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On patient-beneficiary accusative constructions¹

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Abstract

In this squib, we address a group of Spanish ditransitive constructions that, we argue, do not form a natural class with double object configurations nor prepositional constructions of the dative alternation. We call it patient-beneficiary accusative constructions because, as we show, the accusative argument receives two θ -roles: patient and beneficiary. Our account for these sentences explains its particular syntactic behavior; especially, the fact that their patient-beneficiary argument can be passivized whereas Spanish does not allow indirect or secondary passives of ditransitive predicates.

Keywords: argument structure, patient-beneficiary accusative constructions, Spanish ditransitive constructions, dative alternation, secondary or indirect passives.

1. Introduction

It is largely accepted in the minimalist framework that there are two kinds of ditransitive constructions in Spanish (Masullo 1992, Demonte 1995 and Cuervo 2003, among others)² that differ from each other in allowing or not the presence of the dative clitic doubling the goal argument:

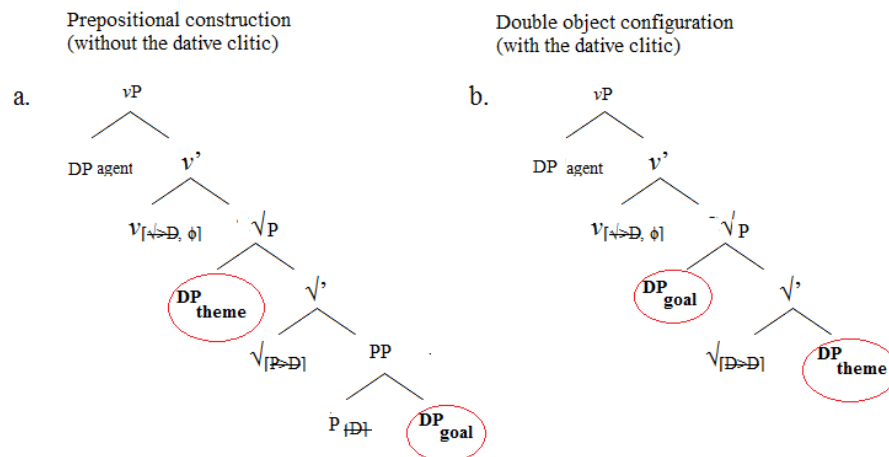
- (1) a. Juan obsequió vino al profesor.
Juan regaled wine to-the professor.
- b. Juan le obsequió vino al profesor.
Juan CL.DAT regaled wine to-the professor.
'Juan regaled wine to the professor'

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² Yet, this is not an uncontroversial statement. See, Pujalte 2013 for discussion.

According to these authors, when the dative clitic is present, (i) the goal argument is a DP rather than a PP, and (ii) the goal DP c-commands the theme DP. That is, they describe a dative alternation between a prepositional construction (PC) and a double object configuration (DOC) similar to the phenomenon described for English (Larson 1988, among others) for the alternation in: *John gave a book to Mary* versus *John gave Mary a book*. This alternation in Spanish can be schematized, roughly, as follows:

(2)



The aim of this article is to account for a third type of Spanish ditransitive constructions, illustrated in (3), which is not part of the dative alternation.

- (3) Juan (lo) obsequió con vino al profesor.
 Juan (CL.ACC) regaled with wine DOM-the professor
 ‘Juan regaled the professor with wine’.

We claim that (3) is different from the sentences in (1) because the DP *al profesor* is not a dative DP (as in both 1.a and 1.b) but an accusative one, and bears two θ -roles, beneficiary and patient. Besides, the DP *vino* is licensed not by the verbal root, but by a preposition. Given these properties, we call this construction the *patient-beneficiary accusative construction* (PBC from now on). Other predicates compatible with this pattern are: *convidar* (‘to invite’) and *adjudicar* (‘to award’), among others.

This squib is organized as follows. First, we present the patient-beneficiary accusative constructions, and show that the accusative DP receives an extra beneficiary role after receiving the theme role from the verbal root (Section 2.1). Then, we provide a derivation for this

construction (Section 2.2). In section 3, we account for the possibility of passivization of the patient-beneficiary argument in this kind of constructions in a natural way, as a welcoming consequence of the analysis exposed in the previous section. Finally, in section 4, we present some concluding remarks and final considerations.

2. Patient-Beneficiary Constructions

2.1 *The extra beneficiary role*

The construction in (3) seems similar to the so-called *fulfilling construction* (Levin 1993), that was already identified in English by Jespersen (1927) and analyzed by Channon (1982), Pesetsky (1995), Hale & Keyser (2002), among others:

- (4) a. The judge presented a prize to the winner. (Regular ditransitive)
 b. The judge presented the winner with a prize. (Fulfilling)

However, this fulfilling construction does not have the same set of properties than the construction we are dealing with in this squib. The main difference between the English fulfilling construction and the PBC is the impossibility, in the latter, of adding an overt beneficiary argument (5.b).

- (5) a. Cuba supplies Nicaragua with arms for El Salvador. [Channon 1982:277]
 b. Juan obsequió al profesor con vino (*para su mujer).
 Juan regaled DOM-the professor with wine for his wife

Moreover, this extra beneficiary argument is accepted in other ditransitive constructions in Spanish. As it is pointed out from the sentences in (6) below, the DOC (6.a) and the PC (6.b), apart from some aspectual details, preserve the meaning of the accusative-beneficiary construction (5.b), however, the former does accept an overt beneficiary argument. This fact suggests that this difference is a syntactic issue rather than a semantic one.

- (6) a. Juan le obsequió vino al profesor (para su mujer)
 Juan CL-DAT regaled wine to the professor for his wife.
 b. Juan obsequió vino al profesor (para su mujer)
 Juan regaled wine to the professor (for his wife).

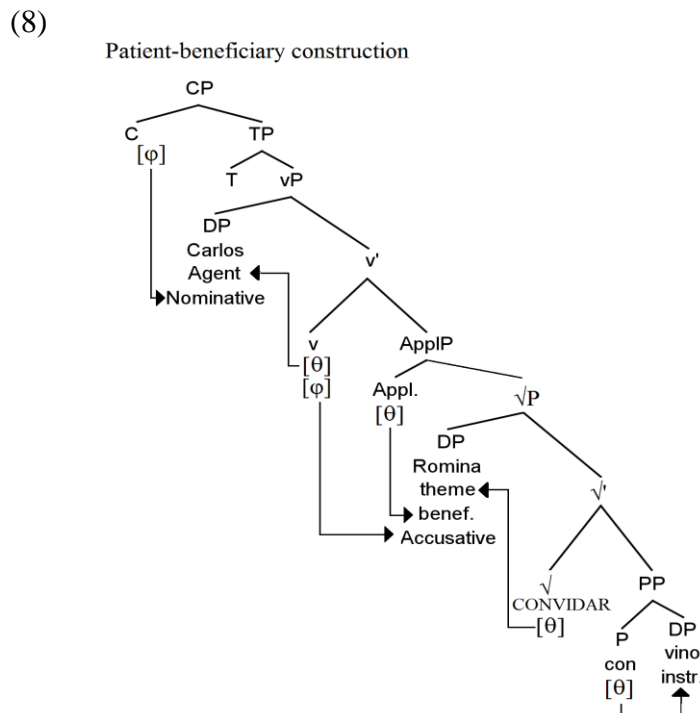
We propose that this phenomenon is a consequence of to the fact that the direct object in (5.b)

receives an extra beneficiary role from an Applicative Phrase after checking the patient role against the root, thus, blocking the presence of any other DP with the same role. In the next section, we give a syntactic account for this construction.

2.2 The Analysis

In the previous sections, we argued that constructions, like (5.b) above, are a particular class of ditransitive constructions in having an accusative DP that receives the patient and beneficiary roles. We take (7) as an example of this kind of constructions and sketch the proposed structure in (8):

- (7) Carlos convidó a Romina con vino.
 Carlos invited DOM Romina with wine.
 ‘Carlos invited Romina with wine’.



In (8) $\sqrt{}$ merges first with a PP and then with a DP. When $\sqrt{}$ merges with the DP, assigns it the theme role. Then, the $\sqrt{}$ P merges with a high Applicative Phrase (Pylkkäinen 2002) that has a beneficiary role to assign.³ It is orthogonal to our discussion if θ -roles are assigned in a long-

³ This approach is in the lines of Pujalte's (2009) generalization that beneficiary roles in Spanish are always introduced by Applicative Phrases or *para* preposition.

distance fashion (Saab 2015) or via internal merge (Sheehan 2012). However, either way, the DP *vino* within the PP is not available for thematic relations, as it is no longer active (Chomsky 2000) in the derivation.⁴ Therefore, the DP *Romina* is the only DP accessible for thematic assignment, and receives the beneficiary role. Then, when *v* merges, the patient-beneficiary DP receives accusative case via Agree (Chomsky 2000, 2001) and is no longer available for thematic assignment, so it cannot receive the agent role, which is discharged over the DP *Carlos* that merges in Spec.v. Finally, when C enters the derivation, the only DP that is still active, *Carlos*, receives Nominative case via Agree.

This derivation explains the impossibility of adding a syntactic constituent introduced by *para* preposition in PBC: there is already a constituent with that role. It also explains, as we show in detail in the next section, why there are passive voices of the beneficiary argument of this kind of ditransitive constructions, if Spanish lacks indirect or oblique passives.

3. An account for passivization of the beneficiary-patient argument

Although dative alternation in English and Spanish behaves similarly in many respects, as we already posited in Section 1, they differ in relation to passivization. English allows passives like (9), in which the passivized constituent is the goal argument.

- (9) a. Mary gave a book to John (PC in our terms)
- b. Mary gave John a book (DOC)
- c. John was given a book. (Passive)

This phenomenon has been characterized by Postal (1986: 82) as a *secondary passive* and described, in Arc Pair Grammar terms, as a process consisted of i) deep subject's demotion, ii) promotion of indirect object to a direct object position, and iii) promotion of the derived direct object to a subject position. This approach conceives (9) as a passivization from a DOC. Larson (1988), within the GB framework, calls this construction *indirect passive* and conceives it as a straightforward passivization of the goal argument of a PC (we still call it PC, although he

⁴ As Kayne (1981) pointed out, prepositions in Spanish assigns inherent case to its complement. Therefore, a DP within a PP is not active for A-movement (Chomsky 2000). This fact has the following implications: (i) in Sheehan's (2012) approach, the DP *vino* cannot move in order to merge with the Appl. Head; (ii) under Saab's (2015) theory, a DP has to be active to receive a θ -role in a long-distance fashion, and it is not the case for the DP *vino* in (8) because, as pointed out above, it has already received its case from P.

interprets the goal argument as a dative NP with a dative marker *to*). In a nutshell, there are two different approaches to these passives: the DOC-based analysis (Postal 1986) and the PC-based analysis (Larson 1988).

As for DOC-based approaches, the primary object (*John* in 9.b) is the only argument available for passivization. This follows because the primary object of English DOCs is available for structural case as it has not checked its case feature yet (i.e, it is active in terms of Chomsky 2000), so it can receive nominative as it is required for passivisation. Conversely, the secondary object (*a book* in 9.b) enters the derivation with accusative inherent case (Larson 1988, among others), i.e., not active for a probe-goal ϕ -relation.⁵ In a PC-based approach, instead, we need to assume that English allows for the passivisation of the goal-active argument, meaning, in Larson terms, that the case marker *to* (or fully specified preposition in other approaches) is removed of the NP goal in order to render it available for probe-goal relations.

Although highly productive in English, Spanish rejects passives like (9), as can be seen in (10) below.

- (10) *Juan fue dado un libro.
Juan was given a book

Under our approach, this contrast gets a straightforward explanation for both DOC-based and PC-based analysis.

In Spanish, on the one hand, there is not double accusative (structural and inherent) in DOC. Instead, the theme argument checks accusative (structural) case and the goal argument checks dative case, as the morphology (*le/lo*) indicates. Therefore, the impossibility of passivizing the goal in Spanish DOC is due to its dative inherent case status. On the other hand, the data seem to show that Spanish does not allow removing the dative marker or the preposition of a PP. Moreover, it does not allow the complement of the preposition to enter A-relations because, as shown by Kayne 1981, in languages that disallow preposition stranding, like French (and also Spanish) prepositions assign inherent case.

⁵ The primary object passivization is predicted, along with ungrammaticality of passivizing the secondary objects, as proved by the very rare status of so-called “tertiary passives” (Postal, 1986).

Unlike the constructions in the dative alternation, PBC in Spanish does accept (as the fulfilling construction in English) passivization (11).

- (11) El plenarista fue obsequiado con vino.
 The plenarist was regaled with wine

There are some arguments that lead us to think that passives like (11) derive from PBC, rather than from other ditransitive constructions.

First, as we already mentioned, secondary/indirect passives in Spanish are not productive, suggesting that the passives in (11) result from a different mechanism.

Second, these passives systematically disallow an extra beneficiary adjunct (12). As shown before, this is also the case with PBC (5.b) but not with PC (6.b) or DOC (6.a).

- (12) El plenarista fue obsequiado con vino (*para su mujer).
 The plenarist was regaled with wine for his wife.

Third, these passives always alternate with a PBC, but they not always do so with a Spanish DOC or PC, as the examples in (13) show.

- (13) (a) Juan fue recompensado con café y medialunas.
 Juan was rewarded with coffee and croissants.
 (b) Lo recompensaron con café y medialunas.
 CL-ACC rewarded with coffee and croissants
 ‘They rewarded him with coffee and croissants’.
 (c) *Le recompensaron café y medialunas a Juan.
 CL-DAT rewarded coffee and croissants DOM Juan

As far as passivization is concerned, this different syntactic behavior of DOC and PC, on the one hand, and PBC, on the other, is due to their configurational properties. As explained above, the goal argument in DOC and PC cannot be passivized in Spanish, as opposed to English, because of its inherent case status. In PBC, the patient-beneficiary argument, in contrast, receives structural accusative case from a ϕ complete v , therefore being able to check nominative instead when it is combined with a ϕ defective v in a passive environment.

Thus, as shown in this section, our analysis of PBC not only offer a syntactic account on these constructions and its particularities in comparison to other ditransitive sentences, but also gives an explanation on its differential behavior on passivization.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this article, we analyzed a Spanish ditransitive construction that we call *patient-beneficiary accusative construction*. In particular, we showed that it differs from Double object configuration and Prepositional construction of the dative alternation in two different respects: i) they reject an overt beneficiary constituent introduced by *para*, and ii) one of their arguments is licensed by a preposition rather than the verbal root. We also showed that this construction is similar, but not identical, to the English Fulfilling construction, which -as DOC and PC in Spanish and English- does accept a beneficiary introduced by the proper preposition. Taking into account this particularity, we proposed an analysis of these patient-beneficiary constructions in which the single argument subcategorized by the verbal root receives both patient and beneficiary roles, thus blocking the presence of another argument with the same role. In order to hold that analysis, we assume a weak locality view on thematic assignment that allows an argument to receive a θ -role from a thematic head as long as the argument is active and local with respect to that head (Saab 2015). Moreover, our approach also accounts for the possibility of passivization of that patient-beneficiary argument in these constructions, even though Spanish lacks secondary or indirect passives. The patient-beneficiary argument in PBC, under our analysis, is an active DP available for probe-goal ϕ -relations, receiving accusative case from a fully specified v in active sentences, or nominative case from C in passive sentences with a ϕ -defective v . If our analysis is on the right track, then, patient-beneficiary accusative sentences are not included in dative alternation, but form a different natural class within ditransitive constructions in Spanish.

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