

## Dative case, prepositions, and argument structure in Spanish

Spanish dative constructions have been widely regarded as equivalent to English double object constructions (Demonte 1995; Bleam 1999; Cuervo 2003). C-command asymmetries are observed in an alternation-like pattern, with the dative clitic being responsible for it:

- (1) a. \**Juan entregó una foto de sí misma a María.*  
Juan handed a picture of herself to María  
b. *Juan le entregó una foto de sí misma a María.*  
Juan CL.DAT handed a picture of herself to María  
'Juan handed María a picture of herself.'

Cuervo (2003) assumes a Low Applicative structure à la Pylkkänen (2002) for dative clitic structures like (1b), including those in which the dative encodes a beneficiary (2a), a location (2b) or a possessor (2c) rather than a goal/recipient:

- (2) a. *Juan le construyó un mausoleo al emperador.*  
Juan CL.DATbuilt a mausoleum to.the emperor  
'Juan built the Emperor a mausoleum.'  
b. *Juan le colocó cortinas al salón.*  
Juan CL.DAT placed curtains to.the living.room  
'Juan fitted the living room with curtains'.  
c. *Juan le rompió la bici a María.*  
Juan CL.DATbroke the bike to Mary  
'Juan broke María's bike'.

Pujalte (2009) notes, however, that not all the sentences in (1) and (2) behave alike. They respond differently to a battery of tests, including nominalisation (3) and passivisation (4):

- (3) a. *La entrega de la foto a María.*  
the handing of the picture to María  
b. \**La construcción del mausoleo al emperador.*  
the construction of.the mausoleum to the emperor  
c. \**La colocación de cortinas al salón.*  
the placement of curtains to.the living.room  
d. \**La rotura de la bici a María.*  
the breaking of the bike to Mary  
(4) a. *A María le fue entregada una foto.*  
to María CL.DAT was handed a picture  
'Mary was handed a picture'.  
b. \**A María le fue rota la bici.*  
to María CL.DAT was broken the bike  
'María's bike was broken'.

These results lead her to distinguish between what she calls "core datives" (i.e. those appearing with *bona fide* triadic verbs), which are both selected for by the main verb optionally featuring the clitic, and "non-core" datives, which are introduced by a Pylkkänen-style Appl head hosting the dative clitic and adding an argument to an otherwise dyadic verb. Building on Marantz's (1991) case hierarchy, Pujalte considers the dative case assigned by Appl to be a "dependent" case which needs to be licensed in a nominative assignment environment, preventing non-core datives from appearing in nominalisations and passive. Core datives are allowed because the dative case assigned by V is a "lexical" case.

However, this proposal does not account for the c-command asymmetries displayed by "core" dative verbs: if *entregar* and *entregarle* project the same structure, the facts in (1) remain unexplained. In addition, the syntactic distinction between core and non-core datives is

not as clear-cut as Pujalte’s analysis predicts, since beneficiary and some locative dative verbs do allow passivisation:

- (5) a. *Al emperador le fue construido un mausoleo.*  
 to.the emperor CL.DAT was built a mausoleum  
 ‘The Emperor was built a mausoleum’.
- b. *Al animal le fue colocado un collar satelital.*  
 to.the animal CL.DAT was placed a collar satellite  
 ‘The animal was fitted with a satellite collar’.

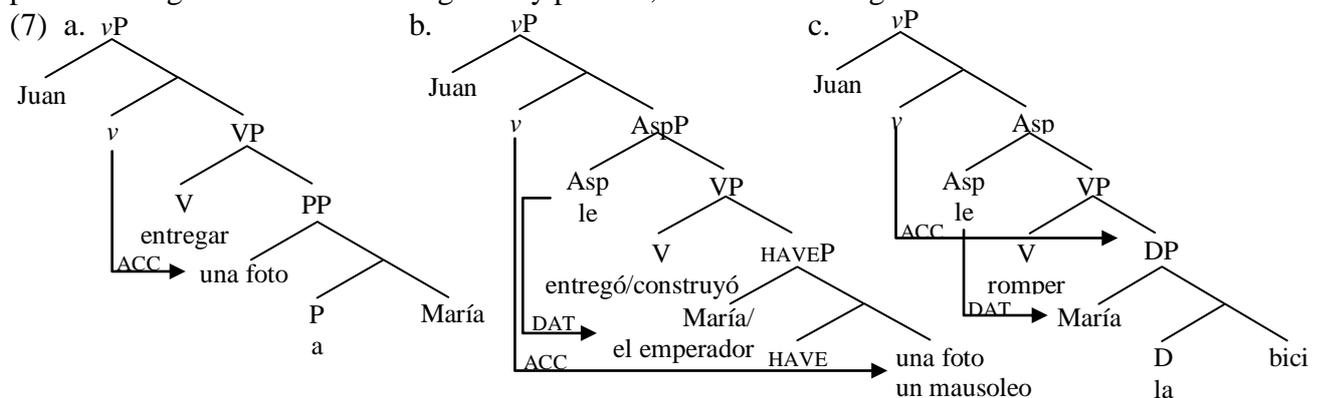
From the semantic point of view, only goal, beneficiary, and locative imply a transfer of possession of any kind: handing a picture, building a mausoleum or installing and antivirus result in Mary having the picture, the Emperor having a mausoleum, and the animal having a satellite collar. Conversely, breaking a bike does not result in Mary (not) having a bike; it encodes a change of state undergone by the bike, its possession remaining unaffected.

The interaction between the tests of nominalisation and passive and the semantic interpretation of the structure gives a tripartite distinction of Spanish datives:

(6) Test	<i>entregar</i>	<i>construir/colocar</i>	<i>romper</i>
Nominalisation	✓	✗	✗
Passive	✓	✓/?	✗
Change of possession	✓	✓	✗

This distinction can be accounted for if a finer-grained argument structure is proposed:

1. Verbs of the *entregar*-type display an alternation akin to English dative alternation. The non-doubling variant, equivalent to the *to*-variant in English, encodes a locative resultative construction headed by the preposition *a*: this variant can be nominalised, as Spanish locative constructions generally can. The doubled construction, equivalent to English DO, contains a possessive resultative phrase (Harley 2002) which features argument inversion (accounting for the c-command facts in (1)); the clitic heads an aspectual projection Asp (cf. Bleam 1999) responsible for the affected interpretation and structural dative assignment, spelled out as *a*.
2. *Construir/colocar*-type verbs only combine with the possessive resultative, therefore lacking a prepositional variant with *a*. Being a structural case marker, *a* cannot appear in the nominal construction; however, actual prepositions such as *para* ‘for’ and *en* ‘on’ are allowed.
3. *Romper*-type verbs do not combine with the possessive resultative construction, hence the lack of transfer-of-possession interpretation. They select for a DP internal argument containing a possessor, which can undergo “possessor raising” (Landau 1999). This DP-internal possessor argument cannot be targeted by passive, as it is not an argument of the event.



**References:** Demonte, V. 1995. Datives in Spanish. *Probus* 7; Bleam, T. 1999. *Spanish and the syntax of clitic doubling*. PhD diss., U. Delaware.; Cuervo, C. 2003. *Datives at Large*. PhD Diss., MIT; Barss, A. & H. Lasnik. 1986. A note on anaphora and DO. *LI* 17; Pylkkänen, L. 2002. *Introducing Arguments*. PhD Diss., MIT. Pujalte, M. 2009. *Condiciones sobre la introducción de argumentos*. MA Diss, U. Comahue. Marantz, A. 1991. Case and Licencing. In *Proceedings of ESCOL 9*. Harley, H. 2002. Possession and the double object construction. *Linguistic Variation Yearbook* 2; Landau, I. 1999. Possessor raising and the structure of VP. *Lingua* 107.