

Feelings as emotion, attitude, and viewpoints

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This paper examines the syntax and semantics of *sentir* ‘to feel’. In use, *sentir* takes different complement types with corresponding differences in meaning. Syntactically, *sentir* takes nouns, adjectives, past participles, and clauses. Semantically, it conveys physical, emotional and cognitive senses, as well as attitude and judgment meanings. We propose that nominal complements correlate with an unmediated physical and emotional perception of an object, while syntactic complements report a thought or opinion towards a proposition. Interestingly, adjectives and past participles describe the state, quality, or property of the perceived object; here, *sentir(se)* behaves as a pseudo-copulative verb taking a second predicate as a complement.

Keywords: *perception, emotions, attitude, predicative complements, sentir ‘to feel’*

I. Introduction.

Verbs of perception have been the main topic in a large number of studies. Among other features, these verbs are well-known due to their polysemic and semantic extensions, and their ability to take different complements with corresponding differences in meaning. In English, verbs denoting perception may take a noun (1a) or an adjective (1b); ‘see’ and ‘hear’ can also select a syntactic complement introduced by *that* (2a), a bare infinitive (2b), or a present participle *-ing* complement (2c), but not a *to*-infinitive (2d).

- (1) a. *I saw/smelled/tasted/touched the fish*
b. *The fish looks/smells/tastes/feels awful*
- (2) a. *Mary saw/heard that Peter played the violin*
b. *Mary saw/heard Peter play the violin*
c. *Mary saw/heard Peter playing the violin*
d. **Mary saw/heard Peter to play the violin*

It has been suggested that the use of a full clause as a complement (2a) favors an indirect perception reading, while reduced clause complements indicate that the act of perception is simultaneous with the act of being perceived. There is also a semantic opposition between the reduced complements (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:473): the use of the infinitive implies that Mary saw the entire event of Peter’s playing, while the use of the present participle indicates that she saw a moment of the ongoing event. The infinitival complement and its categorical status represent a crucial issue in formal syntax; expressions like *Mary saw/heard him play the violin* have been subsumed under the *accusativus cum infinitive* constructions (see Hornstein et al. 2006, and Ciutescu 2013 for references).

There are also numerous studies dealing with verbs of perception in Romance languages, especially on visual and auditory verbs (Ibarretxe-Antuñano 1999; Enghels 2007; Hanegreefs 2008; Vesterinen 2010; Whitt 2010; among others). Most of these studies

focus on perception meanings at the level of simple clauses, except for a few works dealing with infinitival complements (Di Tullio 1998). This paper focuses on the verb *sentir* ‘to feel’, which has received comparatively little attention in the past.

Previous studies dealing with *sentir* have mainly focused on polysemy, diachronic changes in meaning, and transitivity (Fernández Jaén 2006, 2012; Verbeke 2011; Enghels/Jansegers 2012, 2013; Enghels 2013; Jansegers & Cruz Domínguez, in press; Jansegers, Enghels & Cruz Domínguez, submitted). In short, earlier works have shown that, much like ‘see’ and ‘hear’, *sentir* is able to express physical, emotional, and cognitive senses. As a mental verb, its degree of transitivity can vary depending on the cognitive status and control of the perceiver, animacy and definiteness of the object, and the meaning of the construction as a whole. Nevertheless, these studies have not drawn enough attention to the different complement types, the alternation between the transitive form *sentir* and the pronominal form *sentirse*, and the potential effects of these features on the meaning of the construction.

The aim of this study is to examine the syntax and semantics of *sentir* in simple and complex sentences. Based on oral and written data from Mexican Spanish, we corroborate the polysemy of this verb, while also pointing out that different complement types (and verb forms) can denote particular subjective connotations (emotions, attitudes, thoughts, evaluations, viewpoints). We propose that *sentir* has two major functions: it acts as a main verb when taking objects and propositions as complements, and as a kind of pseudo-copulative verb when associated with adjectives, adverbs, and past participles. That is, when the complement refers to objects (concrete and abstract nouns), *sentir* regularly expresses an unmediated apprehension of a sensation that directly affects the perceiver; the sentence *siento dolor* ‘I feel pain’ describes a physical perception, while *siento nostalgia* ‘I feel nostalgia’ expresses emotions. When the complement refers to a proposition (full clauses), the sentence mostly expresses viewpoints, empathy, or regrets; in *siento que el nuevo cine es una porquería* ‘I feel that the new cinema is junk’, the speaker shares a personal opinion toward an independent state of affairs that may or not involve him directly. When taking predicative complements (adjectives, adverbs, past participles, and other structures with the same function), the sentence describes a perceived state, property, or quality of the object of perception. The object can be the perceiver, as in *me siento cansada* ‘I feel tired’, or another participant, *te siento triste*, literally ‘I feel you are sad’.

Previous studies have treated predicative complements in the same way as nominal complements. A closer look reveals that they are not only the most frequent complement type, but also the most structurally and semantically diverse. Except for some structural restrictions, the verb form is basically *sentirse*, and there is a second predicate functioning as a complement. As a result, these sentences not only convey perception, but also the perceiver’s attitude, evaluation, and judgment about the actual state of a participant.¹

The outline of this paper is as follows: section 2 introduces the semantics of *sentir* as a perception verb; section 3 presents our corpus and offers a brief comparison between

¹ There are several works that attempt to distinguish between infinitival and gerund complements of Spanish perception verbs (Suñer 1978; Guasti 1988; Moore 1996; Hornstein et al. 2006). We have not found good references that include adjectives and past participles in the discussion. Our goal here is to systematize the analysis of the complement types of *sentir*, and to examine the potential correlations among different syntactic structures and meanings.

sentir and *ver* ‘to see’; in sections 4 and 5, we situate *sentir* in the domain of simple and complex sentences, respectively. In section 6, we turn towards the analysis of *sentir* associated with predicative complements. To conclude, in section 7 we discuss the relevant syntactic-semantic correlations of *sentir* sentences.

2. The semantics of *sentir* ‘to feel’.

Perception, propositional attitude, and cognition predicates represent mental states of affairs. These verbs can be organized into various semantic fields in terms of the nature of the event that each verb represents, such as intellect, emotion, volition, sensation, and verbal behavior. Roughly speaking, perception verbs are those predicates that denote states or activities in which one comes to have knowledge of an occurring state of affairs directly through the senses: *sight*, *hearing*, *touch*, *taste* and *smell*.

Verbs of perception have been studied from various perspectives. In his seminal work, Viberg (1984) looks primarily at differentiation of chances of meanings within the semantic field of perception (“intrafield” changes such as ‘see’ > ‘hear’). Later, Sweetser (1990) examines the extensions of perception verbs to cognition readings (“transfield” extensions like ‘see’ > ‘know’). These studies assign primacy to vision among the other senses. Evans & Wilkins (2000) and Vanhove (2008) explore the extension of perception verbs into the field of cognition and demonstrate that, in particular languages, verbs such as ‘knowing’ and ‘thinking’ derive from ‘hear’, but not from ‘see’. The sentential complements of perception verbs have also attracted rather much attention from typologists (Kirsner & Thompson 1976; Van der Auwera 1985; Boye 2010).

By exploring the kind of entity that the complement refers to, Dik & Hengeveld (1991) propose four readings of perception verbs: (i) immediate perception of one individual by another individual (*I saw Jane at the party*); (ii) immediate perception of a simultaneous state of affair by an individual (*I saw her dancing at the party*); (iii) mental perception of propositional content, or the acquisition of knowledge through one of the senses by an individual (*I saw that Jane had danced at the party*). And finally, (iv) reception of the propositional content of a speech act brought forward by a third party; this final type of reading occurs with ‘hear’ and ‘see’, as in *Pedro heard that Jane will recite Neruda’s poems*. The distinction between immediate perception of individuals and state of affairs closely correlates with the notion of direct/physical perception, while mental perception of propositional content correlates with indirect/mental perception (e.g., those believed, knows, guessed, inferred, or understood).

The verb ‘to feel’ has received little attention in the literature to date. It has been considered a general verb that expresses more or less related meanings: the perception (of something) through physical contact (*I feel the breeze*), the experience of suffering or the effect of noticing an event (*the whole region felt the rainstorm*), having a particular sensation or impression of (*I felt my lips were dried*), a belief or intuition (*I feel he is guilty*), and a sentiment (*I felt embarrassed*). In order to capture this semantic complexity, previous studies have established three basic categories valid for all sensory verbs, plus a group that includes those cases that may have more than one reading. The distinctions among these categories are gradual; some authors have proposed internal subgroups, at least for the first category, e.g., general perception, specific perception, sensorial sensation (see Fernández Jaén 2012; Jansegers & Enghels 2013).

- (i) Physical perception or bodily sensation with or without specification of a particular sense (*I felt my heart, a rash; I feel pain, cold; I felt the earthquake*).
- (ii) Emotional perception as mental experiences from within the actor that can be referred to as internal perception (*I feel horrible about that; I feel depressed; I feel I am a writer*); as opposed to perception triggered by objects and events outside the perceiver (*I feel that he is weird*). It also encodes psychological sensations with an abstract noun referring to a particular state of mind or emotion (*I feel happiness, sadness, nostalgia*), as well as sorrow (*I am sorry*).
- (iii) Cognitive perception as denoting an abstract sensation (*I felt that I was in love*), a propositional attitude towards a state of affairs (*I felt the supremacy of Spain*), and cognition reported with a subtle subjective aspect (*I feel that his power is fragile*).
- (iv) Ambiguous cases where the verb conveys a meaning that may be physical, emotional and/or cognitive, depending on the extra-linguistic context. For instance, in a hospital *I feel bad* refers to a bodily sensation, but when talking about what happened to somebody else, it is a feeling or opinion.

A direct antecedent to our work are Enghels/Jansegers's (2012, 2013) diachronic studies of *sentir* in Peninsular Spanish, French, and Italian. Considering both "intrafield" and "transfield" associations, they found that the semantic changes inside the domain of perception are the preferred forms in Italian (particularly in the auditory sense), but not in Spanish and French. The sense of emotion predominates in the Spanish data, while cognition is stronger in the French corpus. In addition, Spanish *sentir* has developed a strong preference for expressing sorrow or negative feelings, both in its plain verbal use and in the regular expression *lo siento* 'I'm sorry' (Enghels & Jansegers 2003: 14).

In our corpus, *sentir* expresses physical, emotional, and cognitive meanings in simple and complex sentences. When we take a closer look at predicative complements, however, we notice that the sentence closely expresses the way the perceiver views and feels about someone or something, as well as the appreciation and evaluation of a state, attribute, or quality of the perceived object. These meanings are currently subsumed within emotional and cognitive perception.

3. The corpus under analysis.

The analysis is based on 700 sentences from oral conversations and written texts in Mexican Spanish.² Our corpus corroborates Enghels & Jansegers's findings with respect to the strong preference for encoding emotional over physical perception (Table 1). However, cognitive senses are slightly more prominent in our data, especially in oral conversations.

² The oral data comes from the *Corpus Sociolingüístico de la Ciudad de México* (CSCM) (Martín Butragueño & Lastra 1997); the written texts were taken from *Corpus Referencial del Español Actual* (CREA).

	Oral	Written	Total	
Physical perception	57	80	137	20%
Emotional perception	90	149	239	34%
Cognitive perception	197	97	294	42%
Ambiguous cases	6	24	30	4%
	350	350	700	100%

Table 1. The corpus of *sentir* ‘to feel’

These perception meanings can be expressed by nouns, adjectives, past participles, and full clauses; some examples are in (3). Data from narratives usually encode a lot of information, including the source or cause of the perceived thing; compare the examples (b-c). The sentence in (3f) can be understood as a physical sensation as well as a mental state of the female perceivers; for this reason, we consider this clause as an ambiguous case.

(3) Physical perception

- a. *Él, o sea, sintió así un escalofrío tremendo.* (CSCM)
‘He, I mean, (he) felt a terrible chill.’

Emotional perception

- b. *Frecuentemente la madre llora, ya que también ha sufrido con su hijo. Se siente conmovida al darse cuenta de la profundidad del dolor de éste.* (CREA)

‘The mother often cries, since she has also suffered with her son. She feels moved when she realizes how profound his pain is.’

- c. *Siempre yo sentí que me hizo falta un papá.* (CSCM)
‘I always felt that I lacked a father.’

Cognitive perception

- d. *Soy la primera que salgo de la prepa, me siento muy segura de mí misma.* (CSCM)

‘I am the first one that finished high school, I feel very sure of myself.’

- e. *Empero, él sentía que requería más información y apoyo.* (CREA)
‘Still, he felt that he needed more information and support.’

Ambiguous cases

- f. *Las mamás y las muchachas se sienten muy jóvenes.* (CSCM)
‘The mothers and the girls feel young.’

As a comparison, we also explored 300 sentences with the prototypical predicate *ver* ‘to see’ (Table 2). As expected, *ver* prefers to encode physical and cognitive perception over emotional senses; this is true in both oral and written. Some examples are shown in (4).

	Oral	Written	Total	
Physical perception	85	80	165	55%
Emotional perception	2	-	2	1%
Cognitive perception	58	63	121	40%
Ambiguous cases	5	7	12	4%
	150	150	300	100%

Table 2. The corpus of *ver* ‘to see’

(4) Physical perception

a. *Mira, por ejemplo, ahí vemos una rama, la rama más gruesa de todas.*
(CSCM)

‘Look, for instance, over there we can see a branch, the thickest one of all.’

Emotional perception

b. *Siempre los veo (los discos) así con esa especie de nostalgia o de tristeza.*
(CSCM)

‘I always look at them (the vinyl records) with a bit of nostalgia and sadness.’

Cognitive perception

c. *Se vio obligado a renunciar en 1931.* (CREA)

‘He was forced to resign in 1931.’

d. *A la hora de estar desarrollando el trabajo, veía yo que no había ética.*
(CSCM)

‘When processing the work, I saw that it lacked ethics.’

Ambiguous cases

e. *Trata de cubrirme si es posible. Si ves que no regreso, huye.* (CREA)

‘If possible, try to cover me. If you see that I don’t return, run.’

Although atypical, verbs of perception are considered to be transitive verbs, as the perceiver (the actor) sees/hears/feels a stimulus (the object) through the senses (Cano Aguilar 1987). On one hand, the actor can be more or less agentive, depending on whether the construction encodes a mental activity (*I felt she was nervous*) or a state (*I feel the breeze*). On the other, the object of perception is also diverse. In our analysis, we distinguish between nominal complements, as illustrated in (3a) and (4a); syntactic complements, as in (3c,e) and (4d,e); and predicative complements, as depicted in (3b,d,f) and (4b-c). Usually, the possessor of the stimulus is the same as the perceiver (*John felt that his hands were cold*); but it can be also a different entity (*I felt that his hands were cold*). Similarly to the *accusativus cum infinitive* constructions, in *te siento triste* (literally, ‘I feel you are sad’), the possessor of the stimulus is coded as an accusative pronoun, hence there is a third core argument in the construction.

As can be seen in Table 3, the two verbs differ in terms of the complement they usually take. In the sample, *ver* selects a nominal phrase 31% of the time, and syntactic clauses introduced by *que* ‘that’ 46% of the time; predicative complements are uncommon (17%). *Sentir* equally takes nominal (30%), syntactic (29%) and predicative complements (40%). In fact, adjectives, past participles and a few other structures functioning as a second predicate are the most frequent complements types for *sentir* in the corpus.

	<i>Sentir</i> ‘to feel’			<i>Ver</i> ‘to see’		
	Oral	Written	Total	Oral	Written	Total
Nominal complements	72	150	222 (32%)	48	29	77 (25%)
Syntactic complements	133	69	202 (29%)	70	71	141 (47%)
Predicative complements	145	131	276 (39%)	32	50	52 (17%)
	350	350	700	150	150	300

Table 3. Complement types

As for *sentir*, there are two alternative verb forms, and both are very common. The transitive form *sentir* typically takes nouns and clauses as complements, whereas the pronominal form *sentirse* usually selects adjectives, adverbs, and past participles. Because of this, it has been suggested that *sentirse* is less transitive than *sentir* (Fernández Jaén 2012). There are two other structures that may decrease verb transitivity. First, the occurrence of impersonal/ passive-like sentences describing the perceived stimulus only; in (5a-b), the verb is *sentir* and the pronoun *se* is necessary because of the actor’s absence. In (5c), *se* functions as a reflexive pronoun. We consider these examples to be simple clauses taking nominal complements.

- (5) a. *Quieras o no, ya son treinta y seis años. Ya se siente (el tiempo) ahora.*
(CSCM)
‘Like it or not, it’s 36 years already. The time can be felt now.’
- b. *El norte se siente, se impone, nos marca.* (CREA)
‘The North can be felt; it imposes itself, it marks us.’
- c. *Con las endorfinas, el niño ya no se siente a sí mismo ni a su cuerpo.*
(CREA)
‘With endorphins, the child no longer feels himself or his body.’

Second, there are several examples that take a neutral pronoun, either *lo* ‘it’ or *eso* ‘it’ as an object. In the analysis, we only count those cases where the referential or propositional content of the pronoun can be recovered from the context, as in (6a). We discarded examples like those in (6b) where the pronoun *lo* does not have any referent. Here, *lo siento* ‘I am sorry’ acts as a discourse marker expressing condolence or sympathy.³

- (6) a. *Es necesario el amor, tanto al niño como al trabajo. El niño, esto lo siento.*
(CREA)
‘Love is necessary, both for the child and the job. The child can feel that.’
- b. *Ah, falleció el bebé. ¡Ay lo siento!* (CSCM)
‘Oh, the baby passed away. Oh, I’m so sorry!’

Although infinitival complements are grammatically possible (7a), they are extremely uncommon (three in the sample); the same is true for the gerund in (7b). Due to their scarcity in the sample, we leave these structures out of the analysis.

³ Hence, we exclude the use of *lo siento* ‘I am sorry’ as a discourse marker. See Cruz Domínguez (2014) for a detailed analysis of this and other fixed collocations involving *sentir*.

- (7) a. *Conforme amanecía, **sentían** llegar más gente.* (CREA)
 ‘As it started to get lighter, they felt more people arriving.’
 b. *Podía **sentir** su sangre tibia empapándose la ropa.* (CREA)
 ‘I could feel his warm blood soaking my clothes.’

In what follows, we show that different syntactic constructions can take place depending on whether the sentence refers to physical perception, emotion, attitude, or cognitive senses. The analysis focuses on the three most common structures in the sample: nominal complements (§4), syntactic complements (§5) and predicative complements (§6).

4. *Sentir* taking nominal complements.

Sentir has been considered the most elemental sensory verbs in terms of perception and conscious feelings (Fernández Jaén 2012: 396). It encodes the most basic and physical sensations involving internal organs, pain, and corporal feelings. The thing perceived is expressed either by concrete nouns and body parts, as in (8a-b), or abstract noun phrases introducing physical sensations (8c); occasionally, the locus of perception is explicitly expressed (8d). The example in (8e) depicts the use of *sentir* in the sense of smell.

- (8) a. *Mishkin **siente** los latidos de su corazón.* (CREA)
 ‘Mishkin feels the beats of his heart.’
 b. *Y de repente **siente** uno el balonazo.* (CSCM)
 ‘And suddenly, one feels the smack of the ball.’
 c. *Al menos, Beto no volvería a **sentir** el frío de Santa Ana.* (CREA)
 ‘At least Beto will never again feel the cold of Santa Ana.’
 d. *El niño muestra pánico y grita el dolor profundo que **siente** en el cuello.*
 (CREA)
 ‘The child shows signs of panic and screams out the deep pain he feels in his neck.’
 e. *Se **siente** un fuerte olor a moho.* (CREA)
 ‘A strong odor of mildew is perceived.’

Simple sentences can also denote mental experiences and emotion on the part of the perceiver, e.g., happiness, resentment, loneliness, obligation, fear, worry, anxiety, apprehension, and so on. Examples of the expression of a mental state on the part of the perceiver are illustrated in (9).

- (9) a. *La nostalgia que el narrador **siente** por La Habana.* (CREA)
 ‘The nostalgia that the narrator feels for La Habana.’
 b. ***Siento** la tristeza y siento una soledad inmensa.* (CSCM)
 ‘I feel sadness and enormous loneliness.’
 c. *Felipe apresuró el paso para no **sentir** la congoja que le subía del estómago.*
 (CREA)
 ‘Felipe quickened his pace to avoid the feeling of anguish that rose up in his stomach.’

In phrases with physical and emotional meanings, the actor can be understood as a passive participant that experiences a corporal or mental stimulus involuntarily and/or spontaneously. In the situations described below, however, the perceiver is cognitively more active, as she undergoes some sort of emotional engagement as a response to an external stimulus. In (10a), the perceiver feels and assumes an obligation to improve her working space; in (10b), he accepts a huge commitment when visiting his fiancée’s house.

- (10) a. *Siento una obligación de crear un espacio mejor para quienes trabajamos aquí.* (CREA)
 ‘I feel an obligation to create a better place for the people working here.’
 b. *Al momento que me permiten entrar a su casa, pues yo siento un compromiso muy grande.* (CSCM)
 ‘The minute they let me into her house, I felt a huge sense of commitment.’

Therefore, in this group, *sentir* behaves as a transitive verb taking a concrete/abstract entity as the object of perception. These sentences can be paraphrased as ‘I feel X’; the perceived object can be pronominalized, e.g. *no lo volverá a sentir* ‘I won’t feel it again’ for (8c); in a passive-like sentence, the stimulus alone can function as the subject, e.g. *la obligación se siente* ‘the obligation can be felt’ for (10a). Table 4 presents the correspondences between nominal complements and the perception meaning. In our corpus, 41% of the uses of *sentir* refer to emotional sensations, while 34% convey physical perceptions. The ambiguous cases can be understood as either physical or emotional meanings. Sentences denoting cognition like in (10) are less common.⁴

	Oral	Written	Total	
Physical perception	23	50	73	35%
Emotional perception	21	65	86	41%
Cognitive perception	17	13	30	14%
Ambiguous cases	2	18	20	10%
	63	146	209	100%

Table 4. Perception meanings in simple clauses

Most of our data for simple clauses refer to the actor’s self-perceptions (proprioception). Still, the verb form is *sentir*, rather than *sentirse* (**yo me siento una obligación*, literally ‘I feel myself an obligation’). Examples such as *le sintieron el latido del corazón al bebé* ‘They felt the baby’s heartbeat’, where the actor perceives a physical stimulus (the heartbeat) from a third participant (the baby) are uncommon, and the few cases of external sensations (exteroception) refer to physical perception. In what follows, we describe the major characteristics of *sentir* when taking a full clause as a complement.

⁴ In accordance with previous studies, Cruz Domínguez (2014) and Jansegers & Cruz Domínguez (in press) argue that *sentir* prefers to encode emotion over physical and cognitive meanings. However, they treat nominals, adjectives and past participles equally: as complements in simple clauses. In this analysis, we distinguish between individual objects and (state-) event objects. The first group does not show any preference between corporal and mental sensations, but the last one strongly expresses attitude, evaluation, and judgment meanings (section 6).

5. *Sentir* taking clausal complements.

The transitive verb *sentir* can also take a syntactic clause as a complement. These complex constructions essentially convey the perceiver's points of view, e.g., what she believes, thinks, doubts, assumes about a proposition. The embedded clause is mainly introduced by *que* 'that'. The embedded verb can be independently marked by TAM and negation, but not for illocutionary force. Although the linked clause can denote physical (11a) and emotional sensations (11b), these sentences predominantly suggest cognitive meanings (11c-d).

- (11) a. *Coanacoch (...), al sentir que los españoles se aproximaban, buscó refugio en Tenochtitlan.* (CREA)
 'Coanacoh, when he felt that the Spaniards were getting close, sought shelter in Tenochtitlan.'
- b. *Sé que me apreciaban. Lo sé porque me lo han dicho y porque podía sentir que disfrutaban cuando interpretábamos La llorona.* (CREA)
 'I know that they liked me. I know it because they told me and because I could feel that they enjoyed it when we played *La llorona* together.'
- c. *Yo siento que no ha madurado o no quiere madurar.* (CSCM)
 'I feel that he has not matured or does not want to mature.'
- d. *Se movieron con cautela extrema, pues sentían que los mexicas podrían emboscarlos en cualquier momento.* (CREA)
 'They moved with extreme caution, as they felt that the *Mexicas* could ambush them at any moment.'

Even in those cases that denote physical sensation, as in (11a), the object of perception is understood as indirectly/mentally perceived, and there is no physical or temporal overlap between the two predications. Table 5 summarizes the perception meanings denoted by syntactic complements.

	Oral	Written	Total	
Physical perception	12	11	23	12%
Emotional perception	2	4	6	3%
Cognitive perception	116	50	166	83%
Ambiguous cases	2	2	4	2%
	132	67	199	100%

Table 5. Perception meanings in complex sentences

Instead of an involuntary experience, these sentences refer to a mental process where the experiencer is cognitively active. Most of the sentences in this set can be paraphrased as 'I think/believe/assume/have the feeling that X'; some others can be paraphrased as 'In my opinion, X'. In fact, we found some examples where more than one propositional attitude verb is expressed within the sentence, either to repair or to reinforce the content of the proposition. Thus, in (12a), the speaker feels, thinks, believes a fact; in (12b), the speakers expect to find professional dancers that feel and know how to move in dance.

- (12) a. *Fue un error haberlo dejado, el dibujo, porque yo siento, pienso, más que nada, creo que si me hubiera dedicado bien al dibujo quizás ahorita ya*

tendría un estilo. (CSCM)

‘It was a mistake to have given it up, drawing, because I feel, I think, more than ever, I believe that, if I had really dedicated myself to drawing, I would have my own style by now.’

- b. *Por supuesto, que haya especialistas de danza folclórica que sientan, que sepan cuáles son los motores del movimiento. (CSCM)*

‘Of course, [we need] specialists in folkloric dance that feel, that know which are the crucial movements.’

The embedded clause describes an independent proposition that the perceiver evaluates, thinks, believes, and reports. In comparison to ‘believe’ and ‘think’, however, *sentir* codes a weaker commitment to the content of the complement, as depicted in (11) and (12). In addition, these sentences can describe the actor’s concerns about a potential situation, as in (13a-b), or the thoughts and appreciations deduced from external circumstances, as in (13c). In the context of less-than-ideal experiences in the hospital, the speaker in (13d) offers an evaluation as a subjective point of view regarding the actual behavior of doctors. Because of the nature of the sample, perhaps, the perceiver or main actor usually corresponds to first person, but the content of the proposition is independent of the speaker (first person) or the perceiver (second or third person).

- (13) a. *O sea, yo siento que eso no sería problema para mí. (CSCM)*

‘I mean, I feel that that wouldn’t be a problem for me.’

- b. *[Al poner la bandera], sentía que se le caía, ¿no?, pero nunca se le cayó (CSCM)*

‘[When raising the flag], I felt like it was falling down, right?, but it didn’t.’

- c. *Pues siento que me quieren sólo cuando logro hacer cosas de "grandes." (CREA)*

‘Well, I feel that they only like me when I manage to do “adult” things.’

- d. *De cierta manera o hasta cierto punto, sí siento que muchos médicos se vuelven tan fríos. (CSCM)*

‘In some way or up to a certain point, I do feel that many doctors become really cold people.’

In the sample, we find cases of embedded clauses marked by the modal particle *como ~ como si* ‘like/as if’ (15 out of 199 syntactic complements). Apparently, the selection of *como* highlights the subjective sense of these constructions (Fernandez Jáen 2012); see the example in (14a-c). Occasionally, the two particles concur, as in (14d).

- (14) a. *Siento cómo ese poder me inunda y me da paz. (CREA)*

‘I feel how the power floods through me and gives me peace.’

- b. *Después de la cirugía, sintió como si hubiera vuelto a nacer. (CREA)*

‘After the surgery, he felt like he had been born anew.’

- c. *Mamá, ¿dónde estás?, ¿por qué ya no te siento cerca? siento como si me hubieras abandonado. (CREA)*

‘Mom, where are you? why don’t I feel you close anymore? I feel as though you had abandoned me.’

- d. *Siento como que me lo reprocha: “es que tú siempre tuviste todo en la vida”*
(CSCM)
‘I feel as if he reproaches me: ‘you always had everything in life.’

Similarly to propositional attitude verbs like ‘believe’ and ‘think’, all the meanings of *sentir* described so far convey a subjective view towards the truth of some propositional content. Beliefs, thoughts, and viewpoints are always subjective and, as such, these sentences only express that somebody is more or less strongly committed to the likelihood of some propositional content to be true; no objective indication is given about whether or not that content is actually true (Cristofaro 2003: 107). In the sentence *siento que estás equivocado* ‘I feel you are wrong’, the speaker fully disagrees with the interlocutor’s point of view, but we do not know whether the other person (even the perceiver) is right or not.

Furthermore, the use of *sentir* to express sorrow and empathy is very common in everyday conversation. However, in this sense, *sentir* denotes the speaker’s reaction and empathy toward a propositional content that actually took place (factual statement). For instance, the sentence in (15a) expresses the perceiver’s excuse for being late; (15b) conveys sympathy and condolences about the dog’s death. The last pair of examples is slightly more complicated: they express regret, disappointment, or a kind of empathy about an event that went wrong. In (15c) the speaker feels bad because the elections were rigged; in (15d), the speaker feels sorry and sad because the team lost.

- (15) a. *Siento llegar tarde.*
‘I am sorry I arrived late.’
b. *Siento que se haya muerto tu perro.*
‘I am sorry that your dog died.’
c. *Siento que las elecciones hayan sido manipuladas.*
‘I regret the fact that the elections were rigged.’
d. *Siento mucho que mi equipo no haya ganado la serie mundial.*
‘I regret that my team did not win the world championship.’

The use of *sentir* as *lamentar* ‘to deplore/regret’ always refers to the actions of a third participant. The content of the proposition relates to somebody else’s responsibilities, but the speaker feels himself indirectly responsible for it. Notice that the embedded verb needs to take a special form (present subjunctive) and is always introduced by *that*.

Therefore, *sentir* in complex sentences mainly encodes subjective meanings about a proposition with a content that may or not be actually true. In certain contexts, it may also express empathy (in the structure of an apology) toward a situation that did happen.⁵

6. *Sentir* taking predicative complements.

One of the major differences between *sentir* and *ver* is that the former easily combine with adjectives, adverbs, past participles, and a few other structures in order to express perceived

⁵ Because of the nature of the sample, examples like (15) are not present in our corpus. The expression of sympathy and compassion for someone, and things that bother the perceiver, were also briefly mentioned by Fernandez Jaén (2012). Without a doubt, this use demands profound analysis in its own right.

states, properties, and qualities of the object of perception. That is, the complement does not refer to individual objects or propositions, but to the description of the state of an object, or an epistemic evaluation of the actual condition of the perceiver or a different participant. Almost 40% of the sentences in our sample take what we call predicative complements, as depicted in (16).⁶

- (16) a. *Yo ya me sentía incómoda para tomarme una foto con ellas.* (CSCM)
‘I already felt uncomfortable taking a picture with them.’
b. *Se sienten avergonzadas y culpables de la violencia que sufren.* (CREA)
‘They feel ashamed and guilty for the violence they suffer.’
c. *Te sienta diferente, Lucha, no eres la misma.* (CREA)
‘I feel you to be different, Lucha, you are not the same.’
d. *Nos sentimos como pavorreales.* (CSCM)
‘We feel like peacocks.’

One of the major difficulties when analyzing perception verbs is to determine whether they denote a proposition, an event, or an individual; this is particularly true when the complement is a reduced clause (Kirsner & Thompson 1976; Cinque 1992). For instance, in *vi a Juan llegando empapado* ‘I saw John arriving drenched’, there are two possible interpretations: I saw an event (John arriving drenched) and I saw an individual (I saw John who arrived drenched); in *vi a Juan llegar empapado* ‘I saw John arrive drenched’, it is generally assumed that the object of perception is an event. As for Spanish, DiTullio (1998: 200) argues that the differences between the infinitival and the gerund, on one hand, and the two readings of the gerund, on the other, are subtle but present. For the gerund, she claims that both readings assume the direct perception of the individual and the situation in which he is involved; it is also said that the act of perception and the perceived events temporally overlap.

The situation with predicative complements is just as complicated as that of infinitival and gerunds, since the sentences in (17) involve both individuals and a state of affairs. The question here is whether the actor perceives the individual and the event together or simply the individual. Accordingly, in (17a) the perceiver senses an entity (the feet) having certain temporal properties (they are numb), but she does not perceive the numb sensation alone. In (17b), the speaker considers herself to be happy, so she experiences the entity and the feeling. In (17c), the speaker does physically feel the individual, but does feel an emotion emanating from them too.

- (17) a. *Ya sientes los pies entumidos.* (CSCM)
‘You can already feel that your feet are numb.’
b. *Yo me sentía feliz con él.* (CSCM)
‘I felt happy with him.’
c. *Te sienta muy triste después del divorcio.*

⁶ According to Demonte & Masullo (1999: 2463) and Hernanz Carbó (1988), a predicative complement is a constituent that simultaneously modify both a verb and a core argument. Other authors refer to this as adjacent attributes (of subject or object) and prepositional attributes (Alarcos 2005). See the excellent revision of this topic in Lozano & Valero (2012).

‘I feel that you are very sad since the divorce.’

So far, there is little evidence to claim that *sentir* in (16) and (17) selects a thematic individual alone, and it definitely does not take a proposition. Instead, these sentences refer to both the individual and a predicative description about that individual. The second predication is obligatory, as it cannot be omitted, as in **yo me sentía con él* ‘I felt myself with it/him’ in (17b). Focalization of the perceived state is also odd, like in *#muy triste, te siento después del divorcio* ‘#Very sad, I feel you to be since the divorce’ in (17c). In opposition to nominal and clausal complements, predicative complements cannot be questioned by the interrogative particle *what*, but instead must use *how*, as in *how do you feel your feet?* for the sentence in (17a).

In the sample, the main verb can be *sentir* when the complement is a noun, pronoun, or a descriptive copulative clause (18a-b), or *sentirse* when there is an adjective, adverb or past participle functioning as the complement (18c). The latter is by far the most common in our sample (75%). Importantly, the adjective, adverb, and past participle can be paraphrased by a copulative clause, and vice versa. Notice the structural alternations between *sentir* and *sentirse* in (18b-c).

- (18) a. *No sentí tan pesados los botes.* / *No sentí que los botes estaban pesados.*
‘The recipients didn’t seem so heavy.’ / ‘I didn’t feel that the recipients were heavy.’
b. *Yo siento que soy muy sensible.* / *Me siento muy sensible.*
‘I feel that I am very sensitive.’ / ‘I feel myself to be very sensitive.’
c. *Me siento realizada.* / *Siento que estoy realizada.*
‘I feel fulfilled.’ / ‘I feel that I am fulfilled.’

We suggest, then, that these sentences take complex predicates, *sentir(se)* + second predication. Similarly to gerund complements, predicative complements refer to the direct and mental perception of the individual and the situation in which that participant is involved. The second predication is understood as being simultaneous (at least partially) with the act of perception. In (18a) the perceived state of the object of perception, and the speaker’s appreciation of it concurred in time. Similarly to infinitival complements, when the possessor of the stimulus is different from the perceiver, it must be coded as an accusative pronoun; in *te siento triste*, literally ‘I feel you sad’, there is a third core argument in the construction.

Predicative complements predicate something about a nominal argument, whether it is the subject or the object (Martínez 2005: 179-180). According to Demonte & Masullo (1999: 2463-2464), these modifiers act as a second predicate of an entity, since “they describe a state or property and undergo a syntactic dependency that emerge in number and gender agreement”. In (18c), for instance, the speaker is a woman and the adjective *realizada* ‘fulfilled’ takes feminine marking; in (18b), the perceived object (the recipients) is plural and so the past participle *pesados* ‘heavy’ agrees in number (and gender) with it. Hence, the second predication is not a full verb, but it predicates a physical or mental state (the stative situation of being heavy, sensible, and fulfilled). As such, it lacks verbal information, but it agrees in number and gender with the possessor/source of the stimulus. In other words, the predicative complements add information about a participant’s state of mind, a physical qualification on the evidence perceived through the senses, or some

subjective senses regarding the actual state of the perceiver or a third participant. Outside physical perception, all these predicative complements can be paraphrased as ‘I consider myself/ someone else to be X/ to have the attribute X’.

The embedded states of affair can describe the state of the perceiver, or subject-oriented attributes, and the attributes and properties from another person, or object-oriented attributes. As can be seen in Table 6, subject-oriented attributes are by far the most common expressions in the sample, especially when describing emotional states.

	Subject-oriented attributes				Object-oriented attributes			
	Oral	Written	Total	%	Oral	Written	Total	%
Physical perception	14	12	26	14%	6	-	6	33%
Emotional perception	50	67	117	62%	1	3	4	22%
Cognitive perception	28	13	41	22%	4	3	7	39%
Ambiguous cases	1	3	4	2%	-	1	1	6%
	93	95	188	100%	11	7	18	100%

Table 6. Adjectives, adverbs and past participle complements

Most subject-oriented attributes involve plain adjectives (19a-b), past participles (19c-d), and a few adverbs (19e). We also include in this group the expression *sentirse a gusto* ‘to feel comfortable, lost in the moment’ (19f). Notice that the verb form is *sentirse*.

- (19) a. *Ese día yo **me sentía** triste por lo que había pasado con mi hermano.* (CSCM)
 ‘That day I felt sad about what had happened with my brother.’
- b. *Tras la prueba le avisan que tiene hepatitis C, lo que la confunde porque en realidad no **se siente** enferma.* (CREA)
 ‘After the medical exam, she was told that she had hepatitis C, which confused her since she didn’t not feel sick.’
- c. *Ellas, lo sé, **se sentían** abandonadas, solas.* (CREA)
 ‘They, I know, felt abandoned, alone.’
- d. *En los síntomas inmediatos la falta de energía propicia que el diabético **se sienta** cansado y sin fuerza.* (CREA)
 ‘As part of the immediate symptoms, lack of energy causes the diabetic to feel tired and weak.’
- e. *Confiesa que (...) no **se siente** mal en copiar lo que Madonna ya realizó.* (CREA)
 ‘She confesses that she does not feel bad about copying what Madonna already did.’
- f. *Pues te sientes bien, te **sientes** a gusto. Y cuando la gente no puede darte nada, te da un abrazo.* (CSCM)
 ‘You feel ok, you feel comfortable. And when people cannot give you anything else, they give you a hug.’

The following sentences provide information about the object of perception, either a physical qualification on the evidence perceived through the senses (20a), or the perceiver’s attitude about someone (20b,d) or something (20c). Here, the verb form is *sentir* because there is a noun or pronoun fulfilling the syntactic object position.

- (20) a. *Sí sentíamos rico el baño.* (CSCM)
 ‘Yes, we felt the bath was nice.’
- b. *A ella no la sentíamos adherida a ninguna escuela en particular.* (CSCM)
 ‘As for her, we didn’t feel her to be attached to any particular school.’
- c. *En esos momentos, no me gustaba acercármele. No lo sentía oportuno.*
 (CREA)
 ‘In those moments, I didn’t want to get closer. It didn’t seem opportune.’
- d. *La sociedad encuentra formas (...) de hacer sentir a la gente mal.* (CREA)
 ‘Society always finds ways to make people feel bad.’

All these sentences convey a mental evaluation of an actual state, property, or quality of an individual or situation. In other words, they express the attitude of the speaker towards a state of affairs inferred from physical facts or mental experiences, e.g., based on what is seen, believed or assumed. Commonly, the perceived state involves adjectives such as ‘sad’, ‘happy’, ‘pretty’, ‘ugly’, ‘important’, ‘secure’, ‘capable of’; past participles describing a temporal or permanent quality of the object like ‘surprised’, ‘obligated’, ‘tired’, ‘ashamed’, ‘depressed’, ‘pleasant’ and so on. There are a few adverbs in this group too; ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are the most frequent, but we also find ‘better’, ‘lonely/alone’, ‘like this/ in this way’. Most predicative complements refer to stage-level and episodic adjectives (transitory properties of the subject), and descriptive adjectives of the object.

Structurally, the combination *sentir(se)* + second predication resembles secondary predication structures. However, the sentence *la niña se siente cansada* ‘the girl feels tired’ does not encode a result state in the same way as *I wiped the floor clean* or *the trophy arrived broken*. First, the verbs *wipe* and *clean* have a full predicative meaning on their own, and the secondary predication adds information about their object only (resultative secondary predication). The other possibility is that of depicted secondary predication. A depictive predicate describes a simultaneous state or attribute pertaining to an argument of the main predicate; it can be oriented toward the subject (*Juan llegó enojado* ‘John arrived angry’) or to the object (*Juan compró las zanahorias frescas* ‘John bought the carrots fresh’). For the most part, the predicative complements of *sentir(se)* satisfy three crucial features of secondary predication, as defined by Himmelmann & Schultze-Berndt (2005): (i) the two states of affairs overlap in time, (ii) the second predication is not finite, and (iii) the role of the controller is restricted to core arguments (either the subject or the object). Further, the predicative complements of *sentir(se)* predominantly relate to the semantic categories suggested for secondary predication, meaning physical states and conditions, function, stages of life, and membership.

Nevertheless, these sentences are not quite identical to depicted secondary predications. First, *sentir(se)* does not function as a full verb; it does not express a sole act of perception, but rather encodes perceived states and situations. Second, the nature of the second predicate supports the propositional attitude meanings of *sentir*. Third, these adjective and past participles are not free elements (like the adjective adjuncts in *John bought the carrots fresh*), but are required predications in these constructions. The sentences are closer in meaning to the depicted state found in constructions like *Juan encontró la novela interesante* ‘John found the novel interesting’, where the complement provides information on both the event and the object.

We suggest, then, that *sentir(se)* in these sentences behaves as a kind of pseudo-copulative verb taking a second predicate. Both predicates contribute to the subjective meaning of the construction as a whole.⁷

As for Spanish, some authors also consider certain nouns, prepositional phrases and copulative clauses to act as predicative complements (Gumiel 2005; Lozano & Valero 2012). Accordingly, expressions like *los alumnos lo toman por imbécil* ‘the students think he is stupid’ or *Juan se compró unas botas con hebillas* ‘John bought a pair of boots with buckles’, also involve a second predicate, ‘stupid’ and ‘buckles’ that modifies a core argument, ‘students’ and the ‘boots’, respectively. In our sample (Table 7), there are several cases of this type of predicative complements (25% out of this complement type).

	Subject-oriented attributes		Object-oriented attributes		Total
	Oral	Written	Oral	Written	
Nominal phrases	11	12	2	1	26
Prepositional phrases	11	12	-	-	23
Copulative clauses	9	1	8	3	21
	31	25	10	4	70

Table 7. Other predicative complements

In contrast with nominal complements, the sentences in (21) do not encode a physical perception of a (concrete or abstract) object, but rather something about that object. Nouns like *directora* ‘principal’ in (21a), *actriz* ‘actress’ in (21b), and *miembros de una casta superior* ‘members of a superior class’ in (21c), describe the way the main actor perceives herself with respect to a profession or lifestyle. Notice that, although the complement is a noun, the verb form is *sentirse* in all these examples.

- (21) a. *Aquí en la escuela, yo nunca me **sentí** la directora pero yo sí me sentía una parte esencial.* (CSCM)
 ‘Here in the school, I never felt like the principal, but I did feel like an essential element.’
- b. *López señaló que no **se siente** más actriz que cantante ni viceversa.* (CREA)
 ‘López said that she does not feel like more of an actress than a singer, or vice versa.’
- c. *Todos **se sentían** miembros de una casta superior.* (CREA)
 ‘Everybody felt they were members of a superior class.’

The predicative complement in (22a-b) is introduced by a preposition. These expressions reflect a mental impression of a state or condition, e.g., being the principal of the school, being an actress, having liberty and obligations.

- (22) a. *Los hombres **se sienten** con más libertad de tener más relaciones con mujeres.* (CSCM)
 ‘Men feel that they are free to have more sexual relations with women.’

⁷ The use of the pronominal form *sentirse* as a pseudo-copulative verb was briefly mentioned in Morimoto (2006) and Fernández Jaén (2012).

- b. *Se **siente** en la obligación de dar a conocer lo que está ocurriendo.* (CREA)
 ‘He feels an obligation to reveal what is going on.’

Again, nominal and prepositional phrases modifying the syntactic object are less common but possible; see the example in (23). Attributes that describe the state or condition of the syntactic object regularly make use of a copulative clause.

- (23) *Yo, que viví medio año frente a la Chiesa de San Bastian (...), **siento** a la Venecia como una ciudad que requiere ausencias para conservar su gloria.* (CREA)
 ‘I, who lived half a year in front of San Bastian Church(...) feel Venice to be a city that demands absence in order to conserve its glory.’

There are also copulative clauses that serve as predicative complements. Here, the copulative verb *ser/estar* ‘to be’ is followed by adjectives, adverbs or past participle phrases. The second predicate denotes an evaluation of a physical qualification or property of the subject (24a-b) or the object (24c-d). Again, these copulative clauses can be paraphrased by a simple phrase, e.g., *la siento única* ‘I feel her to be unique’ in (24c).

- (24) a. *Yo **siento** que soy muy sensible* (CSCM)
 ‘I feel that I am very sensible.’
 b. *Precisamente yo **siento** que no estoy tan mal como madre, dentro de todo.* (CSCM)
 ‘Precisely, I feel that I am not so bad as a mother, after all.’
 c. *La veo de una manera distinta, con alegría, más bonita, como algo único (...) **la siento** que es única.* (CSCM)
 ‘I see her differently, happier, prettier, like something unique... I feel that she is unique.’
 d. *La gente que ve suciedad en todas partes podría **sentir** que esto es denigrante.* (CREA)
 ‘People who see dirt everywhere may feel that this is degrading.’

The inclusion of nominal and prepositional phrases in (21-23), and particularly copulative clauses like those in (24), as a subtype of predicative complements might be considered controversial and so merit a detailed study in their own right. They are significantly less common in our corpus and their syntax is less clear, and yet they convey the perceiver’s attitude and evaluation of a state, property, or quality of an individual or a situation.

7. Final discussion.

In sum, *sentir* takes different complements with corresponding differences in meaning. Notionally, the object of perception refers to an individual, a proposition, or a descriptive state of an individual. Syntactically, the complement can take the form of an adjective, past participle, syntactic clause or noun phrase, in that order of frequency. Outside purely physical sensations, *sentir* predominantly conveys subjectivity and epistemic modality: the perceiver’s feelings, emotions, attitude, judgment, thoughts and viewpoints.

Based on the uses of *sentir* in the data under study, we revised the suggested semantic categories for *sentir* and other sensory verbs, and included an additional category. We believe that a category such as ‘perception as attitude and evaluation’ better accounts for those sentences describing the way the perceiver feels about the actual state and conditions of the object of perception. Therefore, the semantic categories dealing with *sentir* can be understood as follows:

- (i) Physical perception as corporal and internal sensations (*I feel a rash, I feel cold*), as well as general and external sensations (*I felt the earthquake*).
- (ii) Perception as emotions, internal experiences, and particular states of mind on the part of the perceiver. The mental state can be experienced from within by the subject (*I feel happiness*), as opposed to external perception triggered by objects and events outside the body (*I feel an obligation*).
- (iii) Perception as attitude, evaluation and appreciation, the way the perceiver views and feels about an entity or situation (*I feel comfortable, I feel myself to be a writer*); the description of a state, attribute, or quality of an object (*I feel sad; I feel you to be sad*).
- (iv) Perception as a point of view, belief, or thought, the perceiver’s report towards a proposition (*I feel that Orphan Black shows a persuasive conspiracy*). It also includes expressions of empathy and general regrets (*I am sorry so many people had problems*).

When the perceived phenomenon refers to physical or emotional domains, the complement can be paraphrased as ‘I feel this’. When it reports an opinion or thought, the meaning is similar to ‘I believe, think, have the impression that X’ or ‘In my opinion, X’. In all these cases, the verb form is basically *sentir*. Sentences that describe the state or quality of the perceived object can be paraphrased as ‘I consider myself/someone else to have X quality/property’.

Despite the fact that all these meanings can be expressed by different syntactic constructions, we found some regular correspondences. More often than not, nominal complements encode physical and emotional perception, whereas full clause complements commonly express viewpoints, beliefs and thoughts; expressions that describe states or qualities of the perceived object generally make use of predicative complements. In the latter group, the pronominal form *sentirse* is almost the rule. There are certain feelings that can take the form of a noun (*siento tristeza* ‘I feel sadness’), a second predicate (*me siento triste* ‘I feel sad’) and copulative clauses (*siento que estoy triste* ‘I feel myself to be sad’). While the predicative complement is the preferred structure in our sample, the question on what motivates the speaker’s choice among these complement types remains open.

Overall, the observations made regarding the Mexican Spanish use of *sentir* contribute to previous studies not only in adding further descriptions to an underestimated verb of perception, but also in furthering the discussion regarding complex predication and complex constructions. Hopefully, further studies can verify not only the formal status of predicative complements, but also the relevance of the syntactic-semantic correlations discussed in this paper.

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