

Parasitic participles and ellipsis in VP-focus pseudoclefts

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31st Comparative Germanic Syntax Workshop, Stellenbosch, December 3, 2016

1. Introduction

unexpected past participle appearing in VP-focus pseudoclefts

(1) *Dutch*

Wat ik heb ge-daan is [keihard werk-en / **ge-werk-t**]
what I AUX:1SG GE-do:PTCP be:3SG real.hard work-INF GE-work-PTCP
'What I did is work real hard.'

(2) *German*

Was ich ge-mach-t habe ist [einfach weitere Apps
what I GE-do-PTCP AUX:1SG be:3SG just more apps
installier-en / **installier-t**]
install-INF install-PTCP
'What I did is simply to install more apps.'

suggests an ellipsis analysis

(3) *Ellipsis analysis for parasitic participle pseudoclefts (Dutch)*

Wat ik heb ge-daan is || ~~ik heb~~ [keihard ge-werk-t]
what I AUX:1SG GE-do:PTCP be:3SG I AUX:1SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
'What I did was work real hard.'

(4) *Remnant ellipsis variant (cf. Ott & De Vries 2016)*

Wat ik heb ge-daan is || [keihard ge-werk-t] ~~heb~~ ~~ik~~
what I AUX:1SG GE-do:PTCP be:3SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP AUX:1SG I
'What I did was work real hard.'

alternative: capitalizing on the association between the focus-VP and the variable

(5) [[what_i Tense Anterior [dummy-V ⟨e⟩_i]] copula [_{VP} V []]
[+T,+ant]>[+ant] > > > > > > > > [+ant]

2. Pseudoclefts

general structure

(6) *wh-clause — copula — focus XP* (7) *variable inside wh-clause*
what he reads — is — books what_i he reads ⟨e⟩_i

two types of pseudocleft

(8) *specificational* (9) *predicational*
focus XP = ⟨e⟩_i focus XP = predicate of [what he reads]
> He reads books e.g. What he reads = x, x = focus XP
> What he reads is interesting / sheer garbage etc.

tests for bringing out the difference in Dutch

(10) a. pied piping wh-element > specificational
b. degree modification of the focus XP > predicational
c. messing with the copula > predicational

(11) *pied piping > specificational*

- a. Met wie hij ⟨e⟩ praat is de nieuw-e directeur
with who he speak:SG be:3SG DEF new-AGR director
'He is talking to the new director.' (specificational)
- b. * Met wie hij ⟨e⟩ praat is een eikel
with who he speak:SG be:3SG INDF acorn
(intended) 'The person he's talking to is a jerk' (predicational)

NB, shows that wh-clause = **question** in specificational, **free relative** in predicational pseudocleft

(12) *degree modification / copula adjustment > predicational*

- a. Wat hij schrijft is / word-t **je reinste** porno
what he write-3SG be:3SG / become-3SG utter porn
'The stuff he writes is/becomes utter porn.' (predicational)
- b. * Met wie hij ⟨e⟩ praat word-t de nieuw-e directeur
with who he speak:SG become-3SG DEF new-AGR director
(intended) 'The person he's talking to will be the new director.' (predicational)

3. VP-focus pseudoclefts

- (13) Wat ik ⟨e⟩ wil is [keihard werk-en]
what I want:SG be:3SG real.hard work-INF
'What I want is to work real hard.'

same specificational / predicational ambiguity

(14) *specificational*

Ik wil keihard werk-en
I want:SG real.hard work-INF
'I want to work real hard.'

(15) *predicational*

- a. Wat ik ⟨e⟩ wil word-t [keihard werk-en]
what I want:SG become:3SG real.hard work-INF
'The thing I will entail hard work.'

(16) *degree modification test*

- a. Wat ik ⟨e⟩ wil is [vrag-en om moeilijkhed-en]
what I want:SG be:3SG ask-INF for trouble-PL
'What I want is asking for trouble.' (specificational / predicational)
- b. Wat ik ⟨e⟩ wil is je reinste [vrag-en om moeilijkhed-en]
what I want:SG be:3SG utter ask-INF for trouble-PL
'What I want is a clear case of asking for trouble.' (predicational/*specificational)

outside modal auxiliaries > dummy verb *do*

- (17) Wat ik ⟨e⟩ { doe / deed / heb ge-daan } is keihard werken
what I do:1SG do:PST.SG AUX:1SG GE-do:PTCP is real.hard work-INF
'What I do/did is work real hard.'
- cf. * Ik { doe / deed / heb gedaan } keihard werken (order irrelevant)

not to host tense, but to host the variable

- (18) Wat ik hem ⟨e⟩ heb zie-n *(doe-n) is [keihard werk-en]
what I him AUX:1SG see-INF do-INF be:3SG real.hard work-INF
'What I saw him do is work real hard.'
- cf. Ik heb hem keihard zien (*doen) werken (order irrelevant)

4. VP-focus pseudoclefts with parasitic participles

(19) *Dutch*

Wat ik (e) heb ge-daan is [keihard **ge-werk-t**]
what I AUX:1SG GE-do:PTCP be:3SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
'What I did is work real hard.'

only when the wh-clause contains a past participle

(20) * Wat ik { deed / wou / probeer-de } is keihard ge-werk-t
what I do:PST.SG / want:PAST.SG / try-PST.SG be:3SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
(intended) 'What I did/wanted/tried is work real hard.'

and only with the dummy verb

(21) * Wat ik heb { ge-wil-d / ge-probeer-d } is keihard ge-werk-t
what I AUX:1SG GE-want/try-PTCP be:3SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
(intended) 'What I wanted/tried is work real hard.'

only specificational

(22) Wat ik ge-daan heb is { vrag-en / ge-vraag-d } om moeilijkheden
what I GE-do:PTCP AUX:1SG be:3SG ask-INF / GE-ask-PTCP for trouble
'What I did was ask for trouble.'
specificational: I literally asked for trouble (vragen/gevraagd)
predicational: The thing I did invited trouble for me (vragen/*gevraagd)

(23) *forcing the predicational reading > *parasitic participle*

a. Wat ik ge-daan heb is je reinste { vrag-en / *ge-vraag-d }
what I GE-do:PTCP AUX:1SG be:3SG utter ask-INF GE-ask-PTCP
om moeilijkheden
for trouble

'What I did was a clear case of asking for trouble.' (predicational / *specificational)

b. Wat ik ge-daan heb werd (op den duur)
what I GE-do:PTCP AUX:1SG become:PST.SG after some time
{ vrag-en / *ge-vraag-d } om moeilijkheden
ask-INF GE-ask-PTCP for trouble

'What I did became asking for trouble (after some time).' (predicational / *specificational)

5. Crosslinguistic parallels?

Known types of parasitic participles

- A. in verb clusters: morphological mix-up (Swedish, Frisian, German, Dutch/German dialects)
- B. in topicalization: predicate clefting (Yiddish, Haitian Creole, Nupe, Bùli, Krachi, many more)

(24) *Type A*

a. Han hade kunnat **skrivit** (Swedish, Wiklund 2001)
he AUX:PST can:PTCP write:PTCP
'He could have written.'

b. ... ohne es **verhinder-t** hab-en zu könn-en (German, Vogel 2009)
without it prevent-PTCP AUX-INF to can-INF
'... without having been able to prevent it.' (AUX > can > prevent)

c. Er isch grad kum-me **g-si** (Alemannic, Brandner 2008)
he AUX:3SG just come-PTCP GE-AUX:PTCP
'He had just arrived.'

(25) Type B

- a. Ge-gess-en hot Maks ge-gess-en fish (Yiddish, Cable 2004)
 GE-eat-PTCP AUX:3SG Max GE-eat-PTCP fish
 'As for eating, Max ate fish.'
- b. Se manje (*pen an) Jan manje pen an (Haitian, Larson/Lefebvre 1991)
 IT.IS eat bread DEF Jean eat bread DEF
 'John ate the bread.'
 > either topicalization, or restrictions on size of VP

No size restrictions with parasitic participles in pseudoclefts

- (26) Wat ik ge-daan heb is alle boek-en van Chomsky ge-lez-en
 what I GE-do:PTCP AUX:1SG be:3SG all book-PL of Chomsky GE-read-PTCP
 'What I did was read all books by Chomsky.'

6. Ellipsis analysis

- (27) focus NP is part of an asyndetically connected clause ('asyndetic source')
 What he reads is || (he reads) books (Peters & Bach 1968, Den Dikken et al 2000)
- (28) Wat ik heb ge-daan is (ik heb) keihard ge-werk-t
 what I AUX:1SG GE-do:PTCP be:3SG I AUX:1SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
 'What I did was work real hard.'

Advantages

- (i) explains participial morphology
- (ii) asyndetic source > only specificational (*What he reads is || he reads interesting)
- (iii) no asyndetic source for (most) ungrammatical cases

(29) cf. (20/21)

- * Ik { deed / wil-de / probeer-de / heb ge-wil-d } keihard ge-werk-t
 I do:PST.SG / want-PST.SG / try-PST.SG / AUX:1SG GE-want-PTCP real.hard GE-work-PTCP

(30) 'most', because:

- Wat ik deed is || *(ik heb) keihard ge-werk-t
 what I do:PST be:3SG I AUX:1SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
 'What I did was I worked real hard.'

An initial problem

(31) no source for pseudocleft with infinitives

- Wat ik deed is || (* ik deed) keihard werk-en
 what I do:PST be:3SG I AUX:1SG real.hard work-INF
 'What I did was I worked real hard.'

(32) but dummy verb is needed after VP-fronting

- [Keihard werk-en] *(deed) ik
 real.hard work-INF do:PST I
 'I worked real hard.'

This suggests remnant ellipsis analysis (à la Ott & De Vries 2016)

(33) Ott & De Vries (2016): Right Dislocation as fronting + remnant ellipsis

- a. Tasman saw them, the Maoris
- b. Tasman saw them || Tasman saw the Maoris (asyndetic source)
- c. Tasman saw them || the Maoris Tasman saw (fronting)
- d. Tasman saw them || the Maoris ~~Tasman saw~~ (ellipsis)

When something's wrong with the asyndetic source, fronting usually fixes it

(34) *ECM verb interrupting the focus VP*

- a. Wat ik hem heb zie-n doe-n is **keihard werk-en**
what I him AUX:1SG see-INF do-INF be:3SG real.hard work-INF
'What I saw him do is work real hard.'
- b. Ik heb hem **keihard** zien (*doen) **werk-en** (nonconstituent)
- c. **Keihard werken** heb ik hem zien doen (constituent)

(35) *object clitic wanders off to the left*

- a. Wat hij gisteren ge-daan heeft is **'m op-ge-lad-en**
what he yesterday GE-do:PTCP AUX:3SG be:3SG OCL up-GE-charge-PTCP
'What he did yesterday is charge it.'
- b. Hij heeft **'m** gisteren **op-ge-lad-en** (nonconstituent)
- c. **'m op-ge-lad-en** heeft hij gisteren (constituent)

(36) *asyndetic source features fused negation*

- a. Wat hij **niet** ge-daan heeft is **een** boek ge-lez-en
what he NEG GE-do:PTCP AUX:3SG be:3SG INDF book GE-read-PTCP
'What he didn't do is read a book.'
- b. Hij heeft { **geen** / #niet een } boek ge-lez-en (fused negation)
- c. **Een** boek ge-lez-en heeft hij **niet** (no fused negation)

(37) *asyndetic source has te-infinitive*

- a. Wat hij gaa-t prober-en is een boek schrijv-en
what he ASP.AUX-3SG try-INF be:3SG INDF book write-INF
'What he is going to try to do is write a book.'
- b. Hij gaa-t prober-en een boek *(te) schrijven (+te)
- c. Een boek schrijv-en gaa-t hij prober-en (-te)

7. Problems with the (remnant) ellipsis analysis

7.1 How is the asyndetic source derived?

(38) *plausibly from a pseudocleft: danger of circularity*

What he reads is || he reads books < What he reads is books. He reads books.

(39) Asyndetic construction is derived from a sequence *AB* such that

- (i) A entails B
 - (ii) A and B have identical narrow focus constituents
 - (iii) A and B have identical focus related topics (Tancredi 1992)
- Derivation: A and B are collapsed by deleting the focus constituent in A

(40) If (39) is the correct derivation, there must be a source for the pseudocleft other than ellipsis

7.2 Material in the focus related topic of the wh-clause that is not in the asyndetic source

(41) *What I like about John is [I like] his sense of humor [*about John] (Green 1971)*

- a. Wat we aan dat probleem ge-daan heb-ben is veel vergader-d
what we about that problem GE-do:PTCP AUX-PL be:3SG a.lot meet-PTCP
'What we did about that problem is hold a lot of meetings.'
- b. We heb-ben (*aan dat probleem) veel vergader-d
we AUX-PL about that problem a.lot meet-PTCP
'We held a lot of meetings.'
- c. Veel vergader-d heb-ben we (*aan dat probleem)
a.lot meet-PTCP AUX-PL we about that problem
'We held a lot of meetings.' (fronting does not help)

7.3 Material that is not in the focus related topic yet must undergo ellipsis

(42) *polar negation*

- a. Wat ik NIET ge-daan heb is keihard ge-werk-t
what I NEG GE-do:PTCP AUX:1SG be:3SG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
'What I did NOT do is work real hard.'
- b. Wat ik NIET ge-daan heb is || ik heb *(NIET) keihard ge-werk-t
what I NEG GE-do:PTCP AUX:1SG be:3SG I AUX:1SG NEG real.hard GE-work-PTCP
'What I did NOT do is I did NOT work real hard.'

7.4 Material that cannot be fronted in the asyndetic source, yet constitutes the focus VP

(43) *negative polarity item inside VP*

- a. Wat geen STUDENT wil is ook maar IETS voorbereid-en
what NEG.INDF student want:SG be:3SG MINIM anything prepare-INF
'What no student wants is to prepare the slightest thing.'
- b. Geen STUDENT wil ook maar IETS voorbereid-en
NEG.INDF student want:SG MINIM anything prepare-INF
'No student wants to prepare the slightest thing.'
- c. * Ook maar IETS voorbereid-en wil geen STUDENT
MINIM anything prepare-INF want:SG NEG.INDF student

7.5 Lack of generalization

(44) The focus VP must have a different source in

- a. predicational pseudoclefts
b. *it*-clefts

(45) It's (*he reads) books that he reads

8. A base-generation analysis

(46) *base-generation in minimalism*

- a. focus VP merged directly from the Numeration
b. focus VP enters Numeration as output of separate derivation (layered derivations, Zwart 2009)
c. morphology is post-Narrow Syntax (spell out of features accumulated in Narrow Syntax)
>> **how does the parasitic participle get its morphology?**

(47) *the position of the variable is crucial*

- a. T c-commands ⟨e⟩ > parasitic participle allowed
wat ik T [⟨e⟩ gedaan heb] is keihard werken/gewerkt
what I done have is real.hard work/worked
'What I did is work real hard.'
- b. ⟨e⟩ c-commands T > parasitic participle not allowed
wat ⟨e⟩ T mij [genekt heeft] is keihard werken/*gewerkt
what me killed has is real.hard work/worked
'What did me in is work real hard.'

(48) *subject gap pseudocleft is still specificational*

- * Wat mij ge-nek-t heeft is je reinste vrag-en om moeilijkhed-en
what me GE-do.in-PTCP AUX:3SG be:3SG utter ask-INF for trouble-PL
(intended) 'The thing that did me in invited trouble for me.'

(49) *structure of the functional domain*

- a. T is actually two positions: ANCHORING (tense) and POINT OF VIEW (aspect), cf. Wiltschko 2014
b. c-command relations: C > T > POV > V
c. in Dutch T = (unmarked, past), POV = (unmarked, anterior)
d. features accumulated in VP derive from (i) subject [AGR], (ii) T [PRS/PST], (iii) POV [ANT]

(50) *the two past tenses in Dutch* (Verkuyl 2008, Zwart 2007)

- a. simple past (like present) = [-anterior], so only has values for T
- b. periphrastic past (*have/be* + past participle) = [+anterior], plus additional value for T

(51) *the relevance of the dummy verb*

- a. the features controlled by the subject (AGR), T and POV (anterior) are realized on V
- b. dummy V potentially shares these features with ⟨e⟩ (the VP-variable in VP-focus pseudoclefts)
> the variable in subject position will never get these features

(52) *a defining property of specificational pseudoclefts is* (Heycock & Kroch 1999, Sharvit 1999)
The focus XP is interpreted in the position of the variable ⟨e⟩

(53) *connectivity effects support (52): reflexivity, negative polarity, floating quantifier*

- a. Wat hij ⟨e⟩ ge-daan heeft is [zichzelf benoem-d]
what he GE-do:PTCP AUX:3SG be:3SG REFL:3 appoint:PTCP
'What he did is appoint himself.' (specificational)
- b. Wat geen STUDENT ⟨e⟩ ge-daan heeft is
what NEG.INDF student GE-do:PTCP AUX:3SG be:3SG
[ook maar IETS voorbereid]
MINIM anything prepare:PTCP
'What no student has done is prepare the slightest thing.' (specificational, cf. (44))
- c. Wat ze ⟨e⟩ ge-daan heb-ben is allemaal Trump ge-stem-d
what they GE-do:PTCP AUX-INF be:3SG all Trump GE-vote-PTCP
'What the whites did is all vote for Trump.' (specificational)

(54) a focus VP in a pseudocleft has a parasitic participle when

- (i) the focus VP is interpreted in the position of the variable ⟨e⟩ (i.e. specificational ps.cleft)
- (ii) the variable ⟨e⟩ has the feature [anterior]

(55) *morphological realization in Dutch* (3SG), *werken* = work

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| a. [+agr, +tense, -anteriority] | werkt/werkte | e. [+agr, -tense, -anteriority] | * |
| b. [+agr, +tense, +anteriority] | heeft/had gewerkt | f. [+agr, -tense, +anteriority] | * |
| e. [-agr, +tense, -anteriority] | werken | g. [-agr, -tense, -anteriority] | werken |
| f. [-agr, +tense, +anteriority] | gewerkt hebben | h. [-agr, -tense, +anteriority] | gewerkt |

(56) parasitic participle is the morphological realization of the single feature [anterior]

Selected references

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