

# Expressed by Present Continuous<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to identify the Present Continuous tense as engaged in realizing direct evidentiality or perception in English. For this, the paper is focused on three research issues. First, the peculiarities of functioning perception verbs in the Present Continuous are given. Second, complex sentences using the Present Continuous predicates to express perception category are analyzed. Third, the Present Continuous as implying perception or direct evidentiality category in certain contexts is considered. The authors of the research set forth the following research hypotheses: 1) direct evidentially is the category implied by the Present Continuous; 2) autonomous functioning of the Present Continuous predicate in simple sentences may be considered as realizing perception category; 3) expressing perception by the Present Continuous depends on different contextual conditions. Theoretical and methodological basis of the research is based on fundamental assumptions of modern linguistic knowledge in evidentiality theory put forward by A. Aikhenvald and V.A. Plungyan. Similarly, the paper applies the methods of component and mental-logical analysis and the descriptive method. The research comprises examples of English websites and data from the British National Corpus. In general, this paper analyzes 12 examples from our 573 corpus. The research showed that although the simultaneity is systemic meaning of Present Continuous, it is not applied to represent the simultaneity of perception situation and perceived situation in complex sentences. It is scale of the objects under consideration, their multiplicity, territorial visibility, verbs semantically implying space localization that permit Present Continuous imply perception in simple sentences.

**Keywords:** Linguistics; Corpus; Grammar; Semantics; Perception.

## **1. Introduction**

In present day linguistics, there exist broader and narrower interpretations of the term *evidential strategy*, but no one can state that only one of them is finally the

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right one. In determining *evidential strategy*, we relied Aikhenvald's explanation of the term since it can be applied to a wider range of different linguistic facts. In her book the author assumes the possibilities of representing evidential values by units of different language levels, "evidential extensions of non-evidential categories considering modal verbs as well as future tenses, elapsed tenses, passive voice, additions, face designations, even indicative determinants as means of expressing evidential strategies (Aikhenvald, 2004; Aikhenvald, 2003). Therefore, it is obvious that the definition of the term should be more comprehensive and applicable to a variety of language facilities. Our hypothesis about an emerging evidential strategy in English is related to expressing perception category on morphological level. We agree that if we adhered to only one of the prevailing definitions of this term, our conclusion would be incorrect. However, application of the term *evidential strategy* to the Present Continuous tense significantly extends and complements it.

The category of perception is the nuclear component of the field of 'direct' evidentiality. Perception is a complex system of receiving and transforming information, providing with a reflection of objective reality and orientation in the surrounding world. Wittgenstein in his "Philosophical Studies" paid special attention to such subjects of analysis as visual experience, visual impression, spatial vision and the concept of "seeing". Comprehension of the philosophical aspects of observability is directly connected with statements like *What do you see? I see it now as ...* (ВИТГЕНШТЕЙН, 1994). In the process of perception of objective reality, i.e., an image comes up in the brain; psychologists consider the following three components: sensory tissue; value as a social experience; personal meaning. Perception is a psychophysiological process, the activity of human consciousness in mastering the objective world and possesses such properties as objectivity, integrity, meaningfulness, constancy, functionality, subject-centricity. Sensual perception, being the basis of man's cognitive activity, is realized with the help of five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste. Visual perception implies that the speaker witnessed the information about which he speaks, the auditory perception indicates that the speaker heard what he is saying. Perception category implies that the speaker informs that he was an eyewitness of the situation and that he has full confidence in the information authenticity. All receptor-analyzers, being directly connected to each other through the central nervous system, jointly participate in perception, displaying objects in their integrity.

## 2. Methods

Current research of direct evidentiality focuses on evidential strategy in English expressed by morphological means and involves the study of expression means of direct evidentiality or perception on morphological level. Some languages fix the immediate perception of the situation such as direct evidentiality and

perception categories, in others there are grammatical means of expressing indirect evidentiality.

This paper aims to identify the Present Continuous tense as engaged in realizing direct evidentiality or perception in English. Our research hypothesis are as follows:

- direct evidentially is the category implied by the Present Continuous;
- autonomous functioning of the Present Continuous predicate in simple sentences may be considered as realizing perception category;
- expressing perception by the Present Continuous depends on different contextual conditions.

To achieve this aim we have to solve three research problems. First, we explain the peculiarities of functioning perception verbs in the Present Continuous. Second, we analyze complex sentences using the Present Continuous predicates to express perception category. Third, we consider the Present Continuous as implying perception or direct evidentiality category in certain contexts.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research is based on fundamental assumptions of modern linguistic knowledge in evidentiality theory put forward by Aikhenvald (2003) and Plungian (2001), AMakhmutova and Lutfullina (2017). Similarly, the paper applies the methods of component and mental-logical analysis and the descriptive method.

The research comprises examples of English websites and data from the British National Corpus (BNC). In general, this paper analyzes 12 examples from our 573 corpus.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

As stated above, in linguistic studies the use of the idea of observation and direct perception seems very productive, e.g., the concepts of the observation and the observer, the observer and the experimenter. A direct personal way of access to information suggests that the speaker himself is a participant of the situation about which he reports: he is not aware of the situation because he observed it or perceived it, but he is aware of the situation because he was directly involved. Direct perception supposes visual perception of the situation. Visual and non-visual indicators relating to the direct personal access zone are differentiated. The first means that the speaker directly observed the situation visually, while the latter means that he directly perceived synchronous situations by other means (by ear, by smell, by touch, etc.) (Plungian, 2001). From a linguistic point of view, perception is a way of processing information entered through an explicitly or implicitly perceived situation.

Information is represented because of a direct personal access. Visual perception represents an observed situation by a narrator or another perceptor.

Thus, main features of perception category are:

- The narrator and the perceptor often coincide; the perception situation is explicit.
- The moment of perception often corresponds to speaker's speech moment or primary temporal deixis.
- The perception situation is temporally correlated with the perceived situation.
- The perceived situation is restricted by a time limit and a determined location.
- It represents 'changing situations on a time line' or 'changing spatial locations'.
- It assumes a perceptual such as space localization, subject and object of perception.
- It is an explicitly expressed category, but often it acts as an implied category.
- It expresses the relationship of the statement content to reality.
- It appears in almost all statements.

According to Durst-Andersen, there are tense systems with central category of actuality / non-actuality. English language, according to Durst-Andersen classification, refers to hearer-based languages; the mental archive includes archives of the Past and the Present. The author concludes, "A state is stored in the form of a photograph, and an activity is stored in the form of a film, regardless of the type of mental archive" (Дурст-Андерсен, 1995). He analyses an example of watch theft. The perfect tense represents the event as "news-flash", the thief shows a photo", while the imperfect tense verbalizes the event in the mental archive of Present, "The thief shows the film stored in memory". The perfect and imperfect tenses determine the mode of representing of the event: stability / instability of visual representation. The imperfect tense represents the situation as a quality, describing the situation from a pragmatic point *He is always smoking*. Actuality / non-actuality parameter correlates with perception and suggests that English prefers to express the perception (Дурст-Андерсен, 1995).

According to Bloch, 'development' category is represented by the Continuous tenses (Блох, 1983). According to Declerc, the Present Continuous does not always carry the progressive meaning 'situation in the course of its implementation'. The author distinguishes the following functioning cases: 1) without a progressive meaning; 2) with modal shades to express future; 3) representation of a situation realized as part of the normal course of events (Declerc, 2006). In some cases, the Present Indefinite and the Present Continuous express similar situations. In the following examples, both sentences express almost identical

situations: *Tyler is coming / Tyler comes (the arrival time is known* (Khisamova et al., 2015).

R. Declerck uses the concept of a special temporal-spherical zone of present, which is an indefinite duration and includes zero point. A tense is the pairing of a particular verbal form with a meaning, the meaning being the specification of the temporal location of a situation. A tense relates the temporal location of a situation to the temporal zero-point, which is usually speech time, or to some other known time which is itself related either directly or indirectly to the temporal zero-point. The temporal zero-point ( $t_0$ ) is the time from which all the temporal relations expressed by a tense ultimately take their starting point. It is usually speech time. The Present tense localizes a situation in a period coinciding with moment T. The temporal domain (domain) is a complex of orientation moments temporally correlated by tenses. In a short-term situation, the interval coincides with the moment T, it cannot be represented in progress. In a long-term situation, the interval does not coincide with the moment T, but represents a part of the total situation interval. For example, the phrase *I am working* suggests a description of any moment of action that coincides with the moment T. Without informing about the situation duration, Present tense expresses that its interval coincides with the moment T. This interval can be the total time of the situation or its part (Khisamova et al., 2015).

Typical cases of using Present Continuous are: 1) *It is raining now* (action at a specific moment in time – at speech moment); 2) *I am writing, you are reading* (the mutual synchrony of two homogeneous situations without any referential point).

The use of Present Continuous can be considered as a means to express simultaneity of two situations. R. Declerck examines T-simultaneity, in which situation time is parallel to speech moment. He differentiates the concepts of the ‘situation time’ and the ‘situation interval’ (Declerck, 2006). Simultaneous perception and perceived situation rarely imply full coincidence of their intervals.

### Part 1: Complex Sentence

Complex sentences presuppose *the perceiving part*, which includes:

- predicate having the corresponding "semantic" component of perceptual action;
- subject, the perceptor, who is the producer / controller of physical and mental action.

Mustajoki points to the dual nature of the perceiving subject as Experiencer and Recipient. The acquisition of information through the senses determines it as Recipient. The status of Experiment is determined by the fact that he experiences feelings and sensations (Мустайоки, 2006).

The object of perception is a dynamic, verbally expressed situation. The *perceived part* of the statement includes:

- a predicate expressing the action of subject of the perceived situation;
- an object, to which the process of the perception is directed.

To study the Present Continuous potential in representing perception, a quantitative method was used based on the data of British National Corpus. The examples were selected with a predicate (of main clause) expressing perception by the Present Continuous. The expression of simultaneous actions is a systemic value of the Continuous tenses. However, there is a paradox - perception verbs do not function in the Continuous to express the synchronicity of a perception situation and a perceived situation. Perceptual verbs are static. They are usually not used in the Continuous: *hear / listen, see / see* (only in the meaning of 'meet': *He's seeing his father tomorrow*); *smell / smell* (meaning 'smell': *He's smelling the soup now*); *to taste*. Perception verbs cannot express a perception process in the Present Continuous tense. They cannot express an action or a state as a process occurring at a certain moment. Instead of the Continuous, the Simple tenses are used.

- Kenneth says his earliest memory *is seeing* Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1898 (K22 390) [BNC];
- Dr Rafaelo *is seeing* mothers and babies every week, you know.' (JYA 3466) [BNC];
- He said: 'All races count but what's more important to me today *is seeing* this old horse winning again (K97 10078) [BNC];
- As a result, Forrest says the Scottish software community *is seeing* revenues grow at about 16% per annum, in contrast to the European average of about 7% (CPM 222) [BNC];
- I suggest that the mirror has severe distortions, and perhaps Harley *is seeing* things grossly out of proportion (CSU 331) [BNC];
- *We are seeing* that we have a message to communicate (G32 727) [BNC].

We found 54 examples with the verb to see in the Present Continuous. There was a perceived object denoted by nouns (Aikhenvald, 2004, 2003). Five examples were found with *He is seeing*, of which only one presents perception situation and perceived situation due to a complex object structure (Витгенштейн, 1994). Only one example was found with a predicate in the Present Continuous and a plural-type perceptor (Дурст-Андерсен, 1995).

- *We were seeing* how it was becoming more dangerous, violent, with the growing presence of guns amongst kids communicate (CHB 1501) [BNC];
- They *were seeing* how much more they could eat and take home communicate (KDW 1752) [BNC];

- I was so caught up in what I *was seeing* that it was only when I reached the top of the close where they lived that I started to think again about what I was doing there (A0F 1342) [BNC].

In majority of analyzed examples, a semantic change and a visual perception of objects were expressed (the Complex Object (Plungian, 2001; Makhmutova & Lutfullina, 2017). Meanings of perception verbs are modified (Блох, 1983; Khisamova et al., 2015).

The results of complex sentences analyses showed that perception is not expressed by a predicate (of main clause) of the Present Continuous.

## Part 2: Simple Sentences

However, we insist on implication of perception by using the Present Continuous. This provision is associated with morphological means of expressing perception.

- He is sitting in the armchair (AF 132) [BNC].

In the absence of other temporal and spatial reference points, this situation is observed at current moment NOW. The Present Continuous traditionally implies observing participant in an event. The systemic value of the Present Continuous is the expression of the action at exactly specified time. In the case of the Present Continuous, we mean moment NOW. The meaning of simultaneity with the moment NOW is the main one.

- (11) He is going to school (DW 52) [BNC];
- (12) Students are taking exams (KD 17) [BNC].

The sentence (11) means that now he is on the street, and the author of the message, for example, *at home*. Another sentence (12) assumes that *students are now at university*, and the speaker is *at home*, he cannot observe them. The time of observed situation and the time of the message coincide with moment NOW. However, at this moment there is now a spatial disunity between the speaker and the participants of the situation, which excludes their mutual observation. It turns out that the autonomous use of the Present Continuous does not imply a perception situation.

The Present Continuous can imply a perception only due to temporal-spatial framework of perceived situation, expressed by non-verbal means. The factor of spatial visibility is crucial. The factor of spatial visibility is analogous to the factor of temporal restriction of situations, for example, a huge interval a year is not observed. The principle of spatial visibility implies that the situation can be observed due to the proximity to the observer.

- (13) All the supermarkets are working now [BNC].
- (14) The boys are playing the piano [BNC].

We cannot observe more than one supermarket at the same time, and it is assumed that many supermarkets can be viewed as separate spatially localized (13).

Spatial segmentation through nomination (supermarkets imply their locations) presupposes remoteness from the observer. In this case, the situations are territorially disintegrated in space and are ontologically unobservable. The factor of territorial unity ontologically justifies that the situation is observable (14).

Thus, the following requirements let the Present Continuous imply perception in simple sentences:

- scale of the objects under consideration (the city);
- their multiplicity (shops);
- territorial visibility semantically significant for perception;
- action verbs and some others imply space localization highlighting a visible spatial segment.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Although the simultaneity is a systemic meaning of the Present Continuous, it is not used to represent the simultaneity of perception situation and perceived situation in complex sentences. Sensory verbs are not used in the Continuous tenses without changing their basic meaning. However, one cannot deny the fact that the Present Continuous can imply perception due to some textual situations. This allows us to speak about the evolving evidential strategy in English, expressed at the morphological level.

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