

Progressive and actionality in Italian

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It has often been claimed that a sentence in the progressive form always refers to a state, irrespective of what the actional value of its lexical verb is. In this paper this thesis will be discussed with reference to the interactions between the Progressive and Actionality in Italian, and some popular arguments in favour of it will be criticised. In Italian the Progressive cannot be considered simply as a tense form; rather, it has to be considered as an aspectual value which can be expressed by both the so called *perifrasi progressiva* (very close to the progressive form in English) and a particular aspectual reading of certain tenses (typically, the imperfectives, like *Presente* and *Imperfetto*). Thus, in order to discuss the possible interactions between the Progressive and Actionality two things are necessary: on the one hand, we must classify the actional values which are relevant for the temporal interpretation and, on the other, we must represent what is common to the different ways in which Italian expresses the Progressive.

As the first problem, the actional values are introduced as, primarily, properties of lexical verbs which can be determined by some systematic tests. Five actionality classes are considered: activities, accomplishments, achievements, instantaneous events and states. They are represented by means of three binary features: durative⁺/⁻, telic⁺/⁻, stative⁺/⁻. Then an analysis of the Italian indicative tenses is made in which both temporal and aspectual values are integrated in a single schematic representation. Here the aspectual values are considered as *perspective values*; in this sense they are related to the different perspective points from which one can report a situation.

With regard to the suggested representations of both the Progressive and the actional values, it is shown that there are no compelling reasons to maintain that the Progressive always transforms a sentence whose actional value has the feature value "stative" into one whose actional value is characterised by the value "stative⁺". However, this does not mean that there are no relevant interactions between the Progressive and Actionality. There is, in fact, at least one case in which the Progressive can influence the actional value of a sentence. By briefly considering the so called *imperfective paradox* and a possible solution to it, it is shown that this interaction amounts to the following well known fact: the Progressive neutralises the telic value of verbs (and sentences), transforming the value "telic⁺" into "telic⁻". *

* On various occasions I had the opportunity to discuss the ideas contained in this paper with R. Vogel. I would like to thank her as well as P. Casalegno and C. Cecchetto for their comments on and criticisms of a first version of this work. I am, of course, the only one responsible for everything that is maintained in this paper.

1. Tense, Aspect and Actionality are three fundamental elements that any model of temporal interpretation should take into account. They concern, respectively, the temporal values expressed by the tenses, the way a situation is linguistically described from a certain temporal point of view and the kind of situation a sentence refers to.¹ However, Tense, Aspect and Actionality do not represent three completely distinct components of the temporal interpretation; in fact, it is easy to find complex interactions between tenses, aspectual values and actionality classes, as well as between them and other contextually relevant elements.

In Italian, for instance, it does not seem appropriate to treat Tense and Aspect separately, for it is possible to determine a systematic correspondence between aspectual values and tenses, at least when the tenses are interpreted in their most common sense. To take an example: the Italian *Imperfetto* (Imp), just like the French *Imparfait*, represents the morphological form of the past imperfective (progressive) aspect and it can be distinguished from the other simple past tense (*passato semplice*, Ps) only in terms of the aspectual distinction between imperfective and perfective. In the same way, in Italian the *aspetto compiuto* (perfect) can be related, in a quite systematic way, to the compound tenses of the indicative. Naturally, this does not exclude that, depending on the contexts in which they occur, it is also possible to associate different aspectual values with these tenses.

However, even for those tenses which seem to allow for more than one aspectual interpretation, it is possible to determine, in a systematic way, what their contextually appropriate reading is on the basis of the interaction between them and other elements in the context. This is what happens, for example, when, for a given context, we have to determine what the proper aspectual reading of Imp is.

In Italian, there are at least three different aspectual values that Imp can express when used in a genuine imperfective sense: the progressive, the habitual and the continuous.² The relevant aspectual reading of the tense can be determined by considering, say, the temporal adverbials or the temporal subordinate clauses that may occur in the context. Thus, in

¹ Although the distinction between Aspect and Actionality is not always clearly stated in the literature, it seems nevertheless that there are good reasons to keep the two concepts distinct. Such a distinction has been argued for in Bertinetto & Delfitto (1992) where a set of phenomena is considered which clearly points to it. In what follows, I use the term "Aspect" (as well as the label "Theory of Aspect") to indicate the domain of problems such as the analysis of the opposition between perfective and imperfective. As is argued, this distinction depends on how a situation is described. Under the label "Theory of Actionality", on the other hand, problems such as the determination of what kind of situation is the one described are considered. Note that the way the concepts of Tense, Aspect and Actionality have been intuitively characterised must not be intended as a definition (among the many others which have been suggested in the literature); rather, it should be seen as an hypothesis which it seems worthwhile to follow up in order to arrive at plausible definitions.

² See Bertinetto (1986) for a discussion of these three aspectual readings of Imp, particularly with respect to the notion of continuous aspect, which Bertinetto himself introduces as an independent aspectual value (different from both the progressive and the habitual).

the following examples, Imp can be interpreted in the progressive or habitual sense depending on the temporal adverbials they contain.

- (1) a. Ieri alle cinque Leo correva (stava correndo/*era solito correre) nel parco.
'Yesterday, at five o'clock, Leo run_{Imp} (was running/*used to run) in the park.'
- b. Leo correva (*stava correndo/era solito correre) nel parco tutti i giorni alle cinque.
'Leo run_{Imp} (*was running/used to run) in the park every day at five o'clock.'
- c. Quando l'ho visto l'ultima volta Leo correva (stava correndo/*era solito correre) nel parco.
'When I saw him the last time Leo run_{Imp} (was running/*used to run) in the park.'
- d. Quando era in vacanza Leo correva (*stava correndo/era solito correre) nel parco.
'When he was on holiday Leo run_{Imp} (*was running/used to run) in the park.'

Similarly, the perfect value, usually associated with the compound tenses of the indicative, depends systematically on contextual elements. This aspectual reading typically presupposes the contextual determination of a point in time (which, except the case of *passato prossimo*, does not coincide with the moment of the utterance) before which the described situation has been completely concluded.

Although the relevant aspectual reading of a tense may depend on the context, the fact that we can see a systematic relation between tenses and aspectual values seems to indicate that the fundamental analytic tool in the study of the Italian temporal system has to be the unified category of tense/aspect. This means that we cannot keep the representations of the aspectual and the temporal values of tenses rigidly distinct; rather, we have to introduce aspectual considerations directly in the determination of the informational value of the tenses. This approach is adopted, for example, in Castelnovo (1991) where, starting from a revision of Reichenbach's two-dimensional model of temporal interpretation, each tense of the Italian indicative (in its standard interpretation) is associated with a scheme in which the representations of its temporal and aspectual values are integrated (see below for a description of such a model).

A different problem, which is the main topic of this paper, concerns the possible interactions between such a temporal/aspectual analysis of tenses and the actional values which can be expressed by the contexts in

which they occur. In what follows I am particularly concerned with one form of such an interaction, namely that between the aspectual value of the Progressive and the actional value of stativity. There is in fact a widespread thesis in the literature on Tense and Aspect for which a progressive sentence has always to be interpreted as describing a state, irrespective of what the basic actional value of the verb (phrase) occurring in it is.³ According to this thesis, the Progressive could also be seen as an operator that, whatever the actional value of the context to which it has been applied, invariably changes it into the stative value. This, in turn, would explain why sentences whose main verb already expresses a stative value do not generally allow for a progressive interpretation.

In evaluating this thesis, a description of what the relevant actional values are is introduced in order to put forward a conceptual framework in which the problem can be dealt with in a precise way. The actional values are related to the types of situations different sentences can describe. More particularly, I assume that the type of the described situation can be determined by considering those aspects of the lexical meaning of verbs which are relevant for the temporal interpretation as well as the relations between these and other contextually relevant elements.

Consider the following examples:

- (2) a. Leo è partito ieri alle dieci.
'Leo left yesterday at 10 o'clock.'
- b. Lisa ha telefonato ieri alle dieci.
'Lisa phoned yesterday at 10 o'clock.'
- c. Lunedì scorso Leo ha dipinto un ritratto di Lisa.
'Last Monday Leo painted a portrait of Lisa.'
- d. Lunedì scorso Lisa ha corso nel parco.
'Last Monday Lisa ran in the park.'
- e. Per alcuni anni Lisa ha corso la maratona di New York.
'Lisa has run the New York marathon for some years.'
- f. Per alcuni anni Leo è stato il capitano della squadra.
'Leo has been the leader of the team for some years.'

³ This thesis is defended, with different motivations, in, for example, Vlach (1981), Dowty (1986), Houweling (1986), Parsons (1989). Different in part is the position taken in Kamp (1981) and Kamp & Rohrer (1985) where it has been explicitly assumed that the distinction states/events does not correspond to the one between stative and non-stative contexts. See below for a more detailed discussion of Kamp and Rohrer's analysis.

The sentences in (2) exemplify some distinctions, regarding the types of actions to which the verb phrases occurring in them refer, that are relevant for the temporal interpretation. They concern the duration of the described situations (instantaneous/non instantaneous), the telic character of the verb phrases (whether they refer to actions which presuppose the achievement of a goal or not) and the opposition between states that hold for the subject and activities (instantaneous or protracted in time) in which he is involved. Here, these distinctions are introduced only in an intuitive way; however, they can be systematically determined by applying some tests based on the possibility of combining different kinds of verbs (and verb phrases) with certain classes of temporal adverbials.⁴

The analysis here is concerned only with the properties shown in the examples in (2), that is the oppositions durative/non-durative, telic/non-telic and stative/non-stative.⁵ By combining these basic values it is possible to arrive at a first (approximate) classification of lexical verbs in terms of a small set of general actional classes. Intuitively, each lexical verb can be related to one of these classes on the basis of the aspects of its lexical/semantic value that are relevant for the temporal interpretation. The classification referred to in what follows is:⁶

- (3) <dur⁺, telic ; stative -> (activities)
<dur⁺, telic⁺, stative -> (accomplishments)
<dur⁻, telic⁺, stative -> (achievements)
<dur⁻, telic⁻, stative -> (instantaneous events)
<dur⁺, telic⁻, stative⁺ -> (states)⁷

Representations like those in (3) are assumed to be directly associated with lexical verbs; however, it is a well known fact that actional values are very sensitive to the context, as shown by the following examples:

- (4) a. cadere : <dur⁻, telic⁻, stative ->
'fall_{inf}'

⁴ See, for example, Bertinetto (1986) for the description of a set of such tests in Italian. Useful data can also be found in Bertinetto & Delfitto (1992).

⁵ I do not believe that these are the only properties relevant for the analysis of the actional values of the Italian verb system. Nevertheless, I assume the classification in (3) because it is particularly convenient for the discussion of the problem I am interested in here.

⁶ This classification is a reformulation of the one introduced in Bertinetto (1986). What is particularly interesting in Bertinetto's analysis is the fact that the classes he refers to are not determined simply on the basis of intuitive semantic properties of verbs but by means of systematic syntactic tests.

⁷ Note that (3) lacks three schemes that would be possible on the basis of purely combinatorial criteria: <dur⁺, telic⁺, stative⁺>, <dur⁻, telic⁺, stative⁺>, <dur⁻, telic⁻, stative⁺>. They are ruled out because they present inconsistent values; in particular, the value "stative⁺" cannot be combined with the values "dur⁻" and "telic⁻" since states are typically non instantaneous as well as not addressed to the achievement of a goal.

il sasso cadere : <dur⁺ ; telic⁺ ; stative⁻ >
 'the stone fall_{inf}'
 la pioggia cadere : <dur⁺ , telic⁺ , stative⁻ >
 'the rain fall_{inf}'

b. ricordare : <dur⁺ ; telic⁺ ; stative⁻ >
 'remember_{inf}'
 ricordare all'improvviso : <dur⁺ ; telic⁺ ; stative⁻ >
 'remember_{inf} suddenly'
 ricordare a lungo : <dur⁺ , telic⁺ ; stative⁺ >
 'remember_{inf} for a long time'

c. mangiare : <dur⁺ , telic⁺ ; stative⁻ >
 'eat_{inf}'
 mangiare del pane : <dur⁺ , telic⁺ ; stative⁻ >
 'eat_{inf} some bread'
 mangiare una torta : <dur⁺ , telic⁺ ; stative⁻ >
 'eat_{inf} a cake'

On the basis of examples like these it has been argued that actional values cannot be defined simply as properties of lexical verbs; rather, they should be associated directly with sentences. However, it seems that there could be some problems with this thesis about the sentential nature of Actionality. Indeed, as it is shown below, by considering actional values directly as properties of sentences some relevant lexical properties of verbs could be overlooked. In order to both avoid these problems and still account for data such as those pointed out in (4), it seems necessary to introduce a *Calculus of Actionality* by means of which, starting from the properties of lexical verbs and from the type of context in which they occur, it is possible to determine compositionally the actional value of entire sentences.⁸

Although it undoubtedly constitutes a fundamental component in a full-blown model of temporal interpretation, such a calculus will not be described here, even in a tentative way. Instead, my attention will be limited to one of its putative components, that is the possible interactions between the aspectual value of the Progressive, which is expressed by some tense forms, and the actional value expressed by the context in which such tense forms occur. Given the way actional classes have been represented in (3), this means that we will be concerned with the possible relations between the Progressive and the actional values "dur⁺/-⁺", "telic⁺/-⁺", "stative⁺/-⁺". By discussing these relations it will be possible to evaluate critically the popular thesis according to which a context

⁸ A compositional approach to the problem of Actionality has been taken, for example, in Verkuyl (1989) in which an *Algebra of Aspect Composition* is outlined.

expressing a progressive value has always to be considered as stative from the point of view of Actionality.

With regard to Italian, the evaluation of this thesis could be complicated by the fact that in Italian the Progressive cannot be considered simply as a tense form; rather, it represents an abstract aspectual value that can be expressed by both the so called *Perifrasi Progressiva* (which corresponds very closely to the English progressive form) and a particular aspectual reading of certain imperfective tenses (typically, *Presente* 'present' and *Imperfetto* 'imperfect'). If the above mentioned thesis is true, both the progressive form and the imperfective tenses (in their progressive reading) should determine the actional re-classification of the contexts in which they occur, invariably transforming them into stative ones. Given the supposed incompatibility between the Progressive and stativity, we should then conclude that these tense forms are not compatible with those lexical verbs whose basic actional value is characterised by the value "stative⁺". But consider the examples below:

(5) a. L'ultima volta che lo vidi Leo si sentiva triste, ma conosceva Lisa e sapeva che lei non lo avrebbe mai lasciato solo.
 'The last time I saw him Leo feel_{Imp} sad but he know_{Imp} Lisa and know_{Imp} that she would never leave him.'

b. *L'ultima volta che lo vidi Leo stava sentendosi triste ma stava conoscendo Lisa e sapeva che lei non lo avrebbe mai lasciato solo.
 'The last time I saw him Leo feel_{Prog} sad but he know_{Prog} Lisa and know_{Imp} that she would never leave him.'

c. Leo guardò dalla finestra. La neve stava cadendo ininterrottamente dall'alba e aveva ormai cancellato il sentiero.
 'Leo looked through the window. The snow fall_{Prog} continuously since dawn and had already covered the footpath.'

d. Leo guardò dalla finestra. La neve cadeva ininterrottamente dal mattino e aveva ormai cancellato il sentiero.
 'Leo looked through the window. The snow fall_{Imp} continuously since dawn and had already covered the footpath.'

In (5a-b) two stative verb phrases (*sentirsi triste* e *conoscere Lisa*)⁹ occur that, according to the thesis we are considering, cannot occur in sentences which allow a progressive interpretation. This claim seems to be confirmed by the fact that the progressive form in (5b) is clearly

⁹ These verb phrases can be classified as stative on the basis of two widely accepted tests for stativity: the non compatibility with both the progressive form and the imperative form. In fact, both tests seem to give unequivocal results with *sentirsi triste* and *conoscere Lisa*.

unacceptable. On the other hand, the use of Imp in (5a) seems to be perfectly correct; thus, (5a) cannot be analysed as equivalent to (5b). If we assume that a sentence whose tense is Imperfecto can be interpreted in a progressive sense only if it can be rephrased by means of a progressive form, then we must conclude that (5a) does not allow a progressive interpretation. However, (5a) shows what seems to be one of the most salient characteristics of the Progressive: the described situation is seen as *holding* at a moment assumed to be relevant (what Bertinetto (1986) calls *istante di focalizzazione*) and as completely indeterminate with respect to its continuation after that moment.¹⁰

In the second sentence of (5c-d) a verb (*cadere*) occurs that belongs to the actional class that is associated with the scheme <dur⁺, telic⁺, stative>. However, as we have already observed with respect to (4a), unlike the simple verb *cadere*, the (abstract) context *la neve cadere* has to be classified as durative due to the nature of the referent of its grammatical subject; thus, in this context we must refer to the scheme <dur⁺, telic⁺, stative>. Moreover, according to the thesis we are considering, the sentence *la neve cadeva* should be analysed in terms of the scheme <dur⁺, telic⁺, stative>. But, in what sense can it be said that *stava cadendo* and *cadeva* refer to states holding for the referent of their grammatical subject (the snow)? Whatever the answer is, we cannot say that it is the same intuitive sense in which we would say that *being sick* (said of Leo) or *being white* (said of the snow) refer to states (permanent or temporary) which hold for their subjects. What do the properties *Leo era ammalato* 'Leo be_{Imp} sick', *Leo conosceva Lisa da molti anni* 'lit.: Leo know_{Imp} Lisa since a long time', *la neve era bianca* 'the snow be_{Imp} white' and *la neve cadeva ininterrottamente dal mattino* 'lit.: the snow fall_{Imp} continuously since dawn' have in common?

It should be clear that when we say that *stava cadendo* (in (5c)) and *cadeva* (in (5d)) refer to states holding for the referent of their grammatical subject, we are using the term *state* in a slightly different sense from the one we presuppose in saying that *essere ammalato* and *essere bianca* refer to states. From an intuitive point of view, a stative

¹⁰ Furthermore, the occurrence in (i) below of an adverbial of the type *da X tempo* leads to an interpretation such that *X tempo* refers to the distance between the starting point of the described situation and the moment assumed as relevant. This is exactly the interpretation such an adverbial gives rise to in typical progressive contexts like the one in (ii).

(i) L'ultima volta che lo vidi Leo si sentiva triste, ma conosceva Lisa da molti anni e sapeva che lei non lo avrebbe mai lasciato solo.
'lit.: The last time I saw him Leo feel_{Imp} sad but he know_{Imp} Lisa since a long time and know_{Imp} that she will never leave him.'

(ii) Leo dormiva (stava dormendo) da due ore.
'lit.: Leo sleep_{Imp}Prog since two hours.'

On the other hand, it should be noted that, in the context of (5a), the Imperfecto can be interpreted neither in a continuous (in the aspectual sense of Bertinetto (1986)) nor in the so called Imperfecto *narrativo* sense.

verb could be intended as referring to a property that characterises its subject; how, then, can we say that *Leo stava cadendo/cadeva dalle scale* 'Leo fall_{Prog/Imp} from the stairs' describes a property holding for Leo? If it were true that all the progressive sentences describe states, then there ought to be a property that, at a deeper level, characterises both the contexts whose actional value can be represented by means of the scheme <dur⁺, telic⁺, stative> and those sentences whose tense expresses a progressive value.

Dowty (1986), for instance, suggests that what stative and progressive sentences have in common is a semantic property (in the sense of truth-conditional semantics) which characterises both of them. Dowty does not define the actional classes in terms of properties of lexical verbs (or predicates); rather, he defines them at the sentential level by means of criteria related to the truth conditions which are associated with different kinds of sentences. The actional values expressed by lexical verbs are thus determined in a derivative way: if a verb occurs in a sentence whose truth conditions correspond to the criteria defining a certain actional class, then it must be classified accordingly. Thus, a verb has to be classified as stative if and only if it occurs in a stative sentence, that is in a sentence whose truth conditions are those assumed to be typical of sentences describing states. In this sense, two things are needed in Dowty's analysis: the formalisation of the truth conditions for stative sentences and of those for sentences in the progressive form.¹¹

(6) A sentence is stative if and only if it follows from its truth at an interval I that it is true at all subintervals of I.

(7) A sentence in the progressive form is true at I if and only if there is an interval I' properly containing I such that its non progressive form is true at I'.¹²

Dowty argues that from definitions (6) and (7) it follows, as a theorem, that all the sentences in the progressive form are stative, whatever the actional values of their lexical verbs are.¹³ In his paper Dowty also claims that, given an appropriate account of negation, from definition (6) it follows that also the negation of an atomic sentence has to be analysed as a stative sentence.

The crucial point in Dowty's argument is the so called *subinterval property*, a property which holds for a sentence if and only if it follows

¹¹ Dowty's analysis is concerned only with the progressive forms of English; however, as Dowty himself observes, his analysis can be directly extended also to the case of the French *Imparfait* and, consequently, to the Italian *Imperfetto* (in its progressive reading).

¹² Actually, this definition of the truth conditions for progressive sentences is not at all adequate since, as Dowty himself acknowledges, it leads to the imperfective paradox. However, this consequence is irrelevant for the problem discussed here.

¹³ The proof runs as follows: suppose PROG(p) is true at I, then, from (7), there is an interval I', properly containing I, such that p is true at I'. Let I'' be a subinterval of I' and, consequently, of I; since p is true at I', it follows (from (7)) that PROG(p) is true at I''. This holds for any subinterval of I, and so it follows that PROG(p) has the property which, according to (6), defines stative sentences.

from its truth at an interval I that it is also true at all subintervals (possibly instantaneous) of I. In (6) Dowty adopts this property as the criterion for stative sentences and from (7) it follows that it holds also for progressive sentences. So, we could say that progressive sentences are to be considered as stative because they are characterised by the subinterval property.

Against Dowty's conclusion it could be argued that: (i) progressive sentences are not necessarily characterised by the subinterval property and (ii) this property does not properly define the class of stative sentences (and consequently of stative verbs) for on the basis of it we would be forced to consider as stative also verbs that are not stative at all. In the same way, it could be shown that Dowty's assumption concerning the stative character of negated sentences does not properly account for some of their relevant distributional properties.¹⁴

I will now show that the subinterval property does not necessarily hold for progressive sentences. Suppose that in interval I between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. it is true that Leo is reading *Ulysses*. If the subinterval property holds for all the progressive sentences then it would follow that it is true that Leo is reading *Ulysses* at every subinterval of I. Suppose now that at 4.35 his mother asks Leo: "What are you doing?" and suppose that Leo answers: "I am reading *Ulysses*". In this situation the sentence *Leo is reading Ulysses* is true at the interval I containing the subinterval I' corresponding to the moment of his reply. However, since at I' Leo is speaking to his mother, it cannot be true that at I' Leo is reading *Ulysses*. Thus the sentence *Leo is reading Ulysses* is true at a given interval I although it could be false at a subinterval I' properly contained in it; this means that the subinterval property does not always hold for progressive sentences.

A similar objection to an analysis of progressive sentences based on the subinterval property can be found in Vlach (1981: 280). His argument goes as follows:

Someone walks into a theatre, points to an empty seat and asks: "Is someone sitting here?" The question being asked can only be whether anyone is sitting there for the evening; it is obvious that no one is sitting there at the moment. The speaker, so to speak, knows that the sentence *Someone is sitting here* is false at the moment of speaking, but does not know whether that sentence is true for the interval of that evening. The sentence can be true for the interval but not true at a moment contained in the interval.

However, Vlach's argument can be rejected by observing that, when we say that the sentence *someone is sitting here* is true at I and nevertheless could be false at a moment contained in I, we are using the phrase *be sitting here* in two different senses: in one sense this phrase is equivalent to *this seat is taken* (compatible with the fact that the seat is

actually empty at a given moment); in the other sense it is equivalent to *someone is actually sitting here* (whose truth is not compatible with the fact that nobody is sitting here at the moment). It should be clear that this kind of objection does not apply to the situation described above with respect to Leo reading *Ulysses*; in this case the verb phrase is used univocally in the sense of *actually being involved in the activity of reading a book*. The only way to counter the objection consists in the requirement that the subintervals should be pragmatically relevant. In fact, if we do not assume this principle, even in the case of sentences like *Leo was sick* for which it clearly seems to hold, the subinterval property can be shown to be false.

However, by resorting to this kind of pragmatic solution, other problems arise: from definition (6) it follows that we must consider as stative a wide class of verbs (and sentences) which do not seem to be stative at all. From an intuitive point of view, a sentence like

- (8) Leo era ammalato.
'Leo be_{Imp} sick.'

has to be interpreted as referring to a state. If we limit our attention to pragmatically relevant subintervals, then we can say that the subinterval property holds for (8); thus this sentence has to be classified as stative also according to definition (6). If it is true at I that Leo is sick, then it is also true that Leo is sick at any pragmatically relevant subinterval included in I. Accordingly, we can say that the verb phrase *being sick* is stative. However, given Dowty's analysis we would be forced to conclude that also sentence (9) is stative:

- (9) Leo dormiva profondamente.
'Leo sleep_{Imp} soundly.'

since, if (9) is true at interval I, and if we consider only pragmatically relevant subintervals of I, then it is also true that Leo was sleeping soundly at every (pragmatically relevant) subinterval of I. Thus (9) must be considered as a stative sentence and *sleep* has to be classified as a stative predicate. Nevertheless, although *being sick* is a stative predicate both from an intuitive point of view and on the basis of syntactic tests, this conclusion does not seem to hold for *sleep*, as the following examples show.

- (10) a. *Sii ammalato!
'Be sick!'
b. *Leo sta essendo ammalato.
'Leo is being sick.'

¹⁴ See, for example, the problems pointed out in Zacchi (1990).

- c. Dormi!
'Sleep!'
- d. Leo sta dormendo.
'Leo is sleeping.'

The difficulty here seems to arise from two conflicting criteria for the definition of stativity: a semantic (truth-conditional) definition which holds for sentences and a syntactic one which is based on tests applied to lexical verbs. The major problem with the semantic definition lies in the fact that, by defining Actonality at the sentential level, a verb like *dormire*, which is not stative according to the indicated syntactic tests (ungrammaticality of both the progressive and the imperative form), must nevertheless be classified as stative when it occurs in a sentence like (9), whereas it remains a simple activity verb when it occurs in the sentence *Leo dormi profondamente* 'Leo slept soundly'. If we accept this conclusion, we are no longer able to account for some systematic aspects of the lexical meaning of *dormire* which are relevant for the temporal interpretation of the sentences in which it occurs. However, the syntactic criteria for stativity are so systematic and compelling that if they make different predictions than the semantic criteria, the latter must be rejected. If we want to continue pursuing the semantic analysis of statives (as well as that of their relation to the Progressive), we must define them in a different way.

2. While critical of a criterion for statives like the one adopted by Dowty, Vlach (1981) agrees with the thesis according to which the Progressive determines a reclassification, in the sense of stativity, of the actional value of the context in which a tense form expressing the progressive value occurs. However, unlike Dowty who tries to motivate this thesis on the basis of the truth conditions for both progressive and stative sentences, Vlach justifies it by means of a test based on the possibility of using both punctual temporal adverbials and when-clauses. More specifically, he characterises stative sentences as those sentences that, when combined with a punctual adverbial or a when-clause, produce an interpretation according to which the described situation is going on at the moment referred to by the temporal adverbial (or by the when-clause), in the sense that its duration starts before that point in time and possibly continues after it. On this basis, a phrase like *essere qui* 'being here' must be classified as stative because the sentence

- 11) Lisa era qui quando Leo arrivò.
'Lisa be_{imp} here when Leo arrived.'

leads to the above indicated temporal interpretation. Vlach argues that this kind of interpretation is also required for sentences in the progressive form; we are thus lead to conclude that, according to this criterion, all progressive sentences must be analysed as stative. This means that, from the point of view of Actonality, progressive sentences are to be classified according to the scheme <dur⁺, telic⁺, stative⁺>; this, in turn, means that the Progressive could also be viewed as an actional operator whose effect is to transform the actional value of the contexts in which a tense form expressing it occurs into the stative value.

While it does not differ from Dowty's thesis with respect to the conclusion, what is novel in Vlach's approach is the fact that his analysis of stative and progressive sentences is shifted from the sentential level (the level of the truth conditions of sentences considered in isolation) to that of their textual function: the progressive and the stative sentences must be analysed in the same way because they exploit the same textual properties. Thus, the problem concerning the relation between the Progressive and stativity represents a case of the more general problem of how to account for the textual function of sentences describing states and events.

Intuitively, the distinction between states and events could be accounted for in terms of the distinction between what *happens* in time (the events) and what *holds* in time (the states). From the point of view of the textual function a sentence can play, this intuitive distinction seems to support two different interpretative principles. The sequence of two or more sentences describing events determines an interpretation that establishes on the time axis a sequential order between the described events, with each event completely preceding the successive one. On the other hand, the occurrence of a stative sentence determines an interpretation according to which the referred state overlaps the last described event, in the sense that it holds at the point (or interval) corresponding to the duration of that event. This textual distinction seems to be so substantial that one could build on it a full-blown model of temporal interpretation. This is the path taken, for example, in Kamp (1981), Kamp & Rohrer (1985), Rohrer (1986), Kamp & Reyle (1993).

It should be clear that, according to this way of looking at it, the opposition states/events does not concern only the level of actional values; on the contrary, it pertains to the general problem of the temporal interpretation of texts. From this standpoint, we should interpret as referred to states all those sentences whose intuitive temporal interpretation, given their occurrence within a text, includes that of the last mentioned event. On the other hand, we should interpret as referred to events all the sentences whose interpretation is such that the situation they describe follows in time the one described by the last sentence with the same tense.¹⁵

¹⁵ In this sense Kamp (1981) and Kamp & Rohrer (1985) state explicitly that sentences whose tense is *imparfait* (or another imperfective tense with a progressive value) refer to states whereas all

The interpretative principles described by Kamp and Rohrer seem to account correctly for a significant aspect of the temporal interpretation of texts. More specifically, they explain what the textual functions of the French *Imparfait* (Imp) and *Passé Simple* (Ps) amount to. What is controversial is their attempt to reduce this difference directly to the one between states and events. This move leads them to assume that a sentence whose tense is Imp must always be interpreted as referring to a state whereas sentences whose tense is Ps always refer to events.

In Kamp & Rohrer (1985) five principles concerning the distinction between Imp and Ps are described:

- P1: Ps drives the narrative action forward; Imp is incapable of this.
- P2: Ps conveys the idea of punctuality whereas Imp conveys the idea of temporal extendedness.
- P3: Ps describes a closed event whereas Imp describes an open state.
- P4: Ps describes an event as seen from afar whereas Imp presents a state as seen from nearby.
- P5: Ps describes an event as seen from outside whereas Imp describes a state as seen from within.

Only in P3 does the reference to the distinction state/event play a crucial role. This is because P3 concerns primarily the type of temporal entity a sentence can refer to whereas the other principles given by Kamp and Rohrer concern primarily the function Ps and Imp can play within a text.

In Castelnovo (1991) an attempt is made to account for the distinction between the Italian *Imperfetto* and *Passato Semplice* (abbreviated here as Imp and Ps, respectively) which adheres to Kamp and Rohrer's principles P1, P2, P4 and P5 while rejecting the problematic principle P3. This leads to an analysis of the system of Italian indicative tenses, based on the unified category of tense/aspect, in which the Progressive is represented in a way that allows a treatment of the textual function of the tense forms expressing this aspectual value along the lines indicated by Vlach (as well as by Kamp and Rohrer), without being forced to assume that all the contexts in which they occur must be analysed as stative from the point of view of Actionality.

the other sentences refer to events, irrespective of the actional value of their verbs. Note, however, that in Kamp & Rohrer (1985) it is explicitly stated that their distinction state/event, which in their theory is strictly related to the progressive/non-progressive distinction, must be understood simply in terms of the opposition between what is described as closed (events) and what is described as, in a sense, open (states). It seems, therefore, that their distinction concerns *how* something has been described rather than different types of eventualities (in the sense of Bach (1986)). From this point of view, their distinction should be referred to what has been indicated above as the theory of Aspect and not to the theory of Actionality. Nevertheless, in the more formalised versions of their theory (Kamp (1981) and Rohrer (1986)), they treat states and events as different entities that a sentence can denote according to its progressive/non progressive value. Thus, despite what they say in their (1985) paper, their distinction state/events ends up as a distinction between different (temporal) entities that a sentence can denote - a typical problem in the theory of Actionality.

The model proposed in Castelnovo (1991) (which is adopted here in a slightly revised form) is characterised by two related elements, both concerning the interpretation of the Reichenbachian concept of reference time: (i) the *perspective* interpretation of this concept argued for in Kamp & Rohrer (1983, 1985) and Rohrer (1986), where it is analysed in terms of the idea of *Temporal Perspective point* (TPpt); and (ii) its aspectual interpretation argued for in Bertinetto (1982, 1986). The basic idea of the model is to integrate the representation of the perspective values of the tenses (in Kamp and Rohrer's sense) and that of their aspectual values. This result is achieved by means of the introduction of the concept of *Perspective Point* (PP) which differs from Kamp and Rohrer's TPpt in that the former also allows an aspectual interpretation whereas the latter is characterised as a purely temporal parameter.

By intuitively interpreting PP as the representation of the temporal point of view from which a given situation is described, the aspectual values systematically associated with Italian indicative tenses can be represented in terms of the different perspective points presupposed in their use. For example, we can distinguish tenses whose use presupposes a description of the situation as seen from within from tenses whose use presupposes instead its description as seen from the outside; following Kamp & Rohrer (1983, 1985) this distinction can be related to the aspectual opposition perfective/imperfective. Thus, if E indicates the described situation and # stands for the relation of temporal inclusion, we can characterise imperfective tenses by means of a simple condition like "PP#E", meaning that the perspective point presupposed by the use of these tenses is located inside the interval corresponding to the temporal duration of the described situation. Accordingly, perfective tenses could be characterised as those tenses which presuppose a perspective point located outside E.

Among the perfective tenses there are those (typically compound tenses) allowing an interpretation in the aspectual sense of perfect. How can we distinguish these from the other perfective tenses? There is a widely accepted analysis of the perfect, based on the compatibility of these tenses with certain classes of temporal adverbials, according to which the function of the tenses expressing this aspectual value is to locate in time not the described situation (E) but the state resulting from it (what in Kamp & Rohrer (1985) is referred to as *perfective state*). Given this analysis of the perfect, we cannot represent this aspectual value simply in terms of the temporal relation between E and PP since the perfect does not describe any relation of this type. To represent the distinction between tenses that allow a perfect interpretation and those that do not, we have to resort to a specific binary feature PERF (which is essentially the same as the one Kamp & Rohrer (1985) and Rohrer (1986) resort to). The feature value PERF+ is associated with the tenses

which express the perfect aspect and the feature value PERF⁻ with all the others.

The abstract values of Italian indicative tenses are represented by associating with each tense a scheme in which three kinds of information are coded: (i) the relation between PP and E; (ii) the relation between PP and the GPT (which stands for *G(iven) P(rimary) T(ime)*);¹⁶ and (iii) the value PERF^{+/-}. The schemes referred to in what follows are:

- (12) Presente (Pre): < PP#E, PERF⁻, PP=GPT >
- Imperfetto (Imp): < PP#E, PERF⁻, PP<GPT >
- Passato Semplice (Ps): < E<PP, PERF⁻, PP=GPT >
- Futuro Semplice (Fs): < PP<E, PERF⁻, PP=GPT >¹⁷
- Passato Prossimo (Pps): < E<PP, PERF⁺, PP=GPT >
- Trapassato prossimo (Tps): < E<PP, PERF⁺, PP<GPT >
- Futuro anteriore (Fan): < E<PP, PERF⁺, GPT<PP >

Given the preceding observations, it should be clear in what sense the analysis integrates in a single representation both the temporal and informational values of the tenses considered in (12). On the basis of the information coded in the schemes, the following aspectual generalisations could be proposed:

- (13) progressive: PERF⁻, PP#E;
- perfect: PERF⁺, E<PP.
- other perfective readings: PERF⁻, PP<E/E<PP.

From the standpoint of the problem we are interested in here, what is particularly relevant in the analysis of the Italian tenses outlined in (12) is the fact that it is possible to account for the textual function of the imperfective tenses (in their progressive reading) without being forced to assume that they always refer to states. The analysis of the imperfective tenses amounts to a representation in which the temporal perspective point that the use of these tenses presupposes is located inside E, regardless of whether the sentences in which they occur

¹⁶ The concept of GPT is introduced in Lo Cascio (1982) as a generalisation of the more traditional concept of "moment of utterance". In the schemes used here Lo Cascio is followed since we want to be able to analyse also the temporal structure of written texts for which it makes little sense to speak of "moment of utterance".

¹⁷ Note that, unlike Ps, which is interpretable only as a perfective tense, Fs allows also an imperfective reading. In particular, Fs can be used to express a future progressive, as in the following example:

Domani alle cinque Leo correrà (starà correndo) nel parco.
'Tomorrow at five o'clock Leo runFs (will be running) in the park.'

This reading of Fs could be roughly represented by the scheme <PP#E, PERF⁻, GPT<PP>.

describe states or events. This move allows us to combine an analysis of the opposition Imp/Ps based on principles like Kamp and Rohrer's P1, P2, P4, P5 and a treatment of the actional properties of sentences as compositionally determined on the basis of the actional values of their lexical verbs. In my view, a rule requiring that Imp (and Pre) transforms a non-stative sentence into a stative one does not belong to the Calculus of Actionality referred to above. Obviously, this does not mean that there are no relevant interactions between the Progressive and actional values; all that is being suggested here is that these interactions do not amount to the reclassification of the latter in the sense of stativity.

The schemes in (12) describe, at an abstract level, the temporal/aspectual properties of Italian indicative tenses, without considering what the functions they can play in texts are. Those schemes give us the information that, for example, by using Imp the focalization of a perspective point included in E is presupposed. In the same way, they tell us that the use of Tps presupposes the reference to a point that lies in the past of the GPT and with respect to which E is, in turn, in the past. However, excluding the tenses for which the PP coincides with the GPT, in (12) there is nothing that can give us information about which are the relevant perspective points and where they are located on the time axis. Such information, which is relevant for attaining a complete interpretation of sentences and texts, can be obtained only by *anchoring* our abstract schemes in a text or a discourse context. It is precisely by anchoring the relevant parameters (PP and E) to temporal reference points,¹⁸ explicitly introduced in the text or contextually presupposed, that we can achieve an adequate temporal interpretation for texts and discourses.

These temporal reference points correspond to the interpretation of certain kinds of temporal constructions (more specifically, certain temporal adverbials and temporal subordinate clauses) or to the temporal location of situations previously described in the text or in the discourse. In this sense, the problem of the temporal anchoring cannot be solved without considering the role that elements other than tenses play in the process of temporal interpretation. However, although this is a crucial problem for every model of temporal interpretation, it is only superficially related to the topic being discussed here; thus we limit ourselves to assuming an interpretative principle according to which, in the case of tenses whose use presupposes a perspective point different from the GPT, the PP can be anchored to a reference point textually (or contextually) fixed as salient¹⁹ whereas the relation between the PP and E is determined on the basis of the information explicitly coded in (12).

¹⁸ Here the terminology could be quite misleading: when I speak intuitively of reference point I simply intend to refer to a position (a point or an interval) on the time axis which is focalized, so to speak, by being the denotation of a given temporal adverbial or by corresponding to the temporal location of a situation described by a preceding sentence.

¹⁹ Of course, the problem is to specify what *salient* means in this connection and to determine, in a given context, which is the most salient reference point.

By assuming this general interpretative principle, it follows from the condition "PP#E" that the interpretation of a sentence whose tense is Imp (in its progressive reading) is such that the described situation temporally includes the point to which PP has been anchored. From this point of view, our analysis of Imp can properly account for the textual role Kamp and Rohrer associated with sentences in which this tense occurs.

To see how this happens, let us consider the following simple text consisting of two sentences:

(14) a. Lisa entrò nella stanza.

'Lisa entered the room.'

b. Leo leggeva il giornale.

'Leo read_{Imp} (was reading) the newspaper.'

In our analysis, (14a) is interpreted such that $E_{(a)}$ precedes the GPT (to which the temporal perspective point is anchored, as required by the condition "PP=GPT" which characterises Ps, as well as the other so called "deictic" tenses). The tense of (14b) is Imp, that is a tense we associated with the scheme <PP#E, PERF-, PP<GPT>. To interpret (14b) we need to anchor the PP to a reference point which precedes the GPT. Such a point can be identified with $E_{(a)}$ (which, in the context we are considering, is the only possible reference point preceding the GPT); we can thus state the condition "PP₂= $E_{(a)}$ ". Then, from the condition "PP₂#E_(b)", which is an instantiation of the condition "PP#E" characterising Imp, it follows that the condition " $E_{(a)}\#E_{(b)}$ " holds, which is what we would expect on the basis of the intuitive interpretation of (14). This kind of analysis can be applied also to sentences like:

(15) Lisa dormiva (a) quando Leo arrivò (b).

'Lisa sleep_{Imp} when Leo arrived.'

(16) Ieri alle cinque Leo correva nel parco.

'Yesterday at five o'clock Leo run_{Imp} in the park.'

In the case of (15) the PP presupposed by the use of Imp in the matrix clause is anchored to the interpretation of the subordinate clause (whereas the PP presupposed by the use of Ps in the sentence (b) is anchored to the GPT), thus determining an interpretation such that the condition " $E_{(b)}\#E_{(a)}$ " holds. Intuitively, this means that the situation described in the matrix clause (which amounts to Lisa being involved in the "activity" of sleeping) was going on at the moment of Leo's arrival.

In the interpretation of (16) the PP presupposed by the use of Imp is, in contrast, anchored to the point referred to by the temporal adverbial. Thus we obtain an interpretation such that the described situation (which

amounts to Leo's being involved in the activity of running in the park) was going on at the moment referred to by the adverbial.

Given the analysis of Imp (in its progressive reading) coded in (12), we can account for the intended temporal interpretation of (14), (15) and (16) without being forced to assume that sentences whose tense is Imp always describe states. Actually, given the way the aspectual value of the progressive has been represented in (13), what the analysis of (14), (15) and (16) amounts to is simply the claim that they describe some activities (reading the newspaper, sleeping, running in the park) which are seen as going on at a certain point assumed as relevant (the PP).

Vlach's argument in support of the thesis that all progressive sentences are statives (or denote states) is based on the observation that stative and progressive sentences share the same textual behaviour: both describe something which is going on at a relevant moment. However, given a treatment of the Progressive such as the one implemented in the schemes in (12), the textual function of progressive sentences (sentences in which a tense form occurs which expresses a progressive value) can be accounted for in a way which is completely independent from the consideration of the actional value they express. This does not prove, of course, that progressive sentences must not be analysed as statives; nevertheless it shows, at least, that besides Dowty's argument supporting this thesis, also Vlach's argument (as well as other similar arguments) is not at all cogent, since the supposed shared textual behaviour of stative and progressive sentences can (and actually does) depend on completely different properties of the actional value of stativity and the aspectual value of the progressive.

From this point of view, after the analysis of some popular arguments in favour of a view of the Progressive as an operator which invariably changes the actional value expressed by the context in which it occurs into the stative value, what we are left with is simply a general perceived analogy between progressive and stative sentences. This analogy could perhaps be strengthened by observing that truly stative predicates (classified as such on the basis of syntactic tests) cannot occur in sentences whose tense is given a progressive interpretation. However, it seems that also this intuitive observation deserves much more attention.

First, not all stative predicates cannot occur in progressive sentences; secondly, as we have already observed, in Italian there are two ways of expressing the Progressive (the progressive form and the progressive reading of imperfective tenses) and they behave quite differently towards the possibility of being combined with stative predicates.

It seems undoubtedly true that predicates referring to permanent states (such as *being born in Italy*, *being clever*, etc.) are not compatible with tenses expressing a progressive value; nevertheless, as examples (5a-b) show, some stative predicates (particularly those referring to non-

permanent states) can occur in a sentence whose tense is Imp, in its progressive reading.

- (5) a. L'ultima volta che lo vidi Leo si sentiva triste, ma conosceva Lisa e sapeva che lei non lo avrebbe mai lasciato solo.
'The last time I saw him Leo feel_{Imp} sad but he know_{Imp} Lisa and know_{Imp} that she would never leave him.'
- b. *L'ultima volta che lo vidi Leo stava sentendosi triste ma stava conoscendo Lisa e sapeva che lei non lo avrebbe mai lasciato solo.
'The last time I saw him Leo feel_{Prog} sad but he know_{Prog} Lisa and know_{Imp} that she would never leave him.'

In discussing these examples we observed that, in spite of its not being rephrasable as (5b), (5a) can nevertheless be interpreted with Imp in its progressive reading, although *sentirsi triste* and *conoscere Lisa* are clearly stative predicates. What does this mean for the analysis of the Progressive? The first conclusion to be drawn is that it is not completely appropriate to say that the progressive reading available for imperfective tenses is always rephrasable by means of a suitable progressive form. Rather, witness (5a-b), it seems that the progressive reading of Imp and the past progressive form show a quite different distribution with respect to the actional value of stative. This means that the two ways in which the tense system of Italian can express the progressive value are not interchangeable in all contexts. In fact, it seems that the actional value of the predicate (for example, permanent/non permanent stative) can determine what the correct form to use in a context is. We can thus conclude that the progressive value, represented by the schemes <PP#E, PERF, PP=GPT> (for the present progressive), <PP#E, PERF, PP<GPT> (for the past progressive) and <PP#E, PERF, GPT<PP> (for the future progressive) is expressed either by a morphological tense form (Pre, Imp, Fs, respectively) or by an appropriate progressive form (*sta/stava/starà + gerundio*) depending, among other things, on the actional values expressed by the predicates.

3. The discussion in the preceding section leads to the conclusion that the interaction between the Progressive and actional values cannot be explained simply in terms of the reclassification, in the sense of stativity, of the actional value expressed by the predicates (or contexts). Thus, we are left with two possibilities: the supposed interaction involves either the value "dur^{+/-}" or the "telic^{+/-}" value.

Let us consider the first possibility. The way the Progressive has been represented here strongly suggests that this aspectual value shares a particular relation with the actional value "dur⁺"; this claim seems to be confirmed by the fact that, when it occurs in a durative context, the most

likely aspectual reading of Imp is the progressive one. However, this does not mean that the occurrence in a non-durative context of a tense form expressing the progressive value can impose a reclassification of it as durative.

The value "dur⁺" is typically associated with two classes of contexts: those in which a verb phrase referring to instantaneous events (<dur, telic, stative>) occurs and those in which an achievement verb phrase (<dur, telic, stative>) occurs. In what follows I will limit my attention to the first type of non-durative contexts since, from the point of view of the problem we are interested in, there are no significant differences from the case of achievement contexts.

Consider the following examples:

- (17) a. Ieri alle due l'aereo si schiantava al suolo
'Yesterday at two o'clock the plane crash_{Imp} to the ground'
- b. *da pochi minuti.
'for a few minutes.'
- c. *quando il pilota riuscì a riprendere quota.
'when the pilot succeeded in regaining height.'
- (18) a. Ieri alle due l'aereo si stava schiantando al suolo
'Yesterday at two o'clock the plane was crashing to the ground'
- b. *da pochi minuti.
'for a few minutes.'
- c. quando il pilota riuscì a riprendere quota.
'when the pilot succeeded in regaining height.'
- (19) a. Quando la polizia fece irruzione, il malvivente premeva il grilletto
'When the police broke into the room, the criminal pull_{Imp} the trigger'
- b. *da una frazione di secondo.
'for a split second.'
- c. *ma fu colpito prima di riuscire a sparare.
'but he was shot before he could fire.'
- (20) a. Quando la polizia fece irruzione, il malvivente stava premendo il grilletto
'When the police broke into the room, the criminal was pulling the trigger.'
- b. *da una frazione di secondo.
'for a split second.'

- c. ma fu colpito prima di riuscire a sparare.
'but he was shot before he could fire.'

None of the examples (17)-(20) is likely to be interpreted as referring to a durative situation, as the ungrammaticality of the continuation of the sentences (a) with the sentences (b) clearly shows. If the occurrence of Imp, as well as that of the progressive form, in a non-durative context can change the value "dur" into "dur+", then the co-occurrence of a durative adverbial of the type *da X tempo* would result in a grammatical sentence. The occurrence in a context of tense forms (usually) expressing the progressive value does not interfere with its durative/non-durative actional character. On the contrary, it seems that the opposite holds: the actional value of the context can determine which among the possible aspectual readings of the tense form occurring in it is the relevant one.²⁰

From the point of view of Actionality, both (17a) and the matrix clause of (19a) can be characterised as "dur". The occurrences of Imp in these contexts cannot be interpreted in the progressive sense; rather, they are to be interpreted in the sense of *imperfetto narrativo*. What is typical of the progressive reading of Imp is the description of the reported situation as going on at the PP, implying that it started before the PP whereas its conclusion after the PP is completely indeterminate. As we have already observed, the first presupposition is not confirmed when Imp occurs in a non-durative context. Moreover, it seems also that these contexts cannot be considered as indeterminate with respect to the conclusion of the described situation after the PP, as the impossibility of continuing (17a) and (19a) with (17c) and (19c), respectively, clearly shows.

Unlike what happens with Imp, the occurrence in a non-durative context of a progressive form maintains the indeterminacy with respect to the conclusion of the described situation after the PP; a text starting with (18a) or (20a) can continue with (18c) or (20c), respectively. However, as usually happens in non-durative contexts, the occurrences of the progressive form in (18a) and (20a) seem to require an intuitive interpretation which is different from the one considered so far. In fact, in non-durative contexts the progressive form is given an interpretation in the sense of the imminent future;²¹ in this interpretation, which

²⁰ Note that there are cases in which it is nevertheless possible to impose a durative reading on non-durative contexts; see for example the following sentence:

- (i) La rivendicazione arrivò alla polizia proprio mentre la bomba scoppiava/stava scoppiando.
'The claim arrived to the police just as the bomb exploded/Imp/ was exploding.'

In this case, however, the durative reading is imposed by the durative conjunction *mentre* rather than by the occurrence of Imp or the progressive form.

²¹ The fact that the progressive form is given an interpretation in the sense of the imminent future in non-durative contexts does not, by itself, represent a problem. On the contrary, this phenomenon makes the point I wanted to stress particularly evident: the occurrence in a non-durative

cannot be represented by means of a condition like "PP#E", (18c) and (20c) can be rephrased as

- (21) Ieri alle due l'aereo stava per schiantarsi al suolo quando il pilota riuscì a riprendere quota.
'Yesterday at two o'clock the plane was going to crash to the ground when the pilot succeeded in regaining height.'

- (22) Quando la polizia fece irruzione, il malvivente stava per premere il grilletto ma fu colpito prima di riuscire a sparare.
'When the police broke into the room, the criminal was going to pull the trigger but he was shot before he could fire.'

Sentences (17)-(20) show that in non-durative contexts neither Imp nor the progressive form can be given a truly progressive interpretation. This conclusion is confirmed also by the fact that, witness (23) and (24), in these contexts neither Imp nor the progressive form can exploit the textual role typical of the contexts in which they are given a progressive reading. In both cases the sentences (b) cannot be interpreted as describing a situation that was going on when the event described by the sentences (a) took place.

- (23) a. Leo lanciò un grido.
'Leo shouted.'

- b. L'auto urtava il muro.
'The car hit_{Imp} the wall.'

- (24) a. Leo lanciò un grido.
'Leo shouted.'

- b. L'auto stava urtando il muro.
'The car was hitting the wall.'

The discussion of the examples above clearly shows that the progressive value does not interfere with the actional distinction durative/non-durative; in other words, the Progressive cannot be thought of as an operator which, when applied to a context which is characterised by the value "dur+", changes that value into "dur". From the point of view of the problem examined here, we are thus left with just one open possibility to consider: if there is any semantically

context of a tense form which usually expresses a progressive value cannot impose a reclassification of the context as durative. Rather, it is the actional value of the context which can determine what the relevant aspectual interpretation of the tense form occurring in it is.

relevant interaction between the Progressive and actional values, it can involve only the value "telic+/-".

In the actional classification referred to in (5) there are two classes of predicates (contexts) with the value "telic+": accomplishment (<dur^t, telic⁺, stative>) and achievement (<dur^t, telic⁺, stative>). We need, then, to consider what happens when a tense form with a progressive reading occurs in a context whose actional value is "telic+". This is a well known problem, often discussed in the literature on Tense and Aspect in connection with the so called *imperfective paradox*. Let us consider the following sentences:

- (25) a. Ieri alle cinque Leo correva/stava correndo nel parco.
'Yesterday at five o'clock Leo run_{imp}/was running in the park.'
- b. Ieri Leo ha corso nel parco.
'Yesterday Leo ran in the park.'
- (26) a. Ieri alle cinque Leo correva/stava correndo la maratona di New York.
'Yesterday at five o'clock Leo run_{imp}/was running the New York marathon.'
- b. Ieri Leo ha corso la maratona di New York.
'Yesterday Leo ran the New York marathon.'

(25a) says that yesterday at five o'clock Leo was engaged in an activity we can describe as *running in the park*; the adverbial introduces a temporal reference point to which we can anchor the perspective point presupposed in the description of the activity. If it is true that yesterday at five o'clock Leo was running in the park then it is also true that yesterday Leo ran in the park. Thus, from the truth of (25a) we can conclude that (25b) is also true. On the other hand, (26a) says that yesterday at five o'clock Leo was engaged in an activity we can describe as *running the New York marathon*. However, from the truth of (26a) it does not follow that (26b) is also true, since (26a) is true even if Leo retired from the marathon a few minutes after five o'clock whereas (26b) can be true only if Leo concluded the race. In both (25a) and (26a) the tense is *imp* (in its progressive reading); the difference lies in the actional values expressed by the predicates.

Run could be associated with the scheme <dur^t, telic⁺, stative>; in (25a) there are no contextual transformations of the basic value of the verb, so we can associate the same scheme with the sentence itself. This means that (25a) describes a simple activity. In (26a) the verb *run* is combined with the noun phrase *the New York marathon* to obtain the verb phrase *run the New York marathon*; this verb phrase does not refer to a simple activity; rather, it refers to an activity aiming at a specific goal. This means that with sentence (26a) we must associate the scheme

<dur^t, telic⁺, stative> typical of accomplishment contexts. The different patterns of implication licensed by (25a) and (26a) could be explained only on the basis of their different actional properties. From this point of view, to avoid the imperfective paradox we need an adequate account of both the Progressive and the property represented by the value "telic+".

We already know how to represent the Progressive in terms of the condition "PP#E". How to represent the value "telic+" is a much more complex problem, in that it seems to involve also the consideration of the internal structure of the described situations. In a sense, running in the park and running the New York marathon are both activities; they differ from states in that they *happen* in time whereas states *hold* in time. Unlike instantaneous events and achievements, they both presuppose a (non instantaneous) duration; their duration could be represented by means of an interval with a starting point, a development and a conclusion; simple activities and accomplishments differ in what this conclusion amounts to.

The end point of an interval corresponding to a running-the-marathon event is not a simple conclusion; rather it is a *culmination point*, that is a point in which the telic activity of running the marathon reaches its natural conclusion. It is only after this point that it can be true that someone has run the marathon. A simple activity, like running in the park, has a certain duration and also an obvious conclusion. However, if someone stops running in the park at *t*, at a later *t'* it is certainly true that he ran in the park but this is also true at any *t''* between the beginning of the event and *t* itself. In this sense activities lack a culmination point. Actually, only accomplishments and achievements presuppose this kind of culmination: this presupposition is determined by their telic character.²²

As is well known, the fact that (26b) can be false despite the truth of (26a) can mean only one thing: *Imp* neutralises the telic value of accomplishment and achievement contexts. All we know from (26a) is that yesterday at five o'clock the telic activity *running the New York marathon* was developing toward its natural conclusion; however, (26a) does not say whether that activity actually reached its culmination point. In other words, from (26a) we cannot infer that Leo finished the race.

The Progressive (in this case *Imp* in its progressive reading) presupposes that the PP is located inside E so that, from the standpoint of the PP, there is nothing we can say about the conclusion of the described situation after it. This explains why (25b) follows from (25a) while the same is not true in the case of (26b) and (26a). The truth of (26b) presupposes that the described event reached its culmination

²² Achievements are non durative (dur^t): in this case the beginning, the development and the culmination point all collapse into an instantaneous interval, that is an interval for which the starting point and the end point (culmination point) tend to coincide.

point, but this is a fact of which we cannot be certain simply on the basis of the truth of (26a).

This is only a brief outline of what an appropriate account of the imperfective paradox should amount to. However, it suffices to show how the tense forms expressing a progressive value can interfere with the value "telic⁺" typical of certain classes of contexts. From this point of view, the Progressive (the tense forms expressing this aspectual value) can actually be considered as an operator that, when applied to contexts whose actional value is characterised as "telic⁺", changes this value into "telic⁻" (that is, the Progressive neutralises "telicity").

Having considered the possible interactions between the tense forms expressing the aspectual value of the progressive and the actional values "dur^{+/-}", "telic^{+/-}", "stative^{+/-}" in Italian,²³ we can conclude that there is only one case in which the occurrence of one of these tense forms can change the actional value of the context: that of telic contexts (accomplishments and achievements), as is well known from discussions on the imperfective paradox. In the formulation of a full blown *Calculus of Actionality* this means that, among all the possible interactions between the Progressive and actional values discussed here, the only one we need to consider is that between the Progressive and telicity.

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²³ This does not imply that the conclusions do not hold for other languages as well. However, in this paper I have not been concerned with cross-linguistical generalisations and, furthermore, examples from other languages have not been considered. This is the only reason for introducing this restriction.

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