

**In: Romance Linguistics 2012, ed. by Jason Smith & Tabea Ihsane**

**ADJECTIVIZATION OF PARTICIPLES IN ROMANCE\***  
**A GRADUAL PROCESS?**

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***Abstract***

The well-known distinction between verbal participles and adjectival ones has been fine-grained in the last decades. Within the adjectival participles, Kratzer (1994) and Embick (2004), for German and English resp., distinguish between stative and resultative participles. Sleeman (2011) distinguishes two types of verbal participles in Germanic. She argues that the postnominal verbal participle in Dutch and English is fully eventive, while the prenominal one is not fully adjectival, as has been claimed by Embick (2004), but to a lesser extent eventive.

In this paper it is claimed that Romance languages also display the four stages in the adjectivization process. It is argued that, not only in Germanic, but also in Romance, the less fully eventive verbal participle does exist, on the basis of an analysis of the French passive participle in combination with the adverb *très* “very” and the Romanian present participle in modifier position preceded by *cel*.

**1. Introduction**

Traditionally, passive participles are divided into two types: verbal passives, as in (1), and adjectival passives, as in (2) (see, e.g., Wasow 1977 and Levin & Rappaport 1992):

- (1) The door has been opened by John.
- (2) John is very astonished.

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\* We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments. Dana Niculescu’s part of this paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/89/1.5/S/59758.



In Romance, participles generally occur in postnominal position. The question that arises is if a distinction between two types of verbal participles, a purely eventive one and a less eventive one, can also be made for Romance. On the basis of French and Romanian, we claim that in Romance, just like in Germanic, the four types of interpretation represented in (9) are present, bringing support for the distinction of a fourth type of participle, situated on the scale above between the purely eventive one and the resultative one.

The paper is structured as follows. In §2, we use the combination of the adverb *très* “very” with eventive passive participles in French as a first piece of evidence for our claim that not only Germanic, but also Romance possesses the ‘less eventive’ type of participle. In §3, this is proved on the basis of *cel* + present participle in Romanian. We end the paper, in §4, with some concluding remarks.

## 2. *Four interpretations of passive participles in French*

Just like for Germanic, the three types of passive participles identified by Kratzer (1994) and Embick (2004) can be distinguished for French (10-12). Just as in (3), the inflected verb in (12) is a copula, whereas the participle is not stative, but expresses the result of an event:

- |      |   |               |
|------|---|---------------|
| (10) | <i>Le livre a été lu par Paul.</i><br>the book has been read by Paul<br>“The book has been read by Paul.”                 | (eventive)    |
| (11) | <i>La fille semble être très étonnée.</i><br>the girl seems be very astonished<br>“The girl seems to be very astonished.” | (stative)     |
| (12) | <i>Les rues sont nettoyées.</i><br>the streets are cleaned<br>“The streets are clean.”                                    | (resultative) |

In this section, we argue, on the basis of the combination of the adverbs *beaucoup* “much” and *très* “very” that two types of eventive participles can be distinguished in French (see also Sleeman 2014).

In the standard case, the adverb of degree *beaucoup* “much, a lot” occurs with verbs and the adverb of degree *très* “very” occurs with adjectives (13-14). *Beaucoup* cannot modify adjectives and *très* cannot be used with simple, inflected, verbs (15-16):

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| (13) | <i>Cela m'étonne beaucoup.</i><br>that me astonished much<br>“That astonishes me a lot.” |
|------|--|

- (14) *Il est très heureux.*  
 he is very happy  
 “He is very happy.”
- (15) *\*Il est beaucoup heureux.*  
 he is much happy
- (16) *Alain travaille \*très / beaucoup.*  
 Alain works very / much  
 “Alain works a lot.”

As the examples (17-19) show, participles can occur both with *beaucoup* “much, a lot” and *très* “very” (e.g., Doetjes 1997; Abeillé & Godard 2003; Gaatone 2007, 2008):

- (17) *On a beaucoup/très apprécié ce discours.*  
 we have much/very appreciated this speech  
 “We appreciated this speech a lot.”
- (18) *Il s’ en est très occupé.*  
 he REFL of-it is very occupied  
 “He has occupied himself a lot with it.”
- (19) *Ce discours a été ?beaucoup/très apprécié.*  
 that speech has been much/very appreciated  
 “The speech has been appreciated a lot.”

According to Gaatone (2008), the use of *très* “very” in these contexts cannot be due to the fact that the contexts in (17-19) would express a state, a property, generally related to the class of adjectives. He states that (17-19) are verbal. He observes that there are also many examples involving *très* with a passive with an agent introduced by “by”, which means that they are agentive and express eventualities, rather than being resultative / stative:

- (20) *Ce comportement est très critiqué par la presse.*  
 this behavior is very criticized by the press  
 “This behavior is much criticized by the press.”

If both *beaucoup* and *très* can be used with eventive participles, it is interesting to know what the choice of the adverb in combination with the participle can tell us about the interpretation of the participle. We hypothesize that the adverb of degree *très* makes the participle less eventive, because in the standard case it is used with adjectives. In order to find out whether this hypothesis is correct, we carried out a corpus research using the categorized version of the literary database Frantext.<sup>1</sup> We counted

<sup>1</sup> The whole corpus was used. The categorized version of Frantext (ATILF – CNRS, University of Nancy) contains 1940 annotated literary works, 127.515.681 words, covering the period 1830-2009).

the number of occurrences of *beaucoup* and *très* in combination with participles in verbal and adjectival constructions:

- *avoir* “to have” + participle (“he has impressed”)
- reflexive pronoun + *être* “to be” + participle (“she has exhausted herself)
- *être* “to be” + participle in passive construction (“it has been criticized”)
- copula *être* “to be” + participle (“they were astonished”)

The results of the analysis are presented in table 1:<sup>2,3</sup>

	<i>beaucoup</i>	percentage	<i>très</i>	percentage
<i>avoir</i>	2656	99.5%	13	0.5%
reflexive	225	97%	6	3%
passive	33	17%	159	83%
copula + <i>par</i>	0	0%	45	100%
copula + adjectival part.	0	0%	(>) 155	100%

table 1: percentage of use of *beaucoup*/*très* with participles

The examples (21-26) illustrate the use of *beaucoup* and *très* with *avoir* “to have” + participle (21-22), a reflexive participial verb (23-24) and a passive verb (25-26).

- (21) *j'ai beaucoup connu votre père*  
I have much known your father  
“I have known your father very well”
- (22) *vous m'avez très intimidé*  
you me have very intimidated  
“you have intimidated me a lot”
- (23) *le système ... s'est beaucoup perfectionné*  
the system ... REFL is much ameliorated  
“the system ... has ameliorated a lot”
- (24) *je me suis très fatigué à bicyclette*  
I REFL am very tired on bike

<sup>2</sup> Since adjectival participles are not always categorized as participles, but also as adjectives, (>) indicates that the number 155 is a minimum. It only indicates the number of occurrences of *très* with a participle that is categorized as an adjectival participle, and not as an adjective, in Frantext.

<sup>3</sup> Occurrences of *beaucoup* “often”, *beaucoup* “many/a lot of things” or *beaucoup* + noun (= Quantification at a Distance, QAD) in combination with a participle have not been eliminated from the results, but this does not make a difference for the interpretation of the data.

- “I have exhausted myself a lot while I was cycling”
- (25) *vous m’êtes beaucoup recommandée par madame d’Arglade*  
 you me are much recommended by Mrs. d’Arglade  
 “you have been highly recommended to me by Mrs.  
 d’Arglade”
- (26) *ma soeur est très prise par son petit garçon*  
 my sister is very taken by her little boy  
 “my sister is occupied a lot by her young son”

Contrary to *beaucoup*, *très* can also be used in combination with an adjectival participle. In (27), *par* means “because of” and not “by”, which means that it does not head a *by*-phrase. The participle in (28) is resultative and the one in (29) is stative:

- (27) *il est midi et je suis très fatigué par la vie irrégulière que je mène*  
 it is noon and I am very tired by the life irregular that I lead  
 “it is noon and I am very tired because of the irregular life that I am leading”
- (28) *Strasbourg vous plaît? ... Beaucoup. Je suis très séduit.*  
 Strasbourg you pleases? Much. I am very seduced  
 “Do you like Strasbourg? ... Very much. I like it a lot.”
- (29) *ils furent très surpris*  
 they were very surprised  
 “they were very surprised”

The results in Table 1 show that, as expected, *beaucoup* occurs with verbal participles and *très* occurs with adjectival participles. But furthermore the results show that *très* can also occur with verbal participles. We take this to mean that *très*, just like the prenominal position in the case of participles in Germanic, makes the participle ‘less eventive’. We suggest that *très* is used with verbal passive participles, and even much more than *beaucoup*, because the adjectival feature that was present in the Latin perfect passive participle (Steriade 2012) is still present in the passive participle, and in the resultative and stative participle, which are derived from the passive one. A second reason for the use of *très* with participles might be that in many of the examples *très* modifies a participle of a psych verb, which, in the present or imperfective tense, has a stative character.

- (30) adjectival ←=====→ verbal
- très*                      *très*                      *très*                      *beaucoup*
- cf. Germanic    prenominal            prenominal            prenominal            postnominal

In this section, we have argued that the combination with *très* draws the verbal past/passive participle in French toward the adjectival side of the scale representing the aspectual interpretations of participles. In the next section we claim that the Romanian adjectival determiner *cel* has the same effect on present participles.

### 3. Four interpretations of present participles in Romanian

#### 3.1 *The gradual adjectivization of the Romanian present participle*

This section brings more evidence that the adjectivization of participles is a gradual process in Romance, supporting the hypothesis that one can distinguish between two types of verbal participles, i.e. the fully eventive and the less fully eventive one, which occupy different steps in the adjectivization process (Sleeman 2011). We argue that this distinction exists in Romanian on the basis of an analysis of the nominal structures containing a present participle in modifier position. The focus of this section will be the configuration containing a verbal participle preceded by the determiner *cel*, which has characteristics that place it between the fully eventive verbal and the postnominal adjectival participle on the adjectivization scale (see table 2). Since in Romanian, as in French, word order cannot be advanced as an argument for the existence of different uses of verbal participles, we shall use evidence coming from lexical and grammatical aspect to argue for the existence of an intermediate stage in the adjectivization process, represented by the *cel*-verbal participle.

<b>Verbal present participle →</b>	<b><i>Cel</i>-verbal present participle →</b>	<b>Postnominal adjectival present participle →</b>	<b>Prenominal adjectival present participle -Episodic</b>
Full eventivity	Lower eventivity	+/-Episodic	

table 2: *the adjectivization of the Romanian present participle*

#### 3.2 *The data: the Romanian present participle in modifier position*

Romanian displays four structures in which the present participle has the function of modifier in the DP. The present participles in the configurations (31) and (34) are verbal, and the ones in (32) and (33) are adjectival.

The participles in (31) preserve the morpo-syntactic characteristics of their verbal base, such as obligatory lexicalization of their direct object (31a), of clausal negation (31b) and of their prepositional object (31c). On the other hand, these participles do not display adjectival behavior: they do not agree with the head noun in gender, number and case, they disallow adjectival degree markers, and cannot be complements of the copula *be*

(31c).

- (31) a. *fata aducând acum apă*  
 girl.F.THE bringing now water  
 “the girl bringing water now”
- b. *mâncarea nemirosind a nimic*  
 dish.F.THE not-smelling like nothing  
 “the dish which does not smell like anything”
- c. *mâna mea (\*foarte) tremurând /*  
 hand.F.THE my very trembling /  
*\*este tremurând de frig*  
 is trembling of cold

The postnominal adjectival present participles in (32) agree in gender, number and case with the head noun. They allow the combination with *foarte* “very”, the adjectival degree marker (32a), and with the determiner *cel*, which typically selects adjectives (32b). They can receive an episodic reading, as shown by the possibility to take on the temporal adjunct *acum* “now” (32b). As opposed to the verbal participles in (31), they cannot lexicalize their direct object (32c), and the lexicalization of their prepositional object is optional, as in (32b).

- (32) a. *o mână foarte tremurând-ă*  
 a hand.F very trembling-F.SG  
 “a very trembling hand”
- b. *mâna (cea) tremurând-ă acum (de frig)*  
 hand.F.THE CEL.F.SG trembling-F.SG now of cold  
 “the hand trembling now with cold”
- c. *natura îmbătând-ă (\*pe mine)*  
 nature.F.THE intoxicating.F.SG PE me  
 “the intoxicating nature”

The prenominal adjectival participles in (33) show a number of restrictions compared to the postnominal participles in (32), placing them at the right-hand end on the adjectivization scale, as fully adjectival (see table 2). They can only combine with modifiers, including the adjectival degree marker *foarte* “very”, but not with complements (33a), and they cannot receive an episodic reading, a fact shown by the incompatibility with the temporal adverb *acum* “now” (33b).

- (33) a. *o ușor / încă / foarte tremurând-ă (\*de emoție) voce*  
 a slightly/still /very trembling-F.SG of emotion voice  
 “a slightly / still / very trembling voice”
- b. *(\*acum) suferind-a fată*  
 now suffering-F.SG.THE girl

“the suffering girl”

The structures under (34), containing verbal participles, are minimally different from (31), i.e. through the lexicalization of the determiner *cel*. These are rarely attested structures, identified on the basis of a corpus analysis which we undertook. The *cel*-verbal participle has the same syntactic characteristics as the participle in (31), but a different syntactic behavior than the post- and prenominal adjectival participles in (32) and (33). Agreement with the head noun does not take place; moreover, it requires for its prepositional (34a), as well as for its direct object (34b) to be lexicalized, and it also allows combination with the temporal adverbial *acum* “now”, which is a diagnostic test for its episodic interpretation (34a).

- (34) a. *camera lui cea mirosind \*(acum \*(a parfum)*  
 room-F.THE his CEL.F.SG smelling acum like perfume  
 “his room which now smells like perfume”
- b. *fata asta cea mereu desenând*  
 girl.F.THE this CEL.F.SG always drawing  
*animale ciudate*  
 animals strange  
 “this girl who is always drawing strange animals”

We claim that the verbal participle under (34) displays a lower eventivity degree than the fully eventive configuration under (31), which is triggered by the presence of the determiner *cel* in the structure. It follows that configuration (34) represents an intermediate step in the adjectivization process, being positioned between the fully eventive verbal participle and the postnominal adjectival participle, as in Table 2. The *cel*-verbal participle structure has a mixed categorial behavior: while still verbal in nature, it is the complement of the determiner *cel*, which typically selects adjectives (see also Niculescu 2014). Evidence for the lower eventivity of (34) will come from lexical and grammatical aspect, which will be discussed in the next sub-sections.

The analysis of the Romanian participial structure is made on the basis of a digitalized corpus of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Romanian literature and of an internet search. For structure (34), which is extremely rare, an acceptability test was conceived and given to 9 native speakers.

### 3.3 The Romanian *cel*-present participle structure in modifier position

The configuration displaying a verbal present participle preceded by the determiner *cel* will be the focus of this section, since its behavior proves that two types of verbal present participles in modifier position can be distinguished, placed on different steps in the process of adjectivization. We shall first give a short description of the determiner *cel* and its uses,

followed by an analysis of the restrictions on lexical and grammatical aspect which are displayed by the *cel*-participle structure.

### 3.3.1 *The determiner cel*

The determiner *cel* is a type of definite article which, uniquely among Romance languages, does not select a noun as its complement, but an adjective / modifier phrase (35). *Cel* can occur both in structures with a covert and with an overt head noun. When the head noun is realized, it takes the suffixal definite article, which means that *cel* is the second definite determiner in the configuration; in this configuration, the realization of *cel* is always optional. The word order of the *cel*-modifier is fixed; it can only be placed postnominally (Cornilescu 1992). The *cel*-configuration in (35) is an instance of a double definite structure. It can be paralleled with polydefinite nominal constructions in other languages outside the Romance territory, such as Greek or Swedish (Giusti 1994, Campos and Stavrou 2004, Marchiș and Alexiadou 2009).

- (35) *fata*      (*cea*)      *mică*  
 girl.F.THE CEL.F.SG    little.F.SG  
 “the little girl”

It has been argued in the literature that the adjectival determiner imposes two restrictions on its complement, a semantic and a categorial one (Cornilescu 2006, Cornilescu and Nicolae 2011). The semantic restriction is the following: in the presence of *cel*, the noun’s modifier will always have an individual-level reading. In the case of non-finite verb forms, this reading is the result of the process of stativization which takes place as a consequence of their adjectivization. In terms of category selection, the claim is that the determiner *cel* cannot select a verbal complement: a non-finite verb form will first adjectivize and only afterwards the combination with *cel* will become possible. However, we showed in the previous section that the *cel*-modifier can also receive an episodic reading, and it is [+verbal] in structures in which the verbal present participle is the complement of *cel*, therefore we consider that these restrictions on the occurrence of the adjectival determiner are too strictly formulated.

As for the reason why the second definite determiner should occur in the DP, two factors were found to trigger the realization of *cel*: a pragmatic factor, salience, and a syntactic factor, the need to mark the noun’s modifier as being predicative. At the pragmatic level, the occurrence of the determiner *cel* indicates that the nominal modifier encodes the most salient property of the head, as in (36a) (Marchiș and Alexiadou 2009, Cornilescu and Nicolae 2011); in the absence of *cel* the modifier is marked as [-salient] (36b). At the syntactic level, *cel* marks the noun’s modifier as being able to occur inside the DP, in predicative position; attributive modifiers cannot be preceded by *cel* (Cinque 2004, Cornilescu 2006, Marchiș and Alexiadou

2009).

- (36) a. *Vecina mea cea urâtă este doctor.*  
neighbor.F.THE my CEL.F.SG ugly is doctor  
“My ugly neighbor is a doctor”  
b. *Urâta mea vecină este doctor.*  
ugly.F.THE my neighbor is doctor  
“My ugly neighbor is a doctor”

### 3.3.2 *The cel-verbal participle and lexical aspect*

This section analyzes the aspectual verb classes which can occur in the *cel*-verbal participle structure. A parallel will be drawn with the configurations in which the verbal present participle is not the complement of the adjectival determiner (the fully eventive type), in order to argue for the lower eventivity of the *cel*-verbal participle structure.

As far as the fully eventive verbal participles are concerned, we can notice that their verbal base can belong to any aspectual class, including accomplishments (typology taken over from Vendler 1967).

- (37) *omul pictând un tablou*                      **Accomplishment**  
“the man painting a painting”

In double definite structures, the predication headed by the verbal present participle cannot belong to the type *accomplishment*, therefore, it will always be recategorized into an activity (38-39). The process of recategorization of an accomplishment into an activity takes place at the level of the predication as a whole, not of the verb alone, by changing the form of the verb’s direct object. Semanticists have argued that the form of the internal argument is a factor which determines the verb’s event type and which is responsible for aspectual shifts (Bach 1986, Verkuyl 1989, Pustejovsky 1995). Specifically, the occurrence of an indefinite plural in direct object position (as in 39) instead of a singular noun (as in 38) leads to the reinterpretation of an accomplishment as an activity, which will pass the diagnostic tests of activities proposed by Dowty (1979: 60). In (39), the individual reading of the participial modifier (triggered by the use of the adverbial *mereu* “always”) is favored over the episodic reading, which is not fully acceptable.

- (38) \**Fata cea fotografiind acum un copil este Ana.*  
girl.THE CEL.F.SG photographing now a child is Ana  
“The girl photographing a child now is Ana.”  
(39) *fata cea (mereu) fotografiind (?acum) copiii sărmani*  
girl.THE CEL.F.SG always photographing now children poor  
“the girl always / now photographing poor children”

The corpus analysis has revealed that the other two eventive predication types (achievements and activities), as well as verbs designating states, can occur in the *cel*-present participle structure. The stative verb bases are by far the most frequent. This can be explained as a consequence of the fact that *cel* typically selects adjectives, which also designate states. The examples below contain the verb *cădea* “fall”, denoting an achievement (40), the verb *tremura* “tremble”, denoting an activity (41), and the stative verb *sclipi* “glimmer” (42). They all encode episodic events:

- (40) *copiii se joacă prin zăpada cea așezată*  
 the children play in snow.F.THE CEL.F.SG lain  
*și prin zăpada cea căzând încă* (internet)  
 and in snow.F.THE CEL.F.SG falling still  
 “the children are playing in the already lain snow and in the still falling snow”
- (41) *vocile cele tremurând de emoție ale fetelor*  
 voices.F.THE CEL.F.PL trembling of emotion of the girls  
 “the voices trembling with emotion of the girls”
- (42) *roua cea sclipind acum în soare*  
 dew.F.THE CEL.F.SG glimmering now in sun  
 “the dew glimmering now in the sun”

### 3.3.3 *The aspectual values of the cel-verbal participle*

Next to the restrictions on the event type, the aspectual values of the *cel*-participle also prove its lower eventivity compared to the verbal present participle which is not preceded by *cel*. The aspectual heads that dominate the *cel*-verbal participle are restricted to the Imperfective ones (the progressive (43a), and the habitual (43b), as defined by Comrie (1976)); the Perfective Aspect is illicit in this structure (43c). On the other hand, the fully eventive verbal participle in modifier position can be the complement of the Perfective Aspect (43d).

- (43) a. *zăpada cea căzând încă*  
 “the still falling snow”  
 b. *stelele cele mereu plângând*  
 “the always crying stars”  
 c. *\*zăpada cea căzând recent*  
 “the recently falling snow”  
 d. *zăpada căzând recent*  
 “the recently falling snow”

The progressive and the habitual were analyzed as stativization mechanisms for eventive verbs (Parsons 1990: 171, Rothmayr 2009: 35-6). The *cel*-verbal participle structure makes use of the progressive and of the

habitual aspectual values for stativizing the event denoted by the verbal base. The fact that the *cel*-verbal participle cannot encode the perfect aspectual value may be a consequence of the anaphoric / deictic function of *cel*, which requires for the event / state to hold at the reference time.

The analysis of the *cel*-verbal participle structure has shown that it is placed on an intermediate step in the adjectivization process, between the fully eventive verbal participle (which does not combine with the adjectival determiner *cel*) and the postnominal adjectival participle. The structure's grammaticality is insured by restrictions on lexical aspectual class for the verbal base which forms the participle and on the type of Aspectual head which dominates it. If we draw a parallel between the characteristics of the adjectival determiner and the restrictions on lexical and grammatical aspect of the *cel*-verbal participle, we can notice that the verbal present participle in double definite structures matches the selectional criteria of the determiner *cel*. There are two consequences of the fact that *cel* typically selects adjectives, which denote states. First, there are the restrictions concerning the lexical aspectual class of the verb base, displayed by the *cel*-participle (preference for statives and exclusion of accomplishments). Secondly, there is the preference of *cel* for complements of the type *property*. Indeed, in the *cel*-participle configuration, most frequently the participle has an individual reading (brought about by the habitual aspect), although the episodic reading is also allowed.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that, just as in Germanic, in Romance participles have various interpretations: fully eventive, less eventive, resultative, and stative. More specifically, it is the less eventive verbal participle whose existence has been put under scrutiny.

For French we have shown on the basis of a corpus research that fully eventive participles generally combine with *beaucoup* "much, a lot" and resultatives and statives combine with *très* "very". For verbal passives which generally combine with *très* "very", we have claimed that they illustrate the less eventive type of participle.

We have shown that in Romanian, *cel* can introduce a verbal participle in modifier position. We have claimed that it is less eventive than the verbal participle which occurs in the absence of *cel*; its lower eventivity is triggered by the lexicalization of the adjectival determiner.

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