

## THE PECULIARITIES OF PERCEPTION VERBS AND THEIR USAGE IN THE LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the perceptive verbs in the language and their indispensable peculiarities in the language. Perceptive verbs are considered as pole semantic verbs in English, which have more than one unique meaning.

**Keywords:** prototypical meanings, verbs of perception, active perception, passive perception, copulative verbs.

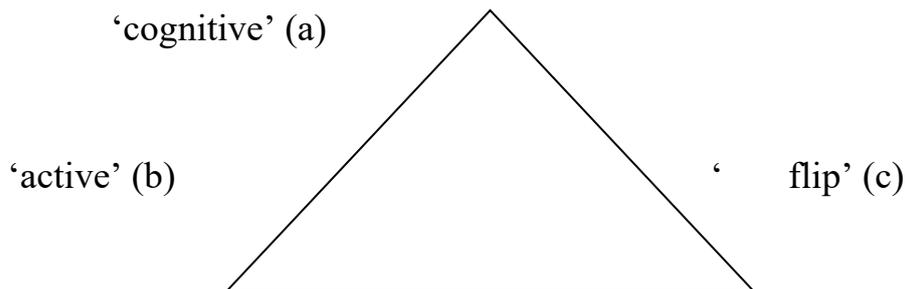
### INTRODUCTION

When trying to define perception verbs, linguists tend to be unanimous in characterizing them as verbs expressing one of the five sense modalities, namely: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste (Rogers 1971, Kryk 1978, Viberg 1983).

“Base paradigm” of perception verbs (Viberg 1984,2001)

	Experience	Activity	Phenomenon-based
SIGHT	see	look	Look(like)
HEAR	hear	listen	Sound
FEEL	feel	Feel/touch	Feel(like)
SMELL	smell	smell	Smell of/stink
TASTE	taste	taste	Taste(like)

Perception verbs are further divided into three main groups by Rogers:



## METHODOLOGY

Cognitive perception verbs are also referred to as ‘passive perception verbs’ (Palmer 1966:99), ‘inert perception verbs’ (Leech 1971:23), ‘experience verbs’ (Viberg 1983:123), ‘non-intentional and non-deliberate’ (Behrman 1998:2). They indicate passive perception and are not used in the progressive or the imperative.

Furthermore, Russian scientists also worked on this topic, namely V.D. Arakin, ND. Arutyunova, M. Ya. Blox, M.D. Restvezova, A.B Kunin and so on.

A.B. Kunin(1996)researched the phraseological meanings of the verb Feel and their usage in the language, its connections between other parts of speech .

Cognitive verbs are often opposed to active verbs which express activity or “unbound process that is consciously controlled by a human agent” (Viberg 1983:123). Thus, cognitive verbs hear and see possess their active counterparts listen to and look at, while the other perception verbs feel, taste and smell have homophonous active counterparts.

Finally, the third group of perception verbs is called descriptive or flip (Rogers 1971), resultative (Scovel 1971:83) or copulative (Viberg 1983:124). Scovel (1971:83) uses the term resultative because, according to him, these verbs are “the result of the state of using a certain sense”. Viberg (1983:124) observes that the difference between experience (cognitive) verbs and copulative verbs lies in the choice of the grammatical subject or, as he terms it, in “base selection”. The subject of the experience-based verbs is an animate undergoing some perception process, while the subject of a copulative verb is the “experienced entity” (e.g. look happy).

The following examples taken from Rogers (1980) show that in English the verb “feel” can be all cognitive, active and a flip verb.

John felt the rock Jon toshni sezdi (Rogers,1971)

John felt the rock Jon toshni ushlab bildi

The rock felt good Qoya yaxshiga o’xshaydi

According to Viberg (1983), who focuses on typology of perception verbs in more than 53 languages, there exists a hierarchy in which the verb see takes the highest position, followed by the verb hear and only then by touch, smell and taste. The existence of such a hierarchy explains the priority given to verbs of visual and auditory perception in linguistic studies.

Viberg (1983:136-137) gives the following interpretation of the hierarchy:

“ A verb having a basic meaning belonging to a sense modality higher in the hierarchy can get an extended meaning that covers some (or all) of the sense

modalities lower in the hierarchy”. This means that the higher the position of the verb, the more polysemous it is. Viberg provides examples of the Kurdish verb *ditin* (‘see’) and the Luo verb *winjo* (‘hear’), which can extend their meanings to touch, smell and taste.

In his work, however, Viberg suggests a more detailed hierarchy that, in his view, better reflects peculiarities of the Russian perception verbs. He states that *hear* is more connected with *smell*, since these modalities do not require physical contact with the body, whereas *touch* is closer to *taste*, where the contact with the body is indispensable. Analyzing patterns of polysemy of sense modalities in different language families, Viberg observes that in Russian, as in Swedish and many other languages, the experience verb *feel* also covers *taste* and *smell*, which is not the case in English. To illustrate the examples from Russian, he quotes the work of Rogers (1980) on the semantic analysis of Russian perception verbs:

- a. John felt the rock ДЖОН ЧУСТВОВАЛЪ КАМЕН
- b. John tasted the pepper ДЖОН ЧУСТВОВАЛЪ ВКУС ПЕРЦА
- c. John smelled the soup ДЖОН ЧУСТВОВАЛЪ ЗАПАХ СУПА

The perception verbs are highly polysemous and vary in their semantic extensions from one language to another.

When used in a sentence, perception verbs become part of a perception process, which involves the presence of other important entities. Kryk (1978:118) singles out the following elements of the perception process: Perception, Percipient, Percept, named according to the function performed in the sentence. The Percipient is “the animate NP involved actively in or affected by the perception”, while the Percept is “a person, object, or phenomenon to affect one of the senses”.

The complementation of perception verbs is represented by various syntactic forms and has been extensively examined in works by many linguists.

For instance Dik & Hengeveld (1991) made a research on the the typology of perception-verb complements. Four types of complementation are singled out in their paper:

- immediate perception of an individual (a),
  - immediate perception of a state of affairs (b),
  - mental perception of a propositional content (c),
  - reception of the propositional content of a speech act (d).
- a. I saw your brother last night.(Dik & Hengeveld, 1991)
  - b. I saw him walk down the street.

- c. I saw that Mary had been crying.
- d. I hear you will probably sing in the Royal Albert Hall next week.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focuses on the complementation of the verbs see and hear and contrasts different types of complements in terms of their representation and expression in different languages.

Other works on complementation of perception verbs include Cinque (1992), who analyses pseudo-relative and ACC-ing constructions, Van der Meer (1994) dwells on the difference between bare-infinitive and ing-constructions, Borgonovo (1996) studies gerundial complements of perception verbs in English and Spanish. Miller and Lowrey (2003) compare the complementation of English and French perception verbs.

Bare infinitival and participial complements of perception verbs are examined in Felser (1998). According to the study, complements of perception verbs possess the following grammatical features: firstly, the simultaneity condition implies that the event expressed by the complement should be simultaneous with the “matrix event”.

We saw John drawing a circle. (Felser, 1998)

\*We saw John to have drawn a circle.

Second, it is claimed that the complement must be a non-stative one or an event. a. John was being obnoxious. (Felser, 1998) \*John was being tall.

b. John was running. \*John was knowing the answer.

Moreover, the direct perception complements do not bear tense markers such as the particle to or the aspectual auxiliaries have and be.

Ex: \*We saw John have drawn a circle. (Felser, 1998)

There are also certain constraints on the use of expletive there in complements.

Ex: \*We heard there be a woman in the room.

Finally, perception verbs cannot be used in the passive form with direct complements: .

Ex: \*John was seen draw a circle.

Felser claims that all these grammatical restrictions are due to the fact that verbs of perception behave as control verbs and provides evidence for it.

The difference between bare-infinitive and the ing-construction is regarded as an opposition of Static versus Dynamic in Van der Meer (1994:477). He observes that the ing-construction is a Static one since it describes “a frozen picture”,

He saw her standing by her door, fumbling with the key. (Van der Meer, 1994), while the bare infinitive complement has a more Dynamic character and indicates simultaneous actions.)

Soon after lunch Andrea saw him drive up and get out briskly (Van der Meer, 1994)

The gerundial complement in English is claimed to be “structurally ambiguous” in Borgonovo (1996:16) and therefore may have two interpretations of the following sentence: I saw John sawing through the floor.(Borgonovo, 1996)

### CONCLUSION

The study claims that on the one hand the sentence may be understood as “I see John directly fulfilling the action”, but on the other hand it can imply that I see only the saw being moved and suppose that John is performing the action of sawing. Borgonovo states that such dual interpretation is impossible in Spanish and explains this by a larger distribution of gerunds in English. Thus we can see that the complementation of perception-verbs is quite varied and different interpretations should be taken into account. From the writer’s point of view these are just some characteristics of the perceptive verbs and more analyses into them should be carried out.

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