Telicity and atelicity in European Portuguese: the case of verbs of inherently directed motion and prepositions

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0. Introduction

Main goals:
1. To describe the interpretations that can arise from the combination of verbs of movement ir and vir and prepositional phrases headed by para (‘to/towards’) and até (‘to’) when denoting events of movement.
2. To highlight some aspectual characteristics of these constructions.
3. To put forward a hypothesis of explanation of the data grounded on a ‘scale semantics’.

This paper is based upon work supported by Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

1. The data

1.1. General description

1.1.1. Verb IR

(i) There are contexts where prepositions para and até cannot replace each other – in these cases, the events denoted are not events of movement.

(1) a pena pode ir até 15 dias de prisão. (* ir para (go to))
The penalty may go up to 15 days in prison.

(2) José Sá tinha acordo para ir para outro clube. (* ir até (go to))
José Sá had an agreement to go to another club.

(ii) There are contexts where prepositions para and até can replace each other (although with a slightly different meaning) – in these cases, the events denoted are events of movement.

(3) agora posso ir para o ginásio (# ir até)
now I can go to the gymnasium (go to)

1.1.2. Verb VIR

(i) Only the preposition para can occur in predications that do not denote events of movement.

(4) essa receita tem que vir para o orçamento de estado.
This income must come to the state budget.

(cf. * essa receita tem que vir até ao orçamento de estado.)
This income must come to the state budget

(ii) There are contexts where prepositions para and até can replace each other (although with slightly different meaning) – in these cases, the events denoted are events of movement.

(5) muitas vezes os familiares não podem vir para Portugal.
Many times relatives can not come to Portugal

(cf. vir até Portugal - come to Portugal)

1.2. Verb SUB

(iii) There are contexts where prepositions para and até can replace each other (although with slightly different meaning) – in these cases, the events denoted are events of movement.

(6) muitas vezes os familiares não podem vir para Portugal.
Many times relatives can not come to Portugal

(cf. vir até Portugal - come to Portugal)
1. The data
1.1. General description

If both prepositions can occur, the predications are interpreted as events of movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(Ir para/vir para) o ginásio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>{to go to/to come to} the gymnasium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(Ir até a/vir até a) o ginásio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>{to go to/to come to} the gymnasium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: what are the semantic differences between (6) and (7)?

1.2.1. Events of movement: some syntactic issues

(i) When PP’s headed by para and até combine with these verbs, they are complements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>* O João {foi/veio} para casa e a Maria fez o mesmo para a escola. (fazer o mesmo = {ir/vir})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* João {went/came} home and Maria did the same to school. (do the same = {come/go})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>* O que é que o João fez até a casa? {Foi/veio}.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* What did João do (up) to home? {come/go}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Due to their deictic component, these verbs can occur, in some contexts, without any complement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(10)</th>
<th>O rapaz {* foi / veio}.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* The boy {* went / came}.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(11)</th>
<th>O rapaz já {foi / veio}.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* The boy has already gone / The boy has already come</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.2. Events of movement: some semantic issues

(i) Different readings are triggered:

a. With para, there is a reading that the entry that undergoes movement remains longer in destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(12a)</th>
<th>Vou {para / até a} o café.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going to the café.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(12b)</th>
<th>Vou até a o café e volto já.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going to the café and I’ll be back soon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. When world knowledge determines that the stay in destination is brief or temporary, only até occurs (even with events of movement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(13)</th>
<th>Antes de ir para Bruxelas e integrar a comissão europeia…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* (Ir até Bruxelas) Before going to Brussels and joining the European Commission…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.2. Events of movement: some semantic issues

(ii) Different readings are triggered:

b. When world knowledge determines that the stay in destination is brief or temporary, only até occurs (even with events of movement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(14)</th>
<th>No sábado o Sporting vai até Paços de Ferreira (* ir para Paços de Ferreira)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Saturday Sporting goes to Paços de Ferreira (goes to Paços de Ferreira)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The data
1.2.2. Events of movement: some semantic issues

(iii) When for x time adverbial occurs:

 PP até: the temporal adverb measures a consequent state (an interval after the event);

(18a) O rapaz foi até à faculdade durante 5 m. (= esteve na fac. 5 m)
The boy went to college for 5 m. (= he stayed in college 5 minutes)

(18b) O rapaz veio até à faculdade durante 5 m. (= esteve na fac. 5 m)
The boy came to college for 5 m. (= he stayed in college 5 minutes)

 PP para - 2 possible readings: the temporal adverb measures:

- the consequent state
- the process phase of the event

(19a) O rapaz foi para a fac. durante 5 m. (= esteve a ir para a fac. durante 5 m /# esteve na fac. 5 m)
The boy went towards/to college for 5 m. (= he was going towards college for 5 m/ he stayed in college 5 m)

(19b) O rapaz veio para a fac durante 5 m. (= esteve a vir para a fac durante 5 m/# esteve na fac. 5m)
The boy came towards/to college for 5 m. (= he was coming towards college for 5 m/ he stayed in college 5 m)

N.B. The readings in (18) and the second readings of (19) are similar to those we can find in examples like (20) with achievements.

(20) O rapaz {desmaiou/adormeceu} durante 5 m.
The boy {fainted/ fell asleep} for 5 m.

(iv) When the PP has a purely directional interpretation, ir/vir combine with para, but not with até.

(21a) vai tudo para {a direita / oeste}
Everything goes towards {the right / the west}

(22a) vem tudo para {a direita / oeste}
Everything comes towards {the right / the west}

(21b) * / # vai tudo até {à direita / oeste}
Everything goes to {the right / the west}

(22b) * / # vem tudo até {à direita / oeste}
Everything comes to {the right / the west}
1. The data
1.2.2. Events of movement: some semantic issues

Only para can occur with the Progressive; até gives rise to almost ungrammatical examples with a single event reading.

(23a) Ele está a ir para a faculdade.  
He’s going towards college.
(24a) Ele está a vir para a faculdade.  
He’s coming towards college.

(23b) ???/* Ele está a ir até à faculdade.  
He’s going to college.
(24b) ???/* Ele está a vir até à faculdade.  
He’s coming to college.

With frequency adverbials, all examples are grammatical; cf. (25).

(25) Ele está a {ir/vir} até à faculdade todas as manhãs.
He’s {going / coming} to college every morning.

1. The data
1.2.2. Events of movement: some semantic issues

The combination with the aspectual operator “parar de” (to stop V-ing) produces unacceptable or even ungrammatical results, with a single event reading.

(26a) ???/* Ele parou de ir para a faculdade.
(27a) ???/* Ele parou de vir para a faculdade.

He stopped going to college.
He stopped coming to college.

(26b) ???/* Ele parou de ir até à faculdade.
(27b) ???/* Ele parou de vir até à faculdade.

He stopped going to college.
He stopped coming to college.

With frequency adverbials, all examples are grammatical; cf. (28).

(28) Ele parou de {ir/vir} até à faculdade todas as manhãs.
He stopped {going/coming} to college every morning.

1. The data
1.2.2. Events of movement: some semantic issues

Entailment

The occurrence with Pretérito Perfeito (Past) and in x time adverb entails the truth of the Progressive during the same time. (identification of accomplishments)

(16b) O rapaz veio até à faculdade em 5 m.
The boy came to college in 5 m.
→ O rapaz esteve a vir até à faculdade durante esse 5 m.
The boy was coming to college during those 5 m.

1. The data
1.2.2. Events of movement: some semantic issues

Different possibilities of non-culminating readings.

(29) O rapaz veio para a faculdade, mas, a meio do caminho, teve de voltar para trás.
The boy came towards college, but halfway he had to go back.

The boy came towards college, but halfway he had to go back.

1. The data
1.3. Events of movement: summarizing the problems

Syntactic criteria point to the same status of PPs headed by para and até, when combined with verbs ir/vir.

→ they behave as complements of the verbs, but…

Semantic criteria point to different aspectual contribution.
1. The data
1.3. Events of movement: summarizing the problems

- Semantic criteria point to different aspectual contribution:
  1. *para* is associated to a longer stay than *até*: cf. (i)
  2. only *para* can occur with a more directional interpretation; cf. (iv)
  3. only *para* can occur with Progressive; cf. (v)
  4. only *para* gives rise to non-culminating readings; cf. (viii)

Furthermore, tests usually used to diagnose aspectual properties of predications give rise to contradictory results:

- with *in x time* adverbials: durative and telic (cf. (ii))
- with *for x time* adverbials (cf. (iii)):
  - with *para*: durative and telic or non durative and telic
  - with *até*: non durative and telic; cf. (iii)
- with “parar de”: non durative (cf. (vi))
- entailment (cf. (vii)):
  - with *para*: durative and telic
  - with *até*: non durative and telic

Summing up:

Predications with *para*:
- denote events that have a terminal point, but...
  - the terminal point can easily be omitted;
  - when the terminal point is achieved, a reading of long-lasting stay in destination arises.

Predications with *até*:
- denote events that have a terminal point, and...
  - the terminal point cannot be omitted;
  - when the terminal point is achieved, a reading of non permanent stay in destination arises.

2. Possible explanation

Inherently directed motion verbs *ir* or *vir* denote path scales (cf. Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2010, for English verbs; Kennedy and Levin, 2007).

Problem: fully specified scales or underspecified scales?

Typically path scales are partially specified in inherently directed motion verbs (only a few verbs, such as “rise” and “descend”, lexicalize all components of a path scale; cf. Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2010; Fleischhauer & Gameschlag, 2014).

A scale has the following parameters (cf., e.g., Kennedy & McNally, 2005):

- A measurement dimension: indicates the kind of measurement and the way degrees are interpreted (e.g. dimension of TEMPERATURE, WEIGHT)
- A set of degrees: e.g. temperature values, weight values;
- An ordering relation: makes explicit the linear order of the degrees.

Is the information brought about by prepositions different or is it the same information?

The data indicate that information is different

Different contribution of prepositions to the aspectual construction of predications with *ir* and *vir* (cf. Lead & O’Gren, 2010).
2. Possible explanation

Para only determines the ordering relation in the scale projected by the verb (to advance on a given point defined by PP with para).

The preposition para defines the ordering relation by defining an arbitrary degree (an arbitrary location) in the path scale and there is an individual x participating in an event e that is approaching that arbitrary degree in the course of e.

2. Possible explanation

Para's with para:

- Their default interpretation is the atelic interpretation, since para does not define a maximal degree (but only an arbitrary degree) and therefore the scale projected by the verb is an open scale.
- There is only a change of location (of degree) of individual x in the course of the event, but in the end of the event, x cannot achieve the maximal degree as this degree does not exist.

(31a) O rapaz foi para a fac.
The boy went towards college.

(31b) O rapaz veio para a fac.
The boy came towards college.

2. Possible explanation

Para's with até:

- The default interpretation is the telic one, since até defines a maximal degree and makes the scale associated to the verb contextually closed.
- This means that there is an individual x participating in an event e and, at the end of e, x is located in the maximal degree of the scale (the maximal location).
- Therefore, there is no subpart of e where x exhibits the maximal degree and the event is telic.

(32a) O rapaz foi até à fac.
The boy went to college.

(32b) O rapaz veio até a fac.
The boy came to college.

2. Possible explanation

In all the above cases, verbs ir/vir are interpreted as durative verbs, which means that they are associated to multi-point scales.

But...

- when for a time adverbial occurs, we can have the reading of measurement of the consequent state.

(18a) # O rapaz foi até à faculdade durante 5 m. (= esteve na fac. 5 m)
The boy went to college for 5 m. (= he stayed in college 5 minutes)

(18b) # O rapaz veio até à faculdade durante 5 m. (= esteve na fac. 5 m)
The boy came to college for 5 m. (= he stayed in college 5 minutes)

(19a) ok /#O rapaz foi para a fac. durante 5 m. (= esteve a ir para a fac. durante 5 m /esteve na fac. 5 m)
The boy went towards/to college for 5 m. (= he was going towards col. for 5 m/ he stayed in col. 5 m)

(19b) ok /# O rapaz veio para a fac durante 5 m. (= esteve a vir para a fac durante 5 m/esteve na fac. 5m)
The boy came towards/to college for 5 m. (= he was coming towards col. for 5 m/ he stayed in col. 5 m)
2. Possible explanation

* In these cases, the verbs seem to be interpreted as punctual, that is, as two-point scales, and PP denote the maximal degree (verbs are interpreted as transitions between a state of not being at the destination and the state of being in the destination).
* As the verb is reinterpreted as punctual (behaving like an achievement), there is no process phase of the event to be measured by the temporal adverbial.
* The adverbial for x time can only measure the resultant state of the event, that is, the time interval during which the individual is participating in the event or remains in destination after the end of e.
* This reading is also possible for PP-para, provided that the arbitrary degree defined by PP-para is reinterpreted as a maximal degree (requires aspectual shift).

3. Concluding remarks

(i) A ‘scale semantics’ (cf. Kennedy & McNally, 2005) can account for the contribution of PPs headed by para and até in E2 to the definition of the aspectual profile of the predicates that denote events of movement.
* This proposal assigns this type of verbs to other types, namely incremental theme verbs and change-of-state verbs.
(ii) This proposal assumes that inherently directed motion verbs ir/vir have a lexical meaning that can be represented as a partially specified scale (cf. Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2010).

Some remaining problems:
* Some tests indicate that predications are non durative. Why?
* A reading of measurement of the consequent state arises with para and até. Why?
* Para exhibits a reading of long stay in destination, and até a brief stay. Why?

Bibliography