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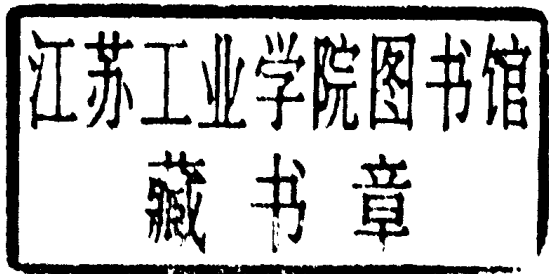
Particle Verbs
and
Local Domains

Jochen Zeller

Particle verbs and local domains

Jochen Zeller

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Frankfurt, Germany
August 2000

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Introduction

The topic of this study

In this book, I show that the syntactic, semantic, and morphological properties of particle verbs follow from the specific, strictly local relation that holds between the particle and its base verb. Importantly, I argue that this local relation is *not* to be understood in morphological terms; the particle and the verb do not form a complex word. Rather, I suggest that a particle and a verb are *structurally adjacent*, with “structural adjacency” being defined as the relation between a head and the head of its complement. This means that a particle is a head whose maximal projection is the sister of the verb in syntactic structure. Since I assume that particles are members of the lexical categories P, N, and A, the verb-particle construction is characterized by two *lexical* heads that are structurally adjacent. In this respect, particle verbs differ from “normal” verb-complement constructions, where the verb is structurally adjacent to a *functional* head, since the verb’s complement is a functional projection. Therefore, a verb is normally separated from every lexical head inside its complement by at least one intervening layer of functional structure. However, the relation between a particle and a verb is not disturbed by a functional boundary; both heads are part of the same locality domain which is defined by the structural adjacency-relation. The major goal of this book is to show that the “word-like” properties of particle verbs follow from this situation; the local relation between terminal nodes that causes an element to behave like a word may also be established by a non-morphological structure.

The problem

It is well-known that particle verbs in German and Dutch have properties of both complex *words* and of syntactic *phrases*. Consider the bracketed constituents in the following sentences:

- (1) prefix verb:
weil er sich dem Gegner [unterwirft]
because he REFL the enemy PREF-throws
'because he surrenders to the enemy'
- (2) particle verb:
weil er ihm seine Verfehlungen [vorwirft]
because he him his lapses PART-throws
'because he reproaches him with his lapses'
- (3) verb-complement
weil er ihm den Brief [in den Briefkasten wirft]
because he him the letter into the letterbox throws
'because he throws the letter into his letterbox'

In (1), we have the prefix verb *unterwerfen*; (2) shows the particle verb *vorwerfen*, and (3) is a phrasal construction where the verb *werfen* combines with the full prepositional phrase *in den Briefkasten*. At first glance, the particle verb in (2) seems to be a word like the prefix verb in (1); both constructions have "word-like" properties. For example, consider the morphological rule that derives nouns from verbs. It seems that both the combination of a prefix and a verb and of a particle and a verb can be used as the appropriate input to this rule. The noun *Unterwerfung* is derived from the prefix verb *unterwerfen* in (1), while the noun *Vorwurf* is derived from the particle verb *vorwerfen* in (2). In contrast, it is impossible to derive a noun from the phrasal construction in (3); there is no word like **in den Briefkasten-Werfung* or **in den Briefkasten-Wurf*. It seems that particle verbs, like prefix verbs, are complex morphological elements, whereas the combination of the verb and the prepositional phrase in (3) is larger than a word; it is a phrasal constituent.

Prefix verbs and particle verbs also behave like words in another respect. It can be observed that the lexical meanings of *unterwerfen* and *vorwerfen* are to a certain extent unpredictable; they are not based on the literal meaning of the verb *werfen*, but rather are idiosyncratically associated with the complex verb as a whole. In contrast, the semantic combination of the verb *werfen* and its phrasal complement in (3) is semantically transparent; the meaning of *in den Briefkasten werfen* is derived by combining the regular meaning of the verb *werfen* with the meaning of the complement-PP. According to standard assumptions, semantic idiosyncrasy is a property of words. Again, this observation seems to support the conclusion that the particle verb, like the prefix verb, is a word, whereas the complex construction in (3) is not.

The surprising fact about particle verbs is that they sometimes do *not* behave like words:

- (4) *Er [unterwirft]_i sich dem Gegner t_i*
 he PREF-throws REFL the enemy
 'He surrenders to the enemy'
- (5) *Er wirft_i ihm seine Verfehlungen [vor t_i]*
 he throws him his lapses PART
 'He reproaches him with his lapses'
- (6) *Er wirft_i ihm den Brief [in den Briefkasten t_i]*
 he throws him the letter into the letterbox
 'He throws the letter into his letterbox'

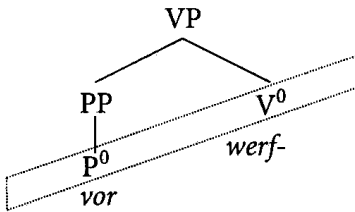
In (4)–(6), the verb has undergone movement to the left in order to derive the verb second (V2) order of German main clauses. The prefix verb in (4) moves as a whole, which is what we expect from a word. Curiously, the particle verb in (5) does not behave like the prefix verb; instead, only the verbal part of the particle verb moves, and the particle is left behind. This resembles the situation that we find in (6). Here, the main verb moves and also leaves the prepositional phrase *in den Briefkasten* behind. This suggests that the particle *vor* in (2) has the same syntactic status as the PP *in den Briefkasten*, i.e. that particles are phrasal complements of their base verbs. This assumption accounts for the separation of the particle and verb in (5). But how would the assumption explain the word-like properties of particle verbs?

The solution

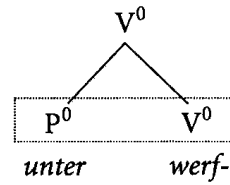
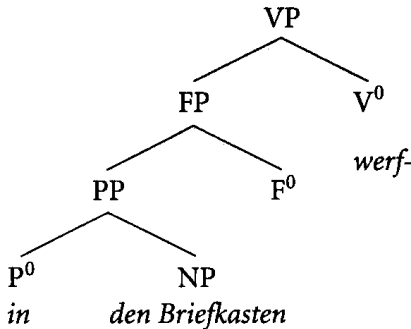
The answer that I offer in this study is that the verb-particle construction shares important properties of *both* phrasal constructions and morphological objects. I argue that the particle is in fact represented as a phrasal complement of the verb. Consequently, the particle verb in (2) patterns with the construction in (3) with respect to a number of syntactic properties (like, for example, the fact that the particle is stranded when the verb moves). However, I will show that there is a crucial difference between particle phrases and phrases like *in den Briefkasten*. I assume that every regular phrasal complement of a verb consists of the phrasal projection of a lexical head *and its functional extended projection* that intervenes between the lexical head and the verb. This additional functional structure is absent in verb-particle constructions. Therefore, the relation between a particle

and a verb is different from the relation between a verb and a lexical head inside a normal phrasal complement; crucially, it is more local, because no functional structure intervenes between the verb and the particle. This is where particle verbs begin to show parallels with morphological objects — the relation between two terminal nodes that form a complex morphological element is also strictly local, and no functional structure intervenes. (7) illustrates these differences and parallels with respect to the constructions in (1)–(6):

(7) a. Particle verb



b. Prefix verb

c. V⁰ + complement

The dashed lines in (7a) and (7b) illustrate that the relation between the lexical nodes V⁰ and P⁰ is strictly local in both prefix verbs and particle verbs. In contrast, V⁰ and P⁰ in (7c) are separated by the functional head F⁰. The locality domain in (7a) is different from the locality domain that is defined by the complex word in (7b), and many studies on particle verbs are primarily concerned with this structural difference. In contrast, the analysis that I propose in this book emphasizes the similarities between (7a) and (7b) with respect to locality. I argue that particle verbs pattern with morphological objects like prefix verbs because both constructions consist of two terminal nodes in a specific local relation. This is why particle verbs exhibit properties that are otherwise only attested with words.

Locality domains are also relevant when it comes to the way lexical information is associated with syntactic nodes. My proposal requires a particular

view about the way lexical information is associated with (morpho-)syntactic structures. The view that I defend in this book is based on the idea that the information contributed by a lexical item is a means to license the interaction between the phonological, the syntactic, and the semantic module of grammar. I argue that the possibility of associating special lexical meanings with terminal nodes in a syntactic tree is restricted and determined by the local syntactic environment of the node. In contrast to the traditional view, a complex word like a prefix verb is not the only structure that may define the local environment that is required for the assignment of special meanings. Phrasal structures can determine special meanings as well. I argue that particle verbs may exhibit idiosyncratic semantic properties, because the verb and the particle are structurally adjacent and hence part of the same locality domain.

Particles

In the following, I want to show which elements I consider particles in this study (and which I do not). To do this, I simply list (sets of) examples; a definition of the notion “particle” that is compatible with this illustrative description is given in Chapter 3.

It is well-known that most particles are *prepositional* in nature. In German, this class includes at least the following elements (cf. Lüdeling 1998a):

- (8) *ab* ('off, from'), *an* ('on, at'), *auf* ('on, up'), *aus* ('from, out of'), *bei* ('at, near'), *durch* ('through'), *ein* ('in, into'), *nach* ('after, to'), *über* ('over'), *um* ('around'), *unter* ('under'), *vor* ('before, in front of'), *weg* ('away'), *wider* ('against'), *zu* ('to, at, for')
- (9) Prepositional particle verbs:
- a. *einbrechen* (lit. in-break, 'break in')
 - b. *nachdenken* (lit. after-think, 'think about')
 - c. *abwaschen* (lit. off-wash, 'wash up')
 - d. *vorführen* (lit. before-guide, 'demonstrate')
 - e. *austrinken* (lit. out-drink, 'drink up')

My main focus will be on prepositional particle verbs, in particular when I discuss the lexical representation of particles in Chapter 4.

In contrast to the prepositional elements in (8), I will argue that the following elements do *not* qualify as particles:

- (10) *hinab, herab, heran, hinaus, heraus, herbei, hindurch* ...

The elements in (10) are morphologically complex; they consist of a prepositional part and a (deictic) prefix *her* or *hin*. In traditional German grammars, these elements are called pronominal adverbs. Some linguists treat the elements in (10) as particles; however, I adopt van Riemsdijk's (1990) view, according to which the elements in (10) are *postpositions* that realize the functional head of the extended projection of prepositional phrases. Although I show that postpositions share many of the properties of particles, postpositions and particles are essentially different elements with different structural and lexical properties.

I assume with Booij (1990) and Stiebels & Wunderlich (1994) that there are also *nominal* particles:

(11) Nominal particle verbs:

- a. *Rad fahren* (lit. bicycle-drive, 'ride a bike')
- b. *Klavier spielen* (lit. piano-play, 'play the piano')
- c. *heimfahren* (lit. home-drive, 'drive home')
- d. *standhalten* (lit. stand-hold, 'resist')
- e. *teilnehmen* (lit. part-take, 'take part')

The nominals in (11) (*Rad*, 'bike', *Klavier*, 'piano', etc.) are determiner-less singular count nouns. Since singular count nouns in German usually cannot occur without a determiner, the examples in (11) cannot be analyzed as normal verb-object constructions. Rather, I argue in Chapter 3 that the nominals in (11) are bare NP-complements of their verbs. Since determiners are associated with functional structure, this explains why the determiner is absent. The non-functionality of the nominal's maximal projection makes it a particle by definition.

Finally, I assume that there are also *adjectival* particles in German. As noted by Stiebels & Wunderlich (1994), there are only a few particle verbs derived from adjectives. Some examples are listed in (12):

(12) Adjectival particle verbs:

- a. *kurz treten* (lit. short-kick, 'go easy')
- b. *krankfeiern* (lit. sick-celebrate, 'play hooky')
- c. *schieflaufen* (lit. askew-run, 'go wrong')
- d. *ernst nehmen* (lit. serious(ly) take, 'take seriously')
- e. *schwarzfahren* (lit. black-drive, 'travel without a ticket')

It is possible that some of the elements in (12) are in fact adverbs rather than adjectives (they modify the verb's semantics rather than expressing a property that is predicated of an individual). Therefore, instead of labeling the elements

in (12) adjectival particles, it is probably more appropriate to speak of particles of category A. In Chapter 3, I show that the particles in (12) are represented as bare AP-complements of V^0 . I distinguish them from functional adjectival complements of the verb which are generally classified as adjectival resultative constructions.

A brief comment is also necessary on the question of whether there are also particles of category V. Stiebels & Wunderlich (1994) assume that the constructions in (13) are particle verbs:

- (13) Verbal particle verbs ??
- a. *spazieren gehen* (lit. stroll-go, 'stroll')
 - b. *sitzen bleiben* (lit. sit-remain, 'stay down')

The question is whether there is any evidence that the serial verb constructions in (13) are particle verbs. According to the claim that I make in this study, the examples in (13) would qualify as particle verbs if the base verbs take bare VP-complements. However, in order to answer the question of whether the infinitives in (13) are bare VPs, one would have to provide a general theory of the syntax of infinitival constructions. Since such a theory is clearly beyond the scope of my study, I have decided to remain agnostic about verbal particles and to restrict my attention to prepositional, adjectival, and nominal particles.

Although I focus primarily on particle verbs in German, Dutch particle verbs, which share many of the properties of their German counterparts, are also discussed at various points in this book. Chapter 7 deals exclusively with verb-particle constructions in Germanic languages like Dutch, English, and Norwegian.

Preliminaries

I now provide a short introduction of the main theoretical assumptions that I adopt as my point of departure. Some of these assumptions are modified or extended throughout the study; wherever this happens, I provide discussion in the text.

With respect to *syntax*, I presuppose familiarity with the Principles-and-Parameters approach (cf. Chomsky 1981, 1986a, b, 1995) and with the core assumptions of X-bar- and Government-Binding theory (Chomsky 1981). More recent versions of the Principles-and-Parameters approach, as they follow from the Minimalist Program of Chomsky (1995), as well as questions and