

A syntactic analysis of Romanian Ditransitives

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1. Problem and aim. This paper discusses Romanian ditransitive constructions focusing on the intervention effects which seem to arise when a differentially marked direct object (DOMed DO) co-occurs with an indirect object DP. At the same time, we aim at providing a derivational account for these constructions, which may accommodate two apparently conflicting sets of results obtained by means of experimental undertaking. More specifically, while the findings in one of the experiments show that Theme-Goal configurations with DOMed DOs are sharply degraded as opposed to their counterparts with bare DOs (irrespective of whether the IO is clitic doubled (CDed) or not), the other experimental study attests a difference in acceptability between constructions with DOMed DOs and bare IOs and constructions with DOMed DOs and clitic doubled IOs, showing that the former pass acceptability tests while the latter get rejected. We claim that a derivational analysis in the tradition of Larson (1988, 2014), Harada & Larson (2009), a.o. can account for these facts and propose that the different experimental results boil down to a reanalysis of the bare IO as a DP instead of a PP as it should be the case.

2. Background. Diaconescu and Rivero (2007), the most extensive study on Romanian ditransitives, argue in favour of an alternative projection account, assimilating Theme-Goal structures either with the Prepositional Object Construction (when the Goal DP is bare) or with the Double Object Construction (when the IO is clitic doubled) in English. Crucially, they assign two different configurations to the two variants, such that in the Theme-Bare Goal structure the DP_{Theme} c-commands the DP_{Goal} and, conversely, in the Theme-CDed IO the IO is said to c-command the DO.

- (1) a. PDC: [V oiceP DP_{Agent} V oice $[_{\text{VPV}}$ [PP DP_{Theme} P DP_{Goal}]]]
b. DOC: [VoiceP DP_{Agent} Voice $[_{\text{VPV}}$ [AppIP DP_{Goal} [clAppI] [VP V DP_{Theme}]]]] D&R 2007: 219-220

Their analysis, however, makes a number of predictions which do not account for all the available data. It is for instance argued that a bare IO may not bind into a DO, contrary to fact: A closer look at the Romanian binding data shows that a) DOC readings *do not depend on clitic doubling*. b) The two internal arguments show *symmetric c-command*. The analysis in D&R is thus severely *incomplete*, excluding many grammatical patterns. For instance, the following acceptable example shows that an undoubled (i.e.) low dative may actually bind into a Theme: *Angajatorii nu au dat tuturor muncitorilor drepturile lor bănești.* 'The employers didn't give all the workers their due money.'

3. A derivational account. In line with Larson (2010), we take the DP_{Goal} as part of the verb's argument structure, and assume the basic structure of the ditransitive ν P to be a Theme-over-Goal one (2). The Appl head θ - and case licenses the Dative, while an AgrOP case licenses the Accusative. Since datives are inherently specified for the animacy hierarchy, we consider them as endowed with a [Person ___] feature. Appl carries an [u Person] feature and [case ___]:

- (2) [ν P DP_{Su} ν [AgrOP [AppIP Appl [ν P DP_{Theme} [V DP_{Goal}]]]]

One key ingredient in our analysis is that Datives have dual categorial status as either DPs or PPs. One argument in favour of this hypothesis comes from sentences containing two datives, of which the higher must be CDed while the second cannot. (3) contains a high Possessive dative and low Goal dative, where the former is a non-core argument introduced by Appl, while the latter is part of the verb's argument structure. Since the Poss Dative is a non-core argument of the verb, it must be case and θ -licensed by Appl in whose specifier it has been merged.

Given that Appl licenses the Poss Dative, it may no longer agree with the Goal Dative. This would not constitute a problem, however, if this Goal Dative were a PP. Indeed, given the grammaticality of this example, the Goal may only be analysed as a PP, with a null P valuing its person features and case licensing it by incorporating into V (in line with D&R 2007).

(3) Le-am prezentat fata unui amic.

Them.dat-have.I introduced girl.the to a friend.

'I introduced their girl to a friend.'

One further argument strengthening the hypothesis of the dual categorial status of datives comes from the distribution of inflectional datives within APs subcategorizing for datives such as *util* (*useful*) or *necesar* (*necessary*). These adjectives select both inflectional datives (*util studenților* 'useful student.dat') or PPs (*util pentru studenți* 'useful for students'). Given that adjectives are not case assigners, one plausible account for their selecting a dative would be to assume that the dative in question is case-licensed by a null preposition which incorporates into the lexical head (Cornilescu 2017).

Another very crucial aspect concerning sentences with double datives is that the low Goal dative may no longer be clitic doubled. The Dative is thus a PP in configurations where doubling by the clitic is impossible and it is actually a DP only when CDed.

Furthermore, there is an essential difference between CDed and non-CDed DPs in that only the former pass through a vP external position on the way to the T-field (Dobrovie Sorin 1994). Building on Preminger (2016) we consider CD as an instance of long head movement, with the DP moving into a Person field above the vP from whence cliticisation arises. The Person head carries a $[iPerson]$ and serves as an escape hatch for constituents which need to check Person in T so that they are not left inside the lexical phase, when the vP spells-out. This is where the most important difference between dative DPs and PPs arise, as only the former will be attracted to the Person field, while the latter will stay in their merge position. The reason for this has to do with the different featural make-up of the two types of datives: while the DP_{Goal} bears a $[uPers: _]$, $case:Dat$ specification, the PP_{Goal} is specified as $[iPers:val]$:

$$(4) [_{vP} DP_{Su} v [_{AgrOP} [_{ApplP} Appl \quad [_{VP} DP_{Theme} \quad [V \quad DP_{Goal} \quad /PP_{Goal}]]] \\ [uPers: _] \quad [case:Dat] \quad [uPers: _] \quad [iPers:val] \\ [case:Dat] \quad [case:Dat]$$

The derivation thus proceeds in two different ways. With PP_{Goal} : Appl probes its c-command domain and encounters the DP_{Theme} case-licensing it. Appl will further scan its c-command domain in search of a matching Person feature which it will find on the PP_{Goal} , ($[iPers:val]$). At this point both features of Appl have been valued and both arguments are case-licensed. The second option involves a DP_{Goal} which needs to check Person and Case. Given its low position below the DP_{Theme} , the DP_{Goal} cannot check its features. It will thus be forced to move into a higher position (presumably an outer specifier of VP) so as to enter an agree relation with Appl. The unvalued $[uPerson]$ feature of Appl and DP_{Goal} agree, but *neither of them is deleted*, as both are *unvalued and uninterpretable*. The two features are related by agreement and count as instances of the same feature (Pesetsky and Torrego 2007). Crucially, after agreement with Appl, the Goal is still left with an unvalued person feature and this will *force movement to the PersonP, at the vP periphery*.

4. A solution to the puzzle. When the DO is DOMed, it bears $[iPerson]$ (Cornilescu 2000) a.o. who argues that DOM is a means of upgrading a DP on the animacy/definiteness scales. As already established, Dative DPs are also sensitive to animacy and endowed with a $[iPerson]$ feature. In a configuration where Appl bears a $[uPerson, EPP]$, both DP_{Theme} and DP_{Goal} act as potential goals. Being closer to Appl, DO has an advantage given and agrees with it, with the

result that the DP_{Goal} remains caseless. The ungrammaticality of DOMed Theme-CDed Goal structures uncovered experimentally is thus explained as a consequence of the competition between the two objects which happen to have similar featural make-up. On the other hand, DOMed Theme - Bare Goal structures are expected to be grammatical, given that the Goal is a PP: Appl will simply check its Person feature against the DO. The different results described in the other experiment could be understood as a consequence of a reanalysis of the bare IO as a DP instead of a PP, which gives way to the ungrammaticality present in DOMed Theme-CDed Goal structures.

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