

NOTES ON THE ENGLISH PRESENT PERFECTIVE, AND ON ITS COUSIN, THE PORTUGUESE 'PRETÉRITO PERFEITO COMPOSTO'

0. Introduction

The English Present Perfective (PP) and its cousins in other languages, including the Portuguese 'Pretérito Perfeito Composto' (PPC), are the subject of much linguistic discussion. Apart from the well-known problem of how to teach the PP to students of English as a foreign language, it appears that this verbal structure causes arguments as to the real nature of 'tense' and 'aspect', and the extent to which the meaning of the syntactic structure is modified by the type of lexical verb involved and the adverbs which accompany them.

In this paper I should like to examine the phenomena known as tense and aspect as they are expressed by the PP and the PPC, and to compare the variations which occur when different situation types of lexical verbs are used. Any analysis of this kind must also include consideration of the adverb types which are often necessary to clarify the meaning in context, and the emphasis will be on language occurring in context rather than in sentences 'for syntactic purposes'.

As the title may suggest that the PP and the PPC will be given equal prominence in this paper, I must make it clear from the beginning that far more attention will be given to the PP, and that the analysis of the PPC will then be made in relation to the criteria established for the PP, and in comparison with it. This is not just because English is my mother tongue, and because of my probably vested interest in explaining its workings to Portuguese native speakers. It is also influenced not inconsiderably by the fact that the PP is far more frequent in English situations than the PPC is in

Portuguese ones. Suffice it to say that there are over twelve times more examples of the PP in the translation of the Portuguese novel *Angústia para o Jantar* than there are of the PPC in the original version¹. This would indicate that, if, as one might suspect, a translator is often influenced by the syntax of the original text, a representative number of English texts might have an even higher percentage when compared to a similar number of Portuguese ones. It also indicates that, although there is a lack of equivalence between the tense and aspect systems of the two languages, it is perfectly possible to translate the situation using different tense, aspect and adverb combinations, and a little help from the context.

This paper will be restricted to the use of the full simple and progressive forms of the PP and PPC. Examples in which a modal precedes a *have/ter* + participle construction, as in *could have done* or *podia ter feito*, will not be examined, as the modal verb shifts the whole semantic balance involved. Neither shall I consider the non-finite clause using *have/ter* + participle, such as *having read* or *tendo lido*, because, although these expressions have a time reference, it is not equivalent to that found with the finite verb forms, and because the pragmatic application of these structures is rather different in both languages.

1. The interpretation of 'Tense' and 'Aspect'

Even a cursory examination of the verbal systems in two fairly similar languages like English and Portuguese will reveal that there are plenty of points of difference in this area. Experts on both languages are by no means completely clear as to how the individual languages work, let alone how they correspond to each other. Traditionally, distinctions have been made between tense, aspect, and mood, but not everyone seems to be in agreement about

¹ The corpus which has served as a basis for several observations made in this article consists of:

MONTEIRO, Luis de Stau — *Angústia para o Jantar*, Lisboa, Edições Atica. 1961.

MONTEIRO, Luis de Stau — *The Rules of the Game*. (Translation of the above) Translator — Ann Stephens, London, Putnam and Co. Ltd. 1964.

These texts were chosen because they consist largely of monologues and dialogues, in a way which makes it as near normal spoken language as most literary texts can come. The perspective is usually of the speaker in the present, and this feature of the text lends itself particularly well to the analysis of the PC and PPC, particularly in a comparative study.

exactly where these distinctions lie². Besides this, much discussion has centred on the nature and function of auxiliary and modal verbs, and there is also a certain lack of agreement about which verbs qualify as auxiliary or modal verbs³. However, perhaps the biggest obstacle to classifying and formalizing the information implicit in the syntax of lexical verbs is that time, or tense, is only one element in the semantics involved.

For the purposes of considering the PP and the PPC in this paper, I shall take the term 'tense' to refer to the concepts of time conveyed by the structure in context. The term 'aspect' will be interpreted as referring to the notions of 'perfective', which is usually assumed to indicate a completed verbal process, and 'progressive', which is understood to describe continuous or iterative verbal processes. The verbs *have* and *ter* are traditionally considered to be the auxiliary verbs which introduce the perfective, and the structures *be* + *ing* form and *estar* + infinitive *-ndo*⁴ are used for the progressive.

The terms used to describe the syntactic behaviour of the verbal system are often institutionalized, and do not always bear close scrutiny. The very description 'present perfective' leaves a lot to be desired. The terms 'past' or 'future' usually refer to the time of the verbal process described, in relation to the perspective of an utterance situated in the present [NOW], and past

² See:

COMRIE, Bernard — *Aspect*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976.

COMRIE, Bernard — *Tense*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

DOWTY, David R. — *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*, Dordrecht/Boston/London, D. Reidel Pub. Co. 1979

OLIVEIRA, Fatima — *Alguns aspectos de aspecto*, in «Actas do VII Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Linguística», Lisboa, 1991.

PERES, João Andrade — *Towards an Integrated View of the Expression of Time in Portuguese*, Lisboa, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 1993

VENDLER, Zeno — *Linguistics and Philosophy*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1967.

³ See:

MAIA, Belinda — *A Contribution to the study of the the Language of Emotion in English and Portuguese*, Dissertação de doutoramento, Porto, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 1994.

PONTES, Eunice — *Verbos Auxiliares em Português*, Petrópolis, Brasil, Editora Vozes Ltda., 1973.

QUIRK, Randolph; GREENBAUM, Sidney; LEECH, Geoffrey; SVARTVIK, Jan — *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, London and New York, Longman, 1985.

⁴ The *estar* + infinitive structure is typical of European Portuguese, but the *estar* + *-ndo* one is more normal in Brazilian Portuguese.

perfective and future perfective often, but not always, describe actions that are perfected, or finished before the past or future reference in question. Similarly, the 'present' in present perfective establishes the notion that the action should be completed before the present [NOW], a debatable point with many examples. Besides, 'perfective', is not always a happy choice, whether the time reference is past, present or future, since it is traditionally meant to describe a telic situation, something that has ended⁵, and is often contrasted to the 'imperfective' which often, but not always, describes an atelic situation. As we shall see, the 'perfective', as a term of reference in English grammar, by no means refers to a telic situation in all its uses. It is no wonder, therefore, that the official terminology should merely add to the confusion in attempting to describe this phenomenon.

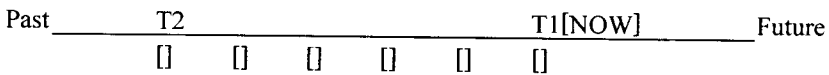
1.1. *Tense and aspect with the Present Perfective*

Let us first examine the concepts of time which are actually involved with the PP. To try to isolate the part of the PP which contributes to the notion of tense from that which suggests aspect, is almost impossible at a morphological level, but most authorities seem to be in agreement that there are three main notions of time, those of state, habit and event, and most will provide diagrams something like the following when discussing the PP:

State:



Habit:



Event:



The peculiarity of the PP is that, although the state, habit or event may belong to, or be initiated in the past, it has to be connected to the present in

⁵ For a description of 'telic' and 'atelic', see COMRIE — *Op. cit.*, p. 44-48.

some way, and the focus of interest is not on T2, but on T1, or [NOW]. A T2 may be specified in the sentence, usually using *since* + time expression, and a notion of a relatively recent period is often implicit in the context, but it is not always necessary, either because it is of minimal interest, or is simply unknown. The state and the habit will be seen as continuing from T2 up to the moment of speaking, and if one is to describe these situations as truly perfective, one will have to accept T1 as the time which marks the specific end of the state or habit.

There have been arguments about whether time notions like T1 can be considered as marking a fixed moment or cut off point in time, or whether they must always be considered as representing an interval, no matter how short. The moment approach allows one to interpret the state or habit type PP as referring to the time interval between T2 and this cut-off point, and would seem to assume that whatever the PP refers to occurs between these two points. However, current theories on time, and particularly on how the brain processes information on time, would seem to favour the interval approach, and the question then arises as to whether the reference of the PP extends to the beginning of this interval, or also includes it. In context, the situations in which the PP occurs often carry the implication that the state or habit not only includes the instant or interval of T1, but it will also continue into at least the near future. This leaves the perfective status of these verbal structures in a rather fuzzy area..

The notion of perfective is rather different when the PP is used with a past event. In these cases the event has taken place in the past but the T2 is not specified because, if specific reference to T2 occurs, it entails the use of the simple past and not the PP. The focus, therefore, is on the relevance of the past event occurring before the present. The event has been perfected, or has ended, at the end of the interval of time understood as T2 but, since T2 is unknown or unspecified, the perfectiveness has to relate to T1 instead.

One reason a certain amount of confusion exists in discussions about tense is that the examples used are often deceptively simple. When people argue about syntax, they seem to happily accept that *John was ill / saw the film/ kissed his wife* are complete situations, whereas they would probably recognize the need for a fuller description of the situation in order to talk about *John has been ill / has seen the film / has kissed his wife* .

This attitude is, however, based on false assumptions. In a real context, the simple past is not used unless a definite instant or interval of time is contemplated. The reference need not be in the sentence or even the text, but it has to be understood at some pragmatic level for the situation described by

the verb to have any coherence. However, perhaps because the simple past often occurs in narratives where the time referred to is established early in the text, and becomes implicit in the situation, it is unnecessary to mention it repeatedly.

With the PP, though, T1, or [NOW], is implicit in the situation, and T2 is only rarely referred to. The type of adverbial used is more often a rather vaguer, or more subjective, notion of time, of the kind expressed by *already, just, recently, yet, once before, or always*. However, the fact that the PP usually functions with some form of time adverbial cannot be ignored in discussions about it, and to argue about examples like *Mary has lived in Amsterdam* without some sort of an adverbial or time reference implied by the situation in context, is a risk.

The progressive form of the PP is often treated merely as a variation of little importance, and in the corpus it does in fact account for only about 10% of the examples. Quirk et al.⁶ shows it to be an alternative for expressing the PP, but agree that it has 'a semantic range that is not entirely predictable from the meanings of its components'. They are preoccupied with working out the time reference involved, but closer examination will reveal that although it has a definite function which only partly overlaps that of the simple PP, it is sometimes preferred to the PP for easily identifiable lexico-semantic reasons. Lexical verbs which lend themselves to the ideas of continuous or repeated action will usually prefer the progressive form of the PP.

2. The Perfective aspect of *ter* + past participle constructions in Portuguese

The behaviour of the perfective aspect of *ter* + past participle constructions in Portuguese is rather less easy to analyse, particularly in relation to the Portuguese 'pretérito perfeito composto' (PPC). Paul Teyssier, in his communication at the IX Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Linguística in April, 1994, put forward the opinion that, from a historical point of view, the PPC has developed relatively recently, and that this development is more complete in those languages, like English and French, where the inflection of the lexical verbs has tended to fall into disuse, at least at the level of the spoken language. He suggested that the more hesitant development of the PPC in Portuguese was linked to the still strongly inflected verb system, and

⁶ *Ibidem*, 4.38-40.

described this as an indication of linguistic archaism in Portuguese. If he is right, then it is to be expected that the tendency will be for Portuguese to evolve towards the situation in other languages and that this evolution will possibly be accelerated by ever-increasing interlingual contact as ever more European citizens are forced out of their more traditional monolingualism. This evolutionary aspect may account for the hesitations about acceptability of its usage in certain situations by native speakers.

Interestingly, the evolution of the 'pretérito mais-que-perfeito composto' (PMQPC), seems to have evolved rather differently to the PPC, and shows more affinities to the English past perfect. Cunha & Cintra⁷ seem to consider the PMQPC as a variant of the simple form of the 'pretérito mais-que-perfeito', and whereas the former is more common in speech, the latter is largely confined to written language. They describe it as indicating 1) an action that occurred before another past action, 2a) a fact vaguely situated in the past, and 2b) a past fact which one wants to 'atenuar', or tone down, in a statement or request. Peres⁸ seems to corroborate the first description. However, the following examples⁹ demonstrate that the PMQPC can describe a state which preceded T2 in the past:

- (1) O pai, que pelos vistos tinha feito a Grande Guerra como capitão-médico, três condecorações e a legião de honra francesa. Mestre de armas também, campeão de florete desde os tempos em que tinha sido aluno do Colégio Militar¹⁰.

a habit which preceded T2 in the past:

- (2) No decorrer da vida tinha visto o pai, muitas vezes, com uma frase ou com um gesto, pôr termo a tensões inesperadas.

or an event happening in T3, before T2 in the past:

- (3) Dias antes, em conversa, Gonçalo dissera que tinha ido almoçar ao English Bar com a mulher.

⁷ CUNHA, Celso; CINTRA, Lindley — *Nova Gramática da Língua Portuguesa*. Lisboa, Edições Sá de Costa, 1984, p. 455-6.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, the examples used in this paper will be taken from *Angústia para o Jantar* by Sttau Monteiro, and the translation, *The Rules of the Game*, *Op. cit.*

¹⁰ This example is taken from *Balada da Praia dos Cães* by Cardoso Pires.

There is also a complex area where the hypothetical use of the past perfect ¹¹ corresponds to the ‘conjuntivo’ of the PMQP, while the conditional *would have* + participle can correspond to the ‘futuro do pretérito composto’, as in:

(4) Se eu tivesse ido jantar contigo nesse dia, nada disto teria acontecido.

tr. If I had had dinner with you that night, none of this would have happened.

or to the ‘conjuntivo’ of the PMQPC with the PQMPC, as in:

(5) E se o António não tivesse dito que me conhecia, tu nada me tinhas contado...

tr. And if António had not told you that he knew me, you would never have told me.

and the toning down factor described by Cunha and Cintra, can be interpreted with similar or other structures in English, but I shall not venture further into this area here.

The ‘futuro do presente composto’ also appears to have a similar function to the future perfect, according to Cunha and Cintra ¹². Peres ¹³ calls the same structure, the future form of *ter* + past participle, the ‘futuro perfeito’, but seems to accept a similar usage for it. Although rare, it would seem to describe states, habits and events similarly to the other perfectives described so far. However, in context, its usage would seem to suggest an overlapping of function with the PP. This function is described by Cunha and Cintra ¹⁴ as expressing uncertainty (probability, doubt, supposition) about past facts. It would seem to correspond fairly closely to the use of the PP in similar situations, as one can see from the following example and its translation:

(6) Que terá acontecido ao meu filho.? Terei falhado como mãe? Não haverá uma possibilidade de ainda nos entendermos?

tr. What has happened to my son? Have I failed as a mother? Is there no chance at all of our understanding each other now?

¹¹ See QUIRK *et al.* — *Op. cit.*, 14.23.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 460.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 460, 3.º.

Unlike its past and future counterparts, however, the PPC appears to be very restricted. Cunha and Cintra¹⁵ describe it as generally expressing the repetition of an act, or its continuity to the moment of speaking. As I have already pointed out in Maia¹⁶, rather than a case of either repetition or continuity, the examples to be found would suggest rather an idea of repetition and continuity, or the idea of habit in the past continuing to [NOW]. This may seem a rather untenable position to take, if one examines Peres'¹⁷ examples with *A Maria tem vivido em Amesterdão*, but I hope to show that *viver* and similar state verbs are not as 'continuous' in nature as some analyses would lead us to believe.

I propose, therefore, that the PPC can be used where a habit or iterative type interpretation is implicit in the PP, but that the state type of PP is usually represented in Portuguese by the 'presente', and the event type of PP by the 'pretérito'. I would also suggest that, the comparison of the usage of the PP and the PPC, draws attention to the notion of an iterative interpretation as important to the general understanding of both.

3. Verbs: situation types

There have been several attempts to classify verbs according to the type of situation they tend to favour. According to Dowty (1979 : 52-3), "Aristotle [...] is generally credited with the observation that the meanings of some verbs necessarily involves an 'end' or 'result' in a way that other verbs do not" and that 'he distinguished between the *kinesis* (translated 'movements') and *energeiai* ('actualities'). Ryle¹⁸, Kenny¹⁹ and Vendler²⁰ all drew attention to the way the lexical meaning of the verb controls the way in which it can appear with phenomena like the progressive and perfective aspects, and the imperative. Dowty²¹ himself suggested four basic verb types — states,

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 453.

¹⁶ MAIA, Belinda — *Tense and Aspect in English and Portuguese*, in «Actas do 1.º Encontro Nacional sobre o Ensino de Línguas Vivas na Universidade Portuguesa», Lisboa, Faculdade de Letras, 1988, pp. 255-271.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

¹⁸ RYLE, Gilbert — *The Concept of Mind*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1949.

¹⁹ KENNY, Anthony — *Action, Emotion and Will*, London and Henley, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1963.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*

²¹ *Op. cit.*

activities, achievements and accomplishments — each with several sub-groups. There have been several other attempts at the semantic and syntactic classification of verbs, and they are described in detail in Vilela²² (1991: 3-28). However, I prefer to use that to be found in Quirk et al.²³ and which is given here in Figure 1.

The basic division is into stative and dynamic verbs. The stative verbs are then divided into quality, state and stance in the diagram, although the state verbs are further subdivided in the text into 'intellectual states', 'states of emotion and attitude', 'states of perception' and 'states of bodily sensation'. The dynamic verbs are further divided into 'durative' and 'punctual', and each of these into 'non-conclusive' and 'conclusive', and 'non-agentive' and 'agentive' as can be seen in the diagram. This classification was constructed largely on the basis of the meaning each group produced when combined with the progressive aspect in English and, with the occasional exception²⁴, the scheme works fairly well for Portuguese verbs when combined with the progressive type *estar* + infinitive in European Portuguese, or the *estar* + *ndo* form of Brazilian Portuguese. However, all such classifications are subject to criticism and must be interpreted flexibly if one is to account for apparently deviant behaviour by language in real texts.

4. Other factors that may influence the meaning of the perfective aspect

4.1. *Adverbials*

The vagueness and subjectivity of the adverbs used with the PP is one reason why people argue about the nature of the PP in relation to tense or aspect. When attempts are made to formalize the tense of the PP, the tendency is to favour examples which occur without these adverbials, or with more definite ones like phrases with *for* and *since*. *Already* may seem to refer

²² VILELA, Mário — *Gramática das Valências: Teoria e Aplicação*. Coimbra, Livraria Almedina, 1992, p. 3-28.

²³ *Ibidem*, 4.27.

²⁴ The behaviour of several of the Stative Stance verbs, like *sit* and *lie* does not have a direct equivalent with the Portuguese verbs *sentar(se)* and *deitar-se*. The progressive forms *is sitting/lying* can only be rendered as *está sentado/deitado*, which conveys a sense of perfective rather than progressive aspect.

PRESENT PERFECTIVE AND 'PRETÉRITO PERFEITO COMPOSTO'

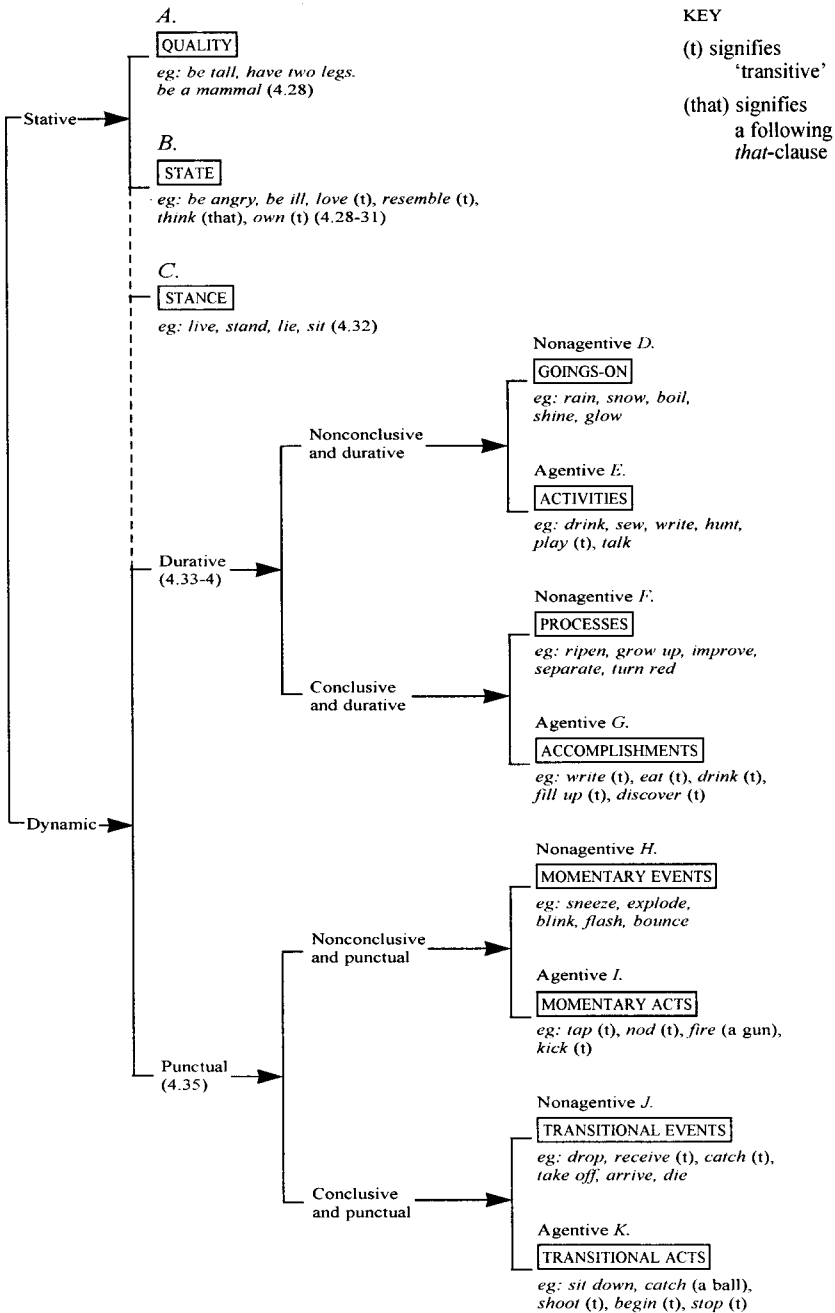


Figure 1

to a definite point in time, but in fact, pragmatically, it really functions to avoid the precision required by a definite time + the past tense. An interesting adverb which can occur with the PP is *before*, as in *I have seen you somewhere before*, translatable as *Já o vi em algum lado*. The reason why it is of interest is that, although it also refers, like *already*, to some vague T2, it also implies, at a pragmatic level, the fact that *I can see you now*.

Recently, *lately* and *just* are highly subjective in relation to concepts of time, and, in practice, *always* and *never* are not always used in the exclusive sense they appear to have when described in isolation. *Never*, *not + yet*, like other negatives, usually appear connected to something which has not taken place, and it should not be forgotten that the interrogative form of the PP is semantically useful for requesting information on whether something was done, rather than on when it was done.

The nearest Portuguese adverbs to correspond to those described above would seem to be *há* + period of time for *for*, *desde* + point in time for *since*, *já* for *already*, *recentemente* and *ultimamente* for *recently* and *lately*, *sempre* and *nunca* for *always* and *never*, *ainda não* for *not ... yet*, and the verb *acabar de* + infinitive for *just*. Apart from this latter expression which, for a PP sense will give us the ‘presente’, the only real problems here for the comparison of the PP and PPC, arise with *sempre* and *nunca*. Both languages can use *always* and *never* in a sentence like *John always / never likes to go to church on Sundays*. or *o João gosta sempre de ir à missa aos domingos* and *o João nunca gosta de ir à missa aos domingos* to describe a present situation, and *John always / never liked to go to church on Sundays* or *o João gostou sempre de ir à missa aos domingos* and *o João nunca gostou de ir à missa aos domingos* to describe a past situation. However, the PP + *always* usually gives us a state or habit starting in the past and continuing up to the present, and the emphasis is on the connection between past and present. Portuguese does not seem to be able to achieve this nuance of meaning with *sempre* and *nunca*. and, since situations with the PP include reference to the past, these examples will normally take the ‘pretérito’.

Quirk et al.²⁵ consider other adverbs such as *today*, *this month* and *this year* as allowing the PP because, although the event is recognized as being in the past — and a normal past tense can be used with them — they can be considered as including [NOW]. When used with the PP, the connection between past and present is emphasized rather than the event in the past, as

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 4.23.

in *I have seen her this year*. Portuguese, on these occasions, will use both the time adverb and *já* to achieve the same effect, as in *Já a vi este ano*.

The length of time involved in those situations which state the time factor more definitely may also contribute to the interpretation that is given to the verbal process and the situation involved. However, I shall return to this point in greater detail in 5.1 when discussing the notions of time involved with the PP and PPC.

4.2. *Other factors*

Apart from the different types of adverbial, which both contribute to and restrict the semantic reading of the verb, there are other other factors to take into consideration. These factors vary according to the situation, but knowledge of the world is usually essential to their understanding.

One syntactically expressed factor is that of plurality which allows for sentences like *The bombs have been exploding* and disallows **The bomb has been exploding*. The progressive form of the PP often refers to repeated or habitual action, but we know that, normally speaking, and unless we are dealing with some special type of bomb which contains several explosive devices, a bomb can only explode once. The use of the plural *bombs* refers not to several bombs exploding several times, but to several bombs exploding one at a time.

Another factor that interferes with classification of verb types is different lexical usage as in *The bomb has exploded* and *The bomb-disposal expert has exploded the bomb*. Both can be classified as punctual verbs, but they take a non-agentive and agentive reading respectively. Although we are aware that someone, at some stage of bomb procedure, has to activate the bomb, the first example expresses the commonly held notion that a bomb explodes spontaneously. The second, more marked, example describes the actions taken by an expert to dispose of a bomb under safe conditions, which is an abnormal situation for bombs.

Several of the verbs normally considered to be state verbs type B are notoriously unstable when it comes to their use with the progressive. The example *I think you are wonderful* would be usually classified as stative because it is presumed to indicate the speaker's permanent opinion about the addressee. It is therefore treated as a state which is permanent and constant within the world in which it is uttered and **I am thinking you are wonderful*

is rejected on the grounds that *thinking*, in this sense, cannot be seen as an on-going activity. However, *I have been thinking about how wonderful you are* is presumed to indicate a conscious activity, albeit mental, requiring no actual action, and not normally observable by the outsider. Also, since *thinking about* someone tends to be a sporadic rather than all-absorbing activity, always occurring in conjunction with other more observable activities, it cannot be granted the permanent status granted to the state type accorded to the opinion type *think*. However, I would suggest that the distinction between the two phenomenon is not quite so clear-cut as it would seem, whether one is analysing it from the point of view of lexicology or psychology, and that syntactic usage merely serves to draw attention to the fuzziness of this area.

This fuzziness can also be seen in the differences between finite and non-finite *-ing* clauses. Finite clauses using verbs such as *know* do not allow the progressive in sentences like **He was knowing she was at home when he visited her*²⁶, but non-finite clauses may use the *-ing* form as in *Knowing she was at home, he visited her* are perfectly acceptable. Despite their morphology, the lexical verbs in such non-finite clauses are not ellipted forms of full progressive tenses, although one could argue here that the situation of *knowing* does not describe a permanent opinion, but rather a short temporary period of time which acts as a time 'frame' to the shorter event of *visiting*.

The same ambivalence can be seen in the verbs of physical perception in English, such as *see* and *hear* when compared with the activity verbs *watch* and *listen to*. They are considered to reject the progressive form in their central sense and it is argued that *I see / hear her* is normal, but that **I am seeing / hearing her* is unacceptable. Actually this type of situation is more easily defensible in the past tense, *I saw / heard her*, rather than **I was seeing / hearing her*, as, pragmatically, the more normal expression in a present situation of perception would be *I can see / hear her*. It should also be remembered that *see* and *hear* can also appear in progressive type sentences like *I have been seeing a lot of him* and *I have been hearing all about you from your mother* which are supposed to indicate some sort of conscious perception of the activity rather than simple uncontrolled perception.

²⁶ Compare to;

He knew she was home when he visited her.

Comparison to the Portuguese verbs of physical perception only helps to highlight the fuzziness of this area. Although people will argue that that *see* and *hear* correspond to *ver* and *ouvir*, and *watch* and *listen to* to *olhar* and *escutar*, the fact remains that *ver* and *ouvir* happily accept usage with the progressive type *estar* + infinitive/*-ndo* form, as in *o João está a ver a televisão e a Maria está a ouvir a rádio*²⁷. Whether this has something to do with the relatively passive position of those who watch television or listen to the radio is a moot point!

The whole area of stative verbs is semantically complex, and one of the problems I hope to highlight here is how difficult it is to lump them all into three categories with a small number of sub-categories, and to describe them in terms of non-volitional states as certain psychologists and grammarians do.

5. Tests of tense and aspect

The syntactic criteria for describing tense and aspect referred to in 1.1 will be developed in more detail here, and certain adverbs will be chosen for testing purposes. These criteria have been chosen partly on traditional theoretical grounds, and partly on the basis of the observable patterns that were found in the corpus of 25 examples of the PPC from the Portuguese novel *Angústia para o Jantar*, and the 269 examples of the PP in its translation.

The diagrams used in 1.1 have been elaborated below to allow for all possible interpretations of the PP and PPC. The commonest adverbials used with the PP will be given, as well as a rough indication of the equivalent method in Portuguese for expressing notions which are typical of the PP but which cannot be rendered by the PPC. Once these criteria have been established, they will be applied to examples which belong to the different situation types of verb.

²⁷ Translatable only as:

John is watching the television and Mary is listening to the radio.

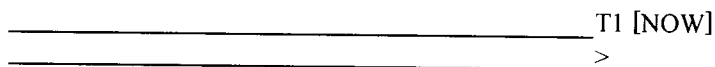
and not as:

**John is seeing the television and Mary is hearing the radio.*

5.1. *Notions of time expressed by the Present Perfect*

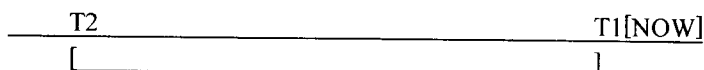
1. STATE TYPE

a) To describe a state or situation that has always existed, still exists — and may continue into the future:



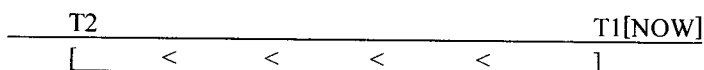
This type is claimed for examples which usually appear with the PP + *always* or *never*, although the idea of eternity expressed by the diagram and the adverb has to be taken relatively. A similar notion is expressed in Portuguese by the 'pretérito' + *sempre* or *nunca*.

b) To describe a state or situation that started at some unspecified time in the past, is still valid — and may continue into the future:



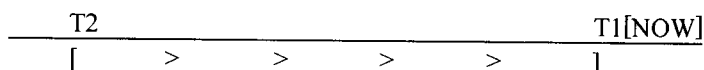
This situation is similar to a), of which it is a more realistic interpretation. It is difficult to realize it in Portuguese without placing it fully in the past with the use of the 'pretérito'.

c) To describe a state or situation referring to a period dating back from [NOW] — and which may continue into the future:



Here the PP appears with *for* + a quantitative expression of time. Portuguese prefers to express this notion of time with *Há* + a quantitative expression of time + the 'presente'.

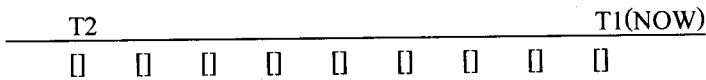
d) To describe a state referring to a period starting at specified point in the past and extending to [NOW] — and which may continue into the future:



This type of situation usually involves the PP with *since* + T2, and in Portuguese it can be expressed with the 'presente' + *desde* + T2.

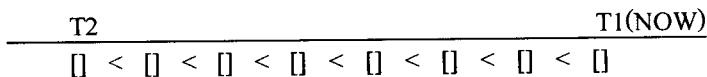
2. HABIT or ITERATIVE TYPE

a) To describe a habit or intermittent situation referring to a period dating from an unspecified T2 till [NOW] — and possibly continuing into the future



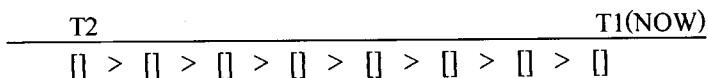
This kind of situation, which favours the progressive version of the PP, can be found with the simple PP + adverbials like *often*, although none were found with this adverb in the corpus. Although the PPC does not seem to need an adverbial in these cases, it usually expresses this type of situation in Portuguese, with or without the progressive aspect.

b) To describe a habit referring to a period dating back from [NOW] — and possibly continuing into the future



This kind of situation also favours the progressive version of the PP, can be found with *for* + a quantitative expression of time. The normal expression of this in Portuguese would be by *Há* + a quantitative expression of time + the 'presente', but, although no examples exist in the corpus, it is possible to express the same idea using *Há* + a quantitative expression of time + the progressive version of the PPC.

c) To describe a habit referring to a period starting at specified point in the past and extending to [NOW] — and possibly continuing into the future



This type of situation, sometimes in with the progressive, usually appears with *since* + T2. In Portuguese it is usually expressed by the ‘presente’ + *desde* + T2, but the progressive form of the PPC + *desde* + T2 is also admissible.

3. EVENT

To describe something that happened in an unspecified past and that is seen as relevant to the present :



This use of the PP appears in the corpus with *already*, *ever*, *just*, *never*, *yet* and, more often, with zero adverbials. It is the most common use of the PP, accounting for over 40% of the examples in the corpus. It appears to bear no relationship to the PPC and is expressed by *já* or *ainda não* + the ‘pretérito’ in Portuguese whenever a past time reference is simply unavailable.

The above diagrams may seem to have simplified the various time concepts involved and reduced the problem to manageable proportions. However, things are never as clear-cut as they seem, and these interpretations have to be modified to accommodate to real life factors. One of the most important of these is that human beings can never be doing only one thing at a time. Even when they are sleeping, they are also breathing and dreaming, not to mention tossing and turning. Some verbal processes, like *organizing a trade fair*, imply a multitude of sub-processes. Another factor is the length of time involved in the different situations.

When simple tenses are involved, it is relatively easy to isolate the action from the surrounding situation. If we say *John wrote a book last year*, we are focusing on something John accomplished last year, and the fact that he got married and went to Italy on his honeymoon does not affect this fact. Alternatively, if we say *John always went / goes to the cinema on Saturday nights*, we are clearly referring to a past or present habit of John’s. The simple PP also presents few difficulties when it emphasizes the finished nature of the process, rather than the time it happened, and *John has written a book* focuses this fact.

However, when we introduce perfective and progressive together in *John has been writing an essay for half an hour* and *John has been writing a novel for twenty years*, we find the analysis of the time notion a little more complex. Clearly, one can isolate the process of writing from all the other processes going on at the same time, and describe both processes in similar terms from a formal point of view. Therefore, in the first example, although John has been writing an essay for half an hour, he has possibly also been chewing his pencil, blowing his nose and thinking hard, while during the twenty years he has been writing his novel, he must obviously have done a myriad other things as well. However, there is a difference in that whereas the main activity of writing can be seen as virtually uninterrupted, or continuous, in the half hour described in the first example, writing in the twenty years of the second example can hardly be described even as a main activity, and must most definitely have proceeded in an intermittent way which, if one does not like to describe it as habitual, one can at least describe as iterative. The term 'iterative' avoids the conscious or unconscious ritual type of idea associated with 'habit', and yet helps to explain this phenomenon as a sequence of intermittent processes. The first example could therefore be classified as a state type 1b) and the second as a habit or iterative type 2b).

The PP so often describes situations that are rather vaguely situated in time that this notion of iterativeness is particularly appropriate for describing the more fuzzy examples, and this possibility will be explored below. The fact that most examples of the PPC can be seen as iterative, and are so described by most authorities, in some way tends to reinforce the arguments in favour of such an analysis.

5.2. *The influence of verb situation type*

5.2.1. The Stative verbs

Quirk et al.'s stative verb types cover a fairly wide selection of verbs, ranging from statements about fairly permanent qualities or more temporary states of the subject described, through all the verbs of perception, cognition and emotion to those which refer to stance or position. In principle, stative verbs do not allow for the progressive aspect, but examples with the same lexical items do occur, and will be examined as and when necessary.

5.2.1.1. Qualities — type A

The first type of stative verb, the A quality ones, which can be exemplified by *be tall, have two legs, be a mammal / ser alto, ter duas pernas, ser mamífero*, seem to reject usage with the PP because they tend to refer to what some classify as ‘eternal truths’, or state type 1 a). Perhaps because of this, the only acceptable examples are those which occur with the adverbials *never* and *always*, as in *She has never/always been beautiful*, and *He has always had only one leg*. However, pragmatically, these examples seem to be used either as an emphatic description of a quality which may in fact lack real permanence, or to draw attention to some unusual feature, rather than because they contain some absolute truth value based on the adverbs.

One example from the corpus, which might have been designed to show how someone can express the idea of eternal truth or state type 1a) using *be*, first in the PP to express a period of time extending from whenever men first evaluated each other to the moment of speaking, and then emphasizing a sort of seamless continuity implicit between this situation and the future by using a coordinated clause with *always* + the future tense, is:

- (7) A man’s worth lies in the extent to which he knows himself, and the extent to which he knows how to measure himself. I don’t see any reason for you to be so awe-struck about it. It has always been like that and always will be.

The more problematical nature of *always* and state type 1a), however, is demonstrated by another example in the corpus, which is a mother’s description of her son:

- (8) You know quite well how practical and realistic he has always been.

Not even the most doting of mothers would insist that her son was practical and realistic from the day he was born and, if challenged, would probably indicate some stage in his development during which she began to notice this characteristic. Pragmatically, her use of the PP + *always* is related not so much to any interest in a particular time span, as to a need to emphasize her son’s qualities.

5.2.1.2. States — type B

This group of verbs actually covers quite a wide variety of lexical fields and Quirk et al.²⁸ allows for several sub-categories. First there are the states which normally consist syntactically of a copula + adjective construction describing some aspect of the Subject that is too temporary and non-inherent to qualify as a quality. Portuguese speakers find the distinction between a quality and a state quite natural because they will use *ser* as the quality type copula and *estar* as the state type one, but the English native speaker, who has only *be* to use in both cases, may find it more difficult to see the difference.

It is easy enough to understand certain adjectives as describing permanent qualities in definitions like *a sphere is round*, but one does not need to contemplate the so-called 'eternal truth' every time one considers the quality of something or someone. After all, very few qualities are actually 'eternal' in the widest sense of this term. However, if we restrict the world of reference to that which is immediately relevant to the situation being discussed, one can argue for certain qualities as being inherent and inalienable from the object described, no matter how temporary the nature of this object. For example, although one may argue about the relativity of point of view, but one can extend the rule to describe someone as inherently *tall*, *beautiful* or *intelligent*. After this there is gradient of inherent quality to non-inherent state which allows one to use certain adjectives in both ways.

As an English/Portuguese speaker, I have always found it very useful to be able to apply the Portuguese *ser* / *estar* test to work out the answers for *be*. For example, one can describe the desert as being *dry* by definition and Portuguese will corroborate the fact by using *ser* in a similar situation. However, an example suggested by the corpus, which will be considered later under the section on processes, is that of an omelette being dry. Dryness is not, or I at least believe it should not be, an inherent quality of omelettes, although at what point we cease to refer to a particular omelette's dryness as non-inherent or inherent, is a debatable point for an English speaker. The Portuguese speaker can solve the problem, at least linguistically, by opting for either *estar* or *ser* to describe it — *A omelette está / é seca..*

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 4.29 -31

Then there are the 'private' states which can be further subdivided into i) intellectual states, e.g. *know, believe, think; be convinced that*, or *saber, acreditar, pensar, estar convencido que*; ii) states of emotion or attitude, e.g. *wish, want, love, be happy; be annoyed*; or *querer, amar, estar feliz, estar zangado*; iii) states of perception, e.g. *see, hear, feel*; or *ver, ouvir, sentir*, and iv) states of bodily perception, e.g. *hurt, ache, feel cold* or *doer, sentir frio*. Finally, there are other states of 'being' and 'having' which are expressed through verbs like *have, contain, hold, matter, depend, resemble* and *belong*, and *ter, conter, parecer* and *pertencer*. The argument that these groups only accept the progressive on rare occasions²⁹ was presumed to show that private states lack the element of volition required for normal more physical actions but, as I have shown elsewhere³⁰, the cognitive processes involved are too complex to be dismissed so lightly.

An interesting point, for the purpose of this paper, is that about a quarter of all the PP examples collected, and 60% of the examples with adverbs like *always, ever, never, and not...yet*, occurred with the stative verbs. They do not include examples of the progressive use as they were not present in the corpus, probably for the reasons already stated, and because those with *think*, usually with the prepositions *of* or *about*, are better interpreted as being conscious type E activities.

5.2.1.2.1. *Non-inherent states*

One point that is worth drawing attention to is that many of those adjectives which usually express temporary states are the copula + adjective/past participle synonyms of the stative verbs discussed in the previous paragraph, for example: *be certain that / estar convencido de que, be happy / estar feliz*, and *be ill/ estar doente*. Another group that lends itself to this sort of structure are those referring to the weather, like *be hot / cold* or *estar quente / frio*, and *be sunny / cloudy* or *estar nublado*.

Let us look at a few non-corpus examples and their translations:

- (9) James has been very unhappy lately.
O Jaime tem estado muito infeliz ultimamente.

²⁹ See QUIRK *et al.* — *Op. cit.*, 4.29 for the tentative use with *hope* and *want*, and those with bodily sensation.

³⁰ *Op. cit.* 1994.

- (10) Francis has been ill for a month.
Há um mês que o Francisco tem estado doente.
- (11) It has been very hot since last week.
Tem estado muito quente desde a semana passada.

The situations described are not simple states and, although they are seen as continuing over a certain period of time up till now, the continuity, or state-like nature of the situation is only relative. As we can see, the Portuguese translations accept the PPC quite happily and, since there seems to be general agreement that the PPC has an iterative function, one can also describe the English examples as referring to some sort of intermittent, cyclical, or iterative state.

Even if one is in a profound state of depression, the frame of mind is not usually absolutely continuous, and one has intervals of less negative moods, or — if nothing else — one needs to sleep at intervals, and our psychiatrists would probably agree with Shakespeare that “sleep knits up the ravelled sleeve of care”³¹, rather than continues or exacerbates it. Illness, too, tends to consist of a cycle of improvements and relapses, and the sun alternates with clouds by day and the moon by night. These situations, therefore, correspond to the habit / iterative type time concepts 2 a), b) and c), and they appear with suitable adverbs, as in the examples above.

If an adjective is used with *always* and the PP, one has to make an A quality type analysis with a State 1a) time concept, but the analysis with *never*, or *ever* and *yet*, which are used with negatives and interrogatives, is quite complex. The negative forms refer to states, habits or events which have not happened, and the interrogative asks whether the states, habits or events have happened. The corpus contains two such examples with adjectives from the emotion group:

- (12) Certainly not . . . I have never been afraid of work. If I had got my degree, I should have become a lawyer . . .
- (13) Have you ever made a bad business deal, or ever been ashamed to say something you had to?

³¹ From SHAKESPEARE, William — *Macbeth*, 1623.

Ex. 12 is a negative proposition referring to a non-existent emotional state any time in the past up till now, and Ex. 13 asks a question about an unknown emotional state during an unknown event which occurred before now. Portuguese would use the 'pretérito' — *nunca tive medo* and *tiveste vergonha de...?* — to express the same situation.

Before leaving this group, it is as well to notice that, despite the intermittent nature of the quality or state, *ser* can also appear with the PPC with as adjective, as in *Ele tem sido muito correcto em todos os contactos comigo*, and when the complement of the copula is a noun, as in *A falta de água no verão tem sido um problema para a agricultura nos últimos anos*. It can also appear in the passive construction, which is related to the copula + adjective structure, as in:

- (14) Agora reparo que tenho sido muitíssimo perseguido pelos meus antigos discípulos...

In all these examples, however, there is a sense of intermittency conveyed by the surrounding context.

5.2.1.2.2. *Intellectual states*

The mental processes involved in intellectual states are by no means static, but because they reject the progressive and imperative, it has been considered convenient to classify them as states. The verbs that come into this category, like *think*, *know*, and *forget*, seem to fit less easily into the state category when they appear in context. For example, although one could almost argue a permanent situation, with State 1a) time analysis, for the following:

- (15) The upper classes have always known how to play the game their times demanded, yielding a bit when it was unavoidable, in order to take it back again at the first opportunity.

despite a possible iterative interpretation, and a normal temporary state reading with state type 1c) time concept for:

- (16) Naturally she'll have to give the impression during dinner that we have known each other for some time.

The following is an E type activity with an iterative type habit concept 2a):

(17) I don't know, and I've thought a lot about it.

and Exs. 18 and 19 are nearer G type accomplishments, with an event type time concept (despite the negative idea of the lexical verb *forget*):

(18) You've forgotten something.

(19) I am going to give him to understand that I have thought of this before.

In any case all these examples except 16, which uses the 'presente' to refer to the fact that the situation continues in the present, would take the 'pretérito' in the Portuguese translation³², which indicates that Portuguese considers the situation a simple state or event in the past.

5.2.1.2.3. *States of emotion or attitude*

Apart from the two examples using copula + emotion adjectives, there are several other examples of emotion verbs in the corpus. They tend to cooccur with *always*, and although they can be interpreted as a continuous state, as in:

(20) 'No, no. I prefer to walk. I have always liked walking and it does me good.

they can also give an iterative idea of emotion. The following example actually draws attention to the fact that the *hating* happened not continuously, but coincided with certain occasions:

(21) What I can be sure of is that he's always hated me a bit more every time he's failed.

³² Translations for these examples would be:

15. ...souberam sempre...
16. ...que nos conhecemos há muito tempo...
17. ...já pensei muito...
18. Esqueceste alguma coisa.
19. ...já pensei nisso.

Even when an example uses *never*, one can understand that the reference could be to repeated occasions if one interpretes it at a pragmatic level:

- (22) 'I have never liked the courage of mobs, and apart from that I wanted to know who was the stronger, they or I'.

Portuguese, though, will use the 'pretérito' in these cases, as an event interpretation is expected with *nunca*.

5.2.1.2.4. *States of perception*

This group of verbs, and particularly *see* and *hear*, seem to take the PP very easily. They lend themselves to habit or iterative interpretations when a normal assertion is made and on these occasions it is possible to find the PPC in the original, as in:

- (23) It's just that I've seen your car there so often . .
or. — *É que tenho lá visto o teu carro tantas vezes...*

- (24) 'You're wonderful, Gonçalo., 'Not wonderful, Alexandra. I'm just old and I've seen a lot.
or. — *Tanto também não, Alexandra. Estou é muito velho e tenho visto muita coisa.*

However, not all these examples were rendered in the PPC, so one can presume that *já vi*, or *já ouvi*, are often felt to be equally suitable, even on very similar occasions. Some uses can be seen as individual events, as is probably the case in:

- (25) 'Have you seen those things hanging on the ceiling? Aren't they ugly ?...'

although the following example is a little ambiguous, partly because of the plurality involved:

- (26) They like Gauguin because they have heard he left his wife and children in order to devote himself to his art.

Negative examples and questions can usually be interpreted as referring to non-existent or unknown events, as in:

- (27) I wonder what happened to Joaquim Pedro? I haven't seen him for years.
- (28) You have lost your place. You've had it. This fellow has never heard of complexes or enlightened spirits. He is pure.

5.2.1.2.5. *States of bodily perception*

No examples of this type appeared in the corpus but one could give the following as an example which functions both for the PP and the PPC:

- (29) My back has been hurting me a lot lately.
tr. A minha coluna me tem doído muito ultimamente.

Again we have this idea of an iterative cycle of states rather than some unbroken continuous state, and here this fact is emphasized by the progressive aspect with the PP, which contributes to the effect. However, this contrasts with:

- (30) My back has never hurt before.
tr. A minha coluna nunca me doeu.

which refers rather to a non-existent one-off situation.

5.2.1.2.6. *Other states of being and having*

Nearly all the examples of this type occurred with *have* and, although one could envisage a permanent state 1a) example like:

- (31) She has always had that birthmark on her face.

and less permanent states, like:

- (32) He has had that car for 6 months.

it also occurs with iterative situations of the type below, translated directly from the Portuguese original:

(33) 'It's good to see you, Gonçalo. It's ages since I've seen you?
'I've had a lot to do.

or. — *Gosto de te ver, Gonçalo. Há muito tempo que não te punha a vista em cima.*

— *Tenho tido muito que fazer.*

and with events as, in

(34) This supper is the first adventure I've ever had.

and in the question or negative situations of the type described for other groups, as in:

(35) By the way, have you had dinner yet?,

5.2.1.3. Stance — type C

This group of verbs is particularly interesting for the PP debate because it includes verbs such as *live*, *stand*, and *lie*, and *morar*, *viver* and *ficar*. It therefore includes the much-discussed example *Mary has lived in Amsterdam for three years*, and about which I shall express my opinion before moving on to other points of interest with this group.

Kamp and Reyle³³ put forward the opinion that:

'English perfects of stative verbs can be used in quite different ways. To see this consider the sentence

(5.126) Mary has lived in Amsterdam for three years:

This sentence has two readings. It can mean that there was, somewhere in the past, a three year period during which Mary lived in Amsterdam. But it can also be taken to mean that Mary *is* living in Amsterdam now and that this state of affairs has already been going on for three years. The first reading - which seems to be the only one available when the perfect occurs by itself, as in

(5.127) Mary has lived in Amsterdam.

— closely resembles perfects of non-stative verbs...'

³³ KAMP, H.; REYLE, U. — *From Discourse to Logic — Introduction to Model theoretic Semantics of Natural Language, Formal Logic and Discourse Representation Theory*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1993, p. 567.

Both as a native speaker of English and as a linguist, I would challenge Kamp and Reyle to find a real-life example of the first interpretation of their so-called ambiguous sentence no.(5.126). At best I might allow it in some deliberately obscure Monty Python type dialogue deliberately constructed to provoke misunderstanding — but I feel that the writers of such dialogues would only use it in order to parody the type of intellectual obscurity represented by such an example. Why on earth should a native speaker want to use such a structure when one can make oneself perfectly clear by saying *Mary once lived in Amsterdam for three years?* In context, only this sentence can be followed by a statement like *After that, she moved to London*, whereas their sentence (5.126) can only take something like *But today she is moving to London*.

I would also challenge their interpretation of the example (5.127), but not because it is ambiguous or because one cannot accept the sense they give it. By using it they show the type of false situation certain linguists impose on themselves by reducing sentences to some supposedly acceptable minimum. As I have already said, any use of language has to presuppose a real life situation if it is to mean anything, and to simply say *Mary has lived in Amsterdam*, and believe it to mean something in a vacuum, is senseless. I am not against their assuming it to refer to an event, but the PP cannot simply mean an event in the past without some form of attachment to the present, and this has to be explicit at some level of the text.

I am completely in agreement with Kamp and Reyle³⁴ that 'the division between event-describing sentence and state-describing sentences appears to be gradual rather than sharp', but I fail to understand why they have used this example to demonstrate their ideas. Maybe it is because stance verbs, as Quirk et al.³⁵ are at pains to point out, are 'between the stative and dynamic categories'. Quirk et al. describe this phenomenon as a sign that 'the stative / dynamic dichotomy is an artificial division of this continuum', and one could argue that the dynamic examples, usually expressed with the progressive, are already outside the stative area anyhow. Kamp and Reyle might have had better luck with Quirk et al.'s more stative example *I have sat here for over two hours* which, it is suggested, implies that 'that the 'sitting' is concluded at the present moment', but for that one has to accept [NOW] as an interval, rather than a moment, and insist that the *sitting* ends at the beginning of the interval. In any case, we are still left with a somewhat

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 507.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 4.32.

'hair-splitting' case of ambiguity. I think it is more probable that Kamp and Reyle have been influenced by factors from other languages of the kind they discuss on page 568.

In any case, this first reading seems to be of less importance than the second to their general argument, and to that of Peres³⁶ who has taken up this example to demonstrate points about the PPC. This second reading is the normal one and is the one which is of real interest because it is the odd one out when the PP is compared to other languages using *have* type perfectives.

The typology of verbs chosen for this group shows up a difference in lexical usage in English and Portuguese that is rather interesting, because it draws attention to the permanent > temporary and stative > dynamic gradients within the group. There were no examples in the corpus, so I shall have to develop this theme using non-contextualized examples, although I shall attempt to show how they would appear in context.

In examples like *Amsterdam is in Holland* the verb *be* is acting as a stance verb, for which the nearest equivalent in Portuguese is *ficar*, but in examples like *Mary is in Amsterdam*, *be* is translated by *estar*. A distinction is made in Portuguese between permanent (*ficar*) and temporary (*estar*) stance. In English, verbs like *stand* and *lie* can be used to describe both the more permanent position implicit in *Nelson's column stands in Trafalgar Square* or *Matosinhos lies to the north of Foz*³⁷, and the more temporary one of *John is standing by the bar* and *Mary is lying on the beach*. Again, Portuguese will use *ficar* for the more permanent situations and *estar* in the more temporary ones, because it has no real verb to express *stand*, only the phrase *estar (de pé)* which only translates the more temporary situation rather awkwardly (*o João está (de pé) junto do bar*), and *deitar* refers to the action of lying down, and needs the pseudo-passive construction *estar deitado* to refer to the position.

It would probably be difficult to find the PP with the more permanent examples quoted above as they are hardly relevant pragmatically. One cannot propose an example like **Matosinhos has lain north of Foz for many years* because neither Matosinhos nor Foz, as they exist in the real world, can be moved to any other position. However, one could say that *Nelson's column has stood in Trafalgar Square since the early nineteenth century* because,

³⁶ *Op. cit.*

³⁷ This sort of example has to be chosen carefully. *Stand* needs to collocate with something tall and upright like Nelson's column and *lie* with a relatively flat area like that of Matosinhos.

despite whatever difficulties might be involved in its removal, it is still essentially movable. However, it would be difficult to say **Nelson's column has stood in Trafalgar Square* and a little odd to say *Nelson's column has been standing in Trafalgar Square since the early nineteenth century* without provoking someone into making a Monty Python type sequence showing the column moving around at will. The duration adverbial is necessary to convey a certain notion of permanence, and the progressive form allows a possible dynamic interpretation which is unacceptable in the circumstances.

As one moves from the use of stance verbs with inanimate subjects to those with animate and moving ones, the need of the adverbial becomes almost essential and the tendency will be to reject the simple PP in favour of the progressive form. Thus? *John has stood by the bar* and ? *Mary has lain on the beach* can only be understood without an adverbial in context if one changes the stance interpretation to one in which they resemble dynamic verbs referring to the activity of standing or lying, rather than the position or stance. *John has stood by the bar for half an hour* and *Mary has lain on the beach all afternoon* are decidedly less natural than *John has been standing by the bar for half an hour* and *Mary has been lying on the beach all afternoon..* Quirk et al. assert that some speakers feel that the progressive form 'suggests a more temporary state' and 'implies that the posture may well continue into the future'. I would not disagree with this, but I would also suggest that it has something to do with the way people stand or lie. The simple PP suggests a rather fixed rigidity of position which is rarely the case in these situations. People standing at bars tend to move about a bit, or at least shift their weight from one foot to another, and lying on the beach also involves turning over or even occasionally sitting up to change position. This suggests that stance of this kind favours the type of iterative interpretation which is on the gradient between states and habits. In any case, if the PP is used, there must be some sort of state or habit interpretation connecting the stance verb to the present, and it is difficult to see how these same verbs could appear as events without changing their group type.

Once we turn from these more obvious stance type verbs to *live* and *viver / morar*, this problem of group classification becomes more complex. The difference between *Mary has lived in Amsterdam for three years* and *Mary has been living in Amsterdam for three years* would seem to be minimal, but there is a subtle connotation of gradient between the more state-like interpretation of the former and the more iterative type reading of the latter. After all, although *live in* has the idea of permanent residence or stance

within the perimeters of Amsterdam, it does not exclude trips to the country or holidays in the Algarve to the extent that the more stance-like use of *be* in *Mary has been in Amsterdam for three weeks* probably does ³⁸.

Portuguese can make three distinctions here, between *a Maria vive / está a viver / tem vivido em Amersterdão há três anos*, although Peres ³⁹ only allows for the first and last of these possibilities, probably because the focus of his paper is on the difference between them rather than on the more marginally relevant second one. The second one would also involve discussion of the English present progressive, which is not necessary in this context. However, the three possibilities draw attention to the different possibilities of fixed stance, continuous state and the iterative interpretation.

Now let us turn to the simple *Mary has lived in Amsterdam* which, as Kamp and Reyle suggest, means that, somewhere in the past, Mary lived in Amsterdam, but that does not mean that Mary is living in Amsterdam now. If we want to clarify this in a way that allows its interpretation as an event, one can use the example *Mary has already lived in Amsterdam* or *Mary has lived in Amsterdam before*. The use of these adverbials help one to understand what is already present in the simpler sentence — that the use of the PP implies the fact or proposal that Mary is now living, or is going to live, in Amsterdam again. Without a surrounding situation of this nature, the use of PP becomes irrelevant, and to compare this use of the PP to perfectives in other languages indicating telic situations in the past, with no connection to the present, is to mislead people as to the oddity of the PP.

5.2.2. The Dynamic Verbs

5.2.2.1. Non-conclusive, Durative and Non-agentive Goings-on — type D

Typical of this group of verbs are those describing meteorological states such as *It is raining* and *The sun is shining*, or *Chove* or *Há sol*. Unfortunately, Sttau Monteiro seems to be uninterested in the weather in his

³⁸ One should not forget that, pragmatically, the semantic meaning of the time reference + lexical verb will change according to the possible combinations involved. Thus, whereas *Mary has been in Amsterdam for three weeks* implies she is there on business or holiday, *Mary has been in Amsterdam for three years* implies much the same as *Mary lived in Amsterdam for three years*, and is thus subject to the analysis made of this sentence.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 44.

novel, so again I must refer to non-contextualized examples. Although both the simple and progressive form of the PP are possible, the progressive form would seem to be a little more natural. The information *It has rained once today* is unnaturally precise, given such an irregular type of happening as *raining*, and unusual in conversation which, for pragmatic reasons of general coherence, prefers *It has been raining today*, which is translatable by *Tem estado a chover hoje*.

The longer the period of time involved, the more likely it is that the progressive form, with its iterative function, will be used, so that *It has been raining for a week* is more normal than *It has rained for a week*. However, when a habitual notion is explicit in the text, as in *It has always rained whenever I have visited you*, the progressive becomes superfluous because the iterative feature is introduced by the *whenever* clause. However, this type of example is unusual as one would normally use the present tense in English, as one does in Portuguese.

5.2.2.2. Non-conclusive, Durative and Agentive Activities — type E

Many of the verbs involved in this group can also belong to group G and the way they are classified in one group or the other depends on whether the action is on-going or completed. Activities focus the action itself and not any possible result, as in *John is drinking*, or the habit, as in *John drinks a lot*, whereas group G accomplishments focus the finished action *John drank all the whisky*. Given the nature of the progressive, which focuses the durative aspect of events and habits, it is only natural that it should occur frequently with the activity verbs, and it is, therefore, understandable that the progressive aspect of the PP should occur more frequently in this group than the simple form.

Some verbs are activities as long as there is no end result, and will not require a progressive aspect, although it could be used in the same context. An example of this from the corpus is:

- (36) 'No. I've hunted everywhere for a coat but I can't find anything suitable'.

When the examples imply continuation from the very recent past to [NOW] the use of the PP and PPC may indicate a more continuous

situation which obscures the basically iterative nature of what is happening, as in:

(37) Did you realize I've been pretending I am one of the others? One of those who . . . Look: now I have been imagining you belong to me.

or. *Sabia que tenho estado a fingir que sou um dos outros? Um dos que... Olhe: agora tenho estado a fingir que você é minha.*

(38) I remembered it a few minutes back and I've been thinking about it..

or. — *Lembrei-me há pouco e tenho estado a pensar...*

Other examples clearly show the iterative nature of the situation, as in:

(39) 'Tell me: how many years have you been working here with me?'
'I've been working fifteen years with you, sir, but I was working down below before you took over.'

5.2.2.3. Conclusive, Durative and Non-agentive Processes — type F

This group describes processes like *ripen*, *improve* and *become*, or *amadurecer* and *melhorar*. The decision as to whether one uses the PP in the simple or progressive form makes a considerable difference here, the former meaning the process has ended in a result, as in, *The apples have ripened well, and they are now ready to eat*, and the latter meaning that the process is still unfinished, as in *The apples have been ripening well, but they still need a little longer*. Portuguese needs the 'pretérito' for the first here, *As maçãs amadurecerem bem*, and the *estar* + infinitive progressive, *As maçãs estão a amadurecer bem*, in the second. *Ripen*, however, results in the final state *ripe*, but although *improve* may result in *improvement*, it is not such a final state, and it probably proceeds at a more intermittent pace than the more continuous *ripen*. So the English *His writing has improved* may be translated with the PPC in *A sua letra tem melhorado*, and its meaning is only a little more definite than the continuous form, *His writing has been improving*, which can give us *A sua letra tem vindo a melhorar*. This *tem vindo a* phrase would seem to be restricted to this group of verbs.

An example of the resultative form from the corpus shows us how the English PP with *become*, which is really a process type copula, serves to translate the Portuguese 'pretérito' of *ficar*, which is a resultative copula:

- (40) 'The omelette has got rather dry after all this waiting'.
or. — *A omelette, com esta espera toda, ficou um pouco seca.*

One could compare the situation to one like *Mary has become a beautiful woman*, possibly translatable by *A Maria tornou-se uma mulher linda*, although Portuguese would probably opt to describe Maria's state as *A Maria é uma mulher linda* using the quality copula *ser*.⁴⁰

The iterative nature of other processes can be seen in the following example:

- (41) He still believed he would one day get beyond lodgings and the office and Sunday afternoon football... Recently, things have grown worse. There is no longer any hope.
or. *Ainda acreditava que viria a ultrapassar a barreira da Rua Morais Soares, do escritório, do futebol aos domingos... Ultimamente as coisas têm-se agravado. É o fim da esperança.*

5.2.2.4. Conclusive, Durative and Agentive Accomplishments — type G

This group is by far the most numerous for the PP, and accounts for over a third of the examples. However, as the most normal time reference for this group is the event in the past, its relevance to the PPC is rather reduced. The events vary in the length of time they take, but they are complete and something has been achieved, as in:

- (42) 'I decided not to speak to Pedro, Teresa, and have written him a letter instead.'

although we also find the interrogative and the negative examples found with other groups, as in:

- (43) I have never even learnt to take all that 'hope' jargon seriously.

⁴⁰ The English process-type copula *become* does not really correspond to the Portuguese *tornar-se*, and *ficar* refers to the resultant state rather than the process. See MAIA — *Op. cit.*, p. 147-50.

On the few occasions when there are examples of the *PPC* related to the group, this is made possible by the plurality of the events understood in the context, as in:

(44) I should prefer, however, to see you with double my pains and to have double your intelligence, to make you pay for all you've done to me...,

All I've done to you! But what the blazes have I done to you?

or. *Gostaria, porém, de ver-te com o dobro das minhas dores e gostaria de ter o dobro da tua inteligência, para te fazer pagar tudo o que me tens feito...*

— *O que te tenho feito! Mas que diabo te fiz eu?*

(45) However, as you have recently adopted certain attitudes which I find disturbing, I decided to write this letter.

or. *Como, porém, tens ultimamente tomado atitudes que me têm preocupado, resolvi escrever-te esta carta.*

The continuous form of the PP is simply irrelevant to this group, because the verbs in this group usually become E type activities when used in the progressive.

5.2.2.5. **Non-conclusive, Punctual and Non-agentive Momentary events**
— type H

Quirk et al.⁴¹ find it useful to describe certain verbal processes as 'momentary' or as lasting for a very short interval of time. The classification is largely made on the basis that when these verbs are used with the progressive one obtains an iterative situation. Examples of the non-agentive forms of this verb chosen by Quirk et al.⁴² are *sneeze* and *explode*, or *espirrar* and *explodir*. These two verbs demonstrate the nature of these verbs rather well by the way they differ. When we sneeze, we rarely do it only once, but if something explodes, it normally disintegrates, so something can be said to explode only once, as in:

(46) Your secret weapon has exploded in your hands.

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*

⁴² *Ibidem*, diagram p. 201.

Thus, the argument goes, although we can say *John has sneezed a lot today*, it is more likely we will say *John has been sneezing a lot today*, because of the iterative nature of sneezing. However, we can only use *explode* in the continuous form if, as in the example in 4.2, we are talking about several things, like bombs, exploding separately.

The iterative nature of both *sneeze* and *espirrar* allows for both the English versions above and the use of the PPC in their translations, *o João tem espirrado muito hoje* and *o João tem estado a espirrar muito hoje*.

5.2.2.6. Non-conclusive, Punctual and Agentive Momentary acts — type I

Similar arguments to those given for the previous group can be found for this one. The examples given by Quirk et al. include *tap*, *fire a gun* and *kick*, but I shall use *tap*, *beat* and *kiss* because they offer suitable equivalents in *bater*⁴³ and *beijar* in Portuguese, and because no examples appeared in the corpus. Being short momentary acts, these situations probably need contextualizing more than most to give them some substance, and *He has already tapped on the door* needs something like *already* to relate to some sort of meaningful context. If one wants to establish duration, with the action being repeated over this period, it is more usual to use the progressive, as in, *He has been tapping on the door for ten minutes*, or *Tem estado a bater à porta há 10 minutos*. The oddness of the examples one creates with the PP and PPC in this group is related not so much to the logical possibility of such things happening, as to the pragmatic likelihood of examples such as *He has been kissing his girlfriend for ten minutes*, or *Ele tem estado a beijar a namorada há 10 minutos*, actually appearing in real-life contexts. This may be due to my lack of imagination, but the fact that no examples appeared in the corpus might also point to a certain general rarity of this sort of situation as well.

5.2.2.7. Conclusive, Punctual and Non-Agentive Transitional events — type J

With this group the PP has the function of describing the conclusion of the event, as in *The train has arrived* and *He has died*. The proximity to [NOW] is established by the context, the first example referring to a probable

⁴³ Both *tap* and *beat* can be translated in Portuguese by *bater*.

maximum of hours, whereas the second can cover a fairly long period of time, particularly if the speaker and addressee have not seen each other for a long time. Being a past event, though, Portuguese will render this with *já* and the 'pretérito', as in *O comboio já chegou*, and *Ele já morreu*.

Any attempt to make sentences like *?The train has been arriving for 1 hour*, or *?O comboio tem estado a chegar há uma hora* are very marked and do not strictly fit into this group because, by using the progressive, they are personifying the train and turning the idea of *arrive / chegar* into an activity. Similarly, *?He has been dying for several days*, is unusual but just possible if a long drawn-out activity type process is involved, and possibly if an ironic effect is intended.

It is just possible to use these verbs in an apparently iterative sense, as in *The 8 p.m. train has arrived on time every day this week*, but that is because there is an idea of plurality of occasions embedded in this sentence, which is also possible with the PPC, *O comboio das 20 tem chegado sempre a horas esta semana*.

Apart from these examples, though, there are plenty in the corpus of the regular variety, such as:

- (47) I merely repeat that up till now you have only received benefits which you, personally, have done nothing to deserve.
or. *Repito, portanto, que até agora só tens recebido benefícios que nada fizeste para merecer.*

where the plural reference allows the PPC as well, and examples of simple events with the PP, like:

- (48) I've reached the age where I'm more likely to know António's father than António.

(49) I shall pretend I have found a substitute and have forgotten all about her.

5.2.2.8. Conclusive, Punctual and Agentive Transitional Acts — type K

The transitional act are similar to the events, the only real difference being that they are agentive. Quirk et al. give *sit down* as an example, and it demonstrates quite well that, whereas *He has just sat down* or *Ele já se*

sentou fits into the classification of this group, the progressive form *He has been sitting down for three hours* or *Tem estado sentado há três horas* is better classified in the more temporary area of the C or stance group, or in the E or activity one.

Although the normal usage in this group can be found in an example like *He has just begun his homework* or even *He has begun his homework several times*, we would only say *He has been beginning his homework for hours* if we wanted to be very ironic about his repeated—and unsuccessful—attempts to do his homework.

Again there are quite a few normal examples in the corpus, both in reference to single events, as in:

- (50) It is then my duty to thank our hostess, in the name of all present, for the opportunity we have had of entering this lovely house where... where... where I have just finished supper.

and a plurality of places in:

- (51) The worst of it is I've grown used to Gonçalo. I've stopped going to the usual places.

6. Conclusion

I do not presume in such a short paper to add anything particularly significant to a subject on which many have written in greater depth. However, I feel that the comparison of two languages often suggests perspectives that have not been fully explored. In this case, I think that a consideration of the iterative nature of the PPC helps us to understand certain aspects of the behaviour of the PP rather better. The iterative concept allows us to consider what actually happens in the situations referred to by the PP, and which the terms 'continuous' and 'habitual', with their connotations of unvarying continuity, and regular, often conscious, repetition, tend to obscure.

The other point that I hope to have made clear is that tense and aspect are by no means easy to isolate as being inherent to the syntax of the verb. Traditional grammars always tend to make rules about one area of syntax without always taking the relationship of other areas into account, or giving due importance to the lexicon or the rules of discourse, and perhaps this can

be understood when economy of description is needed. However, M.A.K. Halliday has always insisted on considering the sentence as a part of discourse first, and then analysing the small items later, and this type of organization can be seen in Halliday (1984)⁴⁴. Quirk et al.⁴⁵, while maintaining a fairly traditional organization has included much of what has been learnt about the lexicon and rules of discourse. In pedagogical grammars, one can understand why rules have to be reduced to their simpler forms, but some more modern ones focus on describing rules with reference to real texts⁴⁶.

However, those attempting to teach language to artificial intelligence are often still struggling to teach it the basic elements of grammar, and find it hard to include more than the minimum of context. They need to reduce meaning to logical formulae, and I admire the progress that has been made. However, I feel they still have a long way to go. With the PP and PPC, for instance, only a certain amount of information can be gathered just from the *ter* / *have* + past participle combination, or added by the progressive aspect. Trying to pin meaning on to this structure or parts of it, is a little difficult. The school of thought that linguists like Kamp and Reyle and Peres belong to, seems interested in isolating semantic features of tense in the verbs alone and Peres⁴⁷, for example, suggests making a rule that '*ter* appears as an inducer of temporal perspective, and in an extraordinary and possibly language-specific role as an iterator of events, when the temporal perspective value is PRESENT (in the indicative)'. Given the very restricted use of the PPC and the iterative factor, perhaps he has a case for suggesting that this gives *ter* 'a very particular status among so-called auxiliary verbs'. However, since *ter* does not function in such a restricted fashion with the past and future perfectives, I feel that teaching this to a Portuguese language learner, whether human or mechanical, is a little dangerous, unless a full explanation of the restricted nature of this rule is made. One must also take into account

⁴⁴ HALLIDAY, M.A.K. — *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London, Edward Arnold, 1984.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*

⁴⁶ The COLLIINS COBUILD ENGLISH GRAMMAR (1990), with its wealth of examples taken from real texts can help students to see the rules of English in a more natural setting.

DOWNING, Angela; LOCKE, Philip — *A University Course in English Grammar*, Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall, 1993 have attempted to provide a functional-systemic type grammar for advanced learners that may prove to be very useful.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 48

other aspects of syntax, and pay particular attention to both the situation type of the verb and to the adverbs. Even after taking all this into consideration, there are still ways in which the real world interferes.

The comparison of the sentence *Ultimamente o Paddy tem estado doente* to *Paddy has been ill lately* may help one realize that the English sentence also contains a certain iterative sense. However, one might deduce this partly from the meaning of *ill* and partly from that of the adverb *lately*, rather than from the verb form, just as similar traces can be retrieved from *doente* and *ultimamente*. The iterative sense of the sentence will become less marked if no adverb is used or if the reference is very close to [NOW], and more marked if the adverbs used become *Nos últimos meses* or *in the last few months*. However, if one amplifies this example a little more, and suggests that *Paddy has always been ill when there is racing at Cheltenham*, how does one inform either our machine, or even someone outside our culture, that the speaker is being ironic, and that Paddy was not in fact ill at all, but was pretending to his boss that he was, so that he could go racing on a weekday? This information is accessible to an informed native speaker, who will know that the name Paddy is usually associated with Irishmen, that there is a well-known race-course near Cheltenham, that we are talking of horse racing, and not motor racing, and that the most important race there, the Cheltenham Gold Cup, is of special significance to the Irish.

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