

## Spanish causative psychological verbs: Insights from their scalar structure

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Transitive experiencer object (TEO) verbs, e.g. Spanish *deleitar* ‘delight’, *tranquilizar* ‘calm down’ have been commonly analyzed (in their eventive reading) as causative transitive change of state (TCoS) verbs, similar to well-known instantiations of this aspectual type such as Spanish *secar* ‘dry’, *limpiar* ‘clean’ (Arad 1998; Alexiadou & Iordăchioaia 2014; a.o.). Both types of verbs share basic semantic and scalar characteristics: they possess an affected argument (the object) which undergoes a change in a property which is caused by a causer. This property is specified by the meaning of the verbs’ stative semantic core, e.g. the state of being delighted or the state of being dry. The process of change the object goes through leads to a natural culminating endpoint (Dowty 1979), which is necessary for a particular set of TCoS verbs (e.g. *secar* ‘dry’) making them be perceived distinctively telic. Crucially, also TEO verbs have been described as telic TCoS predicates where the experiencer object undergoes a culminating change. However, Spanish data shows that the point where the (culminating) change is set for TEO verbs differs depending on the lexical item: a maximum degree (an upper bound) in a scale is set for a small subset of TEO verbs (e.g. *tranquilizar* ‘calm down’), whereas a minimum degree (a lower bound) in a scale is set for a bigger subset of TEO verbs (e.g. *deleitar* ‘delight’) similar to other lower-bounded TCoS verbs such as *mojar* ‘wet’. The point of (culminating) change has an impact on the verbs’ scalar structures. This point is determined at the semantic core level of the verbs and further influences their telicity readings (cf. Hay et al. 1999; Kennedy & Levin 2008; Rappaport Hovav 2014).

The main goal of this talk is to show the availability of scalar readings of TEO predicates and to test predictions about how the scalar properties of the predicates have an impact on the aspectual behavior of the verbs and their (a)telic interpretations. Recent work on the aspectual structure of Spanish psych verbs has proposed that TEO verbs do not lexicalize a culminating change-of-state endpoint (as accomplishment verbs do) but rather the starting of an experiential state, in what authors have called *inchoative state* causative verbs (cf. Fábregas and Marín 2015; Fritz-Huechante et al. 2020). Crucially, these TEO predicates have shown to be atelic. Following the idea that the different type of scale related to a verb determines the telicity potential of such verb (cf. Hay et al. 1999; Kennedy & Levin 2008; Rappaport Hovav 2014), two different types of TEO predicates are proposed here regarding their scalar and aspectual properties: (a) *inchoative state* predicates whose scale sets a minimum degree of the property specified by their semantic core which the experiencer needs to fulfill (e.g. *deleitar* ‘delight’, *alegrar* ‘make happy’), and (b) *accomplishment* psych predicates whose scale sets a maximum degree in their scalar property which the experiencer needs to reach (e.g. *tranquilizar* ‘calm down’, *desestresar* ‘relax’). In that line, the former subclass behaves as lower-bounded TCoS predicates (e.g. *mojar* ‘wet’, *ensuciar* ‘make dirty’) and the latter subclass behaves as upper-bounded TCoS predicates (e.g. *secar* ‘dry’, *enderezar* ‘straighten’). The distinct scalar structures of these two subtypes of TEO predicates result from where the natural bound is located in the verbs’ stative semantic core. Inchoative state predicates express that the degree obtained by the change is higher than the initial degree (the minimum standard degree of the scale); hence any change on the scale leads to a true predicate, e.g. *deleitar* ‘delight’ cf. (1). Sentence (1) means that the experiencer has passed the threshold of delight to at least a minimum degree entailing that Claudia is delighted. In contrast, accomplishment psych verbs present truth conditions that an event is true when it reaches the part of the scale restricted to the maximum standard value (or maximum telos), e.g. *tranquilizar* ‘calm down’ cf. (2). In

sentence (2), for Claudia to be calm, it is necessary that Claudia reaches a maximum degree of calmness (the absence of other emotions) by the end of the event.

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| (1) El cuento está deleitando a Claudia.<br>‘The story is delighting Claudia.’         | = | Claudia está deleitada.<br>‘Claudia is delighted.’ |
| (2) La melodía está tranquilizando a Claudia.<br>‘The melody is calming Claudia down.’ | ≠ | Claudia está tranquila.<br>‘Claudia is calm.’      |

The idea above goes in line with previous observations about telicity that correlate upper closed scalar structures with prototypically telic verbs, e.g. *secar* ‘dry’, and lower closed scalar structures which are open in the scale’s upper end with prototypically atelic verbs, e.g. *mojar* ‘wet’ (cf. Hay et al. 1999; Kennedy & Levin 2008; Rappaport Hovav 2014). This view holds for Spanish TEO predicates, which have been shown to be atelic for the class of inchoative state causative verbs (see Fábregas and Marín 2015; Fritz-Huechante et al. 2020) and telic for those verbs that show an upper-bounded scale structure, i.e. the accomplishment psych verb class (Vanhoe 2004).

## References

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