

Rethinking the syntax of aspect


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This talk: syntax & semantics of aspect

- Aspect head – imperfective, perfective...
 - How many are there?
 - What happens when we have complex forms, e.g., periphrastic progressives?
 - What is the nature of the non personal part?
 - What is the meaning of the inflected head?
 - semantics ascribed to the perfective
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About what there is wide consensus

- Viewpoint aspect is a temporal category
- Informs about the developmental status of an event in time

(1) Juan pintó la habitación *Finished*

Juan paint-pfve.3ps the room

(2) Juan estaba pintando la habitación. *Ongoing*

Juan was.impfve painting the room

(3) Juan iba a pintar la habitación *About to start*

Juan went.impfve to paint the room

All situations before the Utterance Time “past”.



About what there is wide consensus

(4) Cuando Tim abrió la puerta, Juan estaba besando a María.

When Tim opened the door, John was kissing Mary

(5) Cuando Tim abrió la puerta, Juan besó a María.

When Tim opened the door, John kissed Mary

Tim opening the door x

John kissing Mary /

Are *ordered* in a different manner depending on their Aspect:


(4') -----////x///-----

(5') -----x-/---

Therefore: Aspect also contributes to
temporal ordering → it is a ordering
predicate

About what there is wide consensus

What the intervals to be ordered are:

- Topic Time: the time the sentence refers to, speaks about
I saw a book. The book was in Russian.
 - TT of “was” is the time in which I saw the book
 - Event Time: the time the whole situation runs over
 - Reference Time: the time with respect to which the TT is ordered (yielding past, present, future).
- 

About what there is wide consensus

- Aspect establishes a relation between the Time of the Situation (Event Time) and the Time the sentence refers to (Topic Time).
- Aspect is thus conceived as an ordering predicate establishing (temporal) topological relations.
- Analogous to Tense
- Difference lies in the times/intervals they order
- Klein 1994; Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2000

Typical aspect descriptions


Viewpoints	Predicate
Perfective	TT AT (\subseteq) EvT (TT = EvT)
Progressive	TT IN (\subset) EvT
Perfect	TT after EvT
Prospective	TT before EvT

Typical aspect descriptions

Viewpoint	Ordering Predicate	Effects	Interpretation	Traditional intuitions
Progressive Imperfective	TT (WITH)IN EvT	only part is asserted unbounded	ongoing	seen from the inside
Perfective	TT AT EvT (Total overlap)	the whole is asserted bounded	finished	seen from the outside; unanalyzed whole

Comrie 1976
Smith 1991

About what there is about the progressive

- Progressive: associated with imperfective aspect
 - Progressive: semantics is typically described as IN.
 - Progressive: topological roots –preposition of central coincidence across languages (Bybee et al 1994).
 - **What is the element procuring such relation?**
 - The progressive combines with other heads inflected for aspect as well in languages such as Spanish.
 - **Is the progressive (V-ndo; V-ing) an aspect?**
 - Have we got more than one aspect head? – inflected form showing in Spanish.
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Some observations on the progressive

- The inflected form does not have to be imperfective.
- The progressive is always syntactically lower than the inflected head.

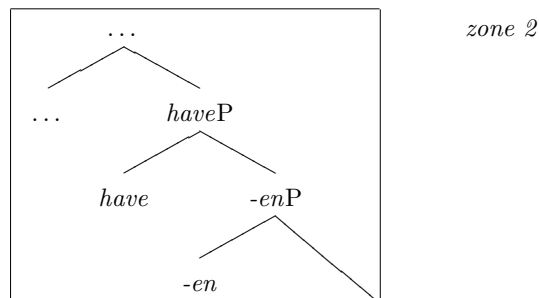
Is progressive an aspect?



Progressive is not an aspect

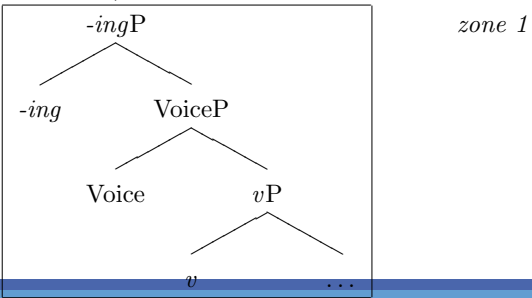
- It creates an in-progress state.
- It belongs to the structural domain where the material is of event sort.

Situations: access to intervals



(Lundquist 2012; Svenonius & Ramchand 2014)

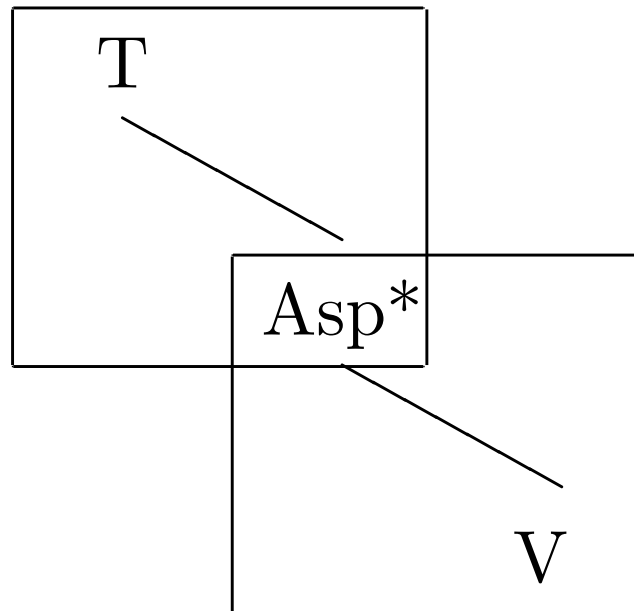
events



Sortal domains

(Svenonius & Ramchand 2014)

(7)



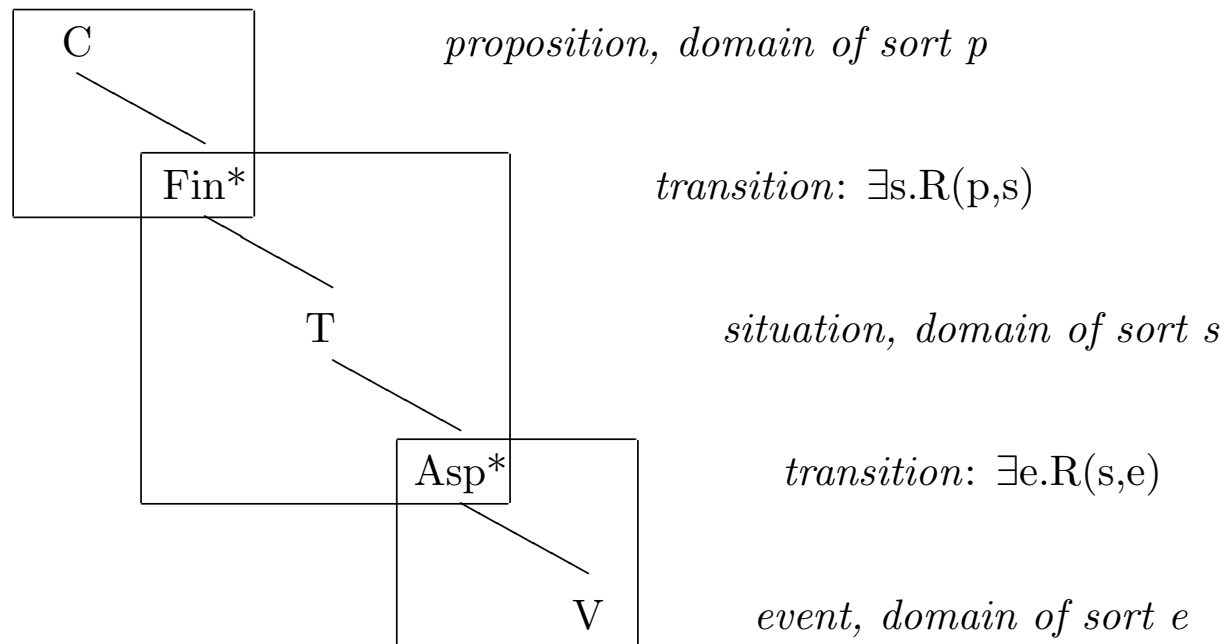
situation, domain of sort s

transition: $\exists e.R(s,e)$

event, domain of sort e

Sortal domains (Svenonius & Ramchand 2014)

(8)



Diagnosing the presence of aspect

- How can we tell if the -ndo/-ing ("progressive") constitutes an aspect head?
 - Note that if there is, the syntax of aspect becomes more complicated than traditionally assumed (see tree above)
- The proposed reasoning:
- Aspect relates intervals of time; provides time arguments to the event.
- ❖ If progressive is aspect: it should access intervals of time
- ❖ If progressive is not aspect it does not access intervals; only parts of the event.
- ❖ If progressive is any sort of an aspect head, *ceteris paribus*, it should order two intervals.

Diagnosing the presence of aspect

- ❖ If such two intervals can be somehow identified: support for progressive being aspect.
- ❖ If its presence brings over a change in temporal interpretation and such a change can be argued to be aspectual in any sense.

Diagnosing the presence of aspect

Empirical arena: perfective progressives, so the content of the heads contrasts and is easier to track.

Perfective progressive

❖ What is it?

❖ It is the paraphrase of a perfective under certain circumstances:

• With activities:

(9) Pedro caminó por el parque.

Pedro walk-pfve.3ps by the park

(10) Pedro estuvo caminando por el parque.

Pedro was-pfve.3ps walk-ing by the park



Perfective progressive

- With accomplishments: when duration is measured

(11) Pedro pintó la habitación.

Pedro paint-pfve.3ps the room

(12) #Pedro estuvo pintando la habitación.

Pedro was-pfve.3ps painting the room

Non
equivalent

(13) Pedro pintó la habitación durante dos horas.

Pedro paint-pfve.3ps the room for two hours

(14) Pedro estuvo pintando la habitación durante dos horas.

Pedro was-pfve.3ps painting the room for two hours

equivalent

Perfective progressives

- ❖ With accomplishments:
 - When duration is measured
 - Entailment of culmination disappears

Progressive & lack of culmination

(16) Pedro **pintó** **la habitación**, pero **no terminó**.

Pedro paint-pfve.3ps the room, but not finished

‘Pedro painted the room but he did not finish to’

(17) Pedro **pintó** **la habitación** durante dos horas, pero **no terminó**.

Pedro paint-pfve.3ps the room for two hours, but not finished

‘Pedro painted the room for two hours but he did not finish to’



Progressive & lack of culmination

But culmination is still possible:

(18) Pedro **pintó** **la habitación** durante dos horas, y **terminó**.

Pedro paint-pfve.3ps the room for two hours, and finished

‘Pedro painted the room for two hours and he finished’

- So not so easy to conclude that the progressive (and/or the durante-XP adverbial) has turned the accomplishment into an activity.

(15) * Pedro **paseó** durante dos horas, pero no **terminó**.

Pedro stroll.pfve for three hours but not finished

- We need to have an accomplishment to deny culmination.

(19) # Pedro pintó la habitación y terminó.

Pedro paint-pfve.3ps the room, and finished

‘Pedro painted the room and he finished’

In the absence
of modification
culmination is
understood.

Progressive, lack of culmination and *durante*

- *Durante dos horas* gives us the **size** of an **interval**
- Not the entire interval of the situation necessarily:

(20) Pedro **pintó** **la habitación** durante dos horas.

Pedro paint-pfve.3ps the room for two hours

‘Pedro painted the room for two hours’

- True even if he was engaged in painting it for five hours.
- Pragmatics

Semantics of the *durante*-modifiers

- **Durante-modifier:**

Seems to modify the TT, the Assertion Time, rather than the interval of the whole event.

For two hours gives us only **part** of the interval the event may extend over, but gives us the relevant part observed in the sentence and that part is over, bounded.

For two hours: ‘for at least two hours’



Semantics of the *in*-modifier

In-time adverbials:

(21) Pedro pintó la habitación **en dos horas**.

Pedro painted the room in two hours

cannot be true if it took Pedro five hours to paint the room.

cannot be continued by “**not finish to**” → **culmination obligatory**

(22) *Pedro pintó la habitación **en dos horas**, pero no terminó.

Pedro painted the room in two hours, but not finished



Semantics of the *in*-modifier

In two hours: 'in two hours maximum'

Semantics of the modifiers

En dos horas

in two hours → interval of the whole actual event

Durante dos horas

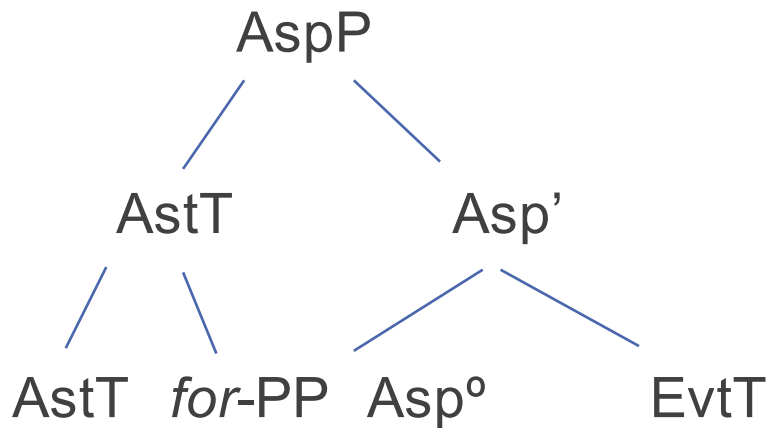
for two hours → interval of the assertion

Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2004: temporal adverbials are modifiers of the Assertion Time or the Event Time.

The syntax of *interval size* modifiers (17) to be refined below

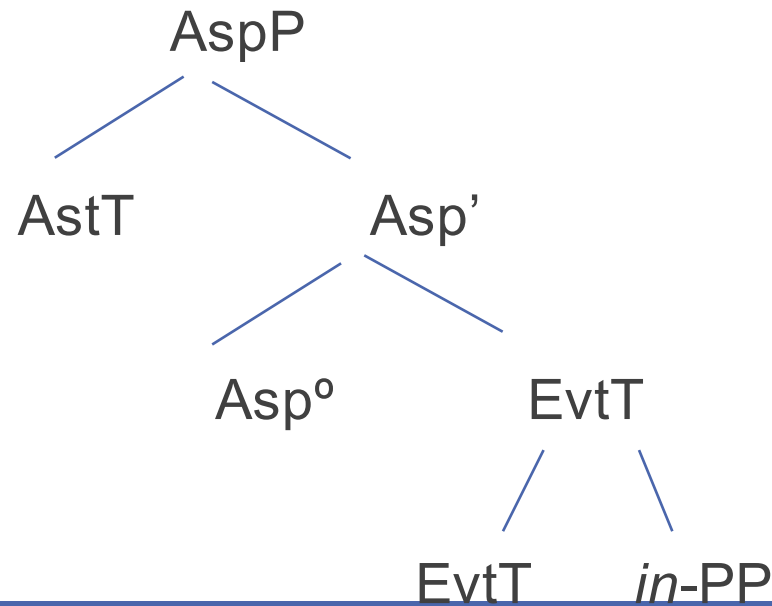
(23)

durante-time
for-time



(24)

en-time
in-time



Some correlations

- ❖ Durante-XP time
- ❖ Lack of culmination
- ❖ Perfective → paraphrased by Perfective Progressive

(25) ?? Pedro estuvo pintando la habitación entera.

Pedro was-pfve.3ps painting the room whole

(26) ?? Pedro estuvo pintando la habitación del todo.

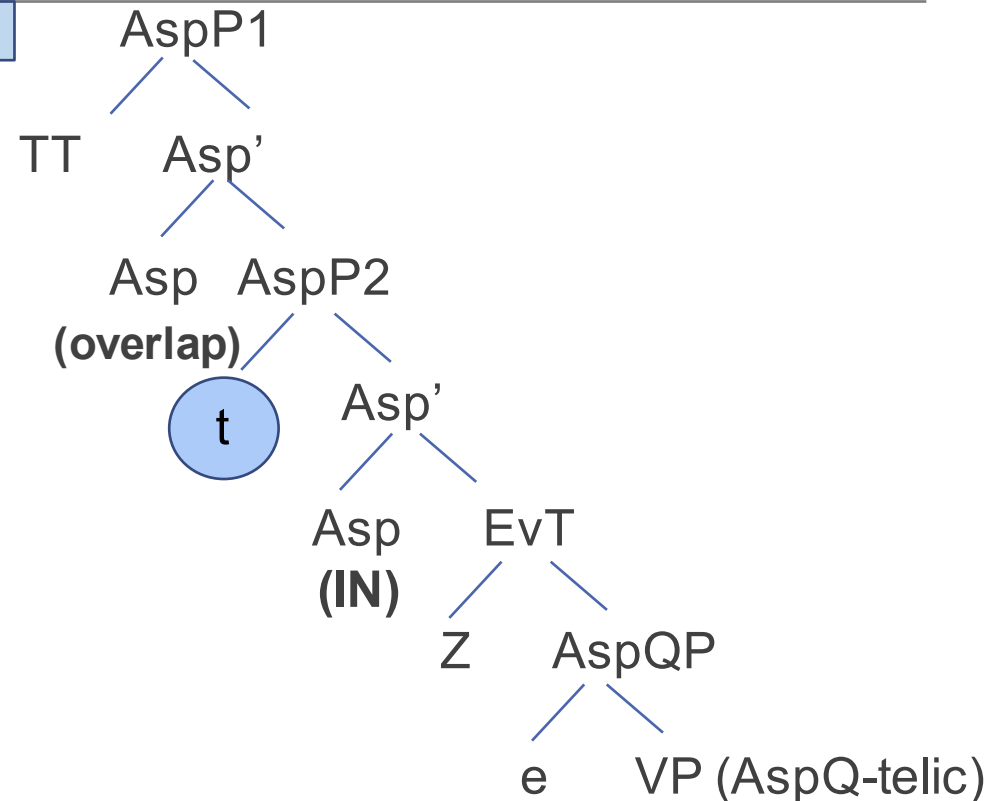
Pedro was-pfve.3ps painting the room completely



If progressive is an aspect

There is some interval **t** that is *included IN* the whole **EvT** extent/interval of painting which completely overlaps with the **TT**.

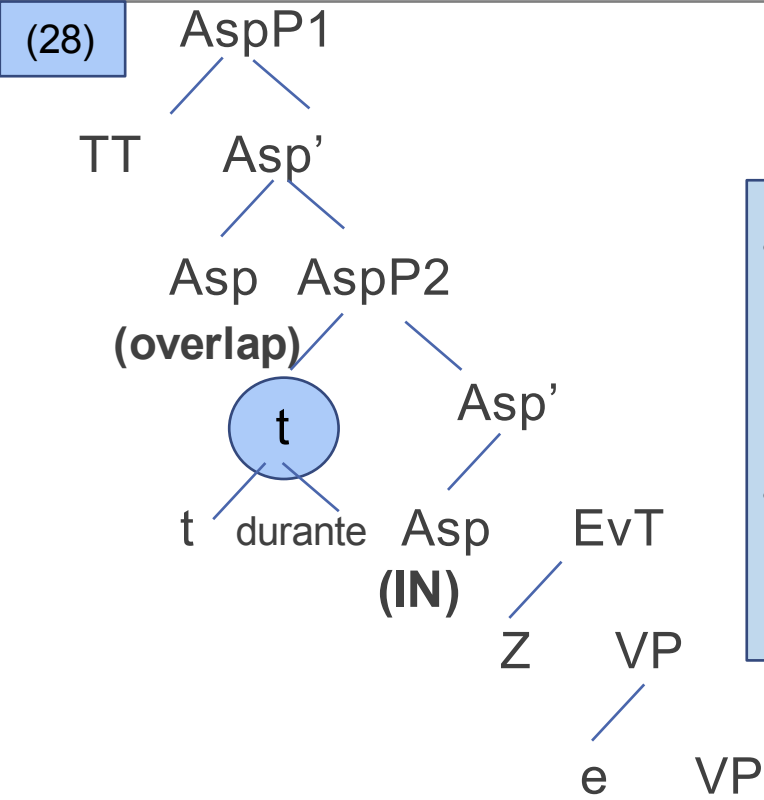
(27)



(paint the room)

The syntax of the durative bound

- This interval **t**, *included IN* the **EvT** and completely overlapping with the **TT**, measures two hours.
- Given the complete overlap with the **TT**, the **TT** gets measured alike.
- When *for-time* is there, the complex structure is there.




- BUT: *for-time* modifier cannot appear there in spell out.
- Asp + Asp = compound form

Is progressive an aspect?



The intermediate interval

- If progressive is an aspect and just following the rules of the book:
 - Another head
 - Another interval
 - Given the overlap between TT and t brought by the perfective, how can we tell?
 - Any modifier that applies only to the intermediate interval?
- 

Probing into the intermediate interval

(29) ??? Pedro pintó la habitación desde las tres.

Pedro paint-pfve the room since three

(30) Pedro estuvo pintando la habitación desde las tres.

Pedro was-pfve painting the room since three

(31) Pedro estaba pintando la habitación desde las tres.

Pedro was-impfve painting the room since three



(32) ??? Pedro ha pintado la habitación desde las tres.


Pedro has painted the room since three

(33) Pedro ha estado pintando la habitación desde las tres.

Pedro has been painting the room since three

- “Desde” marks the commencement of the situation → the situation has started, thus it is in progress.

Is progressive an aspect?

- If it is, at least in the by-the-book way, there must be an intermediate ordering head, which needs an intermediate interval.
 - *Desde* seems to tackle it, suggesting the existence of an intermediate interval.
 - This suggests that the progressive is within the structural territory of situations, rather than (plain) events.
 - Now, this intermediate interval is not the TT per se.
 - What is needed to be considered a typical TT?
 - Being able to be related to the UTT?
 - That is a different question.
- 

Interval material

- How low can we find predication of times?
- See nominalizations. (Fábregas & Marin 2012; Arche & Marin 2012, 2017)

(34) La discusión de la tesis duntante una hora llevó a la conclusión opuesta.

‘The discussion of the thesis for an hour led to the opposite conclusion’

(35) La construcción del puente en seis meses sorprendió al alcalde.

‘The construction of the bridge in six months surprised the mayor’



Interval material

(36) La construcción del puente durante seis meses se hizo pesada pero terminaron.

‘The construction of the bridge for six months was laborious but they finished’

(37) La construcción del puente durante seis meses se hizo pesada y no terminaron.

‘The construction of the bridge for six months was laborious and they did not finish’

(38) * La construcción del puente en seis meses se hizo pesada y no terminaron.

‘The construction of the bridge in six months was laborious and they did not finish’



Interval material

- Can there be intervals without an ordering predicate taking them?
- No ordering predicate in nominalizations:

(39) * La discusión del artículo cuando llegué.


‘The discussion of the paper when I arrived’.

(40) * La construcción del puente en seis meses cuando llegué.

‘The construction of the bridge when I arrived’



That is

- It seems that the progressive belongs to a territory where interval predication happens.
 - Through ZP quantification.
 - Not only event mereology is at stake.
 - This seems to be possible at a very early/low stage of the derivation, as nominalizations suggest.
 - Nominalizations also point to a disengagement between intervals and presence of an ordering predicate.
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This talk: syntax & semantics of aspect

- Aspect head – imperfective, perfective...
- How many heads are there (for a “single” meaning)? –of course recursion.
- Two.
- What happens when we have complex forms, e.g., periphrastic progressives?
- What is the nature of the non personal part? aspectual
- What is the meaning of the inflected head?
 - semantics ascribed to the perfective: culmination with perfective accomplishments can be cancelled.
 - Perfective can be paraphrased by a perfective progressive.
 - Perfective can refer to a *part*.

This talk: syntax & semantics of aspect

- The inflected head does the job of advancing narration – TT job.
- The perfective progressive works like a perfective for the matter:

(41) Pedro entró, estuvo leyendo el artículo durante media hora y se marchó.

‘Pedro entered, was-pfve.3ps reading the paper for half an hour and left’

Gracias




BIN

Me gusta la película.

Me está gustando la película.


??Pedro estuvo llegando a la meta.

Pedro llegó a la meta.

- Ramchand 2014, to appear: The event is existentially closed off.
 - The ZP can do precisely that: quantify the event and convert it into time material.
 - The whole EvT is visible only with culminated accomplishments.
- 

Further questions

- Coercion
 - A Juan le estaba gustando la película \neq le gusta la película.
 - Juan estaba llegando a la meta cuando...
 - \rightarrow additional interval introduced

 - But: ?? Juan estuvo llegando a la meta.
 - (unless iterative reading).
- 

-
- Inflected forms are not always entirely equivalent to the progressive periphrasis with the imperfect:

? Cuando entré todavía redactaba el informe.

Cuando entré todavía estaba redactando el informe.

- Todavía: adv de fase (Garcia Fernandez 1999): commencement has taken place. – Similar to *desde* but different

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