

Reflexivizing Spanish psych-verbs: Ambiguities across classes

Psych-verbs in Romance languages have been categorized in three classes [BR88]. In one class the subject is interpreted as the experiencer (ES, class I, cf. (1)), and in the other two classes the experiencer is the object (EO, class II, cf. (2) & class III, cf. (3)). Class II shows a systematic experiencer-alternation from object to subject by means of reflexivization (*molestar* > *molestar-se*), cf. (2). The *se*-morpheme attached in the derived item in (2c) has been analyzed as: anti-causativizer [Sch08], inchoativizer [DMF00], and recently as a left-boundary marker for the so-called inchoative states [MM11].

- (1) a. Luisa_{EXP} *ama* a Clara_{STM}. ‘Luisa loves Clara.’
b. Luisa_{EXP} *se ama* (a sí misma). ‘Luisa loves herself.’
- (2) a. Clara_{STM} *molesta* a Luisa_{EXP}. ‘Clara bothers Luisa.’
b. Luisa_{EXP} *se molesta* (a sí misma). ‘Luisa bothers herself.’
c. Luisa_{EXP} *se molesta* (por Clara_{STM}). ‘Luisa gets bothered (by Clara).’
- (3) a. A Luisa_{EXP} *le gusta* Clara_{STM}. ‘Luisa likes Clara.’
b. *Luisa_{EXP} *se gusta*. Intended reading: ‘Luisa likes herself.’ / ‘Luisa gets liked.’

We propose an analysis in HPSG in terms of reflexivization where:

- class I derives only true reflexives (e.g. co-occurring with *a sí mismo* ‘himself’, cf. (1b)),
- class III does not accept the *se*-morpheme under any circumstances [BR88], cf. (3b); and
- class II presents a *se*-morpheme that is ambiguous between: (a) a true reflexive (2b) and (b) an expletive (2c) (i.e. a non-thematic argument). Combining the morpheme with the verbal lexeme licences a syntactic argument reduction in the sense of anti-causativization [AAS15].

In addition, data shows that class II – although being able to have both readings with the *se*-morpheme ((a) & (b) above) – does not behave uniformly. Assuming that Spanish reflexive psych-verbs can be further specified into *punctual psych-verbs* (e.g. *asustarse* ‘get frightened’) and *inchoative states* (e.g. *molestarse* ‘get bothered’) [MM11], the latter class but not the former shows a distinction in acceptability. For inchoative state verbs such as *molestarse* ‘get bothered’ both interpretations are equally accepted, whereas for inchoative state verbs such as *deprimirse* ‘get depressed’ the true reflexive interpretation is more marked. On the contrary, the punctual class remains stable with respect to acceptability judgments. Empirical evidence shows that there is a correlation between the agentivity of the stimulus and the acceptability of the true reflexive interpretation of the verb.

Firstly, based on experimental data, we show how speakers judgments differentiate between the two different readings of the reflexive morpheme *se* in the psych domain. Secondly, we model the different sub-classes of psych-verbs by means of an inheritance hierarchy reflecting their differences and commonalities. The reflexivization will be taken care of by means of underspecification and related lexical rules, deriving on the one hand inchoative (“reflexivized”) verbs (cf. (2c)) and on the other hand deriving truly reflexive verbs (cf. (2b)).

References

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