

# Imagining Events: Influences of Temporal Information in Verbs and Perspective Taking

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Recent psycholinguistic research shows that grammatical aspect (GA; imperfective, perfective) interacts with lexical aspect (LA; activities, accomplishments) to influence language comprehension difficulty (Yap et al., 2009; Becker et al., 2013). The purpose of the present research is to examine how these variables interact to influence the ease in which people imagine events described in simple phrases. A second goal is to examine how taking a first person perspective (as if performing the event) or third person perspective (looking at self performing event) influences the ability to imagine events. This research also employed event-related brain potential methodology to examine slow cortical brain potentials. These brain potentials are known to be sensitive to the ease of integrating text into developing situation models (King & Kutas, 1995), and to the ease of imagining events (Conway et al., 2003).

In the first experiment, participants read and imagined sentences that contained either accomplishments (build) or activities (act) that were grammatically marked as ongoing or completed (I was acting/I acted). Our slow potential results show that participants had less difficulty imagining events when the temporal properties of the two forms of verb aspect matched (imperfective activities, perfective accomplishments) versus mismatched (perfective activities, imperfective accomplishments). Furthermore, participants reported they imagined the events more often from a first person perspective for activities than accomplishments. GA had the strongest influence on imagined accomplishments; the first-person perspective was used more often for perfective than imperfective accomplishments.

In the second experiment, participants were told to take either a first or third person perspective when imagining events described in imperfective activity phrases (e.g., I was exercising). The slow potential findings demonstrated that SCP amplitudes were more negative for third-person than for first-person event representation, in left-frontal regions. This difference is taken to indicate that greater cognitive effort is required for the generation of imagined events from the third-person perspective, as compared to the first-person perspective.

This research provides novel neurocognitive and behavioural insight into how event representation is influenced by temporal information associated with verbs and the perspective from which an event is represented.

## References

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