

# Agentivity and experiencer verbs in Catalan and Mayangna and the roles of ‘little v’\*

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## Abstract

*Using Catalan and Mayangna data as evidence, I claim that experiencer predicates are drawn from a universal structure, headed by the functional projection  $v_{EXP}P$ . According to this structure, an experience-denoting N is merged with a V-head to obtain an experience predication, which may take a source of experience phrase as its specifier. The experiencer, introduced by the  $v_{EXP}$  head, c-commands the source of experience allowing for a ‘parasitic’ possession relationship. Additionally, the data presented here show that a limited subset of experience phrases allow an agentive reading. I argue that such agentive interpretation is the result of the merging in the structure of an agentive functional head,  $v_{AG}$ , generated above  $v_{EXP}P$ . In turn, this agentive functional head is responsible for the introduction of the agentive, external argument.*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Light verb constructions (‘do+N’) are common in several languages. A clear example is found in Basque (Laka, 1993), where these constructions create agentive unergative verbs.

- (1) Nik                    eztul    egin    dut.  
PRON:1s:ERG    cough    do        AUX  
‘I (have) coughed.’

However, in Catalan (and Spanish (Masullo 1992; Cuervo, 2003, 2008)) they (may) create experiencer predicates, where N denotes the experience.

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- (2) Me dan asco las ratas. *Spanish*  
 DAT:1s give-PRES3p disgust the rats  
 ‘Rats disgust me.’
- (3) Em fan fàstic les rates. *Catalan*  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3P disgust the rats  
 ‘Rats disgust me.’

Mayangna experiencer verbs, which in some instances allow for N-to-V syntactic incorporation, also show evidence of light verb constructions resulting in experiencer predicates.

- (4) a. Yâ dalâwi. *Mayangna: N-to-V incorporation*  
 DAT:1s pain-PRES3s  
 ‘I am hurting.’
- b. Dala yâwi. *Mayangna: Light verb construction*  
 pain DAT:3s-PRES3s  
 ‘I am hurting.’

Interestingly, in both Catalan and Mayangna, a subset of these experiencer predicates consisting of a light verb construction allow for an agentive reading. If light verbs can be interpreted as the spell-out of *v*, these facts in both Catalan and Mayangna shed additional light on the roles and types of *v* across languages, the different types of light verb constructions available crosslinguistically, and the consequences for the syntactic representation of the other arguments of the predicate.

Experiencer (or psych-) verbs have been widely analyzed in the literature (Belletti & Rizzi 1988; Pesetsky 1987, 1995; Masullo 1992; Arad 1999a, b; Landau 2005; Adger & Ramchand 2006; among others), and different solutions have been offered for their analysis. Building on some of the most recent work on these predicates and argument structure, along with the evidence presented here, I claim that experiencer predicates are the result of a common predication structure, resulting from the merging of an experience phrase with a verbal projection. This predication is then merged with an experience functional projection,  $v_{\text{EXP}}\text{P}$ , responsible for the introduction of the experiencer.

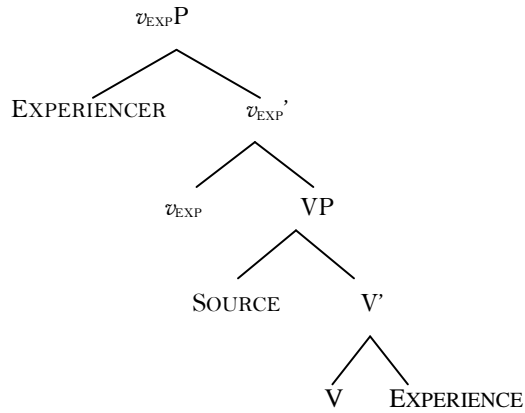
Also, in this paper I provide evidence of a phenomenon that has received far less attention in the literature<sup>1</sup>: a very limited subset of experiencer predicates allow and agentive reading. I argue that this agentive reading (in the experiencer predicates consisting of a light verb constructions that are the object of this paper) is the result of the introduction of another functional

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the agentive/non-agentive contrast in psych verbs and relevant references, see Landau (2005).

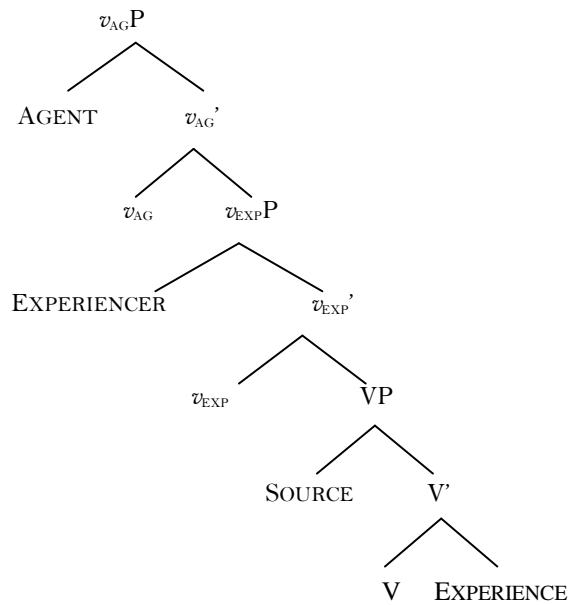
projection,  $v_{AG}P$ , sitting on top of  $v_{EXP}P$  (building on the notion of ‘stackable’ functional projections by Arad 1999a, b), which is in turn responsible for the introduction of the external, agentive argument.

The tree in (5a) shows the basic structure of the purely experiencer predicate, which contrasts with the agentive, experiencer structure in (5b).

(5) a. Non-agentive, experiencer predicate



b. Agentive, experiencer predicate



### 1.2. Goal

With this paper I aim at providing evidence in favor of a universal experiencer structure, building on data from both Catalan and Mayangna. This main goal can be achieved by answering the research questions in 6.

- (6) i. Do Catalan and Mayangna experiencer verbs share the same argument structure?  
 ii. What is the role of the functional heads  $\nu$  in the argument structure of Catalan and Mayangna experiencer verbs?

### 1.3. Paper outline

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents data on Catalan experiencer verbs of the type *fer X* and provides evidence on their argument structure. Section 3 deals with the observed contrast between non-agentive and agentive experiencer predicates in Catalan and puts forward the different argument structure for both types of predicates. The Mayangna counterparts of the Catalan experiencer verbs are presented in section 4, providing further support for the availability of the two structures as part of UG. Finally, section 5 summarizes the main points of the paper and proposes some issues for further research.

## 2. Experiencer verbs in Catalan: Argument structure

### 2.1. Catalan vs. Romance experiencer verbs: the case of Catalan *fer X*

Experiencer verbs in Romance have long been the object of analysis by different scholars (Belletti & Rizzi 1988; Pesetsky 1987, 1995; Masullo 1992; Arad 1999a, b; among others). Belletti & Rizzi (1988) (henceforth, B&R) analyze Italian psych verbs (7) and affirm that these predicates consist of an experiencer (*Gianni*) and a theme (*questo* ‘this’), regardless of their different surface structure.

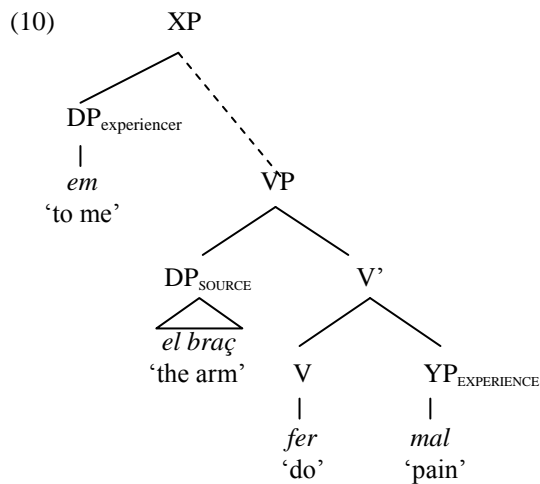
- (7) a. Gianni teme questo.  
       Gianni fear-PRES3s this  
       ‘Gianni fears this.’  
 b. A Gianni piace questo.  
       to Gianni please-PRES3s this  
       ‘Gianni likes this.’

I argue that such an analysis by B&R (1988) is not completely applicable to Catalan experiencer verbs of the type *fer X* ‘to experience X’ (lit. ‘to do X’), since in Catalan we find two additional elements. The Catalan experiencer predicates analyzed in this paper present the following arguments: the (light)

verb *fer* ‘to do’, an experience phrase, a theme or source of experience phrase<sup>2</sup>, and an experiencer dative. An extensive (but non-comprehensive) list of these predicates is presented in (8); some examples are presented in (9).

- (8) a. *fer mal* ‘to hurt’            e. *fer angúnia* ‘to give the chills’  
 b. *fer por* ‘to fear’            f. *fer ràbia* ‘to annoy’  
 c. *fer fàstic* ‘to disgust’        g. *fer nosa* ‘to bother, to be in the way’  
 d. *fer mandra* ‘to not feel like’ h. *fer gràcia* ‘to feel tickled’
- (9) a. *Em fa mal el braç.*  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3s pain the arm  
 ‘My arm hurts.’  
 b. *Em fa por la foscor.*  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3s fear the darkness  
 ‘Darkness scares me.’  
 c. *Em fan fàstic les rates.*  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3p disgust the rats  
 ‘Rats disgust me.’  
 d. *Em fan ràbia les preguntes estúpides.*  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3p fury the questions stupid  
 ‘Stupid questions annoy me.’

According to the analysis presented in this paper, and building on older (Masullo 1992) and more recent work in related languages (Cuervo 2003, 2008), I claim that these Catalan experiencer predicates present a basic structure with two internal arguments (the experience, and the source of experience) and one external argument (the experiencer), as seen in (10).



<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this work, I will use the term ‘source of experience’ as it better reflects its nature than the term ‘theme’, found extensively in the literature.

In the preliminary structure presented above, the experience is semantically incorporated onto the light verb *fer*, thus providing the meaning to the predicate. The source of experience is projected within the verbal projection, as [Spec,VP], establishing a small-clause-like relation with the light verb-experience phrase compound. Finally, the experiencer dative is generated at a higher structural position, outside VP, from which it c-commands the source of experience, establishing with its D a potential binding relation.

### 2.1.1. The argument of the experience

As opposed to the case of psych verbs analyzed by B&R (1988), this class of Catalan experiencer verbs presents an overt experience (*mal* ‘pain’ in (9a), *por* ‘fear’ in (9b), *fàstic* ‘disgust’ in (9c), *ràbia* ‘fury’ in (9d)). This experience phrase is semantically incorporated<sup>3</sup> on the (dummy) verb *fer*, together with which it provides the semantic information of the whole predicate. Despite this semantic incorporation, the experience phrase is syntactically independent (cf. Hale & Keyser 1993, 2002), as it can be quantified (11a) and/or replaced by a partitive clitic *en* (11b).

- (11) a. Em fan molt mal els ulls.  
 DAT:1sdo-PRES3p much pain the eyes  
 ‘My eyes hurt very much.’  
 b. De mal, no me’ n fan els ulls, però...  
 of pain NEG DAT:1s en do-PRES3s the eyes but  
 ‘My eyes don’t hurt, but...’

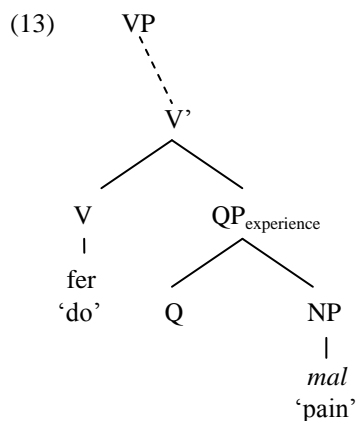
As demonstrated by the examples in (12) below, the experience phrase is a QP: quantifiers and indefinites are allowed, but not definite articles or demonstratives<sup>4</sup>. In the grammatical sentence in (12a), the noun *mal* ‘pain’ is preceded by the indefinite *un* ‘a/one’ (and modified by the adjective *increïble* ‘incredible’). In the ungrammatical sentence in (12b), however, we observe how the experience cannot be preceded by a definite article. From this combination of facts, we can conclude that a D head is not projected, and therefore, the only maximal projection available is a Q.

- (12) a. Em fan un mal increïble els ulls.  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3p a pain incredible the eyes  
 ‘My eyes really hurt.’  
 b. \* Em fan el mal increïble els ulls.  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3p the pain incredible the eyes  
 ‘My eyes really hurt.’

<sup>3</sup> For further information on semantic incorporation, see the works of Van Geenhoven (1998) and Dayal (2003), among others.

<sup>4</sup> Except when followed by a relative clause.

The tree in (13) shows the structure of the experience phrase.



### 2.1.2. The argument of the source of experience

Similar to what B&R (1988) claim for Italian, I argue that Catalan experiencer verbs of the type *fer X* present a theme or source of experience: *el braç* in (9a), *la foscor* in (9b), *les rates* in (9c), *les preguntes estúpides* in (9d). These examples are repeated below.

- (9) a. Em      fa            mal    la mà.  
         DAT:1s   do-PRES3s   pain   the hand  
         ‘My hand hurts.’
- b. Em      fa            por    la foscor.  
         DAT:1s   do-PRES3s   fear   the darkness  
         ‘Darkness scares me.’
- c. Em      fan            fàstic    les rates.  
         DAT:1s   do-PRES3p   disgust   the rats  
         ‘Rats disgust me.’
- d. Em      fan            ràbia    les preguntes    estúpides.  
         DAT:1s   do-PRES3p   fury    the questions    stupid  
         ‘Stupid questions annoy me.’

This element, despite agreeing with the verb (cf. (9c)), is in fact a VP-internal argument. In fact, the source of experience phrase is in close relationship with the experience (cf. also Adger & Ramchand 2006, for Scottish Gaelic). In Catalan, as well as in Italian, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural *pro* “allows a kind of arbitrary interpretation in which the plural specification does not imply semantic plurality” (B&R 1988: 299). Observe the example in (14).

- (14) *pro* T’            estan            trucant.  
         *pro* DAT:2s   be-PRES3p   call-GER  
         ‘They are calling you.’  
         or ‘Somebody is calling you.’

However, not all verbs allow this arb(itrary) *pro*: according to B&R (1988), the arbitrary interpretation can only be obtained when arb *pro* refers to “deep subjects” (B&R 1988:300); that is, it is not possible with surface ‘subjects’ generated at the internal object position (i.e., unaccusatives, among other type of constructions), as seen in (15).

- (15) #*pro* Han            caigut.  
       *pro* have-PRES3p fall-PPART  
       ‘Somebody has fallen.’  
       (only possible as ‘They have fallen.’)

In the case of Catalan experiencer verbs of the type *fer X*, we notice that the arb *pro* interpretation is not possible (16); that is, a plural source of experience cannot be replaced by a 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural *pro* to obtain a semantically singular interpretation of the source of experience.

- (16) #Li fan    mal        *pro*.  
       DAT:3s    do-PRES3p pain *pro*  
       ‘Something is hurting him/her.’

It should be noted, however, that the sentence in (16) above is actually possible, but in a totally different argument structure. In the case of an agentive structure (see section 3), where an external, agentive argument is introduced, the arb-*pro* can occupy the position of the agentive, external argument. In that instance, the reading obtained would be ‘Somebody is hurting him/her.’.

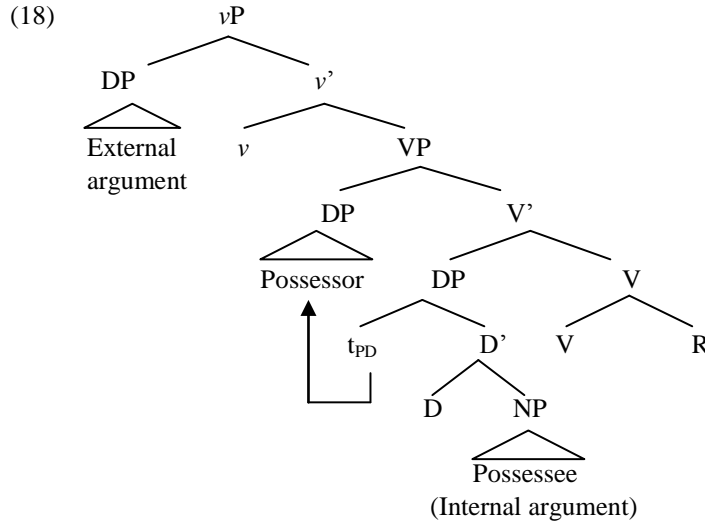
Further evidence supports the claim that the source of experience is generated at the internal argument position. By adapting the claim by Landau (1999), Kempchinsky (1992), Borer and Grodzinsky (1986) according to which Possessor Datives can only refer to internal arguments, I argue that the D of the source of experience is co-indexed with the experiencer dative, which behaves as a ‘parasitic’ possessor. Since such co-indexation is only possible if the possessee is generated at an internal argument position, I demonstrate the internal argumenthood status of the source of experience. Such phenomenon is illustrated in (17).

- (17) Em<sub>i</sub>        fan            mal    els<sub>i</sub> ulls.  
       DAT:1s    do-PRES3p    pain    the eyes  
       ‘My eyes hurt.’

In his work on Hebrew possessor raising, Landau (1999) bases the claim that Possessor Datives (PDs) can only refer to internal arguments on purely syntactic grounds. The possessor-possessee interpretation observed in (13) is only possible if we assume PDs as playing the role of the subject of the DP or, in more precise syntactic terms, as being generated at the [Spec,DP] position. On the other hand, PDs, along with the other dative arguments, always



according to Landau (1999) “are generated below [Spec,VP] and [Spec,IP]” from where “they cannot c-command into any position occupied by external arguments” (Landau, 1999:7). This second structural feature has a third and final implication in the syntax: PDs have to c-command the possessed DP (Landau 1999: 9), which is generated in the lowest argument position in the structure, i.e. the internal argument position. With these assumptions in mind, we can posit the structure in (18), which presents the raising analysis suggested by Landau (1999). (The syntactic tree in 18 is an adapted version of Landau’s (1999) using Hale and Keyser’s (2002) argument structure.)

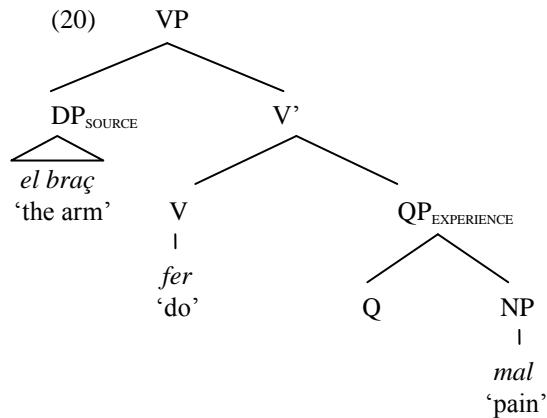


Although the c-commanding relationship between the PD and the source of experience seems to be sound, a more in-depth analysis of the Catalan data seems to present evidence against the possessor raising analysis. Consider the examples in (19).

- (19) a. Em        fa        mal    el braç.  
 DAT:1s    do-PRES3s    pain    the arm  
 ‘My arm hurts.’
- b. Em        fan        mal    les teves paraules.  
 DAT:1s    do-PRES3p    pain    the your words  
 ‘Your words hurt me.’
- c. Em        fa        mal    l’aire contaminat.  
 DAT:1s    do-PRES3s    pain    the air polluted  
 ‘The polluted air hurts/bothers me.’
- d. Em        fa        mal    en Jordi.  
 DAT:1s    do-PRES3s    pain    D Jordi  
 ‘Jordi hurts me.’

In the examples above, only (19a) presents a case of a possession relationship between the dative and the source of experience, which seems to support the possessor raising analysis. Yet, such an analysis is not possible for the sentences in (19b-d). In those cases, the possession interpretation cannot be obtained: in (19b), the NP *paraules* is the possessee of the possessive determiner *teves* and, therefore, it cannot be bound in a possessive relationship with the experiencer dative; in (19c), the referential NP *aire contaminat* cannot be (semantically) possessed, thus, it cannot be bound by the experiencer dative; and similarly in (19d), there is no possessive reading since the personal name *Jordi* cannot be bound in a possessive relationship by the experiencer dative. The latter examples provide evidence against Possessor Dative raising analysis, as the possessor ‘slot’ is already occupied. If we assume this analysis, the possessor relationship observed in (19a) can be accounted for as follows: the experiencer dative is generated above VP, from where it c-commands an internal argument; if this internal argument presents ‘bindable’ possessing features, we obtain a ‘parasitic’ possessor interpretation. One possibility would be to consider that these ‘bindable’ features correspond to the nature of the N heading the source of experience phrase. According to this idea, alienable nouns would lack these ‘possessee’ features, and therefore would not allow the possessive interpretation; on the other hand, inalienable nouns (body parts, kinship terms) would have these ‘possessee’ features, favoring the possessive reading<sup>5</sup>.

Given the empirical evidence provided in this subsection, I propose the following tree structure.



<sup>5</sup> For further information on different classes of nominals, see Mühlbauer (2007).

### 2.1.3. The argument of the experiencer

Empirical evidence suggests that the third element in these predicates is a VP-external argument, supporting the claim by B&R (1988) that the experiencer dative (*em* ‘to me’ in (9a-d), (17), and (19a-d); *a Gianni* ‘to Gianni’ in (7b) is generated at a position external to VP. Similarly to what has been observed in a subset of Spanish light verb constructions with *dar* ‘to give’ (Masullo 1992, Cuervo 2003, 2008), the control test performed demonstrates that the experiencer dative binds PRO when the source of experience is an infinitival clause. Observe the example in (21).

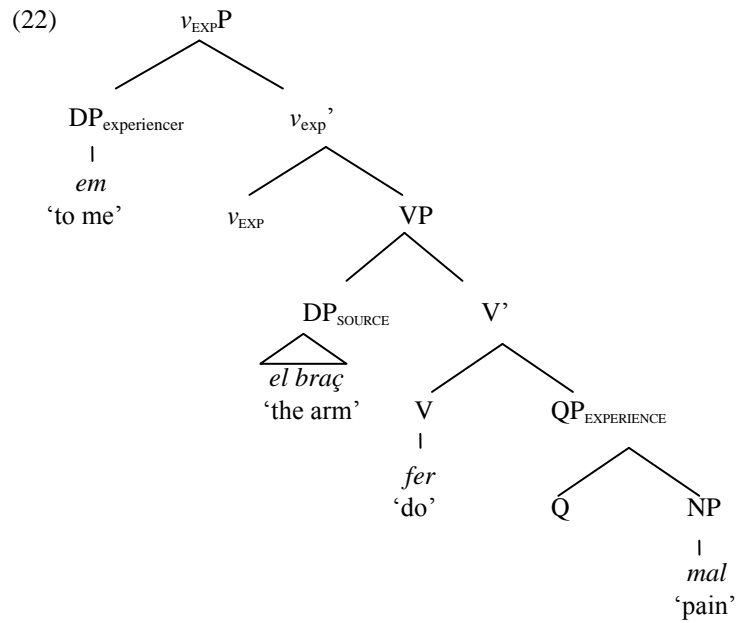
- (21) Em<sub>i</sub> fa fàstic [PRO<sub>i</sub> veure rats al carrer].  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3s disgust PRO see-INF rats on the street  
 ‘Seeing rats on the streets disgusts me.’

Additional evidence of the external argumenthood of the experiencer phrase comes from the PD analysis presented in the previous subsection. Again, if we assume the claims by Landau (1999), Borer & Grodzinsky (1986), and Kempchinsky (1992) on PDs, we can affirm that the experiencer dative has to be generated outside VP since the possessor relationship can only be obtained if the PD is an external argument.

Furthermore, the experiencer dative provides the notion of ‘aboutness’ to the predicate, which is considered to be a feature most commonly associated with the argument external to the VP (Masullo 1992). All these facts combined further contribute to the claim already presented by B&R (1988), Masullo (1992), Cuervo (2008), and Adger & Ramchand (2006) that the experiencer is projected as an external argument, building on the notion of external arguments by Marantz (1984), Kratzer (1996), and Pytkkanen (2002), among others.

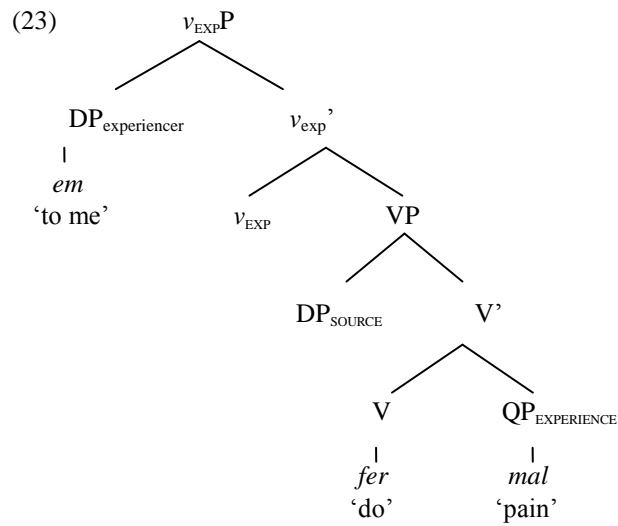
Following on the notion of different *v* heads put forward by Arad (1999a, b), I argue that the experiencer phrase is introduced by an experiencer  $v_{EXP}$ . Again, similarly to the case discussed by Cuervo (2008) for Spanish light verb construction with *dar* ‘to give’, this verbal functional projection is responsible for the theta-role and case assignment to the argument.

With all this in mind, we can propose the structure in (22).



#### 2.1.4. Summary

Given the data presented in the previous subsections, this subset of Catalan experiencer verbs presents two internal arguments and one external argument. The basic structure accounting for this distribution is presented in 23.



The structure above accounts for all the phenomena observed. The experiencer dative is external to the VP, c-commanding the source of experience. Being generated at this position, the experiencer dative can bind the source of experience to obtain the (parasitic) possessive reading and can control PRO if the source of experience is an infinitival clause. Also, the experience is generated as a sister to the verbal head, along with it, through semantic incorporation, it provides the meaning to the predicate.

### 3. The agentivity of the experience<sup>6</sup>

All the examples presented in section 2 have non-agentive readings. In this section, I analyze a subset of Catalan experiencer verbs of the type *fer X* ‘to experience X’ that allow an agentive reading. I argue that the agentive reading is the result of the introduction of a higher verbal functional head,  $v_{AG}$ , which is also responsible for introducing the external, agentive argument.

#### 3.1. Catalan agentive experiencer verbs

Interestingly, a very limited subset of these experiencer verbs (*fer mal*, *fer por*) allow for an alternative agentive reading, as observed in (19d), repeated below, (24), and (25).

- (19) d. Em            fa                    mal    en Jordi.  
           DAT:1s    do-PRES3s    pain    D Jordi  
           ‘Jordi hurts me.’

- (24) Aquells nens    m’            han                    fet            mal.  
           those children DAT:1shave-PRES3p    do-PPART    pain  
           ‘Those children (have) hurt me.’

- (25) a. Em            fa                    por el    teu    germà.  
           DAT:1s    do-PRES3s    fear the    your    brother  
           ‘Your brother scares me.’  
       b. El    teu    germà    em            va                    fer            por    venint  
           the    your    borther    DAT:1s    go-PRES3p    do-INF    fear    coming  
           pel    darrere.  
           from    behind  
           ‘Your brother scared me coming from behind.’

<sup>6</sup> Arad (1999a, b) makes what appears to be the same distinction, although her terminology (based on other theoretical grounds) is a little different: her stative experiencer verbs stand for my non-agentive experiencer verbs, and her non-stative (or agentive) experiencer verbs for my agentive experiencer verbs.

The fact that only a few experience phrases allow this alternative agentive reading hints at the possibility of validation between the experience phrase, the event, and the agentive functional head. Yet, this issue will be the object of further coming research.

Note that (15d) and (21a) are ambiguous, since they allow both a non-agentive reading ('I feel pain whenever I see Jordi.' for (19d); and 'I am afraid of your brother.' for (25a) and an agentive interpretation ('Jordi (physically) causes me pain.' for (19d); and 'Your brother does something to scare me.' for (25a). (24) and (25b), on the other hand, are favored under an agentive interpretation: the experience is caused by an agentive DP (*aquells nens*, in (24); and *your brother*, in (25b)). In the case in which we obtain an agentive reading, the source of experience is either absent or may resurface as a locative or oblique phrase, introduced by a preposition (26).

- (26) *Aquells nens m<sub>i</sub>' han fet mal al<sub>i</sub> braç.*  
 those children DAT:1s have-PRES3p do-PPART pain to+the arm  
 'Those children (have) hurt me in the arm.'

The presence of a PP to introduce the source of experience is correlated with the presence of an agent. In these constructions, the preposition is necessary to assign case to the source of experience. Thus, if the source of experience is introduced by a preposition, it means that another (structurally higher) phrase, the agent, is the one available to receive Nominative Case. Also, the (parasitic) possessor relationship between the experiencer dative (*em* in (26) and the source of experience (*al braç* in (26)) is still maintained, indicating that the experiencer dative still c-commands the oblique phrase, which is generated at a lower position within VP.

On the other hand, and as observed in (25b) and (26), in the agentive reading the agentive DP tends to surface at a preverbal position, while in non-agentive constructions, the source of experience is favored at a post-verbal position<sup>7</sup>. This difference suggests that these two types of DPs may not be generated at the same position, which is the object of the following subsection.

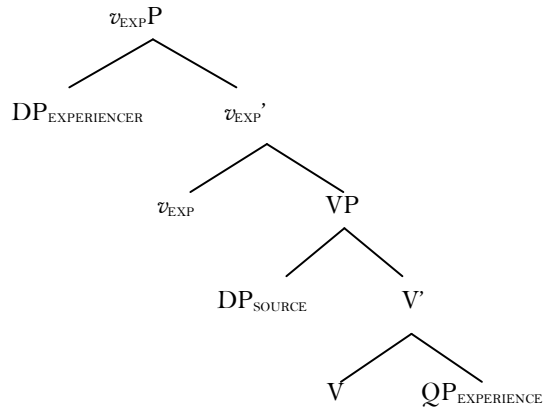
### 3.2. *Non-agentive vs. agentive Catalan experiencer verbs: a different structure*

Building on the notion that the external argument not only is generated outside the verbal projection (Marantz 1984; Chomsky 1995; among others) but it is thematically independent from it, and thus it needs to be introduced by an independent head (Kratzer, 1996; Arad, 1999a, b; among others), and on the more recent approaches by Pylkkanen (2002) and Cuervo (2003, 2008), I assume that the external head, in both agentive and non-agentive cases, is

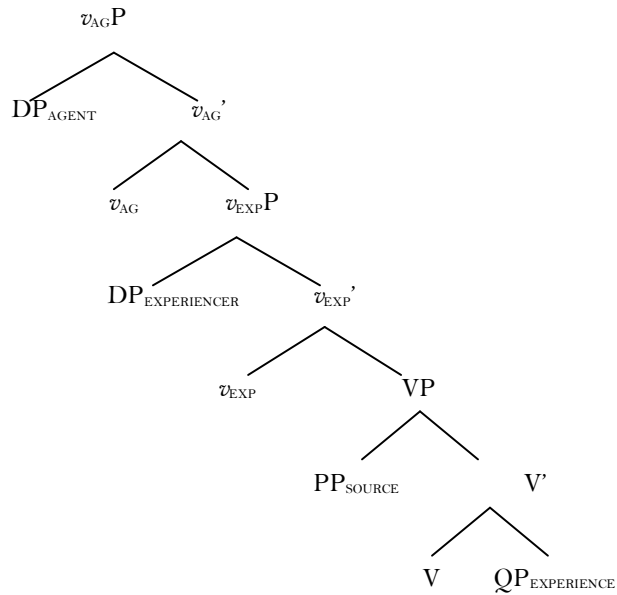
<sup>7</sup> However, under the necessary pragmatic conditions, both interpretations may be possible pre- and post-verbally.

introduced by a functional head above VP. The difference between both structures is the introduction in the case of the agentive, experiencer predicates of a higher functional projection,  $v_{AG}P$ , stacked on top of  $v_{EXP}P$  (cf. Arad, 1999a, b). The tree in (27) presents this contrast.

(27) a. Non-agentive structure:



b. Agentive structure:



Empirical evidence of the difference between the non-agentive and the agentive constructions is shown the examples in (19a) and (26), repeated below.

(19) a. *Em fa mal el braç.*  
 DAT:1s do-PRES3s pain the arm  
 ‘My arm hurts.’

(26) *Aquells nens m’ han fet mal al braç.*  
 those children DAT:1s have-PRES3p do-PPART painto+the arm  
 ‘Those children (have) hurt me in the arm.’

At first glance, we observe that two of the arguments (the experience phrase, *mal* ‘pain’, and the experiencer phrase, *em* ‘to me’) are identically the same in both constructions, while the source of experience needs to be introduced by a preposition only in the case of the agentive construction. Yet, all three arguments perform the same theta-roles in the agentive and non-agentive sentences. Assuming Baker’s (1988) Universal Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH), according to which theta-roles are to be assigned under the same syntactic configuration, we can conclude that all these arguments (the experience phrase, the source of experience phrase, and the experiencer dative) are generated in the same position, regardless of the agentivity reading of the sentence.

As it has already been mentioned, in the agentive construction the source of experience, if it surfaces, is introduced by a preposition. In the case of the agentive reading, the agentive phrase is the one receiving Nominative Case, which is the case that the source of experience phrase receives in the non-agentive reading. Therefore, if the source of experience surfaces, it needs the presence of a case licensing element (in this case, a preposition).

Regardless of this difference, the experiencer dative still c-commands the source of experience maintaining the ‘parasitic’ possessive relationship, which indicates that the prepositional (or oblique) phrase occupies a lower position in the VP. This fact, along with UTAH, provides further evidence in favor of the claim that the source of experience is generated at the same structural position in both agentive and non-agentive readings. Thus, the only difference, due to Case assignment, is that in one case the source of experience is a PP; in the other, it is a DP.

Note that despite the agentive interpretation, the experiencer reading is maintained. This fact leads us to argue, following Arad’s (1999a) proposal about stacking different types of *v*’s, that the agentive phrase is introduced by a higher functional verbal projection,  $v_{AG}$ , which is merged above the experiencer functional projection,  $v_{EXP}$ .

In conclusion, I maintain that the main structural differences between the agentive and the non-agentive readings of the Catalan experiencer verbs of the

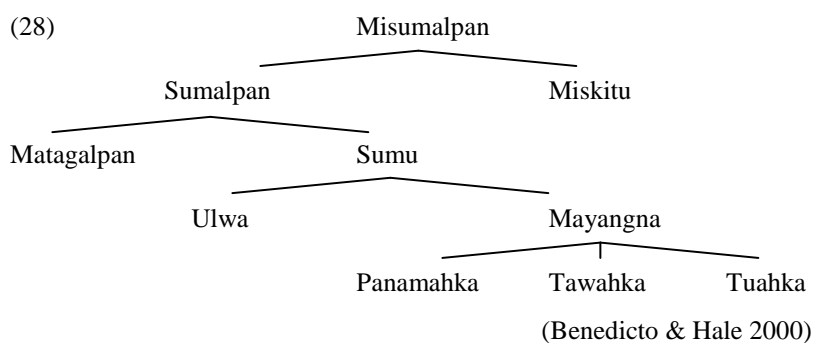


type *fer X* ‘to experience X’ are: i) the introduction in the agentive structure of an external agentive argument in the functional projection  $v_{AG}P$ , generated above  $v_{EXP}P$ ; and ii) the way in which of the source of experience phrase gets Case.

#### 4. Confirming the analysis? The case of Mayangna experiencer verbs

##### 4.1. An introduction to Mayangna experiencer verbs

Mayangna is a member of the isolate Misumalpan family, spoken in southeastern Honduras and northeastern Nicaragua by some 10,000 to 12,000 speakers (Benedicto & Hale 2000). Similar to other members of the Misumalpan family, Mayangna is a head-final language (SOV).



In a recent study, Charles & Torrez (2008) present an analysis of Mayangna impersonal verbs<sup>8</sup>. According to these authors, these Mayangna predicates, which can actually be described as experiencer verbs (as they express either a psychological or physical experience), can be classified in different categories depending on how the experience, the experiencer, and the source of experience are expressed.

A subset of this experiencer predicates is the result of the merging of an experience phrase with the conjugated form of the light verb *kalanin* ‘to give’. Observe the examples in (29) and (30).

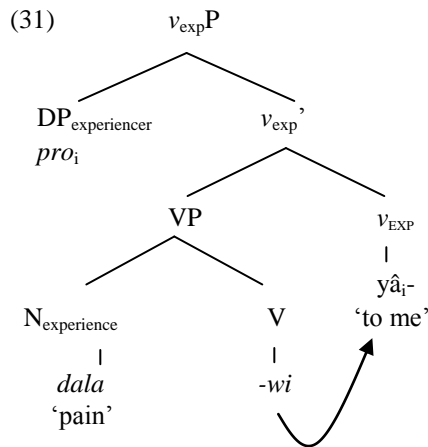
- (29) a. dala     kalawi  
 pain     DAT:3s-PRES3s  
 ‘to hurt’ (lit. ‘to give pain’)
- b. yuh     kalawi  
 hunger     DAT:3s-PRES3s  
 ‘to be hungry’ (lit. ‘to give hunger’)

<sup>8</sup> Charles & Torrez (2008) use the term ‘impersonal verb’ to refer to those verbs that do not inflect for Person.

- c. wakni      kalawi ‘to feel discomfort’  
discomfort    DAT:3s-PRES3s  
(lit. ‘to give discomfort’)
- d. sari      kalawi  
sadness    DAT:3s-PRES3s  
‘to be sad’ (lit. ‘to give sadness’)
- e. alasna    kalawi  
happiness    DAT:3s-PRES3s  
‘to be happy’ (lit. ‘to give happiness’)

- (30) Dala      yâwi.  
pain      DAT:1s-PRES3s  
‘I am hurting.’ (lit. ‘It gives pain to me.’)

The basic structure of this predicate is shown in the tree in (31).



Note that the structure above presents the same basic relationship between the different elements in the predicate as the one observed and described for Catalan. Again, I contend that the experience phrase is originated as sister of V while the experiencer phrase is projected in [Spec,  $v_{\text{EXP}}\text{P}$ ].

#### 4.2. Agentive experiencer verbs in Mayangna

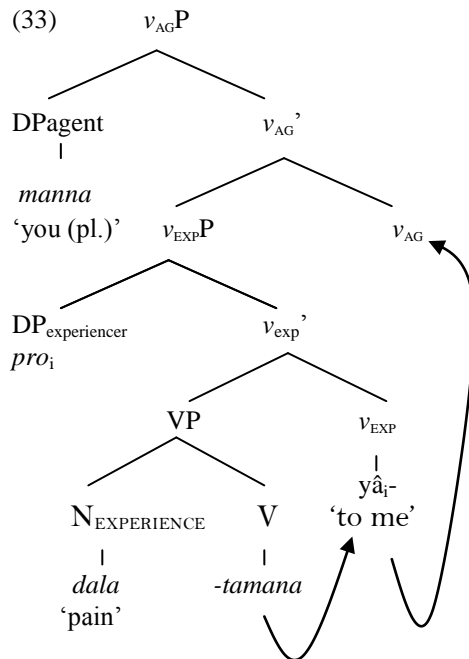
Similar to what is observed in the case of Catalan experiencer verbs (section 3), only one predicate of this subset of Mayangna experiencer predicates, *dala kalawi* ‘to hurt’, allows an agentive reading. It is worth noting that, in both Mayangna and Catalan, the experience that allows the agentive reading is ‘pain’ (*mal* in Catalan; *dala* in Mayangna), which gives further support to the idea of the type experience phrase playing a significant role in the possibility

of the agentive interpretation. Observe the contrast between the non-agentive sentence in (30), repeated below, and the agentive sentence in (32).

(30) *Dala yâwi.*  
 pain DAT:1s-PRES3s  
 ‘I am hurting.’ (lit. ‘It gives pain to me.’)

(32) *Manna dalâni yâtamana.*  
 PRON:2p pain-CS3s DAT:1s-PRES2p  
 ‘You (pl.) are hurting me.’

Building on the idea presented in the previous section, I argue that the agentive reading is the result of the introduction of an agentive functional projection,  $v_{AG}P$ . This agentive functional head is generated above  $v_{EXP}P$  (since the experiencer predicate is maintained), and is responsible for the introduction of the external, agentive argument (*manna* ‘you (pl.)’ in (32)). The resulting (agentive) experiencer structure is presented in (33).



In the structure above, the agentive argument is introduced by the functional head  $v_{AG}$ . If we assume movement of the verbal head to meet all the requirements of syntax, we obtain the observed surface structure, SOV, in which the agent precedes the object and the verb.

### 4.3. Summary

The Mayangna data presented in this section confirms the argument structure for experiencer predicates observed in Catalan. Agentive experiencer predicates are the result of the merging of a higher functional projection,  $v_{AG}P$ , which is responsible for the introduction of the agentive argument. This agentive projection is generated above the experiencer projection, since the experiencer reading of the predicate is maintained.

## 5. Summary and conclusions

In this paper I presented and analyzed experiencer predicates in both Catalan and Mayangna in an attempt to find crosslinguistic similarities that would indicate an underlying common structure for these predicates made available by UG. Following the introductory section 1, in section 2 I presented Catalan evidence that led to propose an experiencer structure, headed by a functional head,  $v_{EXP}$ . The additional data presented in section 3 provides evidence to claim that, in those instances in which an agentive reading is possible (given the necessary conditions, which will require further research), a higher projection is merged above  $v_{EXP}P$ ,  $v_{AG}P$ , which introduces the agentive phrase. This structural difference between the purely experiencer predicates and the agentive, experiencer predicates is further supported with the analysis of the Mayangna data presented in section 4. The experiencer in both Mayangna and Catalan is projected by  $v_{EXP}P$  and, when the agentive functional head,  $v_{AG}$ , is projected, the agentive phrase is introduced by it.

The analysis presented in this paper opens the door to further research. In future investigation, special focus has to be paid to the analysis of the argument structure of other experiencer predicates within the languages of this study and in their respective families. Also, the roles of the different experience phrases and events they represent should be the object of future research in an attempt to spot the features or values that allow or disallow an agentive interpretation.

### Glosses

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
AUX	Auxiliary particle
CS	Construct state
DAT	Dative
ERG	Ergative
INF	Infinitive
NEG	Negative particle

p	Plural
PPART	Past participle
PRES	Present
PRON	Pronoun
s	Singular

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