1. Introduction

- **Object Experiencer Psych-Verbs** (OEPVs, >400 in French) display at least two kinds of ambiguities.¹

  **Internal polysemy:** psychological verbs may have different meanings within the psychological domain.

  Agentive vs non-agentive reading (e.g. Ruwet (1972), Grimshaw (1990): some verbs like *encourager* (‘encourage’) or *ennuyer* (‘annoy/tease’) are said to have an agentive reading (the psychological change of state is induced intentionally) and a non-agentive one (the psychological change of state is induced accidentally or by an inanimate entity). Agent-oriented manner adverbs like *patiemment* (‘patiently’) or *activement* (‘actively’) pick up the first reading, and degree adverbs *profondément* (‘deeply’) picks up the second one (Ruwet (1995), Iwata (1995)):

  (1) Eve a (activement) encouragé/ennuyé Adam. (“agentive” reading)
  Eve actively encouraged/teased Adam.

  (2) Eve/cette histoire l’a (profondément) encouragé/encouragé. (“non-agentive” reading)
  Eve/this story deeply encouraged/annoyed him.

  This ambiguity only displays with a subset of OEPVs, namely those which are compatible with agent-oriented manner adverbs like *activement*.

  **External polysemy:** *déchirer*-verbs (‘tear apart’-verbs, cf. also *frapper*, ‘to strike’, *tuer* ‘to kill’, *choquer*, ‘to chock’...) have a first meaning in the physical domain (*déchirer_φ* denotes a physical change of state), and a second one in the psychological domain (*déchirer_ψ* denotes a psychological change of state; ambiguous verbs will be underlined under their psychological reading)

  (3) Pierre a déchiré_φ sa chemise.
  *Peter tore his shirt apart.*

  (4) En le quittant, Marie l’a déchirée_ψ.
  *In leaving him, Marie tore him apart.*

  Very often [but not always, cf. *démolir*, ‘demolish’], these verbs pass agentivity tests on their physical reading, but not on their psychological one:

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(5) OK Pierre m’a touchée φ gentiment.
    Pierre gently touched me.

(6) ??Il m’a gentiment touchée ψ avec des mots doux.
    He gently touched ψ me with sweet words.

(7) Il a choqué φ méchamment son verre contre le mien.
    He nastily clinked his glass against mine.

(8) #Il m’a choquée ψ méchamment. (OK in irrelevant quantitative reading only)
    He nastily shocked me.

2. Questions and plan

Questions addressed here:

- What are the semantical differences between déchirer ψ and déchirer φ? Why does only déchirer φ pass the agentivity tests? (section 3)
- Should we have one or two encourager-verbs? Semantical differences between encourager ag and encourager ¬ag? (section 4)

3. Déchirer ψ versus Déchirer φ

3.1. A previous analysis

Remark: “S” symbolizes the entity denoted by the subject, and “O” the entity denoted by the object.

In the spirit of Ruwet (1972), one could reduce the meaning of déchirer ψ to a metaphorical use of déchirer φ modulo two changes in the semantic roles:

- physical change of state → psychological change of state (through metaphor)
- S Agent → S Causer/Performer
- O Theme → O Experiencer

Translation in an event semantics:

(9) déchirer ψ \Rightarrow \lambda y \lambda x \lambda e \lambda e' [Performer(x, e) \land Cause(e, e') \land Become Tore Apart ψ(e') \land Experiencer(y, e')]

(10) déchirer φ \Rightarrow \lambda y \lambda x \lambda e \lambda e' [Agent/Performer(x, e) \land Cause(e, e') \land Become Tore Apart φ(e') \land Theme(y, e')]

According to this analysis, the fact that déchirer ψ does not display the properties of agentive verbs derives simply from the fact that S is not a real Agent. The idea is advocated by Di Desidero (1993) and van Voorst (1995) among others:

“Agents of [strike-verbs] cannot act with sufficient intent, volition and control to provoke the expected reaction of the Experiencer.”

(Di Desidero (1993), p. 18)
“We are often condemned to uncertainty as far as our real knowledge of other’s feelings is concerned. Given this uncertainty, it is difficult to imagine that we would be able to control these feelings” (van Voorst (1995), p. 22, my translation)

- Problems:
  1. No independent evidence that e.g. the Mover$_\phi$, but not the Mover$_\psi$, is a Controller
  2. So called “non-agentive” psych-verbs are acceptable in contexts which make clear that S is performing an action which triggers the psychological change of state:

(11) Pierre est intervenu dans la discussion. Il m’a frappé$_\psi$ par sa bêtise.
    Pierre intervened in the discussion. He stroke/amazed me by his stupidity.

3. Even when the context makes clear that S tries actively to trigger the result denoted by the verb (which is arguably not the case in (11)), the possibility to have an agent oriented manner adverb is not guaranteed:

(12) Le médecin m’a soigné attentivement.
    The doctor treated me patiently.

(13) ? ?Le médecin m’a guéri attentivement.
    The doctor cured me carefully.

Even more strikingly, some verbs like persuader, which are not compatible with these adverbs (cf. Mittwoch (1991), Piñón (1997) for English), strongly suggest that S is an Agent:

(14) Chomsky m’a convaincu de devenir linguiste.
    Chomsky convinced me to become a linguist.

(15) Chomsky m’a persuadé de devenir linguiste.
    Chomsky persuaded me to become a linguist.

Conclusion: the possibility for S to be an Agent is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the agent-oriented manner adverb to be acceptable.

3.2. Why déchirer$_\psi$ is lazier than déchirer$_\phi$

Hypothesis: déchirer$_\psi$ may have an Agent as its subject. Its does not differ from déchirer$_\phi$ only by the type of change of state it refers to (psychological vs physical): déchirer$_\psi$ and déchirer$_\phi$ do not perform exactly the same denotational job (déchirer$_\psi$ is “lazier” than déchirer$_\phi$).\(^3\)

\(^2\) Cure is analysed as an achievement by Ryle (1949), who distinguishes the achievement verbs like cure from what he calls task verbs like treat.

\(^3\) A idea similar to our Hyp. 2 is already proposed by Pustejovsky and Busa (1994) : “the head is defined as the most prominent subevent in the event structure of a predicate” (p. 164), “adverbial phrases not only can modify the entire event, but can also take scope over the individual subevents. In particular, heads seem to licence modification” (p. 165). However, these authors speak only in terms of saliency and do not explicitly explore the idea that what they call events with low saliency are in fact presupposed.
A verb can assert or presuppose an event (cf. Engelberg (2000) about some achievement verbs)

Hyp. 1:

- déchirer_φ asserts the causing event e and the resulting change of state e’
- déchirer_ψ asserts the resulting change of state e’, and leaves the task of referring to the causing event (i) to the previous sentence or (ii) to the subject. In case (i), e’ is classically presupposed, and in the case (ii), left aside here, the presupposition of e is « internal » (Solstad (2005, 2007)), in the sense that it is satisfied within the same sentence as the item triggering the presupposition.

Hyp. 2: In order to modify a presupposed event e, an adverb must also modify the asserted event e’ in the same way (it cannot modify the presupposed event alone).

I adopt here the type of representation used by Malink (2007) and Piñón (2007), where the top formula of the two-dimensional array corresponds to the assertion and the bottom formula to the lexical presupposition, as suggested in (16).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Assertion} & \quad [\quad \text{Presupposition} \quad ] \\
\end{align*}
\]

(16)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dèchirer}_\psi & \Rightarrow \lambda y \lambda x \lambda e \left[ \text{Become Tore Apart}(e) \land \text{Exp.}(y,e) \right] \\
\end{align*}
\]

(17)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dèchirer}_\phi & \Rightarrow \lambda y \lambda x \lambda e’ \exists x’ [\text{Agent/Performer}(x,e’) \land \text{Cause}(e’,e) \land \text{Become Tore Apart}(e) \land \text{Theme}(y,e)] \\
\end{align*}
\]

(18)

Hyp. 1 (so-called “non agentive” psych-verbs presuppose the causing process) is not completely new: “the distinctive character of [Object Experiencer] psych-verbs lies in the reduced saliency of the causative process” (Iwata (1995), p. 95).  

Presuppositions. Several authors have proposed the idea that achievement verbs like win or find lexically presuppose the action of S (Engelberg (2000), Zybatow (2004), Martin (2006), Malink (2007), Piñón (2007)), and assert only the outcome of this action. The idea that these verbs presuppose the action of S is supported by the fact that the existence of such an action is preserved under negation:

(19) Mary didn’t win the game.
\[\rightarrow_p \text{Mary participated in the game.}\]

(20) Peter didn’t find the key.
\[\rightarrow_p \text{Peter was looking for the key, or did something that could have made him find the key.}\]

\[\text{Note that on this view, } \text{dèchirer}_\psi \text{-verbs semantically resemble unaccusative verbs if we take into account their asserted component only and are plainly causative verbs only if we take also into account their presupposed part (this can be linked to the intuition that some Object Experiencer Psych-Verbs are unaccusative, cf. Belletti and Rizzi (1988)).}\]
• Observation: \textit{frapper}_\psi \text{ differs from } \textit{frapper}_\phi \text{ in that the former also presupposes the action of } S, \text{ if any:}\footnote{Cf. also Martin (2006).}

(21) Pierre ne m’a pas frappée_\phi.
\textit{Pierre didn’t strike me.}
\not\rightarrow_p \text{ Pierre did something.}

(22) Pierre ne m’a pas frappée_\psi.
\textit{Pierre didn’t strike me.}
\not\rightarrow_p \text{ Pierre did something.}

(23) Pierre ne m’a pas touchée_\phi.
\textit{Pierre didn’t touch me.}
\not\rightarrow_p \text{ Pierre did something.}

(24) Pierre ne m’a pas touchée_\psi.
\textit{Pierre didn’t touch me.}
\not\rightarrow_p \text{ Pierre did something.}

In the same way, ‘guérir/ persuader’ (\textit{cure/persuade}) [not compatible either with Agent oriented manner adverbs] seem to presuppose (\rightarrow_p) the occurrence of the event that is asserted by ‘soigner/ essayer de persuader’ (\textit{treat/ try to persuade}):

(25) Pierre n’a pas essayé de me persuader.
\textit{Pierre didn’t try to persuade me.}
\not\rightarrow_p \text{ Pierre did something.}

(26) Pierre ne m’a pas persuadé.
\textit{Pierre didn’t persuade me.}
\rightarrow_p \text{ Pierre did something.}

(27) Le médecin ne l’a pas soignée. Elle n’a pas pu aller à l’hôpital.
\textit{The doctor didn’t treat her. She couldn’t go to the hospital.}
\not\rightarrow_p \text{ The doctor did something.}

(28) Le médecin ne l’a pas guérie. ?Elle n’a pas pu aller à l’hôpital.
\textit{The doctor didn’t cure her. She couldn’t go to the hospital.}
\rightarrow_p \text{ The doctor did something.}

This difference in the informational structure of the two \textit{frapper} is related to the difference in the way we commonly use them in the discourse. Whereas \textit{frapper}_\phi is commonly used to introduce a new action in the common ground, \textit{frapper}_\psi is not:

(29) Tu sais quoi? Hier, Pierre m’a frappé!
\textit{You know what? Yesterday, Pierre stroke me!}

(30) #Tu sais quoi? Hier, Pierre m’a frappé par sa stupidité hier!
\textit{You know what? Yesterday, Pierre stroke me by his stupidity!}
For instance, (30) forms an strange discourse, because precisely, frapper is oddly used to introduce a new action, whereas normally, it is used to comment on an action (whose nature can be totally unspecified) previously introduced in the discourse:


Agent-oriented manner adverbs. According to the proposed analysis, we do not have to stipulate that the subject of déchirer (or guérir) is never an Agent to explain their incompatibility with agent-oriented manner adverbs. Following Hyp. 2, the unacceptability of toucher gentiment (touch gently may be explained the following way):

(5) OK Pierre m’a touchée gentiment. Pierre gently touched me.

(6) ??Il m’a touchée gentiment avec des mots doux. He gently touched me with sweet words.

(7) Il a choqué méchamment son verre contre le mien. He nastily clinked his glass against mine.

(8) #Il m’a choquée méchamment. (OK in irrelevant quantitative reading only) He nastily shocked me.

In (6) and (8), the adverbs want to access the action of S. However, to do so, they should also be able to apply to the (asserted) resulting psychological process. But this change of state cannot be nasty or gentle (because arguably, the Experiencer cannot control every part of them).

Locative adverbials. The same hypothesis can also account for the fact that déchirer is not compatible with locative adverbials:

(32) Il a déchiré sa chemise dans le train. He tore his skirt in the train.

(33) * Il m’a déchiré dans le train. He tore me up in the train.

The unacceptability of (33) can be explained as followed: in order to modify the action of S, the locative adverbial should first apply to the psychological change of state. But we normally do not spatially localise our emotions:

(34) The tearing up of Peter’s shirt took place in the train.

(35) #My tearing up took place in the train.

Note however that locative adverbs are much more acceptable once they are dislocated:

(36) Pierre m’a déchiré, dans le train.

It can be explained if we assume that contrary to non-dislocated adverbs, dislocated adverbs may apply to events which are introduced in previous discourse (as the action of Pierre in (36)).
Durative adverbials. The proposed analysis also explains why durative adverbials do not trigger the same interpretation when applied to physical verbs or to their psychological counterparts:

(37) Marie lui a fait une déclaration d’amour. Elle l’a touché quelques minutes et puis il s’est rendu compte qu’elle se moquait de lui.
Marie made him a declaration of love. She touched him for some minutes and then he realised that she was making fun of him.

(38) Marie l’a touchée quelques minutes.
Marie touched him during some minutes.

In (37), the action of S (the declaration of love) may last 10 seconds only: the durative adverbial applies to the change of state. However, in (38), the adverbial applies to the action (Marie must touch the object during some minutes).

Nominalisations. If we suppose that nominalisations denote the same kind of events as the verbal root from which they are derived, we also predict correctly that “lazy” verbs (which only refer to the result and not to the causing event) like déchirer\(_\psi\) generate result nominals (referring to the resulting event only), while “hard-working” verbs (which also refer to the causing event) like déchirer\(_\phi\) generate event nominals (referring to the causing event too):

(39) J’ai assisté au déchirement de la chemise de Pierre. (at least the causing event is witnessed)
I witnessed the tearing apart of Peter’s shirt.

(40) J’ai assisté au déchirement de Pierre. (only the caused event is witnessed)
I witnessed the tearing apart of Peter.

(41) J’ai assisté au traitement de Pierre. (at least the causing event is witnessed)
I witnessed the treatment of Pierre.

(42) J’ai assisté à la guérison de Pierre. (only the caused event is witnessed)
I witnessed the curing of Pierre.

Conclusions. According to the proposed analysis, déchirer\(_\psi\) differs from déchirer\(_\phi\) not only by the type of change of state it refers to (psychological vs physical), but also by its informational structure.

4. Two encourager

Plan:

– Evidence in favour of the idea that the « agentive » encourager (encourager\(_1\)) and the « non-agentive » one (encourager\(_2\)) are two different predicates

– Show that

  • encourager\(_1\) \simeq déchirer\(_\phi\)
  • encourager\(_2\) \simeq déchirer\(_\psi\)
4.1. Some facts

Facts 1. A first striking difference between causative psych-verbs which have an agentive reading (encourager) and causative physical verbs (démolir) is that the former only can be used twice in a conjunction of two sentences with co-referential arguments without generating real redundancy:

(43) J'ai été activement encouragée₁ par Pierre, et j'ai été effectivement encouragée₂. (non redundant)
I have been actively encouraged by Pierre, and at the end I was encouraged.

(44) #Le bateau a été activement démoli, et il a été effectivement démoli. (redundant)
The boat has been actively demolished, and at the end it was demolished.

Fact 2. With verbs V like encourage, it is possible to have a non-redundant conjunction of the type x did V and succeeded to V, which is hard to explain if the same predicate is used in the two assertions, since succeed to V entails P. This is not possible either with a causative physical verb:

(45) Il m’a encouragé, et il a réussi. (non-redundant)
He encouraged me, and he succeeded.

(46) #Pierre a tué Marie, et il a réussi. (redundant)
Pierre killed Marie, and he succeeded.

Facts 3. It is not impossible to use encourager in a positive sentence followed by its negation without generating a contradiction, which again suggests that there are two encourager:

(47) Il ne m’a pas (activement) encouragé₁ à partir. Mais tout de même, il m’y a encouragé₂, en disant cela.
He didn’t (actively) encourage me to leave. But, nevertheless, he encouraged me to do so, in saying that.

For instance, (47) can be used in a situation where S did not “actively/ objectively” encourage O, but nevertheless “passively/ subjectively” encouraged him.

The ambiguity between the conative and the resultative readings cannot be exploited with physical causative verbs, as illustrated by the redundancy of (46) or the unacceptability of (48).⁶

(48) #Il ne l’a pas (activement) tué. Mais tout de même, il l’a tué, en faisant cela.
#He didn’t (actively) kill him. But nevertheless, he killed him, in doing that.

⁶Arguably, this difference between physical and psychological causative verbs simply reflects a difference in complexity of the two corresponding ontologies: whereas the psychological domain is stratified between (theoretically independent) “external” changes of state (which affect us only as participants of an interaction) and “internal” ones (which affect our private emotional life), the physical domain doesn’t allow for such disjunction; for instance, it’s not empirically possible to be in the resulting state of an “active” killing without being in the state that would have been caused by a “passive” killing.
We can explain these facts if we assume that these verbs are ambiguous:

i. the 'conative' predicate *encourager*₁ is used to describe an action \( a₁ \) consisting of trying to encourage. The passive of this conative predicate *être encouragé*₁ only denotes the change of state which consists of being the Theme of an attempt to encourage.

ii. the 'resultative' predicate *encourager*₂ is used to describe [in fact, presupposes, see below] an action \( a₂ \) of any type, causing somebody to feeling really encouraged. The passive of this resultative predicate *être encouragé*₂ denotes the change of state which consists of feeling really encouraged.

- Only \( a₂ \) affects the internal emotional life of the Experiencer; \( a₁ \) only affects him as a participant to a social interaction.

- The conative and resultative versions of verbs like *encourager* do not have the same discursive properties:
  - Negative sentences containing a conative predicate do not necessarily presuppose \( \rightarrow_P \) the occurrence of any action of S (cf. (49)).
  - Negative sentences containing a resultative predicate suggest that we have in mind a certain action of S which could have triggered a certain change of state \( e₂ \) (cf. (50)):

(49) Pierre ne m’a pas encouragé₁. (conative)  
*Pierre didn’t encourage₁ me.*  
\( \neg \rightarrow_P \) Pierre has participated to an event which could have encouraged me.

(50) Pierre ne m’a pas encouragé₂. (accidental)  
*Pierre didn’t encourage₂ me.*  
\( \rightarrow_P \) Pierre has participated to an event which could have encouraged me.

4.2. Semantic analysis

I propose to associate a semantic representation similar to the one associated to physical causative verbs (like *décirer*₁) to the agentive *encourager* the (cf. (51), whereas the non-agentive *encourager* will have a semantic representation similar to the one we advocated verbs like *décirer*₂:

(51) \( encourager₁ \Rightarrow \lambda y \lambda x \lambda e' \exists e [\text{Agent}(x,e') \land \text{Cause}(e',e) \land \text{Be Encouraged}_1(e) \land \text{Exp.}(y,e)] \)

(52) \( encourager₂ \Rightarrow \lambda y \lambda x \lambda e \left[ \text{Be Encouraged}_2(e) \land \text{Exp.}(y,e) \right] \)

5. Conclusions

- Causative psychological verbs can have more meanings than causative physical verbs with whom they are often compared.
- A verb may exhibit some semantic properties \( P \) (e.g. non-agentivity) if one only takes into account the eventualities it *asserts*, and the semantical properties \( \neg P \) (e.g. agentivity) if one also takes into account the eventualities it *presupposes*.
- Investigating further the lexical pragmatics of a verb is a good way to understand better its polysemy.
Références


