

# The Spanish dative alternation revisited\*

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We examine Spanish dative alternations, and argue that although there are parallels to English, Harley's (2003) analysis of English cannot be extended to Spanish, contra Bleam (2001). We propose an alternative based on the Morphosyntactic Alignment Principle of Beavers (2006, in press b), wherein the thematic role of the dative argument is a truth conditional strengthening of the thematic role of the corresponding oblique, which follows from the dative vs. oblique case alternation. We support this analysis by showing that it accounts for a range of less-oft discussed Spanish dative/oblique alternations. We then subsume Harley's phrase structural analysis of English and our case-based analysis of Spanish under a more general notion of relative morphosyntactic prominence, predicting both the similarities and differences between the languages.

## 1. Introduction

We examine dative DP/PP alternations in Spanish, as in (1), where the PP *a María* "to Mary" in (1a) alternates with dative *a María* in (1b) doubled by the dative clitic *le*. We refer to the theme in (1) as the direct object (DO) and the dative in (1b) as the indirect object (IO). We refer to (1a) as the Prepositional Dative Construction (PDC) and (1b) as the Indirect Object Construction (IOC). This alternation corresponds to a semantic contrast: (1a) can have a caused motion reading but (1b) has only a caused possession reading.

- (1) a. *Juan envió la carta a María.*  
Juan sent the letter to María  
"Juan sent the letter to María."
- b. *Juan le<sub>i</sub> envió la carta a María<sub>i</sub>.*  
Juan CL.DAT.3SG sent the letter to María  
"Juan sent María the letter."

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Due to similarities with the English glosses, many researchers (Demonte 1995; Blears 2001; Cuervo 2002, 2003; de Pedro Munilla 2004, *inter alia*) have proposed that variants of the standard English shell analysis (Larson 1988) also apply to Spanish: in both (1a) and (1b) the complements form a constituent projected by a null head that generates the appropriate semantics and ensures that the first XP asymmetrically *c*-commands the second.

We agree that the alternations share a common core. However, we review the data supporting the shell analysis and conclude that it is not appropriate for Spanish, since the predicted *c*-command asymmetries do not obtain. Rather, what is common is not the syntactic relationship between the complements within each clause, but how the goal/recipient is realized *across* clauses: oblique vs. direct argument. Following Beavers (2006, *in press b*), when this contrast is semantically significant, it conforms to (2).

- (2) **Morphosyntactic Alignment Principle (MAP) (Version 1):** In an argument/oblique alternation of argument *x* of some verb, the direct argument realization of *x* has monotonically stronger truth conditions associated with it than the corresponding oblique realization.

We show that (2) underlies the Spanish and English data in (1), reflecting a contrast between an oblique goal vs. an IO recipient, where recipient is a semantic subtype of goal. We also show that Spanish datives alternate with more obliques than just *a* PPs, but always conforming to (2), thus providing more substantial support for (2) than English dative alternations.

In §1 we discuss the basic facts of the alternation, and review evidence for a shell analysis. In §2 we discuss some syntactic problems with applying this analysis to Spanish and propose an alternative that does not take the languages to be wholly parallel. In §3 we discuss some novel semantic generalizations about the alternation and suggest that the shell analysis does not account for them either. In §4 we propose an alternative based on (2) that preserves the universal syntax-to-semantics mapping as a relation of thematic roles to various argument-coding properties, of which phrase structure is just one. We argue that the differences between the languages fall out of a contrast in how IOs are coded – positionally in English but morphologically in Spanish. We conclude in §5.

## 2. Background

Harley (2003: 33) (building on Larson 1988; Pesetsky 1995: 135–136; see also Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008) proposes that the English alternation in the translation to (1) follows from two different syntactic event decompositions. The analysis of English (1a) is in (3a), where the two arguments form a small clause-type predication headed by a



However, there are two issues with applying this analysis to Spanish, one syntactic and one semantic. We start with the syntactic issue.

### 3. Problems with shell approach and an alternative syntactic analysis

As noted, Bleam's Spanish IOCs crucially are IO DO, replicating the English order. However, the neutral order in Spanish is DO IO. (See below for corpus data findings.) Yet as Bleam herself admits the English/Spanish parallels disappear in this order, e.g. in (7) the DO can bind into the IO.

- (7) *El editor le envió [cada libro]<sub>i</sub> a su<sub>i</sub> autor.*  
 the editor CL sent each book to its author (Bleam ex. (18))

To account for this, Bleam argues that DO IO is derived from IO DO by moving the DO across IO, yielding two possible IOCs in Spanish:

- (8) a. [ CL V [ IO ... [ DO ... ] ] ]  
 b. [ CL V [ DO<sub>i</sub> ... [ IO ... [ t<sub>i</sub> ... ] ] ] ]

She gives (9) to argue for this, where the IO *backwards* binds into the DO, suggesting it c-commands it at some stage:

- (9) (?) *El editor le envió su<sub>i</sub> libro a cada autor<sub>i</sub>.*  
 the editor CL sent his book to each author (Bleam ex. (19))

Bleam does not discuss how this comes about, but de Pedro Munilla (2004) proposes that it results from optional reconstruction at LF. Thus the Spanish pattern is as in (10), which is not parallel to English: Spanish has an extra IOC showing *symmetric* c-command (cp. (7) and (9)).

- (10) a. PDC: V DO PP: PP goal; DO binds into PP  
 b. IOC: CL V IO DO: IO possessor; IO binds into DO  
 c. IOC: CL V DO IO: IO possessor; IO/DO bind into each other

Yet (8) is problematic for two reasons. First, neither author discusses what motivates DO movement. Cuervo (2002) proposes that ditransitives have uninterpretable EPP/ACC(usative) features that attract the DO to its specifier position. But on the assumption that ACC must be obligatorily checked, it is not clear how she handles IO DO word order. Second, more fundamentally, (8) assumes that the neutral word order is derived. However, the null hypothesis is that it is basic. This conforms to data gathered from the Spanish Royal Academy corpus CREA (written and oral) constituting 518 tokens of clitic doubled constructions for *enviar* "send", *entregar* "give/turn in", *poner*, "put", *quitar* "remove", and *vender* "sell", all past perfective with 3SG clitic *le* and 3SG/3PL

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subject. In these data DO IO order (393 tokens) is clearly unmarked, whereas IO DO order (125 tokens found) is used overwhelmingly (81.6%) when the DO (underscored) is *heavy* (see Wasow 2002), as in the following:

- (11) ...*se le quitó a Landívar el derecho a hablar a nombre de esa comisión.*  
 "they took away from Landívar the right to speak on behalf of that commission"

This suggests that the IO comes before the DO for processing. In other cases, DO IO is the *only* possibility, as when the verb and the DO form a semantic unit, as in (12).

- (12) a. *Juan le puso fin a la relación/#a la relación fin.*  
 John CL.3SG put end to the relation/to the relation end  
 "John put an end to the relationship."

Thus (10b,c) are not free variants, contra previous authors. Given the marked contexts of IO DO order, (13) is a preferable analysis, where the neutral order (13a) is underived, and the marked order (13b) is an alternate base-generated/scrambled option constrained to certain contexts.

- (13) a. [ CL V [ DO ... [ IO ... ] ] ]  
 b. [ CL V [ IO<sub>i</sub> ... [ DO ... [ (t<sub>i</sub>) ... ] ] ] ]

*Prima facie*, though, (13a) does not capture *symmetric* binding. However, we argue that a simple, independently motivated assumption generates the correct results: the dative clitic can be a binder in Spanish. Evidence for this comes from (14), where the reflexive DP inside the PP complement must be interpreted as coreferent with the clitic, thus, the latter binds the former.

- (14) *Los fracasos le<sub>i</sub> arrebataron la confianza en sí misma<sub>i</sub>.*  
 the failures CL.3SG took away the confidence in herself  
 "The failures wrenched from her (her) confidence in herself."

With this assumption symmetric c-command follows for free from (13a). In (13a) the clitic c-commands the DO, which c-commands the IO, and thus the clitic can bind into the DO, which can bind into the IO, predicting symmetric c-command as the byproduct of two asymmetric c-command relations. Conversely, in (13b) both the clitic and the IO DP c-command the DO, ruling out symmetric binding. Thus (13), with the independently motivated assumption that clitics can bind, captures (10c).

However, Cuervo (2003) argues against such an analysis. First, she states that "... such an approach would predict that in [DO IO] constructions, the accusative should also be able to bind into the lower dative DP" (p.42) She gives (15) (her (51)) to show that this is impossible.

- (15) \*/?*La policía les entregó los bebés a sus (respectivos) padres.*  
 the police CL.3PL gave the babies to their respective parents  
 "The police gave the babies to their respective parents."

However, (15) is independently marginal for having two 3PL animate objects competing to be linked to *les*. If we have an inanimate DO, the DO can bind into the IO, contra Cuervo. (See also Blears's (7) above):

- (16) *La policía les entregó las carteras a sus (respectivos) dueños.*  
 the police CL.3PL gave the wallets to their (respective) owners  
 "The police gave the wallets back to their respective owners."

Next, Cuervo argues that a DO IO analysis cannot account for the ungrammaticality of (17a). Cuervo suggests that (17a) is explained on the IO DO analysis as a Weak Crossover (WCO) violation, where the DO has been extracted across the coindexed possessive as in (17b), an explanation not available in (17c).

- (17) a. \**[Qué (libro)]<sub>i</sub> le entregamos a su<sub>i</sub> dueño?*  
 what book CL we.gave to its owner  
 "Intended: What (book) did we give to its owner."  
 b. *[ [Qué (libro)]<sub>i</sub> le entregamos a su<sub>i</sub> dueño t<sub>i</sub> ]*  
 c. *[ [Qué (libro)]<sub>i</sub> le entregamos t<sub>i</sub> a su<sub>i</sub> dueño ]*

However, the facts are not this clear cut, since (17a) is acceptable to our consultants (when given contextual information), supporting (17c). Thus WCO does not argue against a DO IO analysis.

Finally, Cuervo argues that the clitic cannot be a binder since this would require it to be a pronoun and stand for an argument. We agree that clitics are not DPs and assume that they are verbal affixes (Miller & Sag 1996), adjoined to a verb. However, we argue that clitics can stand for an argument. Unlike French and Italian, Spanish allows clitic doubling, which has posed difficulty for defining what clitics are and how the IO is realized. In the generative tradition, Spanish IOs are always defined as lexical XPs and clitics as functional categories, e.g. case absorbers (Jaeggli 1982), agreement markers (Suñer 1988), heads of  $AGR_{IO}$  (Franco 1993), heads of ApplP (Cuervo 2003). In contrast, we take the more empirically transparent position: the IO can be instantiated by a clitic alone (without postulating a phonologically-null element *pro*) or clitic/DP pair, both contributing to the interpretation of the argument, as in (18).

- (18) *El profesor nos/os/les dio la A a la clase entera.*  
 the professor CL.1PL/2PL/DAT.3PL gave the A to the class entire  
 "The professor gave us/you all/them the entire class an A."

In (18) the choice of clitic gives critical information about the referent of the IO not provided by the DP, and the clitic is thus a partial instantiation of the IO. For space reasons we do not exhibit how the IO is syntactically instantiated by the clitic alone or clitic + DP; however, e.g. an analysis proposed by Steele (1988) for Luiseño subjects can be extended to Spanish IOs.

To summarize, with a simple, independently-motivated assumption – that the clitic can be a binder – we can capture (10) without ad hoc movement. We turn next to a semantic issue regarding shell analyses.

#### 4. The morphosyntactic alignment principle

The Harley-style analysis also fails to fully capture the semantics of the dative alternation. On this analysis the semantic contrast is between caused possession and  $P_{LOC}$ , though Harley never defines the latter relation. However, there is an interesting property underlying the contrast between IOCs and PDCs. Consider (19) with an inanimate goal/recipient. As noted above, the IOC is ruled out since an inanimate cannot be a possessor (except on a repair reading). But crucially, the PDC allows *both* caused motion and caused possession readings, the latter again on a repair reading.

- (19) a. John sent a book to London. (Caused motion *or* possession)  
 b. #John sent London a book. (Only caused possession)

Thus (19b) encodes a subset of the readings of (19a). How is this possible? We suggest that the  $P_{LOC}$ -type relation in (19a) is a type of abstract co-location subsuming multiple types of coincidence relationships between entities, which we equate with Hale and Keyser's (2002: 208) *central coincidence* relation (which underlies literal and metaphorical *give* and *with*). A recipient is something that enters into a central coincidence relationship with the theme and comes to possess it (see also Pesetsky 1995: 135–136; 141); a literal goal involves central coincidence plus co-location. Relevant to our data, the truth conditions that constitute possessor-hood entail central coincidence, but not conversely, so that, representing each thematic relation as a relationship between two arguments and an event, the implicational thematic hierarchy in (20) arises.

- (20)  $\forall x \forall y \forall e [\text{possessor}'(x, y, e) \rightarrow \text{central.coincidence}'(y, x, e)]$

Thus (19b) entails (19a) but not conversely, explaining the interpretative patterns in (19). However, Harley (2003: 41ff.) suggests that PDCs do not always encode everything IOCs can, giving light verb and idiom pairs such as *gave John a kick*/\**gave a kick to John* and *threw Mary a glance*/\**threw a glance to Mary* (*ibid.*: ex. (13)) as evidence. However, in all of her cases IOCs are possible, provided the goal/recipient is heavy (cp. *She gave a kick (in the pants) to every boy who ever did her wrong*). This shows that PDCs can encode everything IOCs encode (see Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008: 150–160 for an extensive discussion); we offer an alternative explanation for cases where IOCs are preferred below.

Interestingly, as Beavers (2006, in press b) shows, implicational relationships between variants are not restricted to datives; similar effects are also found with DO/oblique and

subject/oblique alternations (albeit with thematic roles not having to do with possession). Of course, not every alternation shows a truth conditional contrast (as Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008 show for the dative alternation with verbs of giving such as *give* and *hand*). But the generalization Beavers proposes is that when an argument/oblique alternation is semantically contentful, it encodes a monotonic strengthening/weakening of the truth conditions that comprise the thematic role of the alternating participant along an independent implicational hierarchy of the sort in (20):

- (21) **Morphosyntactic Alignment Principle (MAP) (Version 2):** In an argument/oblique alternation of argument *x*, in the direct argument realization *x* bears stronger truth conditions along some implicational thematic hierarchy than in the oblique realization.

Note that we view dative alternations as lexicalized rather than derived, and more generally (21) is a lexicalization principle predicting what kinds of lexicalized alternations will be possible. Furthermore, this principle does not predict *which* verbs will alternate, e.g. it does not explain why certain verbs (*costar* “to cost”) lack one of the two variants, since that is due to the idiosyncrasy of these verbs. It simply predicts what semantic contrast will be instantiated when an alternation is lexicalized.

The MAP underlies Spanish dative alternations as well: (22a) is also compatible with both motion/possession readings, but (22b) has only a possession reading, mirroring (19) and strengthening the parallelism.

- (22) a. *Juan envió la carta a María/Londres.*  
 Juan sent the letter to María/London  
 “Juan sent the letter to M./London.” (London or Scotland Yard)
- b. *Juan le<sub>i</sub> envió la carta a María/#Londres<sub>i</sub>.*  
 Juan CL gave the letter to María/London.  
 “Juan sent María/#London the letter.” (Only Scotland Yard)

In fact, we show that not only does the MAP apply in (22), it is significantly more pervasive than in English. We discuss several IO/oblique alternations in Spanish that do not have English parallels and encode contrasts other than goal vs. recipient. Yet in each case the MAP holds, suggesting its generality in Spanish. Partly for space reasons and partly because these results are tentative, we leave the relevant roles vague, although greater or lesser affectedness (perhaps modeled as in Beavers in press a) is usually key. The crucial point is that the conditions for the IO always subsume those of the oblique, but additional constraints also necessarily obtain.

**De “from/off” Alternations.** Consider first the IO/*de* alternation in (23), where in (23a) the tablecloth is removed (weak reading), while in (23b) the table has additionally been made bare (e.g. has lost an integral part; strong reading), reflecting monotonic strengthening (this also occurs with *sacar* “take out”, *arrancar* “pull out”, *confiscar* “confiscate”, *extraer* “extract”, etc.).

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- (23) a. *Juan quitó el mantel de la mesa.*  
 Juan removed the tablecloth from the table  
 "John removed the tablecloth from the table."
- b. *Juan le quitó el mantel a la mesa.*  
 Juan CL removed a chair to the table  
 "John removed the tablecloth from the table." (affecting it)

To illustrate the semantic contrast we need a way of ruling out readings to see which reading each variant allows. Consider taking an instrument out of a glass case, where (presumably) an instrument never constitutes an integral part of a glass case. Here the PDC is acceptable but crucially the IOC is unacceptable as in (24).

- (24) a. *El dentista extrajo el instrumento de la vitrina.*  
 the dentist extracted the instrument from the glass case  
 "the dentist took out the instrument from the glass case."
- b. #*El dentista le extrajo el instrumento a la vitrina.*  
 the dentist CL extracted the instrument to the glass case

This mirrors the IO/a facts. However, we also expect the PDC to be compatible with both readings. To see this, we need a context where the strong reading must hold, for example extracting a molar from the mouth, assuming a molar is an integral part of the mouth. As expected, the IOC is acceptable. But here the PDC is *unacceptable*, contra the MAP:

- (25) a. #*El dentista extrajo la muela del niño.*  
 the dentist extracted the molar from the boy
- b. *El dentista le extrajo la muela al niño.*  
 the dentist CL extracted the molar to the boy  
 "The dentist extracted the boy's molar."

This suggests that the MAP does not hold here – rather, the PDC encodes the weak reading and a denial of the strong one. Is this problematic?

We suggest not. Rather, it could be that the existence of a dedicated variant for encoding the strong reading in (25b) blocks this reading from obtaining in (25a). Indeed, for distinct, competing variants, we might expect three types of relationships:

- (26) a. The oblique variant is compatible with weak and strong readings.  
 b. The argument variant blocks the strong reading in the oblique.  
 c. The oblique variant implicates a denial of the strong reading.

As Beavers (2006, in press b) shows, English alternations generally have the property in (26a). But so far Spanish has some alternations with the property in (26a) (IO/a) and some with (26b) (IO/de). Indeed, English may also exhibit some blocking: this would account for the light verb and idiomatic data above where IOCs are preferred (but not

categorically) over PDCs (thanks to Heidi Harley, p.c., for pointing this out to us). If (as Harley 2003 suggests) these are cases where strong readings are obligatory, and the IOC is the canonical way to encode this, it may block the PDC unless other factors (heaviness) intervene (providing a cleaner analysis than the Heavy-NP shift + *to* – insertion analysis of Harley 2003: fn.9). Finally, it is not hard to imagine languages where (26c) might hold (Beavers 2006: 226ff. suggests that certain accusative/dative alternations in Spanish *hacer* causatives may instantiate this). Thus IO/*de* alternations do follow the MAP if blocking is taken into account, suggesting commonality with IO/*a* alternations. We do not propose here an explanation for when blocking does or does not occur, leaving this for future work.

*En* “in/on/into/onto” Alternations. Other verbs show IO/*en* alternations. An example is in (27), where in the PDC the entailment is that the tablecloth is on the table (weak reading), but in the IOC there is an additional entailment that it has entered into the appropriate setting relationship with the table, namely covering it (strong reading) (other such verbs are *meter* “insert/put in(to)”, *colocar* “place”, etc.).

- (27) a. *Juan puso un mantel en la mesa.*  
 Juan put the tablecloth in the table  
 “John put the tablecloth on the table.”
- b. *Juan le puso un mantel a la mesa.*  
 Juan CL put the tablecloth to the table  
 “John put the tablecloth on the table.” (covering it)

To test the MAP we must force weak/strong readings. For putting fruit in a fridge (which presumably does not affect the fridge) we predict only the PDC to be possible. Alternatively, when stuffing a turkey, i.e. turning it into a dish, we expect the IOC to be fine and the PDC to either also allow this reading or be blocked. These are shown in (28)–(29), with blocking.

- (28) a. *Juan metió la fruta en el frigo.*  
 John inserted the fruit in the fridge  
 “John put the fruit into the fridge.”
- b. #*Juan le metió la fruta al frigo.*  
 John CL inserted the fruit to.the fridge
- (29) a. #*Metes el relleno en el pavo y lo cueces en el horno.*  
 You.put the stuffing in the turkey and it you.cook in the oven
- b. *Le metes el relleno al pavo y lo cueces en el horno.*  
 CL you.put the stuffing to.the turkey and it you.cook in the oven  
 “You put the stuffing in the turkey and you cook it in the oven.”

Another such alternation has a stative meaning: in (30a) Juan discovers something strange in the box (weak reading), while in (30b) the box is characterized by strangeness (strong reading) (*encontrar* “find”, *detectar* “detect”, *reconocer* “recognize”, *oír* “hear”, *sentir* “feel” also show this).

- (30) a. *Juan vio algo extraño en la caja.*  
 Juan saw something strange in the box  
 "John saw something strange in the box."
- b. *Juan le vio algo extraño a la caja.*  
 Juan CL saw something strange to the box  
 "John found the box strange."

This again follows the MAP, if containing something strange means having a strange quality, while being characterized by strangeness means having a strange quality characteristic of the entire participant. Examples (31)–(32) illustrate the meaning differences: IDs do not characterize wallets, but arrogance characterizes people (and again we see blocking).

- (31) a. *Mi padre siempre encuentra el carnet en la cartera.*  
 My father always finds the ID in the wallet  
 "My father always finds his ID in his wallet."
- b. *#Mi padre siempre le encuentra el carnet a su cartera.*  
 My father always CL finds the ID to his wallet
- (32) a. *#Juan encuentra cierto aire de arrogancia en su nuevo jefe.*  
 John finds certain air of arrogance in/about his new boss.
- b. *Juan le encuentra cierto aire de arrogancia al nuevo jefe.*  
 John CL finds certain air of arrogance to the new boss  
 "John finds certain air of arrogance in/about his new boss."

*Para* "for" Alternations. Finally we have IO/*para* alternations. Consider (33), where (33a) possession may but does not necessarily obtain (i.e. a benefactive reading is possible), while in (33b) possession must also obtain. Thus in the PDC *hijo primogénito* may be a non-existing or existing person, while in IOC the first son must exist. Therefore, the MAP is met (and no blocking occurs; this also occurs with *dibujar* "draw", *hacer* "make", *encontrar* "find", *comprar* "buy", *buscar* "search", etc.).

- (33) a. *Juan construyó una casa de campo para su hijo primogénito.*  
 Juan built a country house for his son first-born.  
 "John built a country house for his first son." (who may not exist)
- b. *Juan le construyó una casa de campo a su hijo primogénito.*  
 Juan CL built a country house to his son first-born  
 "John built his first son a country house." (who exists)

##### 5. The Syntax/Semantics mapping

What these alternations bear in common is the weak/strong to PP/IO correlation predicted by the MAP, which varies by the factors in (34).

- (34) a. Whether the PP is goal (*a, en, para*), source (*de*), or location (*en*);  
 b. The verb-specific extra IO entailment, e.g. type of affectedness.

Thus the MAP links Spanish and English. However, the  $P_{HAVE}/P_{LOC}$  analysis does not capture this, at least not at an appropriate level of generality. First, it only predicts a different predication relationship between the two arguments, but not necessarily that the roles assigned to the PP and IO should be related, much less by monotonic strengthening. It also does not extend to the other dative alternations in Spanish, since more MAP-type relationships than just possession vs. central coincidence are involved. One could posit more heads that stand in more alternations like (34), though the MAP only emerges as an ad hoc fact.

Of course, we can say that the MAP is a general constraint on possible alternations of theta-role assigning heads, which is the analysis we propose to capture the above data. But there is a bigger problem with the shell-type analysis, namely the morpho-syntax. The MAP relates a semantic contrast to different realization options for just *one* participant (even if the semantic relations are dyadic). Yet in the  $P_{HAVE}/P_{LOC}$  alternation the only obligatory morphosyntactic correlate is a change in specifier/complement relations between the arguments. While it may be appropriate for English, this correlation does not hold for Spanish, where the contrast is between a clitic doubled dative DP and a PP, regardless of the positional relation to the DO (see §2). So how can we preserve the MAP – or any uniform syntax-to-semantics mapping – while maintaining cross-linguistic applicability? We need a grammatical distinction that is (a) a priori to phrase structure and morphology and (b) able to compare realization options for a single argument, not just co-arguments.

Following Beavers (2006) (who builds on Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005), we suggest that the relevant distinction is the more general one of morphosyntactic prominence: It is well known that various argument coding devices – case, grammatical function, and syntactic position – can be ranked relative to one another by criteria appropriate for each category. For example, cases are ranked according to their relative morphological markedness, grammatical functions are ranked according to behavioral properties such as (but not limited to) accessibility to operations such as relativization, and syntactic positions are ranked by c-command asymmetries, as summarized in (35).

- (35) a. *Case Markedness* – Nom > Acc > Dat > Obl (Croft 2003: 142ff.)  
 b. NP - *Accessibility* – SU > DO > IO > OBL (Keenan & Comrie 1977)  
 c. *C-command* – SU > IO > DO > OBL (Pesetsky 1995: 160–163)

Crucially, we can link monotonic strengthening to an increase in an argument's morphosyntactic prominence along one or more hierarchies. In both English and Spanish obliques are coded as PPs. The difference – by which the word order and c-command facts follow – is how IO is encoded: in English it is coded *positionally*,

relative to other DP positions, while in Spanish it is coded by case, i.e. a dative *clitic* with optional doubling. This difference has an effect on the syntactic diagnostics expected of dative alternations. In English, the positional fact is that the IO always c-commands the DO (since English does not allow VP-internal scrambling of two DPs). In Spanish the positional relationship of IO and DO DPs is not part of IO or DO encoding and is not restricted by any other categorical factors. This is not to say that IO coding in Spanish is not also partly positional, only that it is not *relative to other DPs*. Thus no particular c-command relationship must obtain in the alternation; rather, the alternating heads constrained by the MAP in Spanish vary instead in the case they assign the relevant argument (and are not necessarily syntactically dyadic). Thus by generalizing the universality claim from categorical c-command relationships between co-arguments to relative morphosyntactic prominence of ways of encoding a single argument (which may manifest as c-command), we can maintain a universal syntax/semantics mapping across languages, with the Harley-type analysis being one of many instantiations.

## 6. Conclusion

We have supported the parallelism view that English and Spanish dative alternations. However, the similarity goes only as far as the relationship between semantics and morphosyntactic prominence (a cross-linguistic variable) for one argument, with a single Morphosyntactic Alignment Principle governing both alternations. This raises the question of what we expect cross-linguistic parallels to be: can we apply analyses appropriate for one language wholesale to another, or should we use cross-linguistic comparison to isolate the factors needed to state universal principles?

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