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The influence of temporal information and perspective taking on the representation of imagined events

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Abstract: The current research examines how the representation of imagined events is constrained by Grammatical Aspect (imperfective/perfective), Lexical Aspect (activities/accomplishments), and first versus third person perspective taking. In one experiment, participants imagined events based on written cues that framed events as completed or as ongoing (e.g., I was exercising). In a follow-up experiment, participants read written stimuli describing ongoing activities from first or third-person perspective. During reading, slow cortical potential amplitudes were recorded to index the difficulty associated with imagining events. It was found that imperfective-accomplishments and perfective-activity cues are more difficult to imagine than perfective-accomplishments and imperfective-activity cues. Greater difficulty was also associated with taking third versus first-person perspective when imagining ongoing activities. This research provides novel insight into how temporal information associated with verbs and perspective influence event representations.