The Double Object Construction in Romance

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1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is the status of Romance with respect to the alternation in (1) that one finds in languages such as English:

(1) a.   ... V NP$_1$ [$_{PP}$ P NP$_2$] ...
     b.   ... V NP$_2$ NP$_1$ ...

where NP$_1$ bears the role *theme* and NP$_2$ bears the role *goal*.

The standard assumption is that Romance and English are different in this respect, and that the difference lies in the fact that Romance has (1a) but lacks (1b). (See Kayne 1984, Larson 1988).

The goal of this paper is to show that things are the other way around. Romance and English are different indeed, but now the difference lies in the fact that Romance has (1b) (word order aside) but lacks (1a).

The thesis of this paper, then, is that indirect objects in Romance are not PPs, but rather NPs (DPs) (albeit of the form [*a* NP]). In order to support this thesis, we will subscribe to a number of arguments for it that have been given in the literature, and will refute a number of arguments against it.

2. Arguments in favor of the thesis

In this section we will present a number of arguments for the thesis that Romance indirect objects are NPs, which we will accept without discussion.

2.1. Quantifiers

A first argument for our thesis, involving quantifiers, can be enunciated as in (2). This argument corresponds to observations made by Jaeggli (1982), Herslund (1988), Rizzi (1988), and Cordin (1990).

(2) Quantifier floating may not involve true PPs, but it does involve indirect objects.

To illustrate, look at the following examples. The contrast between (3) and (4)

(from Jaeggli) shows that quantifier floating does not involve PPs but it does involve indirect objects. Same for the contrast between (5) and (6) (from Herslund) and the contrast between (7) and (8) (from Rizzi):

(3) a. *Ces femmes, avec qui j'ai parlé (avec) toutes...
         these women, with whom I have spoken (with) all
     b. *Ces femmes, devant qui j'ai parlé (devant) toutes...
         these women, before whom I have spoken (before) all
     c. *Ces femmes, à qui jai pensé (à) toutes...
         these women, of whom I have thought (of) all
     d. *Ces femmes, à qui jai pris intérêt (à) toutes...
         these women, in whom I have become interested (in) all

(4) a. Ces femmes, que jai toutes vues...
         these women, whom I have all seen
     b. Ces femmes, à qui jai parlé à toutes...
         these women, to whom I have talked to all

(5) a. Ces femmes, elles sont toutes revenues hier.
         these women, they have all returned yesterday
     b. Ces femmes, je leur ai envoyé des fleurs à toutes hier.
         these women, I them-DAT have sent flowers to all yesterday
     c. Ces femmes, je les ai toutes rencontrées hier.
         these women, I them-ACC have all met yesterday

(6) a. *Ces projets, jy ai réflechi à tous.
         these projects, I cl have reflected on all
     b. *Ces villages, on y a envoyé des troupes dans tous.
         these towns, they cl have sent troops into all

(7) a. Gianni parlerà a voi (tutti).   (8) a. Gianni parlerà di voi (tutti).
         Gianni will-talk to you (all)   Gianni will-talk of you (all)
     b. Gianni vi parlerà.   b. Gianni ne parlerà.
         Gianni you-DAT will-talk   Gianni of-you will-talk
     c. Gianni vi parlerà a tutti.   c. *Gianni ne parlerà di tutti.
         Gianni you-DAT will-talk to all   Gianni of-you will-talk of all

2.2. Binding

A second argument for our thesis involves VP-internal binding. We will enunciate it as in (9):

(9) The preposition a does not prevent the NP in [a NP] from c-commanding and binding a VP-internal anaphor.

This argument corresponds to observations made by Giorgi (1985), Demonte (1987), and Suñer (1988). The examples in (10)-(11) (from Giorgi) illustrate the point:

(10) a. Gianni descrisse se stessa a Maria.   b. Gianni descrisse se stessa a lei.
         Gianni described herself to Maria   Gianni described herself to her

(11) a. Una lunga terapia psicoanalitica restituì se stessa$_i$ a Maria$_i$.
         a long psychoanalytic therapy brought herself back to Maria
     b. Una lunga terapia psicoanalitica restituì se stessa$_i$ a lei$_i$.
         a long psychoanalytic therapy brought herself back to her

The example in (12) (from Demonte) shows that *a* and real prepositions have a different behavior:

(12) a. El profesor le entregó su$_i$ dibujo preferido a cada niño$_i$.
         'The teacher gave his preferred picture to each child'.
     b. *El profesor pegó su$_i$ dibujo preferido con cada niño$_i$.
         'The teacher posted his preferred picture with each child'.

2.3. Domains

A third argument for the thesis that Romance indirect objects are NPs was put forth by Suñer (1988) and Authier & Reed (1991). We will enunciate it as in (13):

(13) PPs may behave as governing categories, but [a NP] cannot.

To illustrate, have a look at the examples in (14) (from Authier & Reed):

(14) a. Jean$_i$ ne parle que [$_{PP}$ de lui$_i$].   c. *Jean$_i$ n'écrit qu'[$_{XP}$ à lui$_i$].
         'Jean only talks about himself'.   'Jean only writes to himself'.
     b. Jean$_i$ ne pense qu'[$_{PP}$ à lui$_i$].
         'Jean only thinks about himself'.

The ill-formedness of (14c) can be interpreted as showing that XP is an NP, not a PP.

2.4. Clitics

A fourth argument for our thesis was put forth by Rizzi (1988). We will enunciate it as in (15):

(15) Indirect object clitics show morphological variation, but PP clitics do not.

To illustrate, witness the examples below (that appeared in Cordin 1990):

(16) a. Vedo Mario/Maria/te.   b. Lo/la/ti vedo.
         (I) see Mario/Maria/you   (I) him-ACC/her-ACC/you-ACC see

(17) a. Parlo a Mario/a Maria/a te.   b. Gli/le/ti parlo.
         (I) talk to Mario/to Maria/to you (I) him-DAT/her-DAT/you-DAT talk

(18) a. Parlo di Mario/di Maria/di te.   b. Ne parlo.
         (I) speak of Mario/of Maria/of you   (I) of-it speak

In (16) we have direct object clitics, which show morphological variation (here, gender and person). In (17) we have indirect object clitics, which also show morphological variation (here, gender and person). In (18), finally, we have a PP clitic, which shows no morphological variation at all.

3. Arguments against the thesis

In this section we will present a number of arguments against the thesis that Romance indirect objects are NPs. For each of these arguments, we will provide a suitable counterargument.

3.1. Secondary predicates

A first argument against our thesis was put forth by Demonte (1986-87, 1987). We will enunciate it as in (19):

(19) The NP in [a NP] cannot license a secondary predicate.

To illustrate, see the example in (20) (from Demonte):

(20) #Enrique le regaló un juguete [$_{PP}$ a su hija$_i$] contenta$_i$.
'Enrique gave a toy to his daughter happy'.

Our counterargument here is that one should blame the theta-role that indirect objects bear, not their categorial status. We have sketched our reasoning in (21):

(21) Only themes can license a secondary predicate within the VP. Indirect objects bear a goal theta-role. Indirect objects cannot license a secondary predicate, irrespective of categorial status.

3.2. A-over-A

A second argument against our thesis was put forth in Herslund (1988). We will enunciate it as in (22):

(22) A PP cannot be extracted from [a NP], in accordance with the A-over-A principle.

To illustrate, have a look at the examples below (from Herslund). In (23) a PP is extracted out of an NP, and the result is good. In (24) a PP is extracted out of a PP, and the result is bad, in accordance with the A-over-A principle. In (25), finally, a PP is extracted out of an indirect object. If this indirect object were an NP the result should be good, but it is not. Hence the indirect object must be a PP, according to Herslund.

(23) a. Claude a tué [$_{NP}$ la belle-mère de Simone].
    Claude has killed the mother-in-law of Simone
  b. De qui Claude a-t-il tué [$_{NP}$ la belle-mère t]?
    of whom Claude has-[t]-he killed the mother-in-law?
  c. Simone, dont Claude a tué [$_{NP}$ la belle-mère t]...
    Simone, of-whom Claude killed the mother-in-law

(24) a. Claude a pensé [$_{PP}$ à la belle-mère de Simone].
    Claude has thought of the mother-in-law of Simone
  b. *De qui Claude a-t-il pensé [$_{PP}$ à la belle-mère t]?
    of whom Claude has-[t]-he thought of the mother-in-law?
  c. *Simone, dont Claude a pensé [$_{PP}$ à la belle-mère t]...
    Simone, of-whom Claude has thought of the mother-in-law

(25) a. Claude a plu [$_{NP}$ à la belle-mère de Simone].
Claude has pleased to the mother-in-law of Simone

b. *De qui Claude a-t-il plu [$_{NP}$ à la belle-mère *t*]?
of whom Claude has-[t]-he pleased to the mother-in-law

c. *Simone, dont Claude a plu [$_{NP}$ à la belle-mère *t*]...
Simone, of-whom Claude has pleased to the mother-in-law

Our counterargument here is that one should blame the theta-marking of in-direct objects, not their categorial status. We have sketched our reasoning in (26):

(26) μ is an extraction domain iff μ is directly theta-marked. Indirect objects are not directly theta-marked. Indirect objects are not extraction domains, irrespective of categorial status.

3.3. NP movement

A third argument against the thesis that Romance indirect objects are NPs was also put forth by Herslund (1988). We will enunciate it as in (27):

(27) [a NP] cannot become the subject of the sentence under passivization.

To illustrate, examine the examples below (from Herslund). In (28) a direct object becomes the subject under passivization, and the result is good. In (29) it is a PP that undergoes this process, and the result is predictably bad. In (30) the involved phrase is an indirect object. If it were an NP, the result should be good, but it is not. Hence the indirect object must be a PP, according to Herslund.

(28) a. On a cassé [$_{NP}$ les bouteilles].
they have broken the bottles

b. [$_{NP}$ les bouteilles] ont été cassées.
the bottles have been broken

(29) a. On a pensé [$_{PP}$ à Claude].
they have thought of Claude.

b. *[$_{PP}$ Claude] a été pensé.
Claude has been thought

(30) a. On a plu [$_{NP}$ à Claude].
they have pleased to Claude

b. *[$_{NP}$ Claude] a été plu.
Claude has been pleased

Our counterargument here is that one should blame the Case of indirect objects, not their categorial status. We have sketched our reasoning in (31):

(31) β can become the subject under passivization iff β receives structural Case. Indirect objects receive inherent Case. Indirect objects cannot become the subject under passivization, irrespective of categorial status.

3.4. Cinque's facts

A fourth argument against our thesis was presented by Cinque (1990). We have summarized it in (32):

(32) Indirect objects do not enter parasitic gap constructions, apparent extraction from islands, or COD constructions (whereas direct objects do).

To illustrate, see the examples in (33) (from Cinque). (33) is intended to show

that no non-NP constituent (including indirect objects) can enter a parasitic gap construction:

(33) a. *[Quanto importanti] si puÿ diventare *t* [senza sentirsi *e*]?
   how important can one become without feeling

b. *[A chi] hai lasciato la lettera *t* [dopo esserti rivolto *e*]?
   to whom did you leave the letter after turning

c. *[Quanti] ne hai presi *t* [senza pagarne *e*]?
   how many did you get of-them without paying of-them

d. *[VENUTO A CASA] era *t* [senza que fosse *e* suo padre]
   come home(focus) he had without his father having

e. *[Quanto gentilmente] si è comportato t con te [senza comportarsi *e* coi tuoi amici]?
   how kindly did he behave with you without behaving with your friends

Our counterargument is that one could blame the Case of indirect objects, not their categorial status. The present problem is reminiscent of another problem that arises with respect to the different behavior of dative and accusative clitic doubling under wh-movement. An accusative clitic cannot double a wh-phrase, but a dative clitic can. The examples in (34)-(35) are from Jaeggli:

(34) a. *¿A quién la viste?   b. *¿A quién me dijiste que María la vio?
   'Who did you see?'   'Who did you tell me that Mary had seen?'

(35) a. ¿A quién le han regalado ese libro?
   'To whom have they given that book?'

b. ¿A quién le han mandado todas esas cartas?
   'To whom have they sent all those letters?'

Now, for this other problem two kinds of explanation have been provided. A kind of explanation is cast in terms of categorial status (Jaeggli 1982), but there is an alternative explanation (which accounts for the same facts) cast in terms of Case (Dobrovie-Sorin 1985, 1990). Our suggestion for the present problem is that an explanation of the facts is also possible in terms of Case. The idea would be that indirect objects do not enter the constructions listed in (32) because they bear inherent Case, irrespective of categorial status.

4. A potential problem

So far we have argued that Romance indirect objects are NPs, not PPs. Remember now that this thesis was defended for the sake of the idea that Romance has (1b) and lacks (1a) (repeated here for ease of reference):

(1)   a.   ... V NP_1 [$_{PP}$ P NP_2] ...   b.   ... V NP_2 NP_1 ...

The goal of this section is to get rid of a potential objection to the claim that (1b) is indeed the only possible string for Romance ditransitive constructions (word order aside). This potential objection would arise from the three facts that we have summarized in (36):

(36) a. Fact #1 [UG]
   An NP goal is higher than an NP theme.

    b. Fact #2 [follows trivially from UG]
       An NP goal is higher than an NP theme in Romance.
    c. Fact #3 [observation]
       An NP goal can be bound by an NP theme in Romance.

Fact #3 ((36c)) is illustrated in (37) (from Giorgi):

    (37) Gianni descrisse Maria$_i$ a se stessa$_i$.
        Gianni described Maria to herself

5. A potential solution

In order to get rid of this potential objection, we will claim that all the facts summarized in (36) are correct, but also that there is some other factor that can alter prominence relations in Romance ditransitive constructions.

Have a look at the existing Case theories:

(38)

Theory	Case	Mode of assigment
I	NOM	GOVERNMENT
	ACC	GOVERNMENT
IIa	NOM	AGREEMENT
	ACC	GOVERNMENT
IIb	NOM	GOVERNMENT or AGREEMENT
	ACC	GOVERNMENT
IIIa	NOM	AGREEMENT
	ACC	AGREEMENT

Theory I is the classic Case theory of Chomsky (1981), and theory IIa is a later development of this classic theory. Theory IIb was presented in Koopman & Sportiche (1988), and was adopted, among others, by Solà (1989) and Bonet (1989). Theory IIIa, finally, is Chomsky's current view on Case. IIIa is the "big theory" of IIa (where a big theory is a Case theory such that accusative is assigned in the same way that nominative is). Our suggestion, now, will be to institute a theory IIIb which is the big theory of IIb. This new theory can be seen in (39):
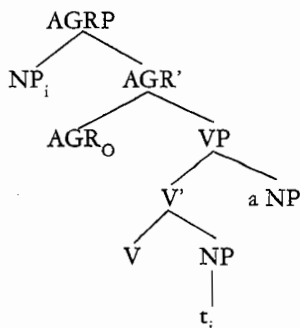
(39)

IIIb	NOM	GOVERNMENT or AGREEMENT
	ACC	GOVERNMENT or AGREEMENT

As we understand it, IIIb introduces the factor that can alter prominence relations in Romance ditransitive constructions. Under IIIb both cases in (40) are allowed:

(40) a. goal higher than theme
       goal binds theme
       ACC under government
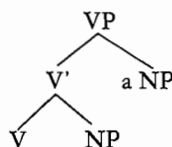
b. goal higher than theme
    theme binds goal
    ACC under agreement

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                    AGRP
                   /    \
              NP_i       AGR'
                        /    \
                   AGR_O      VP
                             /   \
                            V'    a NP
                           /  \
                          V    NP
                               |
                               t_i
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To summarize, in this paper we have retrieved a number of arguments for the thesis that Romance indirect objects are NPs, and we have also ruled out a number of arguments against this thesis. In the last part of the paper, finally, we have presented a possible solution to a significant problem that presents itself when one concedes that (1b) is the only possible string (word order aside) for Romance ditransitive constructions.

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