

Laura Grestenberger GSAS Indo-European/Historical Workshop
November 20, 2020 12:00 – 1:30 pm

Participles, periphrastic constructions, and the structure of the Indo-European verb

Greek and Sanskrit have a rich participial system, but not all of their participles are also used in periphrastic constructions (PCs). In this talk, I argue that the Classical Greek, Sanskrit, and Latin periphrastic perfect (passive) constructions differ in how much structure is spelled out by the respective participial morphology in these languages, using the theoretical framework of Distributed Morphology. This account builds on Bjorkman (2011), who argues against "selectional" approaches to auxiliaries in PCs and proposes that elements such as BE and HAVE are not selected by other syntactic elements, and hence do not project. Instead, auxiliaries pick up "stranded" features on higher functional projections, in particular T/AGR, when agreement with these projections fails. This approach dispenses with the need to stipulate designated functional projections for auxiliaries and participles and explains why periphrastic constructions like the Latin perfect passive or the Greek periphrastic perfect appear to "supplete" a paradigm: They morphologically realize the same syntactic structure as the synthetic forms, the only difference lies in the features (or feature combinations) of these structures. I will show that this correctly predicts that the properties of participles in PCs are essentially the same as those outside of PCs (e.g., attributively used participles and participial adjuncts) and discuss implications for the structure of the Indo-European verbal system, in particular with respect to the status of verbal stem-forming morphology.