

## Voice and transitivity with perception verbs in Ancient Greek

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In Ancient Greek verbs of smell (*osphraínomai*), taste (*géuomai*) and touch (*háptomai*) take genitive second arguments and show middle morphology (touch verbs are partly active but often have meaning other than perception, e.g. *psáuō* and *tigkhánō*, that also take the genitive; Viti 2017) while verbs of hearing, which are mostly *activa tantum*, allow for case alternation and take either the accusative or the genitive, mainly in connection with animacy (Prévot 1935a, Chantraine 1953). Sight verbs take the accusative and show a more varied distribution of voice: in H(omeric) G(reek), *horáō* / *eîdon* ‘see’ has both active and middle forms, others are either *media tantum*, such as *dérkomai* ‘see’, *theáomai* ‘contemplate’, *sképtomai* ‘look carefully’, or *activa tantum*, such as *leússō* ‘gaze’, as well as the post-Homeric verbs *blépō* ‘see’. Notably, middle forms never have passive meaning in HG, nor do passive aorist or future forms occur (on the middle with sight verbs in HG see Prévot 1935b, Bechert 1964; more in general on perception verbs Allan 2003 and Aubrey 2020). Hence, from the point of view of case marking, sight verbs could be viewed as conforming to the transitive prototype, even though this is true only partly, as they do not passivize; in turn, verbs of hearing show a lower conformity, even in connection with case marking. I concentrate on post-Homeric changes in the use of the middle and the passive aorist and future with verbs of visual and aural perception, in particular *horáō* ‘see’ and *akoúō* ‘hear’. In Classical Attic-Ionic morphological passives, i.e. aorist or future forms, occur for both verbs; however, while such forms have passive meaning with *horáō*, this is not always the case with *akoúō*. The development of morphological passives of *horáō* parallels the increasing disappearance of middle forms, virtually limited to the future in prose for unprefixated forms of the verb (middle forms of prefixed verbs such as *eisoráō* ‘behold’ with passive meaning occur in post-classical writers). The extension of passive voice points toward an increasing adherence of perception verbs to the transitive prototype, especially for sight verbs. In this connection, changes in constructions are also worth mentioning. Some of the sporadic occurrences of sight verbs with the genitive should be seen as supporting a partitive meaning of the genitive and prompting an indefinite reading (Luraghi & Kittilä 2014), which is typical of change-of-state verbs, rather than reflect attraction from other perception verbs (Humbert 1960: 273).

- (1) *ē*            *óupō* *eîdes*            *en*            *toiaútēi*            *politeíai*            *anthrōpōn*  
or            never seen.AOR.2SG in            DEM.DAT            state.DAT            man.GEN.PL  
*katpsēphisthéntōn*            *thanátou*            *ē*            *phugēs*  
condemn.PTCP.AOR.PASS.GEN.PL            death.GEN            or            exile.GEN  
*oudèn* *hētton* *autoû* *menóntōn*  
nothing less there abide.PTCP.GEN.PL  
‘Or you have never seen in such a state (any) men who have been condemned to death or exile but nevertheless remain there?’ (Pl. *Rep.* 558a)

In general, sight verbs stand out not only for their higher conformity with the transitive prototype, but also because they feature different constructions for states such as ‘see’, constructed with accusative objects, and activities or ‘inactive actions’ such as ‘look at’ constructed with *eis*+acc (De Boel 1987, Luraghi 2020 cf. Viberg 1984; Croft 2012: 156; such constructional alternation is not available for hearing verbs). I further elaborate on the use of voice with these and other sight and hearing verbs, also in connection with construction variation: indeed, even though the middle voice with *horáō* in HG is said to denote volitionality (Allan 2003: 101; Aubrey 2020), construction alternation does not match the distribution of voice (Luraghi 2020), and it is not the case that *horáō* *eis*+acc ‘look at’ selects the middle in HG. Hence, even the rationale behind the use of the middle voice with sight verbs in HG, and with perception verbs in general, needs to be re-assessed.

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