

Towards a uniform account of accusative and dative clitic doubling

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The goal of this paper is to argue for a more unified account of dative and accusative clitic doubling (henceforth, CID) in Spanish based on the assumption that dative clitics should be decomposed into an invariant applicative (or prepositional) morpheme plus an optional agreement (or pronominal) morpheme.

As illustrated in Table 1, accusative and dative clitics have many syntactic similarities. First, CID is required when there is a full pronoun in canonical object position as in (1). Second, clitics are required when there is no overt object as in (2). Third, clitics are required in LD Topic constructions as in (3).

Table 1: Similarities between Accusative and Dative Clitics

	Accusative clitic	Dative clitic
(1) With a pronoun	a. Los vio a ellos	b. Les dio a ellos una buena nota
(2) W/o overt object	a. Los vio Ø	b. Les dio Ø una buena nota
(3) With an LD Topic	a. A ellos, los vio 'He saw them'	b. A ellos, les dio una buena nota 'He gave them a good grade'

However, there are also important differences with respect to doubling as discussed by Suñer (1988), Bleam (1999), Gutiérrez-Rexach (2000), Ormazabal and Romero (2013), among others and illustrated in Table 2. Whereas CID with full definite DP is frequently required with datives in all dialects, accusative CID is fairly restricted and it is found only in some dialects, as illustrated in (4). When the double is a negative quantifier, CID is impossible with accusative but possible and frequently required with datives, as shown in (5). Similar remarks can be made with regards to bare plurals as in (6) and comparative NPs as in (7): CID is impossible with accusative but possible and frequently required with dative.

Table 2: Differences between Acc. clitic doubling and Dat. clitic doubling

	Accusative clitic doubling	Dative clitic doubling
(4) With a full DP	a. (#Los) vio a los chicos. 'He saw the kids.'	b. Les dio a los chicos una buena nota. 'He gave the kids a good grade.'
(5) With negative QPs	a. *No lo hizo nada. 'He did nothing.'	b. No le da importancia a nada. 'He places value on nothing.'
(6) With bare plural NPs	a.*Ya los compramos bombones. 'We already bought chocolates.'	b. Les ofrecieron queso a familias de pocos medios. 'They offered cheese to families of few resources.'
(7) In comparative NPs	a. *Cada año, los veo a menos estudiantes. 'Each year I see less students.'	b. Cada año, les devuelvo la tarea a menos estudiantes. 'Each year I return the homework to less students.'

The differences in Table 2 have been used to support the claim that whereas accusative CID is subject to semantic constraints, dative CID is not. Contrary to this view, we would like to argue that the differences in CID illustrated in Table 2 are only apparent, and that a more uniform account of clitic doubling is possible. The departure point of our argumentation is the proposal that, whereas accusative clitics are pronominal or agreement morphemes (henceforth, PAM), dative clitics should be analyzed as an applicative (or prepositional) morpheme plus PAM (Ausín and Fernández-Rubiera (2017) for Spanish, Ordóñez and Roca (2018), Martín (2012) for Catalan). Furthermore, and following Ausín and Fernández-Rubiera (2017), we assume that the applicative morpheme can appear without the PAM giving rise to the invariant "le" in examples like (8), which have traditionally been labelled as "le-for-les" (Casares 1918).

- (8) a. Le dice adiós a las garzas que pasan. 'He says goodbye to the herons that fly by.'
b. Dale las lilas a las niñas. 'Give the lilies to the girls.' (Cuervo 1907)

The proposal that accusative clitics instantiate PAM, and dative clitics are applicative morphemes (or a preposition) plus optionally, PAM, opens the possibility of providing a principled account for the similarities and differences between these two types of clitics with respect to CID. In short, following Leonetti (2008), we will argue that PAM is only compatible with a [+definite] interpretation, which explains why accusative clitic doubling and dative clitic agreement is required in contexts as those in Table 1. As for differences in Table 2, we will show that a closer examination reveals more similarities between accusative and dative CID than are normally assumed. Consider the examples in (5). The contrast that we find in (5) is typically used to claim that whereas accusative CID is subject to semantic restrictions, dative CID is not. However, since under the current proposal “le” can be just an applicative morpheme (without PAM), we can still claim that there are semantic restrictions of dative CID but only when PAM is realized. (5b) is fine because “le” can be analyzed just as an applicative morpheme, not because dative CID is not subject to any semantic restrictions.

The ambiguous nature of “le” under the current account (applicative + PAM or just applicative) can also shed some light on the controversial status of examples of dative CID with bare plural NPs. Suñer (1988) and others use examples like (6b) to show that it is possible, whereas Fernández Soriano (1989) and others use examples like (9) to argue that it is not.

- (9) Creo que (*les) daré todo mi dinero a personas necesitadas. (Fernández Soriano 1989)
 'I think that I will give all my money to poor people.'

Interestingly Roca reports that some speakers prefer to have the invariant “le” with bare plural dative NPs as in (10a). We find similar examples like (10b) and (10c) to be perfect.

- (10) a. Luis nunca le da dinero a niños. ‘Luis never gives money to children’ (Roca 1992:fn4))
 b. No le abras la puerta a desconocidos. ‘Don’t open the door to strangers.’
 c. Es importante darle a personas diferentes una oportunidad. (Google search)
 ‘It is important to give a chance to different people.’

Under the current proposal, the preference for invariant “le” in (10) receives a straightforward account: “le” is possible as the realization of the applicative morpheme, but “les” is not acceptable because it has a PAM that requires a definite interpretation of the object, which is incompatible with bare plural NPs. Similar remarks could be made regarding (7). It seems to us that (7b) improves if the invariant, PAM-less “le” is used as in “Cada año, le devuelvo la tarea a menos estudiantes.”

To conclude, by recognizing a crucial difference in the nature of accusative clitics (PAM) and dative clitics (PAM + applicative morpheme or just applicative morpheme), a more uniform account of clitic doubling in Spanish is possible.

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