Stativity and agentivity in Spanish psychological verbs

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1. Introduction

Defining property of psych predicates: having an **experiencer** argument (Landau, 2010).

This **experiencer** argument can be realized in **two main syntactic positions**, leading to a distinction between **two main groups** (Pesetsky, 1995):

> 1) **Subject** experiencer (SEPV): *fear, hate*.
> 2) **Object** experiencer (OEPV): *frighten, worry*.

Regarding **aspect of SEPV**, there is large **consensus**: they denote (IL) **states**.

Regarding aspect of **OEPV**, there is **no consensus** at all:
- **Accomplishments:** Grimshaw (1990), Pustejovsky (1991), Tenny (1994).
- **Achievements:** Van Voorst (1992).
- **Activities:** (Filip, 1996).
- **Activities/accomplishments:** Meinschaefer (2006).
- **Dynamic causatives:** Pesetsky (1995), Van Valin & La Polla (1997).
- **Causative states/events:** Arad (1998, 1999), Pylkkänen (2000), Rothmayr (2009).
- **Inchoative states:** Rozwadowska (2003, 2012), Marín & McNally (2005, 2011).

Here I will support the hypothesis that **most OEPVs** denote **inchoative states**.

Plan:

Point of departure: analysis of the **reflexive** (or pronominal) version of **Spanish OEPVs** (*preocupar-se* 'to be/get worried').

Extend the analysis to **non reflexive** Spanish OEPVs (*preocupar* 'to worry').
>   Distinction between agentive and non-agentive OEPVs

2. RPVs denote inchoative states (Marín & McNally, 2011)

Marín & MacNally (2011) distinguish two types of reflexive psychological verbs (RPVs) in Spanish; **non punctual RPVs** (*preocuparse* 'to be/get worried') and **punctual** RPVs (*enfadarse* 'to get angry'):

(1)   **[Non punctual]**
        agobiarse 'to get/feel overwhelmed,' *angustiarse* 'to get/be distressed,' *avergonzarse* 'to get/feel ashamed,' *confundirse* 'to get/be confused,' *distraerse* 'to get/be distracted,' *entretenerse* 'to get/be entertained,' *interesarse* 'to get/be interested in,' *molestarse* 'to get/be bothered,' *obsesionarse* 'to get/be obsessed,' *preocuparse* 'to get/be worried'

(2)   **[Punctual]**
        asombrarse 'to be amazed,' *asustarse* 'to get frightened,' *cabrearse* 'to get really mad,' *enfurecerse* 'to get furious,' *enojarse* 'to get annoyed,' *excitarse* 'to get excited,' *indignarse* 'to become indignant,' *mosquearse* 'to get irritated,' *ofenderse* 'to get offended,' *sorprenderse* 'to be surprised'

2.1. RPVs are not telic

Three tests:
        (i) RPVs are not compatible with *in x time*, (3);
        (ii) they are not compatible with verbs such as *terminar* or *acabar* 'finish', (4);
        (iii) they are not allowed in **absolute clauses** headed by *una vez* 'once', (5).

(3)   Se {aburrió/ asustó} {durante/ *en} toda la tarde.
        'S/he {bored/ frightened} {for/ in} the whole evening.'

(4)   *Ha terminado de aburrirse/ preocuparse.
        'S/he has finished to get bored/ get frightened.'

(5)   *Una vez aburridos/ asustados tus padres por tu situación, se marcharán.
        'Once bored/ frightened your parents by the situation, they will leave.'

2.2. RPVs are not dynamic

Three tests. Unlike dinamyc verbs,
        (i) RPVs are not compatible with *parar* 'stop', (6);
        (ii) they do not accept modification by adverbs of the type of *lentamente* 'slowly', (7),
        (iii) they do not have **habitual reading** in the present, (8)

(6)   *Ha parado de aburrirse/ asustarse.
        'S/he has stopped boring/ frightening.'

(7)   *Juan se aburre/ se sorprende lentamente.
        'Juan get bored/ get surprised slowly.'

(8)   Se preocupa/ asusta por el futuro   (ahora, en este momento)
        'S/he is worried/ frightened by future.'   (now, in this moment)

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	preocuparse 'to be/get worried'	*enfadarse* 'to get angry'	*enfriarse* 'to get cold'
in x time	–	–	+
terminar 'finish'	–	–	+
absolute clause	–	–	+
parar 'stop'	–	–	+
lentamente 'slowly'	–	–	+
habitual reading in the present	–	+	+

Table I. Tests on SRPVs' aspect (Marín & McNally, 2011).

2.3. Analysis: inchoative states

Non punctual RPVs (*preocuparse* 'to be/get worried') denote a particular type of (stage-level) state, including **both** a **state** and the **onset** of/into that state:

(9) a. λxλyλ⟨b,s⟩ . Pred(x,y,⟨b,s⟩)

b. ⟨boundary, state⟩

c. [———

Punctual RPVs (*enfadarse* 'to get angry') **only include the onset** of/into a state. Strictly speaking, they do not explicitly refer to any stative interval, but they only presuppose it:

(10) a. λxλyλb . ∃s(Pred(x,y,⟨b,s⟩))

b. ⟨boundary, (state)⟩

c. [(———)

According to Piñón (1997), boundaries (both left and right) are boundaries of happenings (processes and states). Punctual SRPVs are represented as the left boundary of a state. **NB**: state left boundaries are not equivalent to (telic) achievements.

3. Agentivity and passive voice in SOEPVs

In dealing with reflexive psych verbs, Marín & McNally (2011) do not face the possible influence of agentivity on the aspectual value of psych verbs.

Here I will put in relation two questions which are not necessarily linked:
(i) OEPVs with **agentive** subject (Ruwet, 1994; 1995);
(ii) The ability of OEPVs to form (verbal) **passives** (Landau, 2002).

As we will see, these two questions are also related to a third one: do psych verbs have a **special syntax**? (Arad, 1999; Landau; 2010; Fábregas, to appear).

Fábregas (to appear): only verbs not allowed to form verbal (*ser* 'to be.IL') passive are **properly psychological**.

Link to aspect (Landau, 2002):

-OEPVs able to form **verbal passives** are **eventive**; as those having **agentive** subject.

-OEPVs able to form **adjectival passives** are **stative**; as those having **non-agentive** subject.

3.1. Psych passives

Landau (2002): no consensus about OEPV's ability to form verbal passives:

-**YES**: OEPVs are normal transitive verbs (Pesetsky, 1995; Bouchard, 1995; Pylkkänen, 2000).

-**NO**: OEPVs, as being unaccusatives, lack external argument (Belletti & Rizzi, 1988; Grimshaw, 1990; Legendre, 1993).

Two types of languages (Landau, 2002):

-Languages **A**: Only eventive OEPVs **form verbal passives** (English, Dutch, Finnish).

-Languages **B**: OEPVs **do not form verbal passives** (Italian, French, Hebrew).

Landau (2002):

"[…] in many languages, passive participles are ambiguos between a verbal and an adjectival form. Thus the evidence bearing on the debate is often indirect, consisting of tests that are supposed to distinguish the two uses. Those tests are themselves not clear-cut, adding to the overall confusion".

Spanish provides such a **clear-cut criterion**:

-adjectival passives: *estar* 'be.SL'

-eventive/verbal passives: *ser* 'be.IL'

According to this criterion: **Spanish** is an **A Language**.

SOEPVs fall into **two groups**:

(11)   *aburrir* 'to bore', *afligir* 'to afflict', *angustiar* 'to distress', *apasionar* 'be passionate', *apenar* 'to be sad', *compungir* 'to sadden', *consternar* 'to sadden', *deprimir* 'to depress', *desesperar* 'to exasperate', *disgustar* 'to disgust', *enfadar* 'to anger' *entristecer* 'to sadden', *fascinar* 'to fascinate', *indignar* 'to anger', *interesar* 'to interest', *obsesionar* 'to obsess', *preocupar* 'to worry'.

(12)   *agobiar* 'to overwhelm', *aliviar* 'to relieve', *asombrar* 'to astonish', *asustar* 'to firghten', *confundir* 'to confuse', *consolar* 'to console', *distraer* 'to distract', *entretener* 'to entertain', *excitar* 'to excite', *fastidiar* 'to annoy', *frustrar* 'to disappoint', *molestar* 'to bother', *oprimir* 'to opress', *perturbar* 'to disturb', *sorprender* 'to surprise'.

Those included in (11) only allow **adjectival passives** (with *estar*), (13); those included in (12) allow **adjectival as well as verbal passives**, (14):

(13)   Filemón {está/*es}{angustiado/ preocupado}.
        'Filemón is distressed/ worried.'

(14)   Romeo {está/es}{animado/ excitado}.
        'Romeo is animated/ excited.'

3.2. Agentivity in SOEPVs

It is widely assumed that (subject) agentivity plays a crucial role in the Aktionsart of OEPVs (Arad, 1999; Pylkkänen, 2000; Broekhuis, 2008; Rothmayr, 2009):
- -OEPVs with **non-agentive subjects** denote **states**.
- -OPEVs with **agentive subjects** denote **events/accomplishments**.

Diagnostics on SOEPVs agentivity.

Answer to ***¿qué ha hecho?*** 'what has s/he done?' and pseudo-cleft clauses give clear results: only agentive SOEPVs, (12), pass them:

(15)   *¿Qué (es lo que) ha hecho?* 'What has s/he done?'
         a. *Ha enfadado/ preocupado a sus padres.
         'S/he has angered/ worried her parents.'
         b. Ha asustado/ molestado a Mafalda.
         'S/he has frightened/ bothered Mafalda.'
(16)   a. *Lo que ha hecho es enfadar/ preocupar a sus padres.
         'What s/he has done is to anger/ worry her parents.'
         b. Lo que ha hecho es asustar/ molestar a Mafalda.
         'What s/he has done is to frighten/ bother Mafalda.'

Modification by agent oriented adverbs such as ***intencionadamente*** 'intentionally', (17), and compatibility with imperative, (18):

(17)   a. *Enfadó/ preocupó a sus padres intencionadamente.
         'S/he angered/ worried her parents intentionally.'
         b. Asustó/ molestó a su vecina intencionadamente.
         'S/he frightened/ bothered her neighbor.'
(18)   a. *¡Enfádalos/ preocúpalos!
         'Anger them/ worry them!'
         b. ¡Asústala/ moléstala!
         'Frighten her/ bother her!'

Complements of ***convencer*** 'to convince' and ***obligar*** 'to oblige':

(19)   a. *La convenció de enfadar/ preocupar a sus padres.
         'S/he convinced her to anger/ worry her parents.'
         b. La convenció de asustar/ molestar a sus padres.
         'S/he convinced her to frighten her parents.'

These results pattern with the ability to form *ser* passives: compare (13) and (14).

	Non-agentive	Agentive
answer to *¿what has s/he done?*	–	+
pseudo-cleft clauses	–	+
agent oriented adverbs	–	+
imperative	–	+
convince, oblige	–	+
ser passive	–	+

Table II. Tests on agentivity of SOEPVs

4. The aspect of non-agentive SOEPVs

I am going to argue **against the prevalent view** (Grimshaw, 1990; Tenny, 1994) that OEPVs are telic: SOEPVs, both agentive and non-agentive, are not telic, not even dynamic.

Let us start by **non-agentive SOEPVs**, (11), copied here in (20):

(20)   *aburrir* 'to bore', *afligir* 'to afflict', *angustiar* 'to distress', *apasionar* 'be passionate', *apenar* 'to be sad', *compungir* 'to sadden', *consternar* 'to sadden', *deprimir* 'to depress', *desesperar* 'to exasperate', *disgustar* 'to disgust', *enfadar* 'to anger' entristecer 'to sadden', *fascinar* 'to fascinate', *indignar* 'to anger', *interesar* 'to interest', *obsesionar* 'to obsess', *preocupar* 'to worry'.

4.1. Non-agentive SOEPVs are not telic

-In/for x time

(21)   a. *{Esta situación/ Juan} lo ha {obsesionado/ preocupado} en cinco minutos.
        '{This situation/ Juan} has {obsessed/ worried} him in five minutes.'
        b. {Esta situación/ Juan} lo ha {obsesionado/ preocupado} durante meses.
        'This situation/ Juan} has obsessed/ worried} him for months.'

***-Terminar* 'finish'**

(22)   *{Esta situación/ Juan} ha terminado de {apasionar/ interesar} a tus padres.
        '{This situation/ Juan} has finished to {passionate/ interest} your parents.'

-Absolute clause

(23)   *Una vez aburridos/ obsesionados tus padres, nos iremos de vacaciones.
        'Once bored/ obsessed your parents, we will go on holiday.'

4.2. Non-agentive SOEPVs are not dynamic

-Non habitual interpretation in the present tense

(24) {Esta situación/ Juan} {angustia/ ilusiona} a tus padres.
      '{This situation/ Juan} {distresses/ excites} your parents.'

-Lentamente **'slowly'**

(25) *{Esta situación/ Juan} {angustia/ desespera} a tus padres lentamente.
      '{This situation/ Juan} {distresses/ desperates} your parents slowly.'

-Parar **'to stop'**

(26) *{Esta situación/ Juan} ha parado de {fascinar/ interesar} a tus padres.
      '{This situation/ Juan} has stopped {fascinating/ interesting} your parents.'

Other tests (Maienborn, 2005): **perception** reports, **manner** and **place** modification:

(27) a. *Vi {esta situación/ a Juan} {interesar/ preocupar} a tus padres.
      'I saw this situation/ Juan } {to interest/ worry} your parents.'
      b. *{Esta situación/ Juan} {interesó/ preocupó} elegantemente a tus padres.
      '{This situation/ Juan} {interested/ worried} elegantly your parents.'
      c. *{Esta situación/ Juan} {interesó/ preocupó} a tus padres en la cocina.
      '{This situation/ Juan} {interested/ worried} your parents in the kitchen.'

Conclusion: if SOEPVs are **not telic** and **nor dynamic**, it is plausible that they are **stative**. A positive diagnostic: **subinterval property** (Rothstein, 2004).

Proposal: like their reflexive counterparts, SOEPVs denote **inchoative states**:

(28) a. Cuando llegamos a su casa, se preocupó.
      'When we arrived to her house, she get worried (at that moment).'
      b. Cuando llegamos a su casa, estaba preocupado.
      'When we arrived to her house, she was worried (already).'

5. The aspect of agentive SOEPVs

In the previous section, we have seen that, unsurprisingly, for non-agentive SOEPVs, the **animate** nature of the subject **does not matter**.

Here we are going to see that, surprisingly, it is also the case for agentive SOEPVs.
In (29) we repeat the list of **agentive SOEPVs** already given in (12):

(29) *agobiar* 'to overwhelm', *aliviar* 'to relieve', *asombrar* 'to astonish', *asustar* 'to firghten', *confundir* 'to confuse', *consolar* 'to console', *distraer* 'to distract', *entretener* 'to entertain', *excitar* 'to excite', *fastidiar* 'to annoy', *frustrar* 'to disappoint', *molestar* 'to bother', *oprimir* 'to opress', *perturbar* 'to disturb', *sorprender* 'to surprise'.

5.1. Agentive SOEPVs are not telic

Given that non animacity removes agentivity, here we concentrate on **animate subjects**.

-In/for x time

(30)   Juan ha {entretenido/ molestado} a María {*en/ durante} cinco minutos.
       'Juan has {entertained/ bothered} María {*in/ for} five minutes.'

-*Terminar* 'finish'

(31)   *Juan ha terminado de entretener/ molestar a María.
       'Juan has finished to entertain/ bother María.'

-Absolute clause

(32)   *Una vez entretenida/ molestada María, …
       'Once entertained/ bothered María, …'

5.2. SOEPVs are not dynamic

-Non habitual interpretation in the present tense

(33)   #Juan entretiene/ molesta a sus padres.
       'Juan entertains/ bothers his parents.'

-*Lentamente* 'slowly'

(34)   *Juan entretuvo/ molestó a María lentamente.
       'Juan entertained/ bothered María slowly.'

-*Parar* 'to stop'

(35)   *Juan paró de entretener/ molestar a María.
       'Juan stopped entertaining/ bothering María.'

Maienborn tests on eventivity (**perception** reports, **manner** and **place** modification) are not so clear.

(36)   ?Vi a Juan entretener/ molestar a María.
       'I saw Juan entertaining/ bothering María.

(37)   ?Juan {entretuvo/ molestó} a María {en la cocina/ elegantemente}.
       'Juan {entertained/ bothered} María {in the kitchen/ elegantly}.

Conclusion: Agentive SOEPVs are not aspectually different than non-agentive SOEPVs

	Non-agentive SOEPVs	Agentive SOEPVs
in x time	–	–
for x time	+	+
terminar 'finish'	–	–
absolute clause	–	–
habitual interpretation in the present tense	–	–
lentamente 'slowly'	–	–
parar 'to stop'	–	–
perception report	–	(+)
manner and place modification	–	(+)

Table III. Tests on (non-)agentive SOEPVs' aspect.

6. Nouns derived from SOEPVs

Fábregas et al. (2012) show that **nouns** derived from SOEPVs **denote states**.
Here I will verify if there is any difference between nouns coming from **non-agentive** SOEPVs, (38), or from agentive SOEPVs, (39).

(38)   *aburrimiento* 'boredom', *apasionamiento* 'passion', *consternación* 'consternation', *depresión* 'depression', *desesperación* 'desperation', *fascinación* 'fascination', *indignación* 'indignation', *obsesión* 'obsession', *preocupación* 'worry'.

(39)   *confusión* 'confusion', *distracción* 'distraction', *entretenimiento* 'entertainment', *excitación* 'excitement', *frustración*, 'frustration', *opresión* 'oppression', *perturbación* 'distress'.

Several tests allow to distinguish between eventivity and stativity in the nominal domain. One of the most significance is ***tener lugar*** 'to take place'

(40)   El rodaje/ la operación tuvo lugar esta mañana en Berlín}.
        'The filming/ operation took place this morning in Berlin.'

(41)   *El aburrimiento/ la confusión tuvo lugar esta mañana/ en Berlín.
        'The boredom/ confusion took place this morning in Berlin.'

Other tests: ***en curso*** 'in process'; ***durante*** 'during'; **perception**:

(42)   a. El rodaje/ la operación en curso va a ser un éxito.
        'The filming in process is going to be a success.'
        b. Durante el rodaje/ la operación, no hagan ruido.
        'During the filming/ operation, do not make noise.'
        c. Presencié el rodaje/ la operación de Pedro.
        'I witnessed the filming/ operation of/by Pedro.'

(43)   a. *El aburrimiento/ la confusión en curso.
        'The boredom/ confusion in process.'
        b. *Durante su aburrimiento/ confusión, no hagan ruido.
        'During the boredom/ confusion, do not make noise.'
        c. *Presencié el aburrimiento/ la confusión de Pedro.
        'I witnessed the boredom/ confusion of Pedro.'

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	Nouns derived from SOEPVs		Eventive nouns
	Non-agentive	Agentive	
N *tener lugar* 'to take place'	−	−	+
N *en curso* 'in process'	−	−	+
durante N 'during N'	−	−	+
presenciar N 'to witness N'	−	−	+

Table IV. Tests on the aspect of nouns derived from SOEPVs.

7. Conclusions

SOEPVs fall into two groups:
> (i) SOEPVs whose subject is never agentive; it can only be causative.
> (ii) SOEPVs whose subject can be agentive, if animate.

Non-agentive SOEPVs: only allow for adjectival passives (*estar*);
Agentive SOEPVs: also allow for verbal passives (*ser*).

Spanish: A Language (Landau, 2002).

Unsurprisingly, non-agentive SOEPVs are stative.
Quite surprisinly, agentive SOEPVs are also stative.

These findings are confirmed by nouns derived from SOEPVs.

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