

The German Zustandspassiv: The ellipsis hypothesis reconceived

Joanna Wall

University of Utrecht and Meertens Instituut

j.h.wall@uu.nl

Donnerstag,
05.03.2020
09:30–10:00
VMP5 2067/2071

German formally distinguishes two passives: the *Zustandspassiv* (ZP) ‘state passive’, with *be* (*sein*) + pp, and the *Vorgangspassiv* (VP) ‘process passive’, with *become* (*werden*) + pp; e.g. (1a).

- (1) a. Die Post ist / wird geöffnet. b. Die Post ist geöffnet worden.
The post is becomes opened.PTCP The post is opened.PTCP became.PTCP

Following older grammars, Lenz (1993) advocates the ellipsis hypothesis, proposing that some ZPs have the underlying structure of a so-called *VP Perfekt* (VPP), like (1b), and that the participial *become* is subsequently elided. This accounts for certain parallels between the two constructions, whilst also explaining their distinct surface forms. This ellipsis hypothesis has been rejected by numerous subsequent accounts (e.g. Rapp 1998, Alexiadou et al. 2014, a. o.), based on the significant deviant properties between ZPs and VP(P)s. Firstly, unlike VP(P)s, ZPs have restricted event-related modification: they disallow manner adverbs and instrumentals, unless relevant for the state expressed, and spatial modifiers: (2) and (3).

- (2) Der Brief ist *langsam/ mit roter Tinte geschrieben. (Rapp 1998: 257)
The letter is slowly with red ink written.PTCP
- (3) ??? Die Reifen sind in der Garage aufgepumpt. (Gehrke et al. 2011: 246)
the tyres are in the garage inflated.PTCP

Secondly, ZPs, but not VP(P)s, display a number of external argument-related restrictions. For example, whilst ZPs can contain *by*-phrases, the nominals in these must be weakly or non-referential, (4) (repeated from Gehrke et al. 2014: 192).

- (4) Die Zeichnung ist von [einem Kind]_i angefertigt. *Es_i hat rote Haare.
the drawing is by a child produced.PTCP it has red hairs

Likewise, ZPs differ from VP(P)s in having a reflexive reading and in generally disallowing purpose clauses. Thirdly, and finally, unlike VPPs, ZPs disallow deictic past tense adverbs like *a year ago*, (5) (repeated from Rapp 1998: 236).

- (5) weil der König vor einem Jahr besiegt *(worden) ist
because the king before a year defeated.PTCP became.PTCP is

In light of these contrasts, the above accounts reject the claim that the ZP is a perfect, instead proposing that it is a copular construction. In this talk, I propose a middle ground between the two stances. Firstly, I claim that a certain ZP and VPPs are distinct types of perfect passives. More specifically, I argue that Kratzer’s (2000) resultant state passives are perfects-of-result based on their parallels in (2) to (5) with (English) active perfects-of-result, whilst I propose that VPPs are ambiguous between experiential and simple-past like perfects. Secondly, I propose that the different characteristics of ZPs and VP(P)s result from different lexicalisations based on a Nano-syntactic approach, and that these different lexicalisations involve lexically distinct [+/-perfective] *bes/becomes*.

Selected References: Alexiadou, A., B. Gehrke & F. Schäfer (2014). The argument structure of adjectival participles revisited. *Lingua* 149, 118–138. Gehrke, B. & C. Marco (2014). Different *by*-phrases with adjectival and verbal passives. *Lingua* 149, 188–214. Kratzer, A. 2000. Building statives. Annual Meeting of the BLS 26(1). Lenz, B. (1993). Probleme der Kategorisierung deutscher Partizipien. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 12(1), 39–76.

AG 6