Revisiting Spanish ObjExp psych predicates

In some Spanish ObjExp psych verbs (e.g *molestar* 'to bother', *sorprender* 'to surprise'), the experiencer argument can select dative or accusative case, as in (1).

1. *(A Juan) le molestan los gatos. / Los gatos lo molestan (a Juan).*
   to Juan CL.DAT bother the cats./ the cats CL.ACC bother to Juan
   Cats bother Juan./ The cats bother Juan.

There are two issues that arise: (i) case selection and (ii) lexical entry. As regards issue (i), Parodi & Luján (2000) and Ackerman & Moore (2001) propose a correlation between case selection and eventuality, i.e., stative psych verbs select a dative experiencer argument, and eventive psych verbs an accusative one. As regards issue (ii), Ackerman & Moore capture the case distinctions within the lexicon and propose the Paradigmatic Selection Principle (PSP), which states that if a predicate allows for a dative argument it also has another entry in the lexicon that allows for an accusative argument.

However, the above-referenced authors wrongly assume that eventive sentences can only assign accusative case, as shown in (2), where the experiencer is dative.

2. *(A Juan) le sorprendió la muerte en Tenerife.*
   to Juan CL.DAT surprised.3PL the death.NOM in Tenerife
   Death surprised Juan in Tenerife (Read: Juan died in Tenerife).

Moreover, Ackerman & Moore's PSP makes wrong predictions since there are ObjExp psych verbs that do not assign accusative case (e.g *gustar* 'to like/please'*, encantar* 'to really like').

In this paper I resolve both issues. First, I discuss the dative case selection in eventive sentences. I reclassify psych verbs based on the degree of causation expressed in the sentence. Certain salient features of causation (for e.g, animacy, agency, volition and affectedness) determine the assignment of dative case to the experiencer argument. In (2) the degree of causation is low since the subject *muerte* 'death' is inanimate and non-agentive, and there is no volition expressed by the subject in the sentence (vs. *María lo sorprendió* 'María surprised him.ACC').

Second, I propose two lexical entries for these ObjExp psych verbs to capture the case selection in the lexicon, as seen in (3).

3.

		Stimulus	Experiencer	
molestar$_a$	<	x_1	x_2	>
			SUBJ	IO
		Causer	Sentient	
molestar$_b$	<	x_1	x_2	>
		SUBJ	(strong causation) DO	
			(weak causation) IO	

For the two lexical entries for the verb *molestar* 'to bother'- *molestar*$_a$ has two arguments where the stimulus is assigned subject role and nominative case and the experiencer the indirect object role and dative case; *molestar*$_b$ also has two arguments where the causer is assigned subject role and nominative case, the experiencer depending on the strength of causation is assigned case: if causation is strong the experiencer is the direct object and takes accusative case; if causation is weak the experiencer is the indirect object and takes dative case. Additionally, these lexical entries correctly predict that any ObjExp psych verb that can select an accusative experiencer can select a dative one too. My reclassification and lexical entries better capture case selection in Spanish ObjExp psych verbs.

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