of a predicate verb itself as a form of the aspect and henceforth call it the *simple aspect*,⁶⁾ following the aspectual framework of Somiya (2010: 68–69).

- (12) I have heard of various instances of a butler being displayed as a kind of *performing* monkey at a house party. [RD: 35]
[mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *simple*; voice: *active*]

This *performing* should not be interpreted to imply the progressive aspect ('a monkey which *is performing*') but the simple aspect ('a monkey which *performs*') in this context.

- (13) She may, in the earlier times, have thought of escape; but gradually she fell, as so many *bullied* [...] women do, into a gradual despair. [SS: 158] [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *simple*; voice: *passive*]

This *bullied* is interpreted in context as showing simple aspect.

- (14) I find myself now in the attic room of this small cottage *belonging to Mr and Mrs Taylor*. [RD: 159] [mood: *indicative*; tense: *present*; aspect: *simple*; voice: *active*]

To *belong* is a state verb, and this *belonging* thus cannot represent a progressive aspect but must indicate a simple aspect.

- (15) My account is curtailed, but omits nothing of substance and faithfully narrates the actual words *spoken*. [SS: 239] [mood: *indicative*; tense: *past*; aspect: *simple*; voice: *passive*]

Premodifying *spoken* does not refer to any actual act of speaking;

instead it characterises the head noun: *spoken words* are the kind of words that are spoken, not written. In contrast, postmodifying *spoken* in (15) denotes the particular, actual act of speaking in the past.

3.3.2. Progressive aspect

The progressive aspect expresses either the progression of an action

- (3) Survivors were pulled from the *sinking* vessel.
 (16) The policeman *patrolling* was now only a few paces from the consulate [...]. [MH: 162] [mood: *indicative*; tense: *past*; aspect: *progressive*; voice: *active*]

or its iteration.

- (17) [...] I began again to study the *jumping* waters. [SS: 247]
 [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *progressive*; voice: *active*]

Postmodifying past participles can show the progressive only in periphrastic form, '*being* + past participle' (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: 1265).

3.3.3. Perfect aspect

With premodifying past participles, the perfect aspect refers to the one that conveys a resultant state.⁷⁾

With postmodifying past participles, it conveys a 'resultant state' or contributes to the meaning of 'pluperfect'. Note that pluperfect, or past perfect, comprises past tense and perfect aspect,⁸⁾ and that within adjectival participles, the pluperfect is indicated only by postmodifying past participles, which can show both past tense and perfect aspect. (It follows that premodifying past participles cannot indicate pluperfect because they lack tense.)

- (18) [...] we were confronted by a *closed* gate [...]. [RD: 207] [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *perfect*; voice: *passive*]

The perfect aspect of this *closed* conveys the resultant state of being closed; we should note that *closed* here does not refer to anyone's actual action but to a characteristic of the head noun.

- (19) Adam double-checked. It had to be some form of agreement *executed between the Russians and the Americans in 1867*. [MH: 248] [mood: *indicative*; tense: *past*; aspect: *perfect*; voice: *passive*]

The past participle *executed* here implies both past tense and perfect aspect—that is, the pluperfect. The time of the narrative is in the past (i.e., in 1966), while the time of the act referred to is much earlier (1867). This temporal gap is what the pluperfect expresses.

3.4. Voice

Present participles, whether they derive from intransitive or transitive verbs, represent the active voice.

- (20) He [...] looked across the roses at the *assembling* guests. [LB: 56] [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *progressive*; voice: *active*]
 (21) [...] the costs of such a trip might still come to a *surprising* amount [...]. [RD: 10] [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *simple*; voice: *active*]

Assembling in (20) is the present participle of the intransitive verb *assemble*; *surprising* in (21) is the present participle of the transitive verb *surprise* (and takes no object, as it is a ‘participial adjective’ rather than a present participle proper). Both present participles indicate active voice.

Past participles, if derived from intransitive verbs, indicate active voice, and if derived from transitive verbs, passive voice.

- (22) It had become almost dark, though there was still a little light over the sea where the *sunken* sun was still illuminating the line of white clouds [...]. [SS: 362] [mood: \emptyset ; tense: \emptyset ; aspect: *perfect*; voice: *active*]
 (13) She may, in the earlier times, have thought of escape; but gradually she fell, as so many *bullied* [...] women do, into a gradual despair. [SS: 158]

Sunken in (22) is the past participle of the intransitive verb *sink*; *bullied* in (13) is the past participle of the transitive verb *bully*. The former represents active voice, and the latter, passive voice.

4. Conclusion

What this paper has aimed to do is to present the grammatical meanings conveyed by the adjectival participle. The paper utilises grammatical categories inherent in the predicate verb—mood, tense, aspect and voice—and the concepts of *characteristic* and *accident* to explain differences in meaning between pre- and postmodifying participles. The table below shows the grammatical meanings conveyed by them.

	PREMODIFICATION		POSTMODIFICATION	
	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST PARTICIPLE	PRESENT PARTICIPLE	PAST PARTICIPLE
MOOD	φ	φ	INDICATIVE	INDICATIVE
TENSE	φ	φ	PRESENT/ PAST	PRESENT/ PAST
ASPECT	SIMPLE/ PROGRESSIVE	SIMPLE/ PERFECT	SIMPLE/ PROGRESSIVE	SIMPLE/ PERFECT
VOICE	ACTIVE	ACTIVE/ PASSIVE	ACTIVE	ACTIVE ¹⁾ / PASSIVE

Needless to say, this paper certainly does not exhaust or comprehensively explain this topic. Nevertheless, I hope it throws some light on a challenging grammatical phenomenon. In my view, one grammatical matter that still needs dealing with in connexion with the adjectival participle is the adjectival to-infinitive (e.g. a house *to live in*). Work on differences between adjectival participles and adjectival to-infinitives can rely on the treatment of the former presented here.

NOTES

Title

1) The paper is an abridged version of my master's thesis, presented to the postgraduate school of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

Section 1

1) In the paper I use the term *simple* to mean the use of participles without any arguments/adjuncts to them (e.g. a *sleeping* baby) except for the term *simple aspect*, and the term *compound* to refer to the use of participles with an argument/adjunct to them (e.g.

a baby *sleeping in bed*).

2) For example, *progressive* and *actuality* (or *reality*), even though they are different from each other (the former relates to aspect and the latter to mood and tense), are classified under the same category, *temporariness*.

Section 2

- 1) Cf. Jespersen (1914: 382) and Curme (1931: 64).
- 2) For one reason why adjectival participles do not, or cannot, indicate subjunctive mood, see Biber et al. (1999: 632).
- 3) On simple aspect, see section 3.3.1.
- 4) For the factors in determining tense in postmodifying participles, see Quirk et al. (1985: 1264) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 162).
- 5) In the paper I use the term *accident* in its philosophical meaning: 'a property of a thing which is not essential to its nature' (s.v. *accident* n. 3 in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Twelfth edition)). For example, the premodifying past participle *rotten* in 'a rotten apple' indicates a 'characteristic' of an apple, whereas the postmodifying past participle *eaten* in 'The food *eaten* was meant for tomorrow' (Quirk et al. 1985: 1265) refers to an 'accident' of the food.

Section 3

- 1) To collect examples of the adjectival participle I have used four present-day British novels:

Jeffrey Archer. *A Matter of Honor* (MH). New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005.

Alan Hollinghurst. *The Line of Beauty* (LB). New York/London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004.

Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Remains of the Day* (RD). London: Faber and Faber, 1989.

Iris Murdoch. *The Sea, The Sea* (SS). London: Triad Grafton Books, 1980.

After each example quoted from one of these novels is shown the abbreviated title and the page on which the example appears. For example, [SS: 16] indicates page 16 of *The Sea, The Sea*.

- 2) Cf. Bolinger (1967: 9).
- 3) As the following examples show, there are cases where compound participles premodify the head noun: There is of course no refrigerator, which is dismaying to a *fish-eating* man [SS: 14]; Adam began to devour the *freshly cooked* food [MH: 247].
- 4) Another example of a simple postmodifying participle is 'being' in the idiomatic phrase *for the time being*. The phrase can refer to the present, the past, or the future (cf. Jespersen 1931: 91); therefore, the present participle *being* must be placed after the head noun, whose position allows interpretation of tense in my hypothesis.
- 5) In the paper I admit two tenses: the present and the past.
- 6) For example, in the sentences *She dances well* and *She danced well*, both of the predicate verbs *dances* and *danced* are taken to be the simple aspect.
- 7) Note that here, the 'resultant state' includes the so-called 'statal passive', which is appropriately explained by Quirk et al. (1985: 169–170). In the paper I treat adjectival past participles meaning 'resultant state', whether they correspond to the perfect form

of the verb or to the statal passive, as denoting perfect aspect.

8) With predicate verbs, pluperfect is expressed by the periphrastic form *had* + past participle, in which the first *had* itself denotes the past tense, and the combination of auxiliary *have* + past participle, the perfect aspect.

Section 4

1) Compound past participles derived from intransitive verbs normally cannot post-modify the head noun. For exceptions, see Quirk et al. (1985: 1265).

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