Tense, Aspect, Mood and Modality

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The curiosity to better understand the notions of tense, aspect, mood and modality dates back a long time and it is not restricted to a field of study, approach or theoretical construct. Currently, it is possible to observe the proliferation of linguistic approaches that discuss, in light of different epistemologies and methodologies, the categories of Tense, Aspect, Mood and Modality (TAM), unveiling morphosyntactic as well as semantic-pragmatic phenomena.

In this edition, the dossier on such notions is anchored on several theoretical frameworks, that is, the studies here undertaken are carried out from the perspective of theories based on cognitive approaches to human language, manifesting phenomena of grammatical and discursive nature of Brazilian Portuguese or foreign language.

According to Travaglia (1991, p. 78), modality can be "[...] an indication of the speaker's attitude towards what he says".[1] According to the author, there are at least five kinds of modality. The imperative would be that in which the speaker "[...] considers what is said as a situation over whose accomplishment he has control or power". The deontic modality would be linked to the duties and norms of conduct; the volitional modality would be related to will and desire; the alethic modality would be

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1   Our translation.

associated to the fact that the speaker sees the accomplishment of the situation as something possible, viable or necessary; and the epistemic modality would be that which reveals the enunciator's belief in the truth of what is produced, at the exact moment of enunciation. The modality can reveal itself in verbs, but also in names, adjectives and adverbs, and it is, to some extent, intertwined with the notion of mood which we begin to approach.

Vilela and Koch (2001) stated:

> "Mood", as the main grammatical category of the verb, is one of the privileged instruments to express "modality". "Modality" is a semantic-formal category in which, on the one hand, a hierarchy of morphological, syntactic, prosodic and lexical means intervene, and, on the other hand, the speaker's attitude towards the validity of the content fixed in the enunciation intervenes, which is presented as coincident or not coincident with reality. There are thus two basic modalities in the sentence: reality and unreality. [...]
>
> From here, possible scales can be constructed: certainty and uncertainty, supposition, condition, need, demand, possibility or impossibility of a given happening.
>
> This panel of modality possibilities are made objective by the verb moods and by other linguistic processes.
>
> "Modality" can be defined as the grammaticalization of the speaker's subjective attitudes and their transposition to the content of the statement. There are two fundamental kinds of modality: the epistemic (connected to matters of opinion, belief or knowledge) and the deontic (related to obligation or permission). There are, as it is to be expected, some problems related to modality and its expression through clauses. Let us limit ourselves to verbal moods.
>
> The indicative is the basic form of moods: it represents the content of the statement as a fact, denoting what really exists, the predictable and what is about to happen […]
>
> The semantic of **subjunctive** can be defined as opposed

to the one of the indicative: it is the mood of "not accomplished" or "not yet accomplished" (VILELA & KOCH, 2001, p. 175-177, emphasis added).[2]

It can be verified then, that the two notions can be closely related and, in many languages, they are studied in several ways. Next to modality and mood, there are two other categories which have been the subject of several studies: tense and aspect. The first one is a deictic category as it locates situations in time, and the second one is related to the internal time of the situation.

From the linguistic perspective, tense is the way in which the location of situations in time is expressed linguistically, being such expressions manifested by means of phenomena of grammatical nature in many languages. However, the grammatical categories which express time, as flexional morphemes or verbal particles, constitute a group that enables the expression of information regarding the temporality of the situation to be not as precise as the other forms of expression of those pieces of information. The grammatical categories that express time in languages tend to only code information such as anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority of a situation related to another one in a timeline (COMRIE, 1985).

Beyond grammatical categories, languages can take hold of other ways of linguistically expressing the location of a situation in time, some of them constituting ways of expressing more precise time information than the ones previously mentioned (anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority). A couple of these ways are: (i) through lexical items, that tend to be less numerous, as "now", "yesterday" and "tomorrow"; and (ii) through lexically composed expressions that tend to be of an infinite number and,

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2   Our translation.

depending on culture, allow to be highly precise in the location of the situation in the timeline, as "10 thousandths of seconds after de beginning of the experiment".

Intimately related to tense, there is, in languages, the aspect category. The notions of tense and aspect can be understood as strictly related because it is possible to frame a situation in a timeline from two perspectives: (i) establishing that situation in relation to another point in the timeline (situation prior, simultaneous or posterior to the point in time regarding the moment of speech); or (ii) revealing the internal time outline of the situation – for example, it can refer to a situation that is characterized by a closed point in the timeline, by points that are repeated on the line or by a trace that extends along the line. The former frame is related to tense and the latter, to aspect.

A large part of the texts presented in this dossier deals directly with aspect and therefore, a brief approach of the classic authors will be presented (although there are many others), namely Vendler (1957), Comrie (1976), Smith (1997) and Bertinetto (2001).

According to Vendler (1957), some verbs are characterized by a succession of phases and others are not; and some verbs would have a time definition and others would not. Based on that, Vendler proposes the following classification: stative verbs, activity verbs, accomplishments and achievements. The verbs of state would not have a succession of phases nor a demarcation of time. For the author, when someone has loved someone from a time (t1) to a time (t2), it means that, in some instant between (t1) and (t2), someone has loved that person. The verbs of activity would be characterized by having a succession of phases, but would not have an inherent time stamp. So, if

someone was running in a time *t*, it means that the instant of time *t* is in the extension of time in which that someone was running. The accomplishments would have both a succession of phases and a time ending. For example, if someone was drawing a circle at *t*, it means that it was in the time range in which that someone was drawing that circle. As a last category, Vendler presents the accomplishments, which would not have a succession of phases, but would have an ending. Therefore, if someone, for example, won a race between t1 and t2, it means that the instant of time that someone won that race is between t1 and t2.

Comrie (1976), the author of a classic book on aspect studies, and who granted an interview to this edition, presents the following classification of aspectual oppositions:

Image 1: Classification of aspectual oppositions
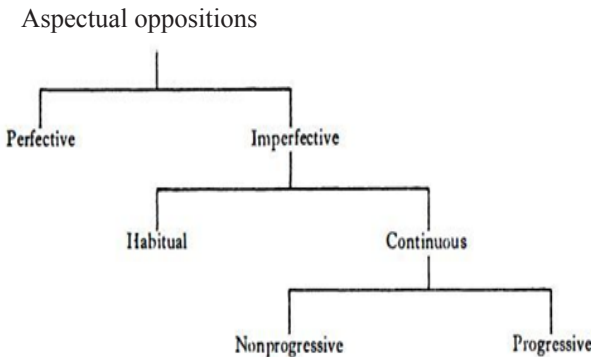
Source: Comrie (1976, p. 25)

From this perspective, perfectivity (COMRIE, 1976, p. 17) would be the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that compose that

situation, while the imperfective pays attention to the internal structure of the situation. An example brought by the author (COMRIE, 1976, p. 3), translated into Portuguese: "*Ele leu*" and "*Ele estava lendo*". The difference between the sentences is not due to the tense category, since both are in the past. The difference lies in the aspectual notion, the first sentence being marked by the perfective aspect and the second by the imperfective aspect.

In certain languages, there is a single category to characterize imperfectivity, but there are others where this notion can be subdivided into a variety of distinct categories. The author points out the habitual and continuous aspects. Situations marked by habituality would be characterized by the repetition of a given situation over an extensive period of time, so extensive that such a situation cannot be referred to as an incidental property of the moment, but precisely as a characteristic trait of the whole period. The continuous aspect is defined, according to Comrie (1976, p. 26), as the imperfective in which there is no habituality. The continuous aspect, for the author, can be subdivided into progressive and non-progressive.

Smith (1997) bases his proposal on Vendler and suggests that the aspectual notions are linked with two lines: (i) the type of situation, which classifies the event or state presented in the sentence according to its time properties and (ii) the point of view, which adds a time perspective to the sentence, giving a partial or total view of the situation being treated. Regarding the type of situation, the author refers to the main verb, its arguments and adjuncts and points out that the structures formed by the verbs would be characterized by the features: [+/-] dynamism, [+/-] durativity and [+/-] telicity. Regarding point of view, the author says that aspect would be revealed in grammatical

morphemes and auxiliary verbs. In the second line, there would be the perfective and imperfective aspects.

Bertinetto (2001) proposes a similar frame to Smith's, but instead of a trace of telicity, the author uses the notion of homogeneity, previously presented by Vendler (1957). So, an event like "running" is homogeneous, since a part of "running" is "running". On the other hand, "painting a picture" is not homogeneous, since a part of "painting a picture" is not "painting a picture". The stative verbs would be characterized by the following features: [+durative], [-dynamic] and [+homogenic]. The activity verbs would be marked by positivity in all features: [+durative], [+dynamic] and [+homogenic]. The accomplishment verbs would be characterized as follows: [+durative], [-dynamic] and [-homogenic]. Finally, the achievements would be marked by [-durative], [-dynamic] and [+homogenic].

As previously mentioned, the characterization of tense and aspect can be given to verbs, but also by other constituents, for example, by adverbs. This is what Ilari (2002) calls attention to, pointing out that the use of the adverbs of time can indicate or reinforce time notions of anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority, such as the adverbs "yesterday", "today", "tomorrow", respectively; in addition to denoting aspectual notions, such as adverbial phrases like "sometimes", "once in a while", "without stopping", etc. (ILARI, 2002, p. 141).

As previously pointed out, there are several theoretical frameworks that have been dealing with the notions of tense, aspect, mood and modality. Many demonstrations of constituents expressing such notions can happen through different functions connected to different argumentative intentionalities and, in this perspective, different theoretical frameworks, with their

respective methodologies, dedicate their efforts to understand such categories.

The generative theory, for example, which is largely dedicated to understanding the mental representation of grammar, has long studied several functional categories, among them that of tense, mood and aspect. In its early days, Chomsky's (1965, 1972) generative theory considered that the structure of a simple sentence would consist of an NP and a VP, connected to a knot, called a S(entence), obtaining a formalization like the following: S → NP VP. But in order to accommodate data where there was the presence of an auxiliary, the following was proposed: S → NP Aux VP, in which Aux would protect the information of time and agreement. In Edmonds (1976), a binary marking is indicated for the node destined for verbal flexion, thus a finite sentence would have INFL [+T, +AGR] and the one in the infinitive would have INFL [-T, -AGR]. The syntagmatic rule becomes S → NP INFL VP and would be considered valid for all kinds of sentences.

In 1989, Pollock proposed a major change in the conception of the syntactic tree and IP, which was also adopted in Chomsky (1995, chapter 2). Pollock carried out a study to compare the movement of verbs in finite and non-finite forms in English and French, leading him to adopt more than one position that serves as a landing place for verbs: before and after adverbs, quantifiers and negation particles. Thus, in the syntactic tree, on that occasion, two positions are given for notions of flexion: one for tense and one for agreement. Since 1995, there is a signaling that agreement should no longer be the nucleus of a projection. However, studies with other categories have proliferated and a very interesting work, like that of Cinque (1999), which studies the position of adverbs and their relation with functional

projections, modality, mood, time and aspect, demonstrates that researches such as the notions proposed in this dossier are still very much needed.

After this brief theoretical explanation, we will present the articles published in this issue of **Scripta**, which are the result of the discussion of research results on a very instigating theme that, even if it has been studied for a long time, recently it has deserved expressive research in numerical terms by major scientific research centers in Brazil and abroad.

Codinhoto and Rech, in the text "*Considerações sobre o modal teológico*", present the syntactic and semantic properties of the teleological modal auxiliar, addressing aspects related to the construction in which such constituent appears. Furthermore, the authors demonstrate the differences between their object of study and other root modals, revealing how a construction with the teleological modal relates information that corresponds to medium and goal. Codinhoto and Rech also address factors such as modal orientation and its cooccurrence with a negation item, adding important analysis to the field of modal studies.

Penz and Ibaños, in "TARDIS & TAME: *an essay on natural language meaning and metaphysics*", using a methodology that considers the lexical/metaphysical dualism for Formal Semantics and its correlation with time and space, approach the theoretical relationship between the instances of time and space from natural language as the vector of their manifestation. The starting ontological design, according to the authors, is composed of the categories of TAME (tense, aspect, mood and evidentiality/eventology) instantiated by linguistic phenomena that illustrate the properties of displacement, anchorage and aboutness. Penz and Ibaños approach the lexical nature of the entries in Brazilian

Portuguese and their metaphysical counterpart in meaning, reflecting on the proper balance of the formal device of the semantic component in relation to TAME, correlating them to the broader principles of human language, which the authors call TARDIS, focusing mainly on modality.

Fatima-Zahra El Fenne, on the text "English Paradigm structure in French verbal inflection", has the main objective of demonstrating how certain morphosyntactic properties can be analyzed as a global affix, which operates within the same space, without a fixed order. To this end, the author studies the verbal flexional morphology in French, which, in Fenne's words, is marked by five grammatical categories: tense, aspect, mood, person and number. From the perspective of Construction Morphology, the author brings excellent reflections on the subject, going through phonological and morphosyntactic analysis.

Lessa and Cabral, in the text "*A competição entre Simple Past e Present Perfect no inglês estadunidense: um estudo de caso sobre perfect de resultado*", verify that, in American English, the use of Simple Past to represent situations of result and recent indefinite past has proved to be more natural than the use of Present Perfect, resulting in a competition between the two structures, especially in the directions of the perfect that would be classified as result perfect or resultant. After the application of elicitation tests, the authors verified that Simple Past assumes the default form, even when the context indicates continuation and relevance of the result in the present. The use of Present Perfect is favored in situations whose resulting state is a condition for a previous demand for action of the interlocutor, specifically when there is no other causality linguistic mark.

Bertucci, in the text "*A aspectualidade de 'ficar' na perífrase com gerúndio*", promotes a reflection of the aspectual interpretation of the verb *ficar* when followed by gerund or participle in Brazilian Portuguese. The author proposes that *ficar* is an aspectualizer, contributing with the formation of a predicate with stative characteristics and defends that it is valid the notion of permanence attributed to it for the analyzed constructions. The author also assumes that differences between the complementation with gerund or participle are compositional. With this assumption, Bertucci corroborates the interesting studies that have been developed on the aspectuality of auxiliaries and peripheral structures.

In the same perspective, Xavier and Oliveira, in the text "*Marcação de aspecto gramatical nos verbos de ligação: uma análise morfológica*", propose a morphological analysis of the linking verbs to verify the aspectual marking in this verbal typology. The text takes as samples the verbs *ser*, *estar*, *continuar*, *virar*, *andar*, *ficar*, *parecer*, *permanecer*, viver, *tornar-se* and *encontrar-se*. By studying the aspectual traits contained in the linking verbs, the authors have verified whether they carry semantic traits or should be associated with only one functional category. Xavier and Oliveira assume that the linking verbs indicate aspect, so they cannot be considered semantically empty or just a functional category.

Araújo and Sebold, in the text "*A volição na leitura aspectual de sentenças com a perífrase 'estar+gerúndio' no português brasileiro*", investigated whether the aspectual readings of the "estar+gerúndio" periphrasis generate volitive readings in the context of [±animated] subjects in Brazilian Portuguese. Assuming that there is no specific volitional reading for this

periphrasis, the authors arrive at results suggesting that, even in contexts with [-animate] subjects, the majority of speakers associate the sentences with interpretations that indicate ability and, consequently, volition. This is one contribution more of this dossier to the understanding of aspect in verbal periphrases.

Soares and Ferrari, in the text "*Imediaticidade Pragmática e Uso do Presente do Indicativo em Manchetes e Subtítulos Jornalísticos*", aimed at understanding the conceptual motivations for each type of use and verifying the discursive-pragmatic strategies observed in these initial resources of access to the news. The investigation starts with the notion of epistemic immediacy, extending it to the notion of pragmatic immediacy and, in this way, relating the study to the notions of the act of sharing news. Soares and Ferrari verified that there is a high frequency of use of the Present of the Indicative in headlines, which would be associated to the conceptualization of a past event as a new fact, indicating a pragmatic immediacy.

Coelho and Tenuta, in the text "*As construções [V1ANDAR/ IR/ SAIR/ VIR/ VIVER + V2gerúndio] e a expressão do aspecto: restrições sintático-semânticas e motivações cognitivas do seu processo de gramaticalização*", seek to understand the process of auxiliaryization of the verbs listed in the title of the text and that present a notion of movement. Based on the hypothesis of imagery schemes present in the conceptualization of such verbs accompanied by a nominal form of gerund in the V2 position, the authors aim at a diachronic analysis of such aspectual constructions and seek to describe the cognitive motivations involved in their process of grammaticalization, in addition to identifying possible syntactic-semantic restrictions arising from them. The results of the diachronic study indicated that the forms

"andar", "ir", "vir" and "viver" already functioned as aspectual auxiliaries when combined with a nominal gerund form since the 13th century and that the source-path-goal scheme is an essential factor for the verb of movement to be re-analysed as an auxiliary form in a construction in which V2 is a gerund form.

Oliveira and Amaral, in the text "*Os verbos de estado no português brasileiro: propriedades semânticas e classificação*", studied the stative verbs in order to show that they are compositional and decomposable items and have no uniform behavior. The authors analyzed 36 stative verbs in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and found that the link between compositionality and behavioral variety occurs when verbs with the same semantic components have similar syntactic behaviors, while they behave differently with respect to verbs that have different sense components in their semantics. From the results found, the authors suggest that the BP stative verbs are composed of smaller parts of meaning that cause them to be distributed in six classes: existential verbs, reciprocal verbs, locative verbs, measure verbs, possession verbs and need verbs.

Figueiredo and Lourenço, in the text "*Analisando a língua brasileira de sinais como uma língua sem-tense*", present a proposal for analyzing the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) as a non-tense language, characterized by morphosyntactic properties similar to those found in other non-tense languages, such as Chinese. Based on the assumption that Libras is constituted by a verb without morphology of tense nor optionality of the temporal expression nor the adverb of time; by the past time not marked grammatically in the verb; by the future marked by auxiliary; by the presence of predicates of bare nouns; by the absence of expletive subject; by the absence of morphological distinction

between finite and nonfinite; by the absence of movement motivated by case, and by the interpretation of time reference based on aspect, the authors verified that the language under study employs other mechanisms to express time reference, such as the use of timeline and the use of time expressions and time adverbs.

Ely and Snichelotto, in the text "*Tempo-aspecto-modalidade em construções hipotáticas adverbiais condicionais do português brasileiro à luz da linguística funcional centrada no uso*", present an analysis of the behavior of the functional categories of tense-aspect-modality in conditional adverbial hypothetical constructions of written Brazilian Portuguese. The authors analyzed these categories on data obtained from letters and the results suggested that the inherence of the functional triad to the conditional enunciation is organized from gradualness: (+) temporality (-) modality or (+) modality (-) temporality. Ely and Snichelotto verified that the predominant contexts in the sample would be the unrealistic/non-factual ones, which would link more easily to the epistemic modality and the future temporality. In other words, the statements are focused on the uncertainty and doubt of the speaker and on the willingness and possibility of realization of the proposition.

Tortato, in "*Dependência entre ser, tempo e narrativa em Ricoeur*", discusses Ricoeur's intelligible narrative structure, demonstrating how it depends on the semantics of the action, the symbolization of action and temporality. The author notes the capacity of an action to be narrated so that such temporality is (humanly) meaningful, as well as a need for this action to be narrated and a need for narrative, so that temporality is (humanly) understood. The author, going through Augustine's threefold

present and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, seeks to understand how this practical ordering of time is done on a daily basis, considering the relationship of dependence between being, time and narrative and the expressions that realize it and that unfold from verbal tenses to the adverbs of time.

Carvalho and Gonçalves, in the text "*A categoria aspecto verbal e o ensino: o que os alunos revelam conhecer e/ou entender sobre essa categoria*", develop an important study that points to a gap in basic education. For the authors, it is quite common to teach the categories mood and tense conveyed primarily in the verb, but little or no reflection on the aspectual notion. Carvalho and Gonçalves carried out a research in which reading activities were applied to students newly admitted to the academic environment, having just finished basic education. Through the analysis of the answers given, they found that many students associated the effects of meaning derived from verbal uses only with the identification of verbal tenses (present, past and future), which reveals little about the functionality of this class of words in a dimension of the language in use. The authors found that, in the answers, despite some subjects having identified features of aspectuality promoted by verbal actions, there were certain limitations and objections in the answers, revealing little understanding of the studied category.

In the Free Section, there are two articles that deal with topics that go beyond the proposed theme for this issue: "*Traços categorizadores na derivação de pares nome-verbo em LIBRAS*", by Santos, and "*Exclamativas e interrogativas com 'ques' em português brasileiro dialetal*", by Pereira.

Santos, in the text "*Traços categorizadores na derivação de pares nome-verbo em LIBRAS*", investigates the signs and

complex structures of the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). The author takes into account the lack of a generative lexical component present in lexical models that precede it, and notes that, in sign languages, the lexical units would be formed from some parameters, such as: Hand Configuration (HC), Location (L) and Movement (M), besides Hand Orientation (HO) and Aspects or Non-manual Expressions (NMEs). For Santos, the name-verb pairs would present the same superficial form, syntactically differentiated by a **v** or by a **n** categorizer, with phonological realization Ø or with specific realization in some members of the pairs. The proposal made by the author would corroborate the idea that languages are uniform and variations are restricted to easily identifiable properties of enunciations.

Pereira, in the text "*Exclamativas e interrogativas com 'ques' em português brasileiro dialetal*", investigates the exclamatory sentences, such as "*Ques paisagem bonita!*", and interrogatives, such as "*Ques ferramenta você usou?*", in which the "*ques*" (instead of "*que*") are present in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) dialects. The author invests her efforts in understanding which syntactic operations are responsible for deriving such structures. Both in interrogatives and exclamations, the illocutionary force would be responsible for the move and Pereira indicates that, in many languages, the distribution of features of plural is determined by the position of the cardinals in the structure of DP. She then extends the reasoning to non-standard BP, explaining the plural form in this determinant.

Morato, Martins and Castro conducted interviews with two major researchers on the subject of this journal. They are Bernard Comrie (University of California, Santa Barbara) and Robert Binnick (University of Toronto). Comrie is a specialist in

linguistic typology and is known for two important books on tense and aspect studies: Aspect (1976) and Tense (1985). The work on universals and language typology is what has triggered the deep and important studies on aspect and tense, which are probably some of the most widely cited nationally and internationally. Interestingly, Comrie concludes his interview by indicating the reading of a great scholar in the field, Robert Binnick. This last researcher's great interest resides in Mongolian languages, besides the semantics of aspect and verbal tense. Binnick is the author of **Time and the verb:** a guide to tense and aspect (1991), which continues to be a reference work to aspect studies, and of **The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect** (2012), besides several articles on the subject.

The set of articles and interviews in this dossier presents directions to be followed, because they signal that the phenomena here studied – tense, aspect, mood and modality – promote knowledge of various natures and deserve, increasingly, academic-scientific investment, in addition to dissemination among language professionals.

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