

Modality and complementation in Ancient Greek: Epistemic nuances in perception verbs complements

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Perception verbs complements have been interpreted as conveying different evidential and epistemic nuances depending on the sensory modality, the type of complement clause, and the presence of epistemic modifiers. This contribution examines the interaction of syntax, semantics and pragmatics in perception verb complementation, an area where the boundaries between evidentiality and epistemicity are difficult to define. The research focuses on perception verbs in Ancient Greek and investigates how different complement clause constructions associate with epistemic and intersubjective meanings related to the source of information, the degree of certainty, and the speaker's commitment.

Typological studies show that perception verbs with a sentential stimulus can convey immediate perception or acquisition of knowledge, depending on the type of complement clause (Schüle 2000, Viberg 2001, Boye 2010). Verbs of hearing (and of multimodal perception) can express both the acquisition of knowledge through sensory inference and the reception of the content of a speech act (Dik & Hengeveld 1991). Scholars have interpreted these phenomena as evidential strategies or as conveying epistemic or inter-subjective overtones (Aikhenvald 2004, Whitt 2010, Squartini 2018).

The interaction between modality and complementation has been extensively studied in Ancient Greek (Denizot & Tronci 2023, Benedetti & Gianollo 2023), where a variety of finite and non-finite complement clauses are used (Crespo 1984, Cristofaro 2008, Faure 2013). Perception verbs can govern genitive and accusative participial complements, accusative and infinitive clauses, finite clauses introduced by complementizers *hóti* or *hōs*, and indirect interrogative clauses (Cristofaro 1996, Faure 2021). Recent studies have investigated the evidential, modal, and intersubjective nuances associated with these constructions, including their connection to other classes of complement-taking predicates, such as verbs of knowledge and speaking (Van Rooy 2016, Masliš 2023).

My contribution will expand upon the findings of these studies by focusing on the complement clauses governed by *akoúō* 'to hear' and *aisthánomai* 'to perceive' with a data-driven and corpus-based approach. These constructions will be investigated through a qualitative and quantitative study of the data collected from a corpus of classical prose, which includes the complete works of Plato, Lysias, Xenophon, Isocrates, and Thucydides.

The discussion will show that genitive participial clauses are related to immediate perception, while all other types of complements are related to the acquisition of knowledge, but with different epistemic nuances, from a higher degree of certainty associated with the accusative participial clause to a lower degree of certainty connected to the accusative and infinitive.

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