ESTUDOS LINGÜÍSTICOS

Linguistic Studies

PROGRESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE AND ENGLISH*

*Construções progressivas em português brasileiro e inglês**

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Introduction

This paper focuses on the notion of *stage* as a central point in the study of progressive constructions. *Stage* in the technical sense used here is a semantic feature related to the property of "being dynamic on an interval" (Rothstein (to appear)). On the basis of empirical differences between Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and English, my main claim is that crosslinguistic variation in the use of progressive constructions can be accounted for only one general universal requirement: the progressive operator (in the sense of Landman, 1992) must have scope over some element marked with a [+ stage] feature.

This paper is organized in the following way: In section 1, I briefly introduce the main crosslinguistic issue. In section 2, I make a review in the literature on progressive, in order to describe similarities in the use of progressive

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constructions in BP and English. In sections 3 and 4, I present the proposal and show how the progressive requirement can account for the crosslinguistic variation. Finally, in section 5, I conclude this discussion by presenting some extensions of this analysis and potential limitations of it.

1. The main crosslinguistic issue

In this section, I present the main crosslinguistic data that show how BP and English differ from each other with respect to the possibilities of licensing the progressive.

In order to conduct the description, I assume Vendler's (1967) classification of verbs in four classes: *achievements*, *accomplishments* (both telic), *states*, and *activities* (both atelic). Intuitively, achievements express a change of state in a situation and they finish as soon as they start (e.g. 'to recognize', 'to reach', 'to find', 'to die', 'to notice', etc.); accomplishments are events that are drawn in order to reach an ending point (e.g. 'to paint a picture', 'to draw a circle', 'to eat a sandwich', 'to build a house', etc.); states are permanent situations (e.g. 'to know', 'to believe', 'to love', 'to understand', etc.); and finally, activities are events that are not drawn to reach any ending point (e.g. 'to run', 'to swim', 'to push a cart', 'to drive a car', etc.). In the next section, I am going to discuss some issues concerning Vendler's classification. For the purpose of this section, this preliminary introduction is enough.

It has been noticed in the literature (Vendler, 1967; Dowty, 1979; Landman, 1992; Rothstein (to appear)) that some languages, like English in (1), allow the progressive form mainly for activity and accomplishment verbs.

(1) English
   a. State: *I am loving John.
   b. Activity: I am driving a car.
   c. Achievement: *I am noticing the picture.
   d. Accomplishment: I am eating a sandwich.

On the basis of these data, the progressive has been used as one of the most important tests to separate achievements and states from activities and accomplishments. However, some languages, like BP at (2), allow the progressive

form in all four classes (Ilari; Mantoanelli, 1983; Scher; Viotti, 2000; Wachowicz, 2002).

(2) Brazilian Portuguese (BP)
a. State: Eu estou ama-ndo o João
I aux love-Prog the Joao.
'I am loving John'
b. Activity: Eu estou dirigi-ndo um carro.
I aux drive-Prog a car
'I am driving a car'
c. Achievement: Eu estou nota-ndo a foto.
I aux notice-Prog the picture.
'I am noticing the picture'
d. Accomplishment: Eu estou come-ndo um sanduíche.
I aux eat-Prog a sandwich.
'I am eating a sandwich'

As one can see, states and achievements in (2a, c) are as good as activities and accomplishments in (2b, d) in the progressive form.

It is important to notice that even in English *states* and *achievements* can sometimes appear in the progressive form; however, it is only possible in some very restricted contexts.

(3) a. State: I am loving John more and more.
b. Achievement: I was reaching the summit, when I broke my leg.

In the presence of the adverbial 'more and more', the verb 'love', for instance, can be licensed in the progressive, such as in (3a), and in the presence of a when-clause that provides some more elements in the context, the verb 'reach' can be used in the progressive such as in (3b).

The crucial difference between these cases in (3) in English and the cases in (2) in BP is that in BP the acceptability of the progressive in *states* and *achievements* constructions is independent of adverbials or rich context, such as we can see in (4).

(4) a. State: Eu estou ama-ndo o João (mais e mais).
I aux love-Prog the João (more and more).
'I am loving John more and more'

b. Achievement: Eu estava alcançando o topo (quando eu quebrei a minha perna).
I aux reach-Prog the summit (when I broke my leg)
'I was reaching the summit (when I broke my leg)'

This crosslinguistic variation raises at least two questions: whether Vendler's (1967) classification holds crosslinguistically and whether the meaning of the progressive is the same crosslinguistically. As mentioned before, the progressive has been used as a classical test to distinguish between states/ achievements and accomplishments/ activities in Vendler's classification. The fact that a language, such as BP, does not show this distinction in the use of the progressive may be taken to question the adequacy of applying Vendler's four classes to other languages. Another issue that is raised by the previous data is that the meaning of the progressive may be different across languages and this could be the explanation for the variation in its use. To be more precise about it, in a system, such as Landman (1992), in that the meaning of the progressive is given by a progressive operator, one could question whether the contribution of the operator is the same across languages. If the contribution of the operator is not the same, then languages can easily differ in the use of the progressive.[1]

However, there is a third logical possibility to explain this crosslinguistic variation: Vendler's classification and the contribution of the progressive operator hold for both English and BP, but there is an intervening fact that plays a role in the productivity of progressive constructions. In this paper I will take the third option. I mainly defend that differences between English and BP result from the contribution of auxiliary verbs that form the progressive (and tentatively other elements, such as adverbs).

In the next section, I will review the literature, in order to show that Vendler's classification does hold for BP.

1 As for the question whether the meaning of the progressive is different across languages, one could argue that the construction *estar + ndo* in BP does not correspond to the *progressive* notion presented in the construction *be +ing* in English. This is not the position I am going to take in this paper and I believe that the similarities discussed in the section 2.2 show indirect evidence that these constructions are very similar, apart from what concerns to the contribution of the auxiliary verb.

2. Background in progressive constructions

Apart from the differences between English and BP presented in the previous section, a careful description shows that there are consistent similarities as well. On the basis of this similarities, I am going to argue that Vendler's (1967) proposal is adequate to classify linguistic expressions used to describe events in BP. Before doing that, it is necessary to address some theoretical issues concerning Vendler's system. The first issue is what kind of linguistic expressions should be classified – verbs, V' or VPs, and the second issue is on which basis they should be classified. Section 2.1 addresses these two issues, and section 2.2 presents the description of the similarities.

2.1 Theoretical considerations

Recent linguistic works on aspect and aspectual classification have asked what kind of linguistic expressions should be classified, i.e. should we classify verbs, V' or VPs into aspectual classes?

One possible answer for this question is that verbs should be classified into aspectual classes. The intuition behind this choice is that events named by different verbs are really inherently different, i.e. a 'knowing' event is inherently different from a 'painting' event, and it is natural to think that this difference is expressed in the lexical semantics of the verbs *know* and *write*, and in the behavior of the VPs headed by them.

This viewpoint has suffered two major criticisms. The first is that sometimes, a verb can head a VP with different aspectual properties, depending on the contribution of the complements (or modifiers). One example is the verb *paint* that can head a telic predicate in 'he painted two houses', and an atelic predicate in 'he painted houses'. The second is that sometimes, some verbs may show properties that are not associated with their original class. For instance, stative verbs, such as *know*, do not occur in the progressive form as in '*She is knowing the answer'; however, in the so called "appropriate" context, it may occur, such as in '?she has been knowing the answer more and more recently'.[2]

Considering these two major problems, one may take the position that it is not possible to classify verbs inherently into several aspectual classes. For

2 Example from Rothstein (to appear).

instance, Verkuyl (1993) defends this position. According to him, verbs can be only classified into [±ADD ON], which corresponds to a dynamic-nondynamic distinction, and nominals can be classified into [±SQA], which corresponds to a distinction between specified quantity and non-specified quantity. In his theory, aspectual properties of the VP are derived compositionally.

On the other hand, facing the two issues presented above, and at the same time, classifying verbs aspectually, it was also a position taken in the literature. For instance, Dowty (1979) developed a theory of lexical decomposition. In his system, the four verb classes are associated with templates. These templates are formed by basic operators, and variable slots that are filled by the idiosyncratic lexical meaning of a particular predicate. In other words, activity predicates contain a DO operator, achievements contain a BECOME operator, and accomplishments contain a CAUSE BECOME operator.

The main proposal of this paper is not intrinsically incompatible with a highly compositional system, such as Verkuyl's (1993) presented above, since my main claim is that auxiliary verbs may contribute to the composition of the progressive reading. However, I am going to assume Rothstein (to appear) that makes use of a system with aspectual verb classes associated with templates constructed out of the basic operators in a Dowty's (1979) style. Additionally, I am going to assume Landman (1992), and his analysis in terms of a progressive operator. I am assuming that the progressive is an operator on VPs, which means that whatever the contribution of complements and adverbials is, the progressive operator will have scope over them. In other words, the contribution of complements and adverbials, especially for telicity issues, is guaranteed in this analysis. Being so, I will concentrate the discussion and exemplification in classical instances of the four verb classes, which means that for accomplishment constructions, for instance, I will take an accomplishment verb and combine it with a nominal specified for quantity.

As for the second issue – on which basis verbs should be classified, I assume, following Rothstein (to appear), that these four classes of verbs can be classified by using two features: [±telic] and [±stage].

Achievements	+ telic	- stage
Accomplishments	+ telic	+ stage
States	- telic	- stage
Activities	- telic	+ stage

The feature [± telic] is related to an inherently determined stopping point, which is often called the 'set terminal point' or, more traditionally, the 'telos'; hence, activities and states, which have no such natural end point are [-telic], while achievements and accomplishments, which do, are [+ telic]. The feature [± stage] is related to the property of being dynamic in an interval. In other words, accomplishments and activities are [+ stage] verbs, because they are dynamic in the sense that every subpart of these events is in a relation of continuation with the others. For instance, an event of "Mary eating a sandwich" has subparts that gradually change the nature of the event itself, since time after time smaller portions of a sandwich are present in the situation until it ends completely. States are non-dynamic and therefore [- stage] because every bit is exactly the same as every other bit and no stages can be distinguished over time. Finally, achievements are [- stage] because they are basically constituted by the telic point and then they are too short to have internal parts.

Taking Rothstein's system, I will present the results of three tests: two related to telicity and one related to the stage property.

2.2 Tests for telicity and stage

It has been noticed in the literature (Vendler, 1967; Kenny, 1963; Ryle, 1949) that states and activities co-occur with the adverbial "for x time" in English sentences, while achievements and accomplishments do not. This property has been correlated with telicity; more precisely with a [- telic] feature.

(5) a. State: John loved Mary for years.
b. Activity: John ran for hours.
c. Achievement: *John arrived for hours.
d. Accomplishment: * John built a house for days.

Applying the same test in BP, we get the following results.

(6) a. State: O João amou a Maria por anos.
The John love-Past the Mary for years
'John loved Mary for years'.
b. Activity: O João correu por horas.
The John run-Past for hours
'John ran for hours'.

c. Achievement: * O João chegou por horas.
The John arrive-Past for hours
'John arrived for hours'.

d. Accomplishment: * O João construiu uma casa por dias.
The John build-Past a house for days
'John built a house for days.

As you can see, in BP just like in English, states and activities can occur in sentences with the adverbial "for x time", but achievements and accomplishments can not. This strongly suggests that, as for telicity, verbs presented in (5) and their correspondent verbs in BP in (6) behave in a similar way.

Some native speakers of English and BP may accept (5d) and (6d), when they are contextually supported. In addition to that, when accomplishment verbs take a bare plural, the sentences are also acceptable.

(7) John built houses for years.
(8) O João construiu casas/ casa por anos.
The John build-Past houses/ house for years.
"John built houses/ house for years"

This data may raise questions over the relation between adverbials and telicity. However, I want to highlight that in both cases the sentences improve systematically with the adverbs in both languages, showing that the behavior of accomplishment verbs and accomplishment constructions are the same in both languages.

Other test used to verify the telicity of linguistic expressions is the so-called imperfective paradox (Dowty, 1979). The imperfective paradox lies on the observation that, with activity verbs, an event P in progress entails that P has already happened as we can see at (9a); however, with accomplishment verbs, an event P in progress does not entail that P has already happened as we can see at (9b).

(9) a. Activity: John was/is pushing a cart ENTAILS THAT
John pushed a cart.
b. Accomplishment: John was/is building a house DOES NOT ENTAIL THAT
John built a house.

In other words, a sentence like "John was/is pushing a cart" entails that "John pushed a cart", but a sentence like "John was/is building a house" does not entail that "John built a house", because when an accomplishment is in progress, this does not mean that it will continue and actually reach the predetermined endpoint.

As I mentioned before at (3b) repeated here in (10), some achievement verbs exceptionally accept the progressive form.

(10) Achievement: I was reaching the summit, when I broke my leg.

Rothstein (to appear) notice that these instances of achievement behave like accomplishments as for the imperfective paradox.

(11) Achievement:
- a. I was reaching the summit (when I broke my leg). DOES NOT ENTAIL THAT
- b. I reached the summit.

A sentence like "I was reaching the summit" does not entail that "I reached the summit", because something can happen, such as "braking a leg", and impede me to complete the process of reaching the summit.

If Rothstein (to appear) system is correct to classify verbs in BP, as well in English, we should expect that [- telic] verbs in BP behave like [- telic] verbs in English, and that [+ telic] verbs in BP behave like [+ telic] verbs in English.

In fact, in BP the four-verb classes display a very systematic distribution that differs from English only in the fact that BP allows the progressive freely in achievement and state sentences.[3]

(12) Activity:
- a. O João estava/ está empurrando o carrinho
  "John was/ is pushing a cart" ENTAILS THAT
- b. O João empurrou o carrinho
  "John pushed the cart".

3 One of the anonymous reviewers reported the judgment that *activities* and *states* in progress do not entail the past, when the auxiliary verb in the progressive construction is in the present form. Two of my informants, both from São Paulo, judge that *activities* and *states* in progress do entail the past, even if the progressive construction is in the present. Assuming that the progressive has become more and more productive recently in some parts of Brazil, I would tentatively associate this variation in the judgments with that phenomenon, called *gerundism*.

(13) State:
a. O João estava/ está amando a Maria
"John was/ is loving Mary" ENTAILS THAT
b. O João amou a Mary
"John loved Mary"

(14) Accomplishment:
a. O João estava/ está construindo uma casa
"John was/ is building a house" DOES NOT ENTAIL THAT
b. O João construiu uma casa
"John built a house"

(15) Achievement:
a. Eu estava/ está alcançando o topo.
"I was/ is reaching the summit" DOES NOT ENTAIL THAT
b. Eu alcancei o topo.
"I reached the summit"

As we can see, an activity in a progressive construction in BP entails its past, such as in (12), but accomplishments and achievements in progressive constructions do not entail their pasts, such as in (14) and (15). These results show us that English and BP behave similarly as for the imperfective paradox. Moreover, a state verb in a progressive construction does entail its past in BP, such as in (13).

In short, these two tests have shown that the distribution of the feature [±telic] is systematic among the members of the four classes in English and BP.

Another classical test for Vendler's verb classes is closely related to the feature [± stage]. It has been noticed by Carlson (1977) and Kratzer (1994), among others, that states and achievements do not usually occur in the complement of perceptual verbs in English, while activities and accomplishments do.

(16) a. State: *I saw Mary [know English]
b. Activity: I saw Mary [speak English]
c. Accomplishment: I saw Mary [eat a sandwich].
d. Achievement: (?) I saw Mary [notice the picture]

The results for BP are shown in (10).

(17) a. State: * Eu vi a Maria conhecer inglês.
I saw the Mary know-INF English
'I saw Mary know English'
b. Activity: Eu vi a Maria falar inglês.
I saw the Mary speak-INF English
'I saw Mary speak English'
c. Accomplishment: Eu vi a Maria comer um sanduiche.
I saw the Mary eat-INF a sandwich
'I saw Mary eat a sandwich'.
d. Achievement: (?) Eu vi a Maria notar a foto.
I saw the Mary notice the picture
'I saw Mary notice the picture'

As you can see, BP behaves just like English as for the complementation of perceptual verbs, which means that states and achievements are usually not allowed and activities and accomplishments are.

On the basis of these systematic correspondences between English and BP as for the results of the tests for telicity and stage, we can conclude that the four-way classification proposed by Rothstein (to appear) holds for English and BP. This brings us back to our original question: why is the progressive allowed in all classes in BP, but only in accomplishments and activities in English? That is the main discussion in the next section, in which I present my proposal to account to these differences.

4. Proposal

My proposal to account for the differences in the use of progressive in English and BP is that there is a progressive requirement, which can be stated in the following terms:

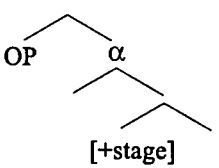
(18) Progressive requirement: the progressive operator (in the sense of Landman, 1992) must have scope over some element marked with a [+ stage] feature.

In Landman's original formulation, the progressive operator PROG corresponds to the composed form *be +ing*. I am assuming that the progressive operator PROG correspond to *–ing* in English, and *–ndo* in BP, and that it means the progressive notion in both languages. Additionally, I defend that the auxiliary verbs may, or not, contribute with a notion of *stage*.

The progressive requirement states that, given the configuration in (19), the progressive operator is licensed if and only if the node ± is a property of stages, and the progressive operator abstracts on it. The node ± can be a property of stages by the contribution of some element marked with a [+ stage] feature.

Phrasing the progressive requirement in syntactic terms, one may say that ± is a verb phrase (VP) containing the auxiliary verb, the main verb and its arguments/ adjuncts. The progressive operator is merged into the sentence in a higher position (tentatively, an aspect phrase), taking the VP as its syster.[4] The diagram below shows the basic configuration for progressive constructions.

(19)



There are at least three ways of satisfying the progressive requirement:

(20) a. The main verb on the VP is an *accomplishment* or *activity* verb, because these types of verbs have inherently the feature [+stage];

b. Some adverb under the scope of the progressive may have the feature [+stage]; or

c. The auxiliary verb that appears in progressive constructions is marked [+ stage].

4 Most of morphological theories will be able to explain how the morpheme ends up attached to the main verb.

The options at (20a, b) are assumed to be universal, which means that they should be available in all languages. The option at (20c) is language specific and I argue that it is available in BP, but not in English.

Empirical motivation for assuming that (20c) is the main factor for crosslinguistic variation is provided in (21), borrowed from Schmitt (2003).

(21)a. Maria **é** bonita. (individual-level reading)
Mary aux pretty
"Mary is intrinsically pretty"

b. Maria **está** bonita. (stage-level reading)
Maria aux pretty
"Mary looks pretty at this moment"

In BP there are (at least) two auxiliary verbs that appear in copular constructions: "ser" and "estar". In (21a), "Mary is pretty" has an individual-level reading that I informally translated as "Mary is intrinsically pretty", while, in (21b), it has a stage-level reading that I informally translated as "Mary looks pretty at this moment". Since (21a) and (21b) forms a minimal pair, I am allowed to conclude that the stage-level reading comes from the contribution of "estar". "Estar", and not "ser", is verb that appears as auxiliary in progressive constructions, as we can see bellow.

(22)A Maria **está/ *é** correndo, construindo uma casa, alcançando o topo, amando o João...
The Mary is running, building a house, reaching the summit, loving the John...
'Mary is running, building a house, reaching the summit, loving John...'

My claim is that crosslinguistic differences between BP and English follow from the fact that the auxiliary verb "estar" in BP has the [+ stage] feature, but the auxiliary verb "to be" in English does not. Combining this and the progressive requirement, it is possible to account for the empirical facts shown in the previous sections.

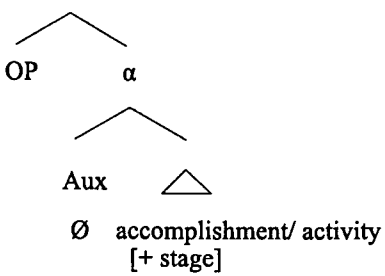
5. Accounting for the data

In this section, I am going to show how the analysis accounts for crosslinguistic differences between BP and English in progressive constructions. At moment, I do not have all the technical details of the semantic implementation of this analysis; then, I am going to focus on how the progressive requirement can be licensed by a [+ stage] element in both English and BP.

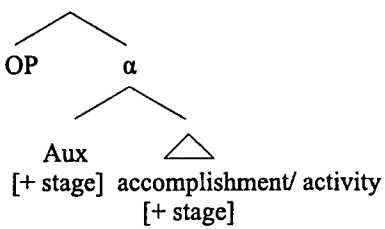
Let us start considering VPs with accomplishments and activities, such as "I am building a house" and "I am running". The structures for accomplishments and activities in progress in English and BP are given in (23a, b).

(23)

a. English (OK)



b. Portuguese (OK)

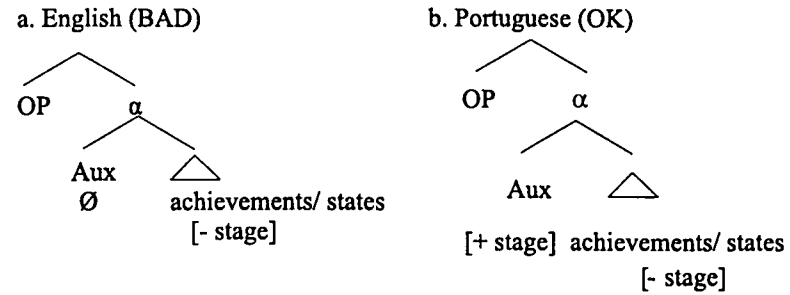


According to the progressive requirement, the progressive operator must have scope over some element marked with a [+ stage] feature. In both English and BP, the progressive is acceptable with accomplishments and activities, because they are intrinsically marked with the feature [+ stage]. In BP, I claim that also the auxiliary verb has the feature [+ stage]. I use the symbol Ø to mark the auxiliary verb in English instead of [- stage], in order to express that 'be' is fully defective, and correspond to the identity function.

In this configuration, both the auxiliary verb and the main verb equally contribute to turn the node ± into a property of stages.

As for achievements and states, such as "I am noticing the picture" and "I am knowing the answer", we have a different picture.

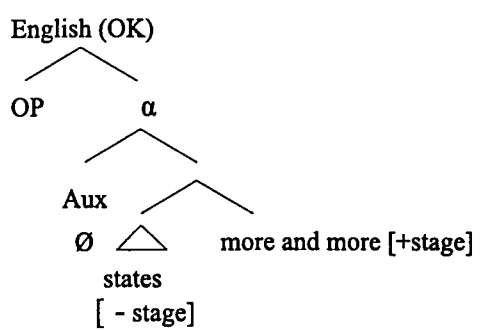
(24)



Progressive achievements and progressive states are usually not good in English, because they are [- stage] verbs. The sister of the operator is not a property of stages and the progressive is not licensed. Given the discussion in section 2, achievement and state verbs in BP are [- stage] just like English; however, I argue that the auxiliary verb has the feature [+ stage]. The feature of the auxiliary verb turns the sister of the operator into a property of stages and then, the progressive can be licensed in BP.

This analysis can be expanded to account for some special cases in that the progressive is licensed in English, such as "I am loving John more and more". In these cases, I tentatively assume that the adverbial "more and more" has the feature [+ stage], since by the description of a *stage* presented before, [+ stage] elements are dynamic in the sense that every subpart of them is in a relation of continuation with respect to the others.

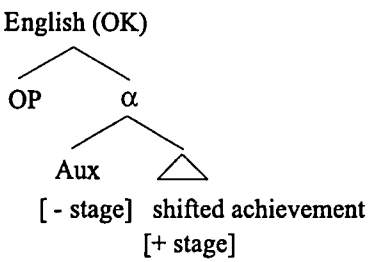
(25)



By the contribution of the adverbial "more and more", the node ± is a property of stages and the operator can abstract over it.

Other case that can be accounted for this analysis is the licensing of some achievement verbs in the progressive in English, such as "I was reaching the summit, when I broke my leg". Assuming Rothstein (to appear), some achievements, but crucially not all of them, are able to undergo to a type shift operation that turn them into abstract accomplishments. I am not going to discuss the details of her analysis; instead of this, I will show in (26) how this can be combined with the progressive requirement.

(26)



If we assume that achievements shifted into abstract accomplishments have all the features that accomplishments have, then shifted achievements should be able to license the progressive, because they also have the feature [+ stage].

In short, the data in this section shows us that the progressive is licensed whenever the progressive operator has scope over some element that has the feature [+ stage]. This element can be a verb, either main or auxiliary verb, or an adverbial element.

6. Final remarks

As discussed in the previous sections, the hypothesis that there is a progressive requirement is able to explain the main issues in the crosslinguistic variation between BP and English as for the licensing of the progressive. However, there are some facts in BP that require more attention.

One of these facts is the impossibility of "estar" (stage-level "to be") as a main verb in the progressive in BP, such as in (27). This is a puzzle for the present analysis, since the verb "ser" (individual-level "to be") is allowed in a similar configuration, as we can see in (28).[5]

(27) *A Maria está estando feliz.
The Mary aux ESTAR-prog happy.
'Mary is being happy'

(28) A Maria está sendo feliz.
The Mary aux SER-prog happy.
'Mary is being happy'

Given the analysis proposed above, the sentence in (27) should be acceptable, since both the auxiliary and the main verb "estar" have the [+ stage] feature; however, it is not. The sentence in (28) is correctly predicted to be acceptable, since the presence of "estar" as auxiliary verb is enough to license the progressive.

Another empirical fact that requires some consideration is the impossibility of the state verb "ter" ('to have') in some progressive sentences, depending on the contribution of the direct object.[6]

(29) A Maria está **tendo** dor-de-cabeça.
The Mary aux have-prog headache.
'Mary is having headache'

(30) *A Maria está **tendo** uma casa.
The Mary aux have-prog a house.
'Mary is having a house'

5 Thanks to Evani Viotti that show me this contrast in BP.

6 The fact that one can not add the adverbial 'more and more' in (30) to try to improve it, such as in (i), is not a counterargument to the presence of a [+stage] feature in that adverbial, since 'more and more' can not modify the VP 'have a house' in any case.

(i) *A Maria está tendo uma casa **mais e mais**.
The Mary aux have-prog a house more and more.
'Mary is having a house more and more'

(ii) *A Maria tem/ terá uma casa **mais e mais**.
The Mary has/ will-have a house more and more.
'Mary has a house more and more'

At moment, I do not have any explanation for these data presented above and I will leave this question open for prospective studies. By now, I would like to highlight that all possible explanations based on specific semantic properties of the verbs "estar" (stage-level "to be") and "ter" (to have") in BP are fully compatible with the main system presented in this paper, which claims that the progressive requires a sister node in the syntactic configuration that is a property of stages.

RESUMO

Esse artigo discute diferenças no licenciamento de construções progressivas em português brasileiro (PB) e inglês. Minha proposta central é que a variação translingüística pode ser explicada por um único requerimento universal: o operador de progressivo (no sentido de Landman, 1992) deve ter escopo sobre algum elemento que possua o traço [+ *stage*]. *Stage*, sob este ponto de vista, é um traço semântico relacionado à propriedade de "ser dinâmico em um intervalo de tempo". Os dados discutidos neste artigo mostram que o significado básico das classes verbais e o significado das construções progressivas é o mesmo em PB e inglês. A variação translingüística é explicada a partir das propriedades específicas dos verbos auxiliares usados em construções progressivas; em outras palavras, o verbo auxiliar em PB possui o traço [+ stage], mas o verbo auxiliar em inglês não o possui.

Palavras-chave: progressivo, operador de progressivo, stage, verbos auxiliares.

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses differences between Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and English in the licensing of progressive constructions. My main claim is that the crosslinguistic variation can be accounted for only one general universal requirement: the progressive operator (in the sense of Landman, 1992) must have scope over some element marked with a [+ stage] feature. *Stage*, under this view, is a semantic feature related to the property of "being dynamic on an interval". On the basis of empirical evidence, I show that both the basic meaning of the verb classes and the meaning of the progressive are the same in BP and English. The variation in the use of the progressive is explained by specific properties of the auxiliary verbs in these languages; in other words, the auxiliary verb in BP has the feature [+ stage], but the auxiliary verb in English doesn't.

Key-words: progressive, progressive operator, stage, auxiliary verbs.

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