

## If you wanna be a psych, first you gotta be stative

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Psych verbs have been extensively studied for the unusual properties they present. In fact, the aspectual value of experiencer psych verbs (OEPVs) is still a matter of intense debate. Arad (1998) *i.a.* proposes 3 possible predications: (1a) *stative reading* (*Economy concerns Mary*), an individual level state; (1b) *eventive reading*, where a change-of-state arises in the experiencer with no intentional agent (*The noise bothered Mary*), and (1c) *agentive reading*, where an agent intentionally causes a change of state in the experiencer (*John frightened Mary deliberately*). Yet, the existence of two distinct subtypes of OEPVs (Marín 2011), *molestar*- ‘bother’ and *preocupar*- ‘worry’ verbs (2), is central to any analysis insofar as dramatically distinct patterns obtain (3). Both types (*molestar*-verbs only with inanimate subjects; *preocupar*-type with both (in)animate subjects) allow the expression of inchoative (psych) states (Marín & McNally, 2011). Yet, this does not mean that psych denotation is part of the verb meaning in all cases. Namely, with agentive subjects, *molestar*-type verbs yield activities without any psych implication (and no special ‘psych’ syntactic properties), thus contrasting even with the proposed predication in (1c). The radical question remains what really is a psych verb?

(1)

- a. *El ruido le molesta mucho.*  
‘The noise bothers her a lot’
- b. *El ruido molestó a Uma./El ruido la molestó.*  
‘The noise bothered Uma’
- c. *Uma molestó a Quentin deliberadamente / para que se fuera.*  
‘Uma bothered Quentin deliberately/to make him go away’

(2)

- a. *molestar*-type (accepts agentive subjects): *agobiar* ‘overwhelm’, *animar* ‘encourage’, *consolar* ‘comfort’, *fastidiar* ‘annoy’, *importunar* ‘importune’, *motivar* ‘motivate’.

- b. *preocupar*-type (do not take agentive subjects): *aburrir* 'bore', *apasionar* 'impassion', *disgustar* 'disgust', *fascinar* 'fascinate', *indignar* 'outrage', *obsesionar* 'obsess'.

(3)

- a. *Uma molestó / #preocupó a Quentin deliberadamente / para que se fuera.*  
'Uma bothered / worried Quentin deliberately / to make him go away'
- b. *Uma fue molestada / #preocupada por Quentin.*  
'Uma was bothered / worried by Quentin'

On the one hand, agentive *molestar*-verbs (*bother*-verbs) pass major dynamicity tests. They allow progressives (4a), serve as infinitival complements of perception verbs (4b), and yield habitual reading in the present (4c). On the other hand, agentive *molestar*-verbs resist telicity: they allow *for x time* (but not *in x time*) adverbials (5a), they cannot serve as complements of *acabar/terminar* 'finish' (5b), and fail to appear in absolute clauses (5c).

(4)

- a. *Uma está molestando a Quentin.*  
'Uma is bothering Quentin'
- b. *Vi a Uma molestar a Quentin.*  
'I saw Uma bother Quentin'
- c. *Uma molesta a Quentin habitualmente / cada semana.*  
'Uma bothers Q often/each week'

(5)

- a. *Uma molestó a Quentin #en/durante dos horas.*  
'Uma bothered Q in/for 2 hours'
- b. *#Uma acabó/terminó de molestar a Quentin.*  
'Uma finished bothering Quentin'
- c. *#Una vez molestado Quentin, ...*  
'With Quentin bothered...'

More importantly, *bother*-verbs yield dynamic agent-controlled events with defeasible (cancellable) root-named states (6) (Koenig & Davis 2001). This explains the availability of Failed Attempt readings and *should* modals (Martin 2015) yielding deontic/epistemic [D|E] reading correlated with  $\pm$ animacy, with D marking an activity that Quentin must perform.

(6) *Quentin ha molestado a Uma durante horas, pero ella no se molesta/no se molestó.*

‘Quentin bothered Uma for hours, but she isn’t bothered / she didn’t bother.’

(7) Aff

a. *Quentin debería molestar a Uma.*

‘Quentin should bother Uma.’ (<sup>OK</sup>D/?E)

b. *El muro debería molestar a Uma.*

‘The wall should bother Uma’ (#D/<sup>OK</sup>E).

Based on similar semantic outputs, Martin (2015) posit that some verbs (accomplishments), if agentive, yield a nonculminating reading also present in Romance OEPVs. Yet, (6) may not show the cancellation of *molestar* endpoint/result (which, as an activity does not have any culmination to cancel), but rather a zero-Cos predication, as data above suggests.

### Proposal.

Facts could be readily explained by pursuing a fair workload division balancing a nonradical constructional account, where predications decompose into distinct vP configurations, while preserving (grammatically-relevant) lexical-based properties yielding distinct root types associated with distinct OEPVs traditionally subsumed together. Psych roots like *preocup-* would be realized through ‘psych’ state roots (Beavers & Koontz-Garboden, 2020, *i.a.*). For this type, only the stative construction with the psych state as core (nondefeasible) part of the verb’s denotation would be

available. For the *molest-* type, instead, both constructions are available, as these verbs in their agentive reading would denote an act performed with intention of triggering a certain state, but where the state is not part of the core denotation. From here, defeasibility follows: a result (a mental state) does not have to truthfully occur for the predication to hold. This would uncover key criteria to tell apart ‘regular’ verbs eligible for psych state expression vs. core psych verbs that, accordingly, find no event/argument structure alternative but pure psych state denotation. While *preocupar*-verbs and non-agentive *molestar* could both yield (inchoative) states, only *molestar*-verbs could denote noncausative, nonresultative activities. The structures (8)-(9) should capture these facts.

(8) *Quentin preocupa a Uma.*  
 ‘Quentin worries Uma’.  
 [Init<sup>i</sup>, ResRHEME<sup>j</sup>]

(9) *Quentin molesta a Uma.*  
 ‘Quentin bothers Uma’  
 [Init<sup>i</sup>, Proc<sup>j</sup>]

In (8), the external argument is introduced by *InitP* (or *VoiceP*, depending on the specific approach). As *ProcP* is merged, the verb behaves as a regular *manner* verb: the external argument is interpreted as a volitional actor and the internal one is the target of the controlled, intentional behavior of Quentin. As in other activity verbs on this account, the referent of the external- argument-introducing head and the specifier of *ProcP* (the dynamic heart of the predicate) correspond by default to the same participant (=actor). This layout dovetails with the aspectual properties of originally unergative *activity* verbs, and dismisses the need to include other components (e.g. ResP) in the configuration which are not inherent part of the verbal predicate – or participants, like a RESULTEE, cf. Ramchand 2008: 214). Hence, *Uma* here is interpreted as the target of a directed/intentional action (the dispositional behavior of the subject). In (9) the construction is, by contrast, fully stative (no true causer, no true *undergoer/patient*, *no change of state*). We speculate that this is due to  $\sqrt{\text{ }}$  sitting in complement position of a stative predicate (SC) headed by *Res* but not introduced by *Proc*. Since *Res* is a mere flanking, eventless (default stative) eventuality, it would be the semantics nuance of *Res* that creates the entailment of an apparent result.

Importantly, under this approach the original (dynamic) denotation of the verb in its default configuration is not a problem. The proposed structure would make the eventive (manner) entailments of the verb irrelevant so long the root can refer, by lexical content and conceptual compatibility, to a psych experience, hence allowing the verb to occur in the guise (9). This complies with the manner/result complementarity – a topic where psych verbs remain underexplored. This possibility would follow from conceptual conditions linking the root's denotation to a mental state. As many facts show (cf. Alexiadou et al. 2017 on resultatives), that this content can be deployed in a distinct grammatical configuration does not imply that it is codified as part of the verb's basic meaning.

### **Result.**

Based on data below we contend that (i) core psych uses are always stative, the state cannot be cancelled; (ii) agentivity plays a key role only for some verbs, (iii) two classes (stative|agentive [eventive]) are relevant and sufficiently different. This follows from a key observation on which our central claim builds: the criteria taken by Arad *i.a.* to operate the differentiation between possible constructions (whether there is an agent deliberately doing something to bring about a mental state in the experiencer; whether there exists a change of (mental) state in the experiencer) are in OEPVs in complementary distribution and fail to coexist as core part of the predication. Of course other analyses are possible. Yet, what is clear is that if verbs like *molestar* involved a result (psych) state as part of their denotation, telic/resultative predications should be possible, contrary to fact.

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