

## Aspect in non-finite complements of perception verbs

In Brazilian Portuguese (BP), verbs of non-agentive perception, such as *ver* ‘see’, *ouvir* ‘hear’, *sentir* ‘feel’, when conveying a “direct” reading, can take either an infinitive (1a) or a gerundive (1b) complement.

- (1) a Eu vi a Maria chorar.  
      ‘I saw Maria cry.’  
      b Eu vi a Maria chorando.  
      ‘I saw Maria crying.’

Generally, infinitive and gerundive complements of perception verbs have similar semantic properties. For instance, they show a temporal dependency with respect to the matrix (2), which implies a “direct” interpretation of the perception verb and the simultaneity between the perception and the perceived event. They show in addition a restriction against individual-level predicates (3).

- (2) a \*Ontem, eu vi o João beijar / beijando a Maria antes de ontem  
      Lit.: ‘Yesterday, I saw the João kiss / kissing the Maria before of yesterday’  
(3) a \*Nós vimos o João saber / sabendo a lição  
      Lit.: ‘We saw the João know / knowing the lesson’

These properties are also characteristic of infinitive and gerundive complements of perception verbs in English (4).

- (4) a \*Yesterday, I saw John kiss / kissing Mary the day before. (Boivin, 1998, p. 108)  
      b \*We saw him know / knowing the answer. (Felser, 1999, p. 74)

Declerck (1981) and Felser (1999), among others, argue that these complements exhibit, however, an aspectual difference: while the gerundive complement describes the perceived event as an incomplete action, the infinitive complement normally implies that the depicted event was seen in its entirety.

In order to account for these properties, Felser (1999) proposes that the non-finite complements of perception verbs are a projection of the functional category Aspect and assumes, on the basis of Kratzer (1995)’s Principle of Argument Linking, that stage-level predicates provide an event argument, which is generated in (Spec, AspP), while individual-level predicates lack an event position. Therefore, only stage-level predicates project an aspectual layer (the syntactic realization of an event), while individual-level predicates projects a TP (the syntactic realization of a proposition). Under this view, individual-level predicates are excluded from the non-finite complements of direct perception verbs because these verbs semantically select an event, a position that is not provided by this kind of predicate. Furthermore, direct perception and simultaneity between the perception and the perceived event obtain because the perception verb “functions as a control predicate in that its event argument controls the event argument provided by the embedded predicate” (p. 146). The aspectual difference is due to different aspectual features in Asp: [+progressive] in the case of gerundive complements and [-progressive] in the case of infinitive complements.

In this paper, following Felser, we argue that the structure of the non-finite complements of perceptions verbs in BP involve the projection of Asp and we adopt the distinction between individual-level and stage-level predicates in terms of presence/absence of an event argument. However, we disagree with this author on the issue of the syntactic realization of these predicates. We defend that AspP is always projected in the non-finite complement structures. On the basis of Ramchand (2004), we propose that Asp instantiate a temporal variable which represents the distinct aspects of the predicate and whose value can be modified by aspectual

operators, like the progressive operator, or by the aspectual value of the matrix. Therefore, the aspectual reading of the complement clause does not result from the feature [ $\pm$ progressive] in Asp, but from the interaction between the lexical and grammatical aspect of the embedded predicate. The lexical aspect is related to the event structure of the predicate, which take into account, among other things, its semantic type (individual or stage-level). We also disagree with Felser in regard to the analysis of the infinitive complement as always having “non progressive” aspect. We argue that the infinitive complement, because it isn’t morphologically marked for aspect, “inherits” the aspectual value of the perception verb. Otherwise stated, the infinitive complements are aspectually dependent of the matrix, which means that they can denote an imperfective event if the matrix event is imperfective.

## References

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