

Aspect in infinitive complement clauses subcategorized by perception verbs

Aspect is a universal grammatical category, although manifested with different semantic content and modes of expression in several different languages.

The main purpose of this paper is to describe the aspectual features conveyed by the relations between Infinitival completive clauses and the perception verbs that select them.

Our *corpus* is built by Medieval Portuguese texts from the XIIth to the XIVth century and we will focus our analysis on perception verbs *ver* (*see*) and *ouvir* (*hear*), since *sentir* (*feel*) has no significant expression in this *corpus*.

From the semantic point of view, this set of verbs displays the interpretation of an intellectual or sensory perception. In order to occur this perception, two different situations are required - the perception and the perceived. Furthermore, these two events are expected to happen simultaneously, so that a direct perception can be possible.

Oliveira (2008) focused on the temporal interpretation of the infinitive complement governed by perception verbs and concluded that it is determined by a complex interaction of several factors that cannot be disconnected, in particular the semantic nature of the verbs, the modal value of the main clause and the nature of the main clause's external argument.

Besides this, according to this study, both verbs can express two possible readings – overlap and non-overlap - and it's basically the semantic features of the main verb that determine which one occurs.

Thus, if the perception is in a sensitive, physical level, there is an overlap between the perceived event and the perception; an intellectual perception implies the existence of an extended action, which suggests a habitual reading, leading to an interpretation of non-overlapping.

Knowing already the temporal values conveyed by perception verbs in these constructions, this paper investigates the role of this set of verbs (more specifically its semantic features) in aspectual determination of the embedded event.

Infinitive complements are expected to describe a complete event, so it seems logical that the complement of the perception verb in the matrix denotes a perfective action, regardless of other factors.

Once the Portuguese system of inflectional morphology does not specify aspectual markers that determine the perfective or imperfective character of the event, like Slavic languages for instance, the distinction between the expression of both grammatical and lexical aspect (or *aktionsart*) seems inappropriate.

Assuming that the aspectual character of these predications results from a merge of several factors, it remains the possibility of being verbal tense to convey this information.

But not only the verbal tense of the perception verb deserves our attention. Beside this factor, we examined the influence of many others (morphologic, syntactic and semantic ones), according to their relevance and possible contribution to the formation of the aspectual profile of the predications studied.

We will describe all aspectual features, like the possible eventive or stative character of the verb contained in the complement clause, durative and punctual activities, progressive feature and the duality perfective/imperfective.

Moreover, involving the analysis of several factors, our goals are to describe the aspectual properties of the infinitive complements of perception verbs, but also to determine the main factors in aspectual profile interpretation of these constructions.

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