

The Locative Syntax of Experiencers

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1 Introduction

Experiencers are special. In the eyes of a nonlinguist, this statement may seem too obvious to merit discussion. As we ourselves are the primary species of experiencers, it is hardly surprising that we assign a privileged status to the category of sentient entities capable of mental life. Whether a given entity in our environment is an experiencer or not has vast consequences for our perception and behavior; anyone who has ever had the unsettling experience of walking around a wax museum can testify to that.

But experiencers are not just cognitively special; they are *linguistically* special. Both in the eyes of the linguist and nonlinguist, this ought to be a remarkable fact. Why should the cognitive significance of experiencers have any consequences for the grammar of their language? After all, countless other cognitive categories of equal or greater significance leave no mark in the grammar. Consider the categories of solids, visibles, rigids, edibles, artifacts, tools, moral values, and social institutions, to name just a few. Each of these categories is fundamental to our daily dealings with the world, indeed indispensable. Yet as far as we know, there are no languages that contain grammatical principles of the following forms.

- (1) a. If an NP denotes an artifact, it is opaque to extraction.
- b. An NP that denotes something edible must be doubled by a clitic.
- c. An NP that denotes a solid object cannot be anaphorically bound.

Therefore, the fact that experiencers *do* figure in such principles—as we will shortly see—is extremely surprising, even on the (tendentious) view that cognitive primacy has causal effects on the grammar. Notice that this view, in itself, is not self-evident. If the grammar of human language is a natural object, immune to deliberate design, then it should display no more conformity to human concerns than the heavens do.¹ Substituting “natural selection” for “deliberate design” does not take us much further.

Beyond the trivial usefulness of language as a communication system, one can hardly argue for the adaptive value of particular grammatical mechanisms; did homonids whose grammar contained tone spreading, *wh*-islands, or psych effects have a reproductive advantage over those whose grammar did not? Yet the brute fact is that languages *do* exhibit such phenomena, and, in particular, experiencers *are* grammatically special. If this fact can be traced neither to their cognitive significance (why not other significant categories?) nor to the relevance of their significance to the grammar (why should it be relevant?)—then it remains a tantalizing puzzle.

How are experiencers grammatically special? This is the subject matter of this monograph. In just about any language where psych(ological) verbs have been studied in any depth, some special properties of these verbs have emerged.² Consider a handful of examples (all of which are discussed in detail below).

Example 1 In Greek, clitic doubling of accusative objects is optional; strangely, accusative doubling becomes obligatory in just one case—when the object is an experiencer.

- (2) a. O Jannis (tin) ghnorise tin Maria se ena party.
 The John (cl.ACC) met the Mary in a party
 ‘John met (her) Mary at a party.’
 b. Ta epipla ?*(ton) enohlun ton Petro.
 the furniture ?*(cl.ACC) bother the Peter
 ‘The furniture bothers Peter.’

Example 2 In many languages, an object anaphor can (and sometimes must) be bound by the local subject; indeed, this is the canonical binding configuration. Such binding fails in a particular kind of psych constructions.

- (3) a. John and Mary resemble each other.
 b. ?*John and Mary concern each other.

Notice that both verbs in (3) are stative, and in fact, both are unaccusative (e.g., no passive exists). Yet for some reason, the experiencer anaphor cannot be bound by the subject.

Example 3 A well-studied rule of Russian grammar is the Genitive of Negation rule, which shifts the case of direct objects to genitive under clausemate negation. The rule optionally applies to all accusative objects (modulo certain restrictions that are orthogonal to the present discussion)—except for experiencers.

- (4) a. Ja ne našel tzvety/tzvetov.
 I not found flowers.ACC/GEN
 'I didn't find (the) flowers.'
- b. Šum ne ogorčil ni odnu devočku / *odnoj devočki.
 noise.NOM not upset no one.ACC girl.ACC / *one.GEN girl.GEN
 'The noise didn't upset a single girl.'

Example 4 Relativization of direct objects in Hebrew can leave a resumptive pronoun in the extraction site, although a gap is slightly preferred. Strikingly, the resumptive pronoun becomes obligatory when the object is an experiencer.

- (5) a. ze ha-iš₁ še-ha-ma'amar te'er (?oto₁).
 this the-man that-the-article described (?him)
 'This is the man that the article described.'
- b. ze ha-iš₁ še-ha-ma'amar hid'ig *(oto₁).
 this the-man that-the-article worried *(him)
 'This is the man that the article worried.'

Example 5 In many languages, the only possible controller for a nonfinite adjunct is the matrix subject. A systematic exception to this generalization is that of object experiencers, which unlike all other objects, *can* control adjuncts. The French example below illustrates a minimal contrast between a goal and an experiencer dative (control options are disambiguated by participial gender agreement in the adjunct):

- (6) a. [PRO_{1/*2} remis(*e) sur pied], son mari₁ s'adresse à Yolande₂.
 re-put on foot, her husband addressed to Yolande
 'Once recovered, her husband addressed Yolande.'
- b. [PRO_{1/2} remis(e) sur pied], son mari₁ manque à Yolande₂.
 re-put on foot, her husband misses to Yolande
 'Once recovered, Yolande misses her husband.'

These are just a few of what I call *psych effects*—specific syntactic properties associated with experiencers. As the examples above suggest, we will be mostly concerned with object experiencers (ObjExp), accusative or dative. The nonexperiencer argument—sometimes called the stimulus, trigger of emotion, causer, or target/subject matter—will simply be called the *theme*, unless finer distinctions become relevant.

I follow Belletti and Rizzi's (1988) (*henceforth B&R*) tripartite classification of psych verbs.

- (7) a. *Class I*: Nominative experiencer, accusative theme.
John loves Mary.

- b. *Class II*: Nominative theme, accusative experiencer.
The show amused Bill.
- c. *Class III*: Nominative theme, dative experiencer.
The idea appealed to Julie.

An important distinction exists between stative and eventive ObjExp verbs. All class III verbs are stative; consequently, they can never be used agentively. Most class II verbs are ambiguous between the two readings.

- (8) a. *The solution is occurring to Mary right now.
- b. Bob (*deliberately) mattered to his boss.
- (9) a. The noise is scaring Mary right now.
- b. John embarrassed Maggie (on purpose/unintentionally).

We will see that the ambiguity in (9b) is grammatical rather than pragmatic: Universally, psych effects are associated only with the nonagentive reading.³

The peculiarity of ObjExp verbs has been noted long ago, giving rise to a rich tradition of generative analyses, mainly within the frameworks of Relational Grammar (RG) and Government and Binding (GB) (Lakoff 1970; Postal 1971; Perlmutter 1983; Hermon 1985; Stowell 1986; Pesetsky 1987, 1995; Belletti and Rizzi 1988; Legendre 1989; Cresti 1990; Herschensohn 1992; Bouchard 1995; Anagnostopoulou 1999; Arad 2000; McGinnis 2000, 2001). The fundamental question is: What is the special feature of psych verbs that is responsible for the observed psych effects? Various authors have located that feature in various places: D-Structure, logical form (LF), conceptual structure, aspectual properties, inherent case, zero morphemes, and so on.

The analysis to be developed in this monograph has been inspired by many precursors, and it incorporates some of their insights. Its novelty consists mainly in the attempt to synthesize various ideas, previously unrelated and sometimes underdeveloped, into one coherent theory. This will involve a thorough investigation of available crosslinguistic data, as well as an analysis of novel data from several languages.

The basic intuition that I will pursue is very simple. It can be stated as follows.

- (10) Experiencers are mental locations, that is, locatives.

To the extent that this thesis is grammatically, and not just metaphorically, real, two major consequences follow.

- (11) a. All object experiencers are oblique (or dative).
- b. Experiencers undergo “locative inversion.”

Since nonsubject locatives are normally introduced by a preposition, so must object experiencers, if (10) is true. The nontrivial case that falls under (11a) is experiencers in class II, which are bare nominals. If (11a) is correct, this is but an appearance; strictly speaking, there are no bare object experiencers, only oblique ones. Hence, what looks like a bare object experiencer must be the object of a null preposition. This proposal expands on the idea of Hermon (1985) and B&R (1988), that the accusative case on object experiencers is *inherent*. I will argue that the consequences of this simple idea are far-reaching and go well beyond what those authors had suspected. Indeed, there is overwhelming crosslinguistic evidence for (11a), when properly interpreted. Much of this evidence has not been taken as such, and instead has generated a plethora of theoretical proposals. Chapters 2 through 6 of this monograph demonstrate that the simplest idea, in this domain, is actually the right one.

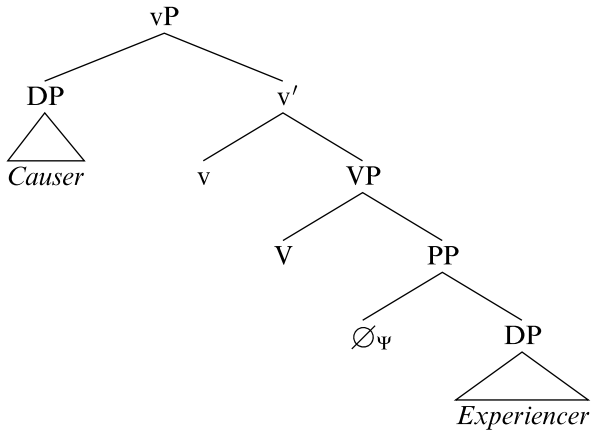
Perhaps more surprising is the claim in (11b); yet again, it should be expected if (10) is true. I will argue that the common phenomenon of *quirky* experiencers is but an instance of locative inversion. More controversially, I will argue that even object experiencers are quirky, in the sense that they too undergo raising to the subject position only at LF, explaining their peculiar scopal properties. Chapters 7 through 9 explore the consequences of this idea.

In fact, this is the whole story; nothing more controversial than (11) will show up along the way. The complexity of the theoretical argument will result from the intricate interactions of the claims in (11) with various components of the grammar. A methodological benefit is the demonstration of the explanatory efficacy of very simple assumptions across a broad range of crosslinguistic data; the low ratio of theory to facts is a significant argument in favor of the present analysis.

Before we turn to the empirical discussion, it would be useful to have in mind a concrete structural representation for the constructions under study. Naturally, every bit of that structure will be discussed and justified in the chapters to follow. Limiting myself to the VP-structure at the moment, and following the extensive discussion in Pesetsky 1995 and Iwata 1995, I assume that class II verbs are transitive, projecting a light *v* and an external argument, the causer.⁴ The null preposition, introducing the experiencer, is termed \emptyset_{ψ} . I also follow the standard assumption that class III verbs are unaccusative (Perlmutter 1983; Belletti and Rizzi 1988; Legendre 1989; Pesetsky 1995; Arad 1998; Reinhart 2001). The “theme” argument of these verbs is not a causer but rather a target/subject matter, T/SM (Pesetsky 1995). In languages where the dative marker is not an

independent preposition, class III experiencers are also governed by \emptyset_Ψ , which assigns dative case.

(12) a. *Class II Verbs*



b. *Class III Verbs*

