



UF

On dative possessors and middle constructions in Spanish

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OBJETIVES

Objectives

Part 1: The boundaries of inalienable possession

1. Examine inalienable possession effects (and lack thereof) in Spanish middle-passive constructions containing body-part/relational nouns and dative arguments.
2. Assess inalienable possession (and lack thereof) in inchoative configurations in Spanish.
3. Propose a hybrid possessor raising/applicative analysis of this phenomenon that incorporates phase theory.
4. Evaluate the predictions of the proposal by looking at inalienable possession in other unaccusative and transitive contexts.

PART 2: On possessor datives and word order in Spanish middle-passives

1. Point out the intervention effects that a low applicative analysis of these configurations might run into and propose a possible solution.

PART 1

MIDDLE-PASSIVES

Middle contexts in Spanish

**Table 1. Traditional classification of middle sentences in Spanish
(Mendikoetxea 1999)**

Middle sentences with non-paradigmatic 'se'

Middle-passives a) Esta camisa se lava muy bien.

Impersonal middles b) A estos niños se les asusta fácilmente.

Middle sentences with paradigmatic 'se'

Anticausatives c) Se hundió el barco.

Reflexives d) Los niños nos lavamos.

Pseudo-reflexives e) Vosotros os demayasteis.

Middle contexts in Spanish

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Anticausatives

c) Se hundió el barco.

Reflexives

d) Los niños nos lavamos.

Pseudo-reflexives

e) Vosotros os demayasteis.

Middle-passive constructions

- (1) Esta camisa se lava fácilmente.
this shirt REFL washes easily
'This shirt washes easily.'
'Anyone can wash this shirt easily.'

Sánchez López (2002)

- Stative/generic predicates denoting atemporal properties of the theme DP; only compatible with non-perfective tenses (present, imperfect).
- Modal value: often modified by adverbial or prepositional phrases.
- Grammatical subject → semi-agent (Hale y Keyser 1988): its intrinsic properties are responsible for the event.
- They allow all kinds of predicates, except for stative ones: **los datos históricos se saben difícilmente* ['historical facts are difficult to know'] (2002: 67).

Middle-passive constructions

- (1) Esta camisa se lava fácilmente (*por Pedro).
this shirt REFL washes easily by Pedro
'This shirt washes easily.'
'Anyone can wash this shirt easily.'

Sánchez López (2002)

- **Impossible to express the notional subject by means of a by-phrase.**
 - *Various accounts regarding the structural instantiation of the notional subject.*
 - Syntactic analyses (Roberts 1987; Stroik 1992)
 - Semantic analyses (O'Gready 1980; Dixon 1982; Chierchia 2003)
 - Lexicalist analyses (Fagan 1992; Ackema & Schoorlemmer 1995)

Middle-passive constructions

(1) ***(Esta) camisa se lava fácilmente.**

Sánchez López (2002)

- Grammatical subject must be a DP.
- Unmarked order preverbal

(2) *What happens?*

- a. (Que) esta camisa se lava fácilmente.
- b. ?(Que) se lava esta camisa fácilmente.
- c. (Que) se lavaron camisas.
- d. *(Que) camisas se lavaron.

SE-Passive

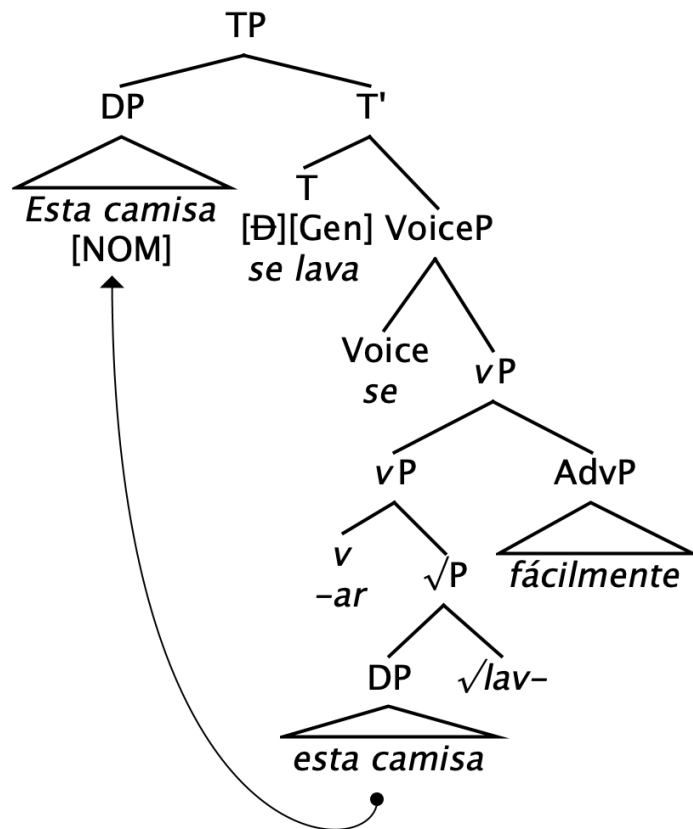
SE-Passive

This may be due to the fact that this argument is a sentential topic in middle-passives (Mendikoetxea 1999; Sánchez López 2002)

Middle-passive constructions

(3) a. Esta camisa se lava fácilmente.

b.



INALIENABLE POSSESSION

Inalienable possession

Relational/body-part nouns in middle-passive sentences:

(4) a. *Internal possession*

Sus arrugas se ven fácilmente.

his wrinkles RFL see easily

‘His wrinkles are easily visible.’

b. Las arrugas **de Chomsky** se ven fácilmente.

the wrinkles of Chomsky RFL see easily

c. *External possession*

A Chomsky_i se **le_i** ven [**las/*sus_i/*tus** arrugas]_i fácilmente.

Chomsky_{DAT} RFL 3SG.DAT see the/your wrinkles easily

d. **A Chomsky_i** se **le_i** congelan [**las/sus_i/*k/tus_j** verrugas]_i fácil.

Chomsky_{DAT} RFL 3SG.DAT freeze the/his/your warts easily

‘Chomsky’s warts freeze easily.’

‘(Your) warts freeze easily on Chomsky.’

ANALYSIS

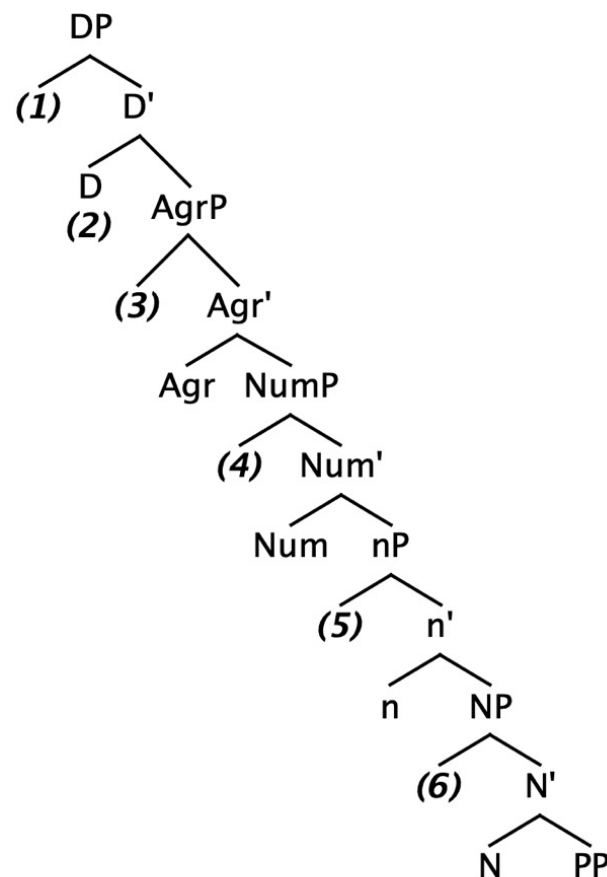
Inalienable possession

- **Guéron (1985): Inalienably possessed nouns take a possessor as an argument:** *Marta_i levanta [la ec_i mano]* ('Marta raises her hand.')
- **Español-Echevarría (1997) & Fábregas (2011): alienable and inalienable possessors merge in different positions inside the possessee.**

Inalienable possession

Internal possession (*Adapted from Alexiadou et al. 2007: 575*):

1. Lexical DP possessives ('John's book')
2. Clitic possessives ('su libro'; her book)
3. 'Weak' pronoun possessives ('el seu llibre' [Catalan])
4. Post-nominal strong possessors ('el libro suyo'; the book of his)
5. Alienable possessors
6. Inalienable possessors



Inalienable possession

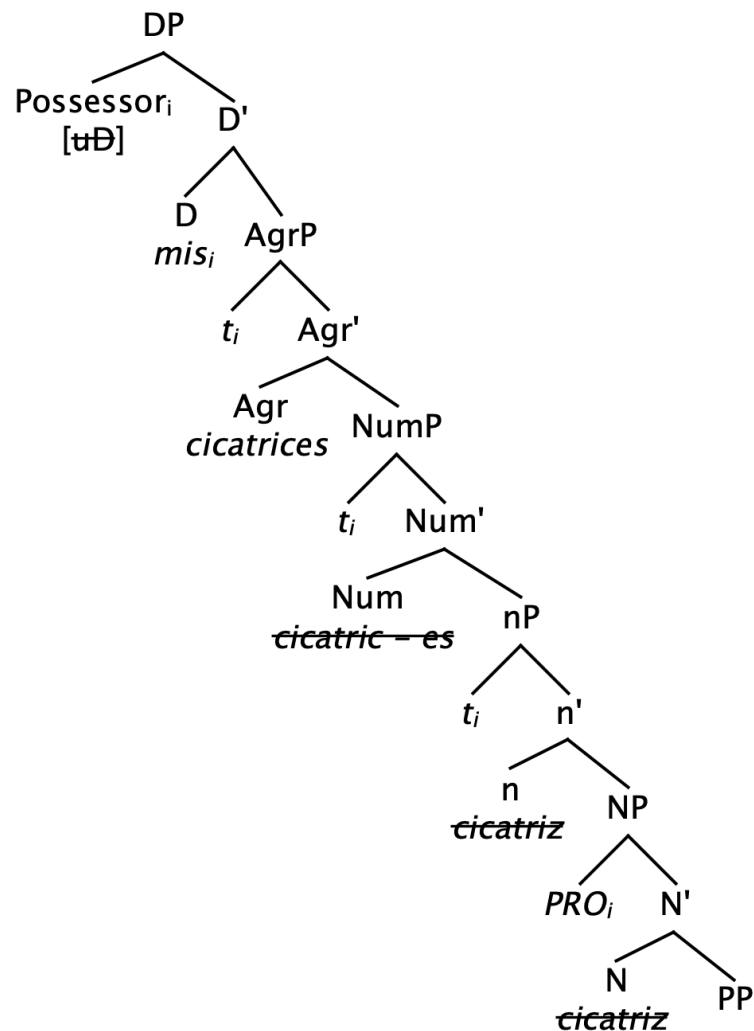
Feature endowment for Spanish possessors proposed in Fábregas (2011: 28):

- Feature endowment of the possessive: [uD, uNum, uGen, Possessive]
- Feature endowment of the determiner: [D, uNum, uGen]

Inalienable possession

Clitic possessors:

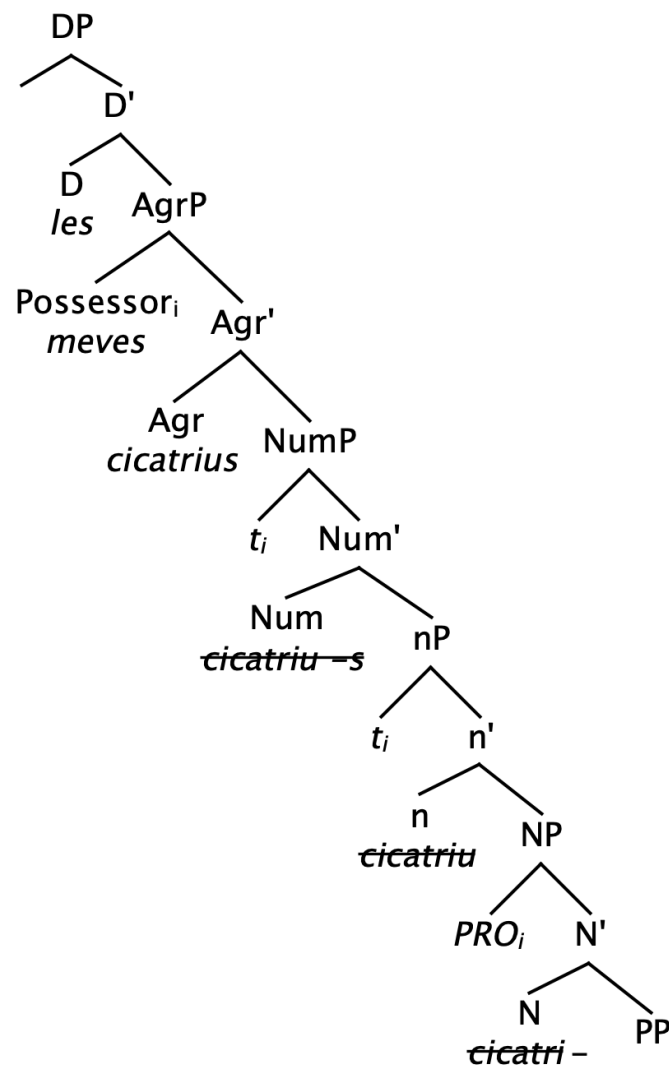
Mis cicatrices [Spanish]



Inalienable possession

Weak possessors:

Les meves cicatrius [Catalan]

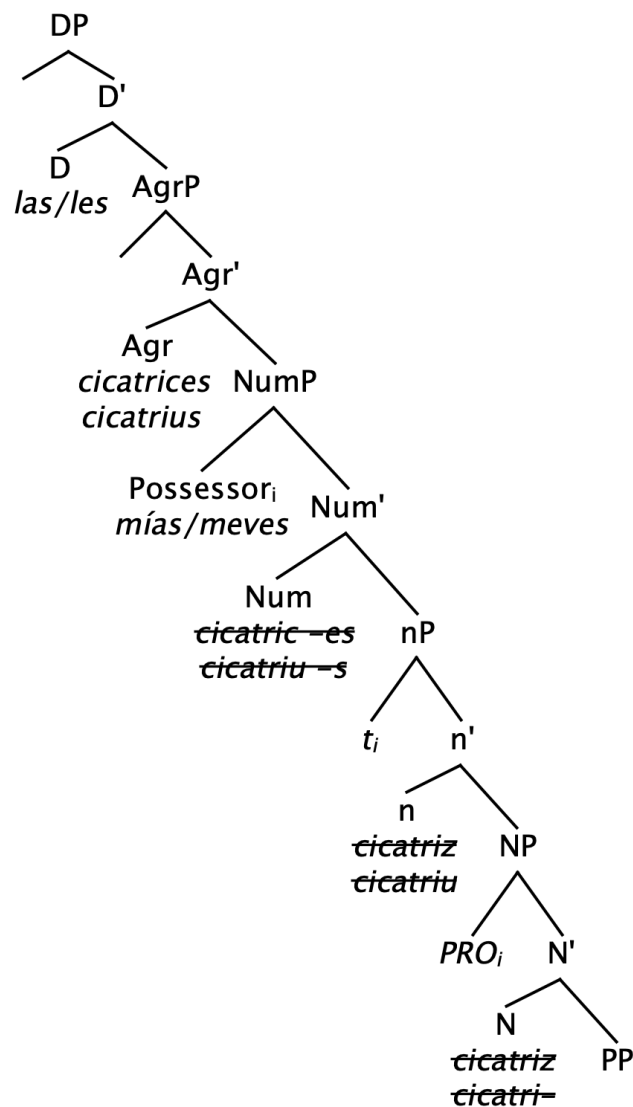


Inalienable possession

Strong possessors:

Las cicatrices mías [Spanish]

Les cicatrius meves [Catalan]



Inalienable possession

External possession

- Dative possessors and inalienable possession analyzed in terms of:
 - *Control* (Guéron 1983, 1985; Demonte 1995)
 - *Predication* (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992)
 - *Possessor raising* (Landau 1999; Sánchez López 2007; Deal 2017)
 - *Applicatives* (Cuervo 2003)
 - *Hybrid approach: possessor raising to Spec,ApplP* (Armstrong 2021)

Analysis

Three types of low applicatives:

Pylkkänen (2008)

APPL_{TO} (Goal applicative):

$\lambda x. \lambda y. \lambda f_{\langle e \langle s, t \rangle \rangle}. \lambda e. f(e, x) \ \& \ \text{theme}(e, x) \ \& \ \text{from-the-possession}(x, y)$

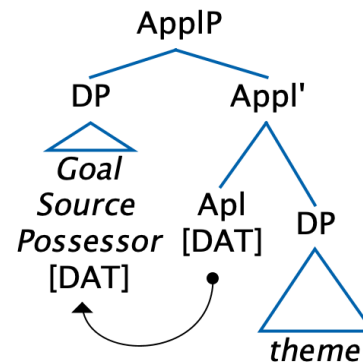
APPL_{FROM} (Source applicative):

$\lambda x. \lambda y. \lambda f_{\langle e \langle s, t \rangle \rangle}. \lambda e. f(e, x) \ \& \ \text{theme}(e, x) \ \& \ \text{to-the-possession}(x, y)$

Cuervo (2003)

APPL_{AT} (Possessor applicative):

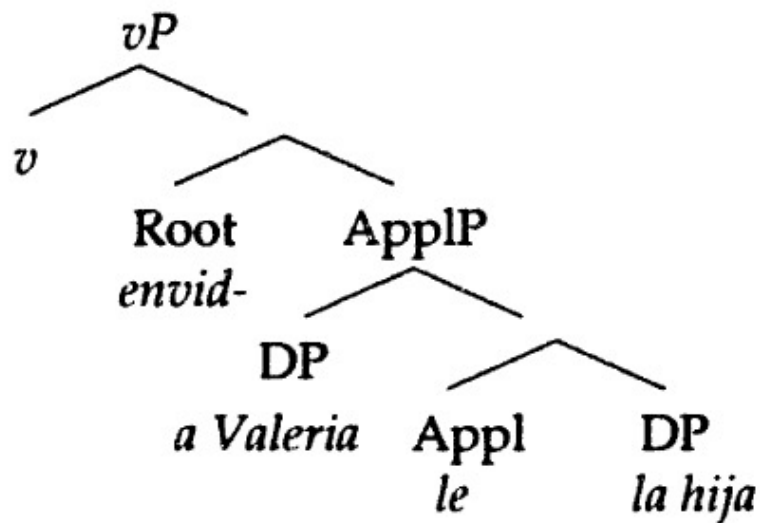
$\lambda x. \lambda y. \lambda f_{\langle e \langle s, t \rangle \rangle}. \lambda e. f(e, x) \ \& \ \text{theme}(e, x) \ \& \ \text{in-the-possession}(x, y)$



Analysis

Cuervo (2003: 76, ex. 90)

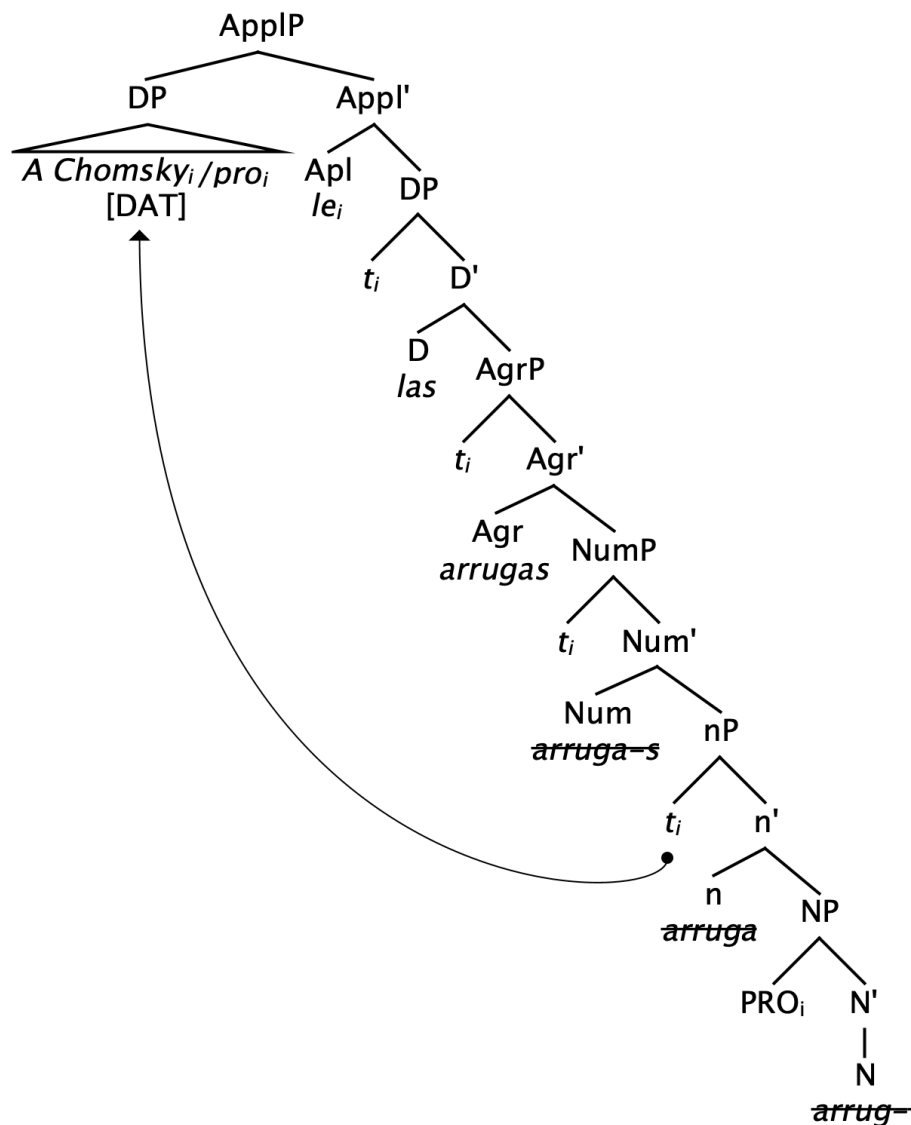
Pablo le envidia la hija a Valeria ('Pablo envies Valeria's daughter').



Analysis

A Chomsky_i se le_i ven [las arrugas]_i fácilmente

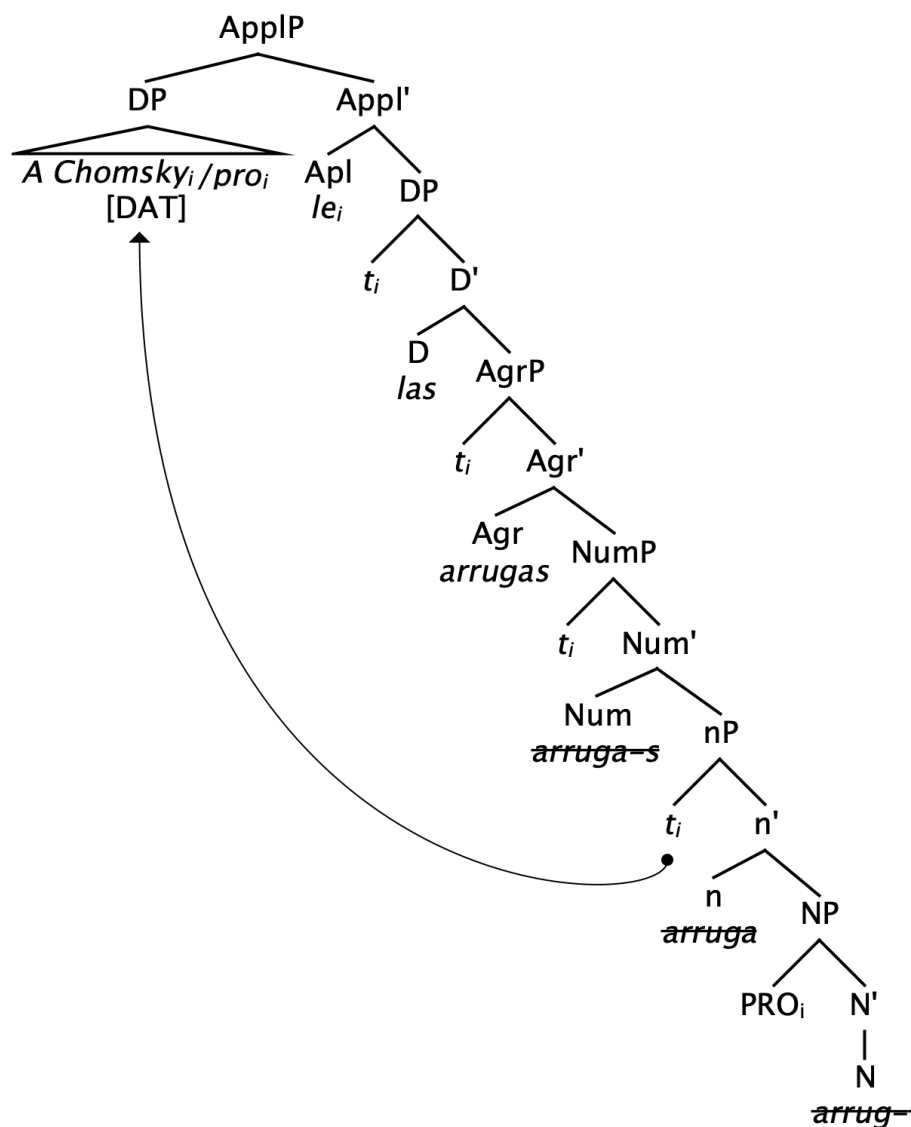
- The possessor DP originates in Spec,nP (not Spec,ApplP) from where it controls the PRO in the specifier of the relational NP.
- The possessor undergoes XP-movement to the empty specifier of the low applicative head, spelled out as *le*, where it is assigned structural DAT.



Analysis

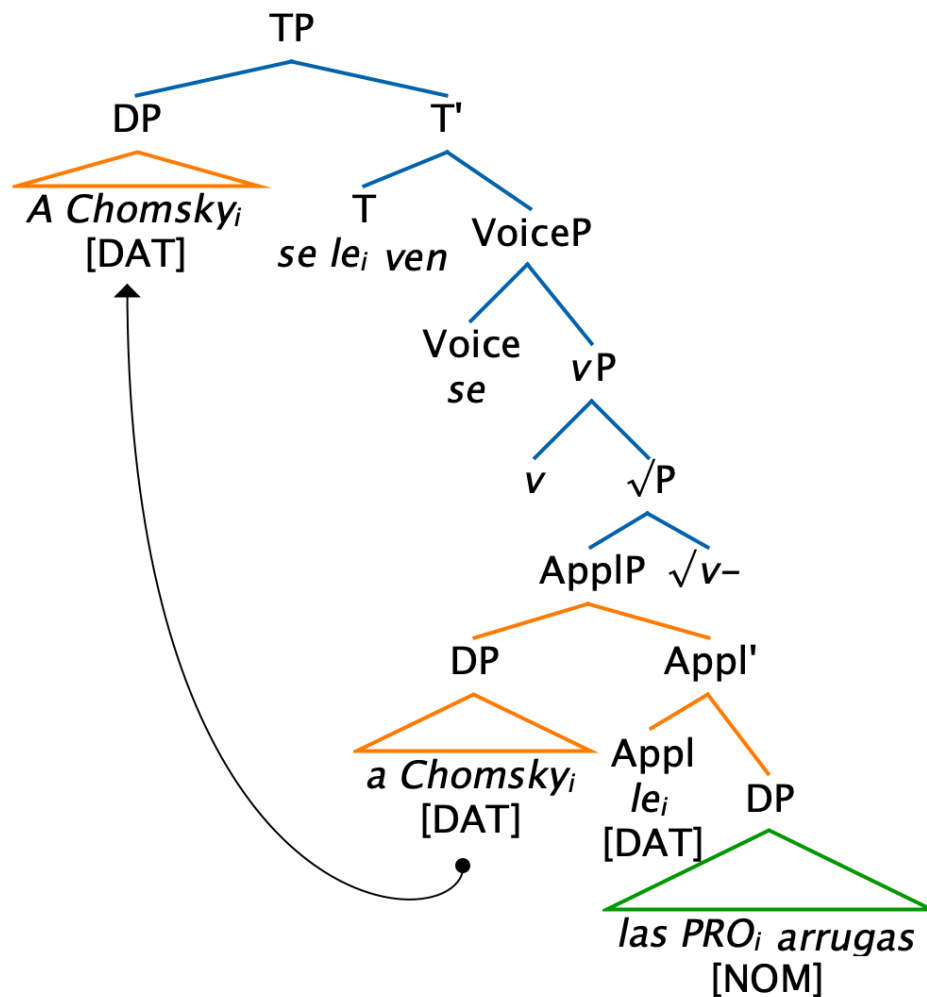
A Chomsky_i se le_i ven [las arrugas]_i fácilmente

- The purpose of the applicative head is then to license a full DP originating inside the possessee.
- The complementary distribution between the possessive determiner and the dative possessor is a consequence of the nature of this derivation: no feature bundle standing for the possessor sits in Spec,DP, but a lower copy of the possessor DP.



Analysis

(5) *A Chomsky_i se le_i ven [las arrugas]_i fácilmente*



LACK OF INALIENABLE POSSESSION

Lack of inalienable possession

A Chomsky_i se le_i congelan [las/sus_{#i/j}/tus_k verrugas]_i fácilmente.
 Chomsky_{.DAT} RFL 3SG.DAT freeze the/his/your warts easily

Possible interpretations:

1. Affected possessor of the body-part DP undergoing the change of state: *Chomsky's warts freeze easily (and he's affected by it).*
2. Benefactive/Malefactive of someone else's body-part's resulting state: *(Your) warts freeze easily on Chomsky.*

Lack of inalienable possession

Change-of-state predicates involve a bi-eventive configuration comprising an activity subevent (v_{DO}) and a stative one (v_{BE})/ResultP (Cuervo 2003).

Casi ('almost') can have scope over the whole event (vP_{DO}), or only over the stative projection (vP_{BE} /ResultP) (Cuervo 2014).

- (6) Juan casi quema la tortilla.
Juan almost burns the omelet

'Juan almost started to burn the omelet, but he did not.'

Scope = v_{DO}

'Juan almost burned the omelet, but it did not burn completely.'

Scope = v_{BE} /ResultP

Lack of inalienable possession

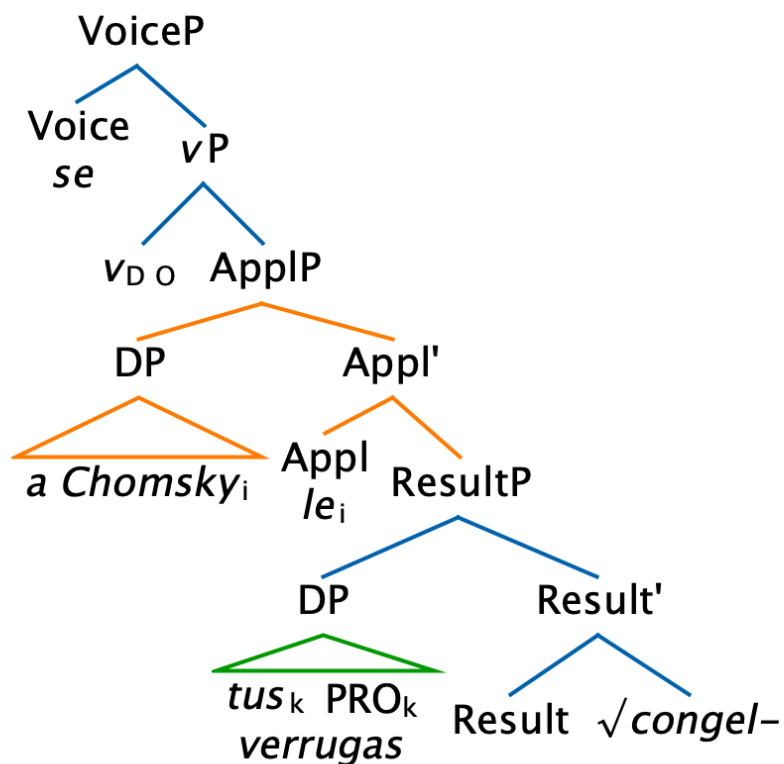
Dative arguments in these structures are introduced by an affected applicative head (Affected-APPL), a type of middle applicative relating the dative argument to the end state of the theme.

This functional head merges ‘sandwiched’ between the two subevents.

“When the dative is understood as the possessor of the theme object, to assume possession is a way to (pragmatically) accounting for the affectedness of the dative as a result of the change of state the theme undergoes” (Cuervo 2003: 126).

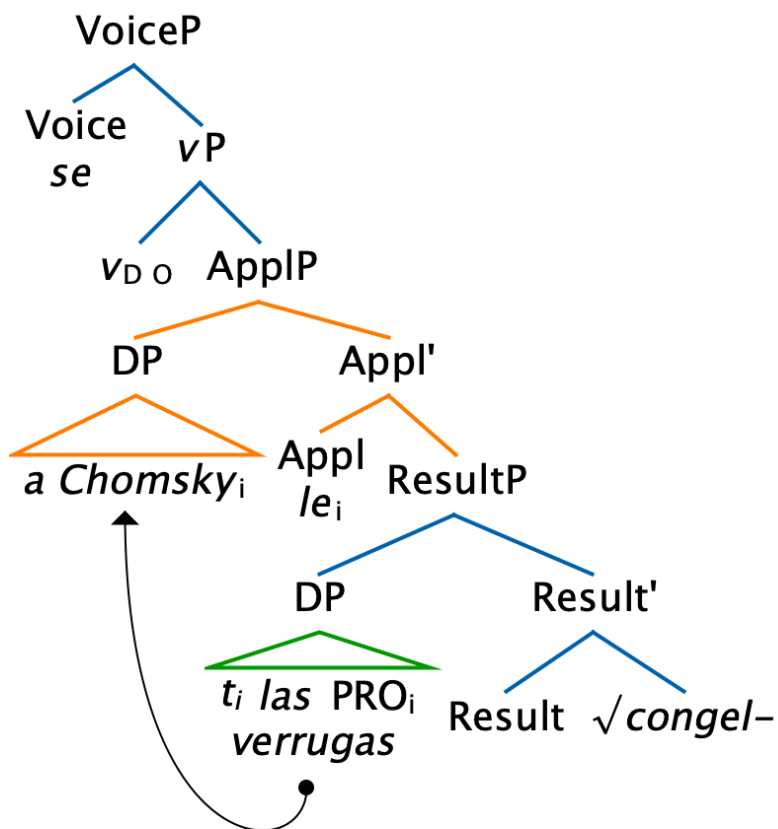
Lack of inalienable possession

(7) a. A Chomsky_i se le_i congelan **tus** verrugas fácilmente.



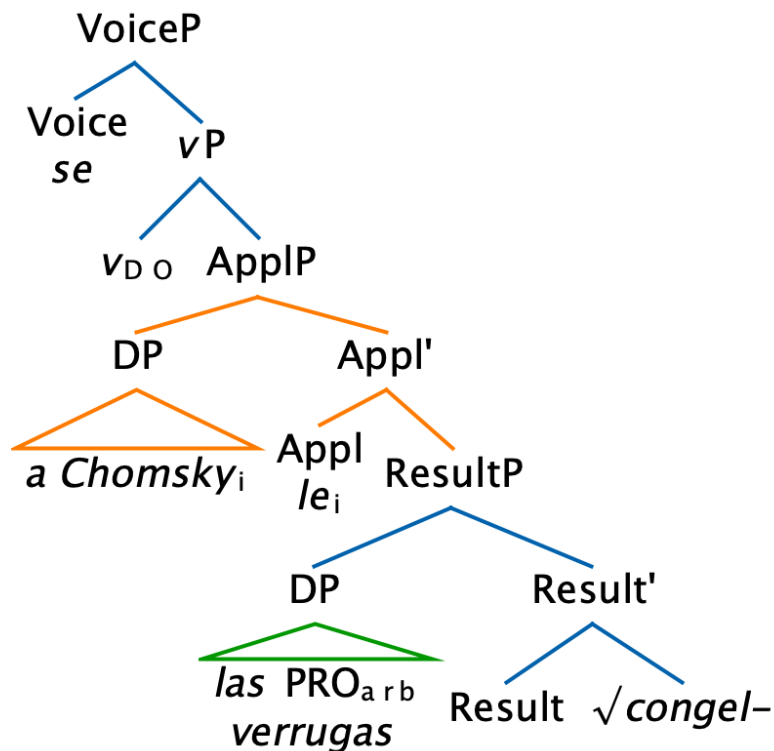
Lack of inalienable possession

(7) b. A Chomsky_i se le_i congelan las_i verrugas fácilmente.



Lack of inalienable possession

(7) c. A Chomsky_i se le_i congelan las_{arb} verrugas fácilmente.



Lack of inalienable possession

There are two types of middle applicatives:

- **Affected-APPL:** introduces an additional argument in its specifier, which is interpreted as affected given the position this functional head occupies in the structure. When a body-part DP occurs in this context, it surfaces as internally possessed (possessive determiner binds PRO in Spec,NP) or without a possessor (PRO in Spec,NP is not controlled).
- **Affected-APPL-AT:** licenses a possessor DP originating inside the theme DP; therefore, this Appl head originates with an empty specifier. The dative argument is necessarily interpreted as the possessor of the relational noun.

This proposal structurally accounts for these possible interpretations which, otherwise would have to be pragmatically explained.

THE PICTURE SO FAR...

Inalienable possession (and lack thereof)

An analysis of possession whereby the possessor originates inside the possessum DP, in Spec,nP, in line with the existing literature.

Body-part/relational nouns take a PRO as an argument, merging in Spec,NP.

The possessor in Spec,nP can be a feature bundle (internal possession) or a full DP (external possession), both of which are able to bind PRO in Spec,NP in the context of a body-part noun.

If the possessor is a full DP, it will require to undergo XP-movement to the specifier of a licensing head (Spec,ApplP) where it checks dative case.

This applicative head may be low (activities/accomplishments) or middle (changes of state/location), depending of the particular event structure of the configuration.

Inalienable possession (and lack thereof)

Two types of middle applicatives are proposed: an affected applicative, introducing an additional argument in its specifier that is interpreted as affected, and an affected applicative of possession, whose empty specifier is filled by the possessor DP raising from inside the theme DP.

This proposal accounts for inalienable possession (and lack thereof) in structural terms, without the involvement of pragmatics.

SCOPE OF THE PROPOSAL

The boundaries of inalienable possession

Anticausative change-of-state configurations in Spanish and dative arguments:

(8) A Luis_i se le_i quemó la hamburguesa.

Luis_{DAT} RFL 3SG.DAT burned the burger

‘The/his burger burned and Luis is affected by it.’

‘Luis accidentally burned the/his burger.’

(9) A Luis se le quemaron los dedos.

Luis_{DAT} RFL 3SG.DAT burned the fingers

‘Luis’s fingers burned and he’s affected by it.’

Impossible: ‘*Luis accidentally burned his fingers.’

(10) Luis se quemó los dedos.

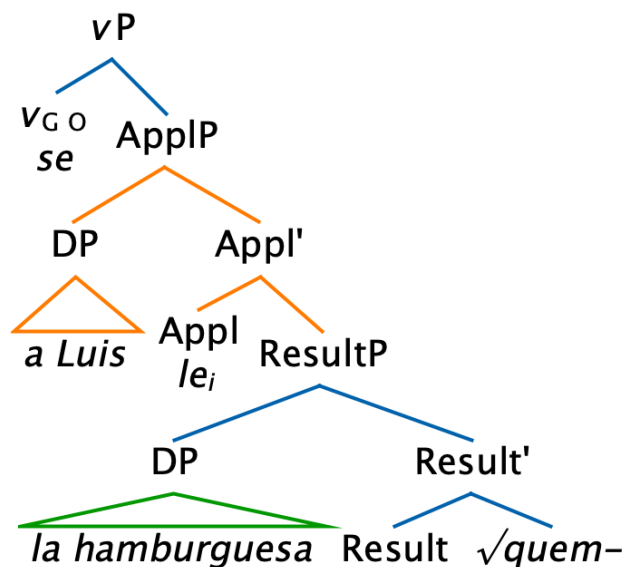
Luis RFL burned the fingers

‘Luis accidentally burned his fingers.’

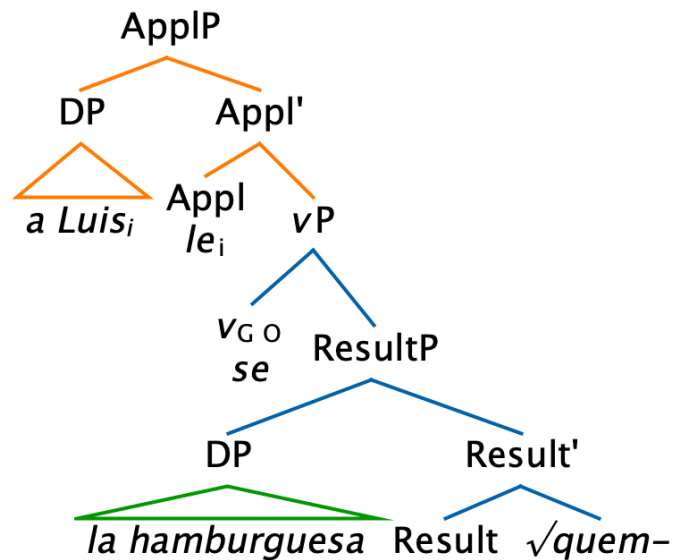
The boundaries of inalienable possession

Unintentional causers introduced by a type of affected applicative, a high applicative this time, on top of a dynamic event (v_{GO}) in anticausative configurations (Cuervo 2003).

Dative = Affected



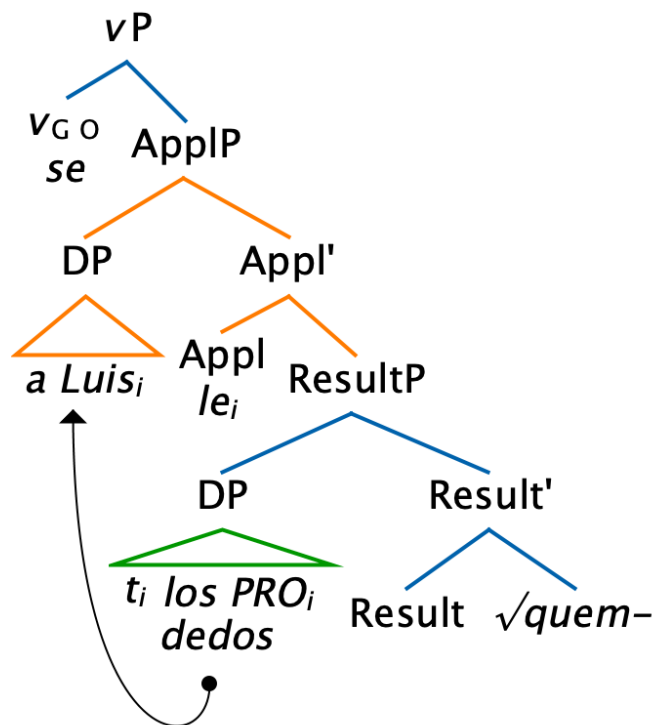
Dative = Accidental causer



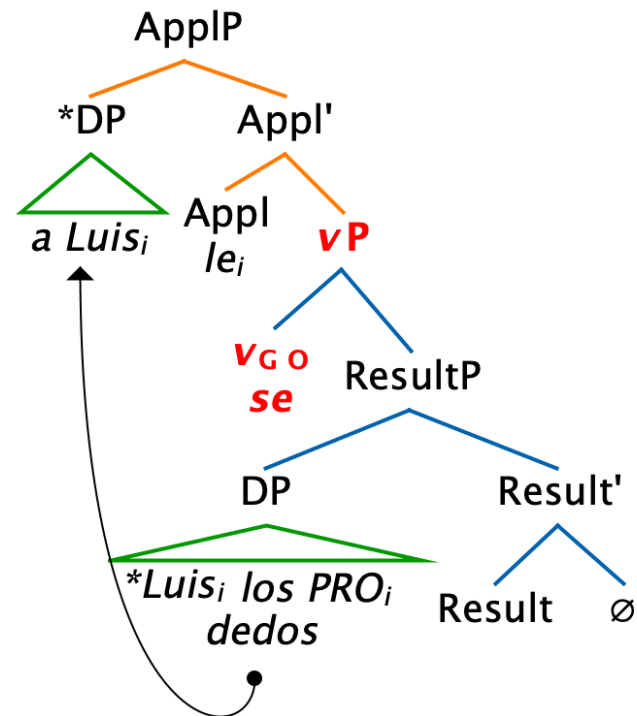
The boundaries of inalienable possession

(9) A Luis se le quemaron los dedos.

Dative = Affected possessor

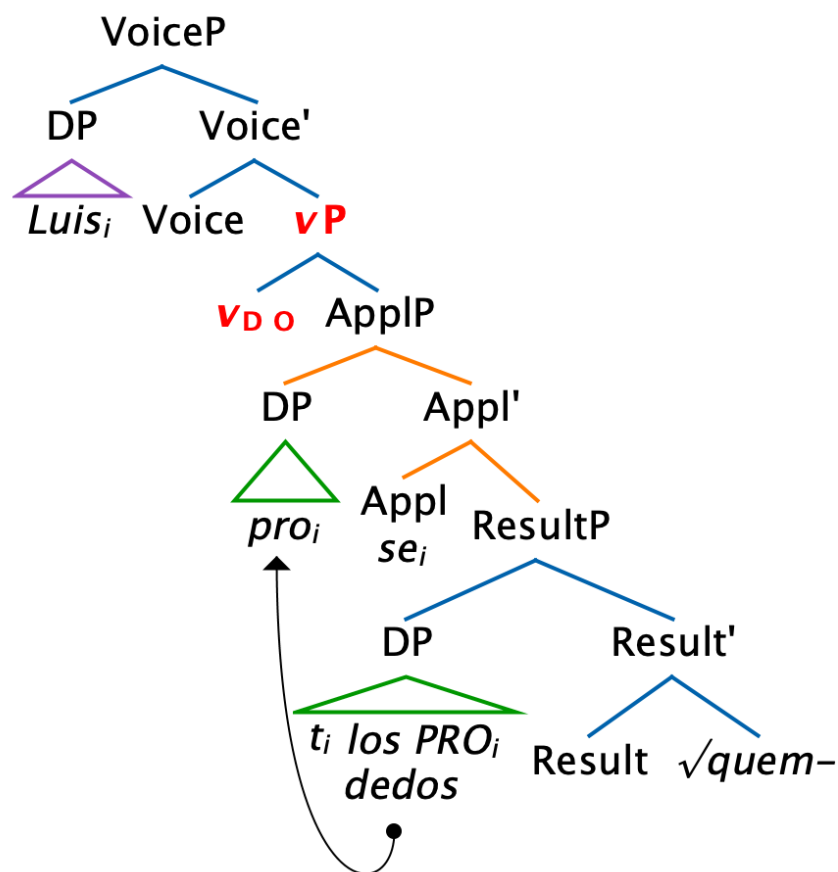


Dative = Accidental causer & possessor



The boundaries of inalienable possession

(10) Luis se quemó los dedos.



The boundaries of inalienable possession

Raising of the inalienable possessor to the specifier of a high applicative phrase is impossible because it would have to cross a phase (v_{GO}) (Chomsky 2000).

This explains why an inalienable possessor cannot be understood as an accidental causer in (9), but it can be interpreted as an affected possessor, because raising to the specifier of a middle applicative head does not cross any phases.

The accidental causer is compatible with alienable possession, presumably because no possessor raising occurs in those contexts; in such case, the fact that the theme may be interpreted as “possessed” by the accidental causer may be due to pragmatic factors, like Cuervo pointed out.

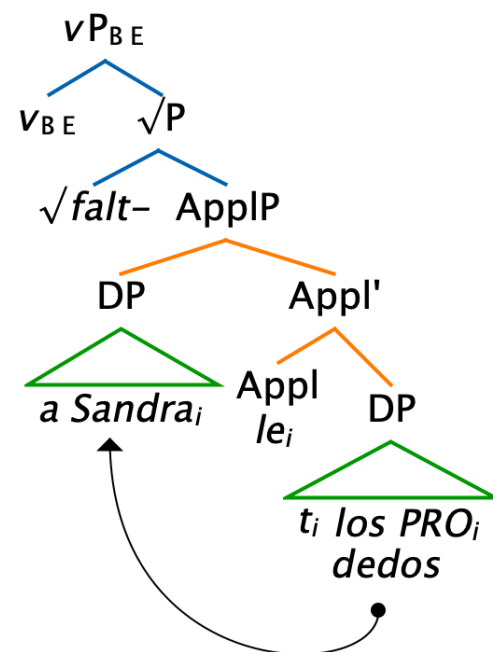
This phenomenon supports the hybrid possessor raising to Spec,ApplP analysis.

The boundaries of inalienable possession

If this proposal is on the right track, we would expect inalienable possessor datives only in contexts containing low or middle applicatives, but never with high applicatives. Let's test the data.

Datives in existential constructions:

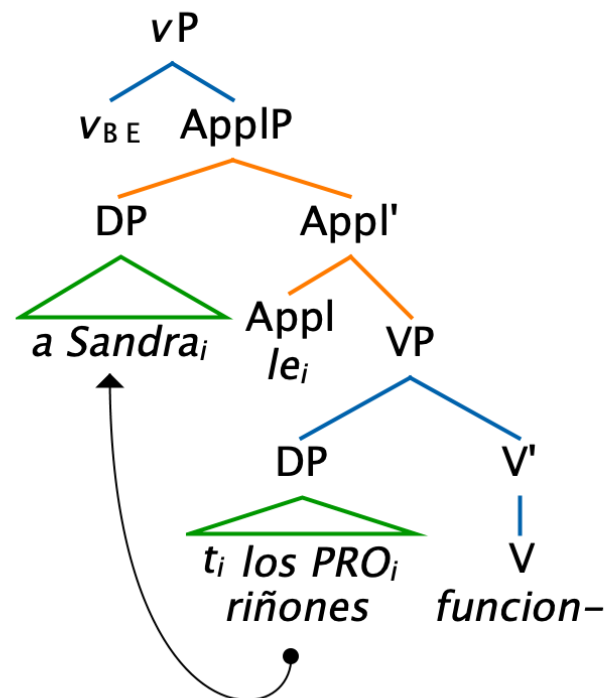
- (11) A Sandra_i le_i faltan [(los) dedos]_i
 Sandra_{DAT} 3SG.DAT lacks the fingers
 'Sandra lacks (her) fingers.'



The boundaries of inalienable possession

Datives in other stative contexts:

- (12) A Sandra_i le_i funcionan *(los_i) riñones.
 Sandra_{DAT} 3SG.DAT work the kidneys
 'Sandra's kidneys work well.'



The boundaries of inalienable possession

Datives in constructions with psych predicates are supposed to be High-APPLs; we should not be able to have dative inalienable possessors in these sentences.

(13) a. A Sandra_i le_i gusta el*_i pelo.

Sandra_{DAT} 3SG.DAT likes the hair
'Sandra likes hair.'

b. A Sandra_i le_i gusta su_{i/k} pelo.

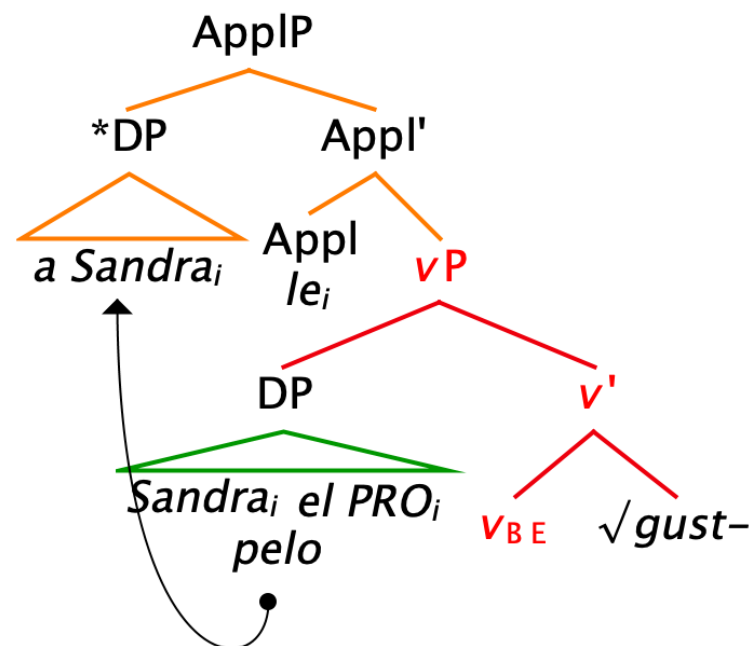
Sandra_{DAT} 3SG.DAT likes her hair
'Sandra likes her (own) hair.'

The boundaries of inalienable possession

(13) A Sandra_i le_i gusta el*_i pelo.

Chomsky's (2000) Specifier Condition seems to be at play here:

No subextraction is possible out of a constituent which is a specifier of a phase head.

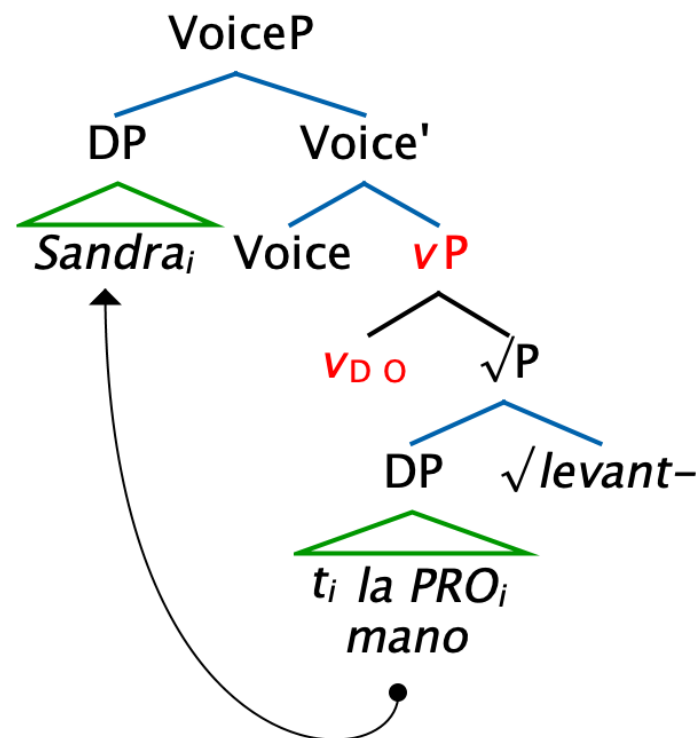


The boundaries of inalienable possession

Constructions of natural physical gesture (Authier 1992; MacDonald 2017).

Armstrong (2021):

- (14) Sandra_i levantó la mano_i.
Sandra raised the hand
'Sandra raised her hand.'

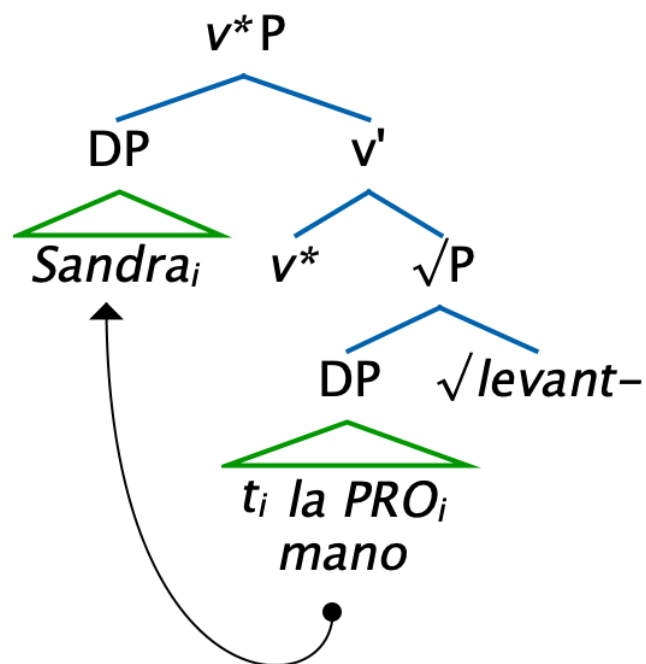


The boundaries of inalienable possession

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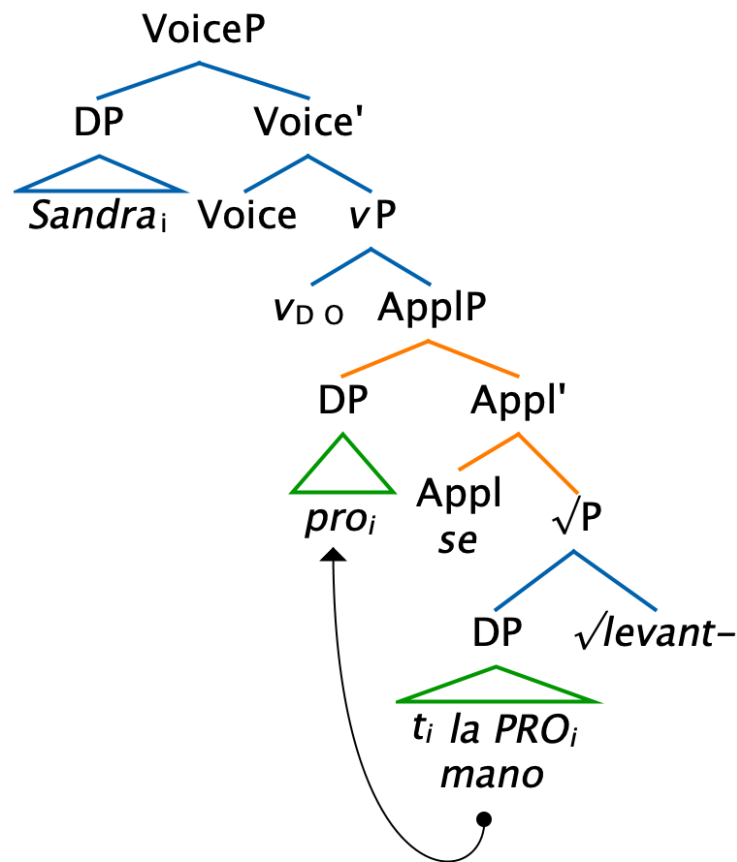
- (14) Sandra_i levantó la mano_i.
 Sandra raised the hand
 'Sandra raised her hand.'

Evidence for the Bundling Hypothesis in Spanish (Pylkkänen 2002; Folli & Harley 2007)?



The boundaries of inalienable possession

- (15) Sandra_i se levantó la mano_i.
 Sandra RFL raised the hand
 'Sandra raised her hand.'



CONCLUSIONS

Inalienable possession

Inalienable possession between a dative DP and a body-part noun can only happen within the boundaries of a phase.

Therefore, these dative possessors are licensed only in the specifiers of low or middle applicatives, but never by high applicatives, because that would involve crossing a phase.

High applicatives are true argument introducers, whereas low and middle applicatives of possession simply license possessor DPs originating inside the possessee.

A type of middle applicative may also be an argument introducer, an Affected-APPL, following Cuervo (2003), in which case, the relational noun will surface internally possessed, or not possessed at all.

A hybrid possessor raising-applicative analysis is able to capture these data.

PART 2

Inalienable possession and word order in Spanish

Numerous studies discuss the position and the subjecthood of preverbal datives in Spanish (Masullo 1992; Fernández Soriano 1999; Tubino 2007; Fernández Soriano y Mendikoetxea 2013; Fábregas, Jiménez y Tubino 2017).

Jiménez-Fernández (2020) argues that possessor datives are low-applicatives (Cuervo 2003), hence they surface post-verbally.

Inalienable possession

Dative DP in preverbal position in middle-passive sentences:

(16) *What happens?*

- a. (Que) le_i veo [las arrugas]_i a Chomsky_i fácilmente.
- b. ?(Que) a Chomsky_i le_i veo [las arrugas]_i fácilmente.
- c. (Que) a Chomsky_i se le_i ven [las arrugas]_i fácilmente.
- d. (Que) a Chomsky_i [las arrugas]_i se le_i ven fácilmente.
- e. (Que) [las arrugas]_i a Chomsky_i se le_i ven fácilmente.
- f. ?(Que) [las arrugas]_i se le ven a Chomsky_i fácilmente.

Dative possessors

In this respect, possessor datives in Spanish middle-passive constructions resemble preverbal dative experiencers.

Masullo (1992) notes that negatively quantified dative experiencers lose their quantificational scope if left-dislocated, and are thus interpreted referentially.

(17) *Masullo (1992:90)*

- a. A nadie le gusta la música pop en esta casa.
'Nobody likes pop music in this house.'
- b. *A nadie, le gusta la música pop en esta casa.
'Nadie likes pop music in this house.'

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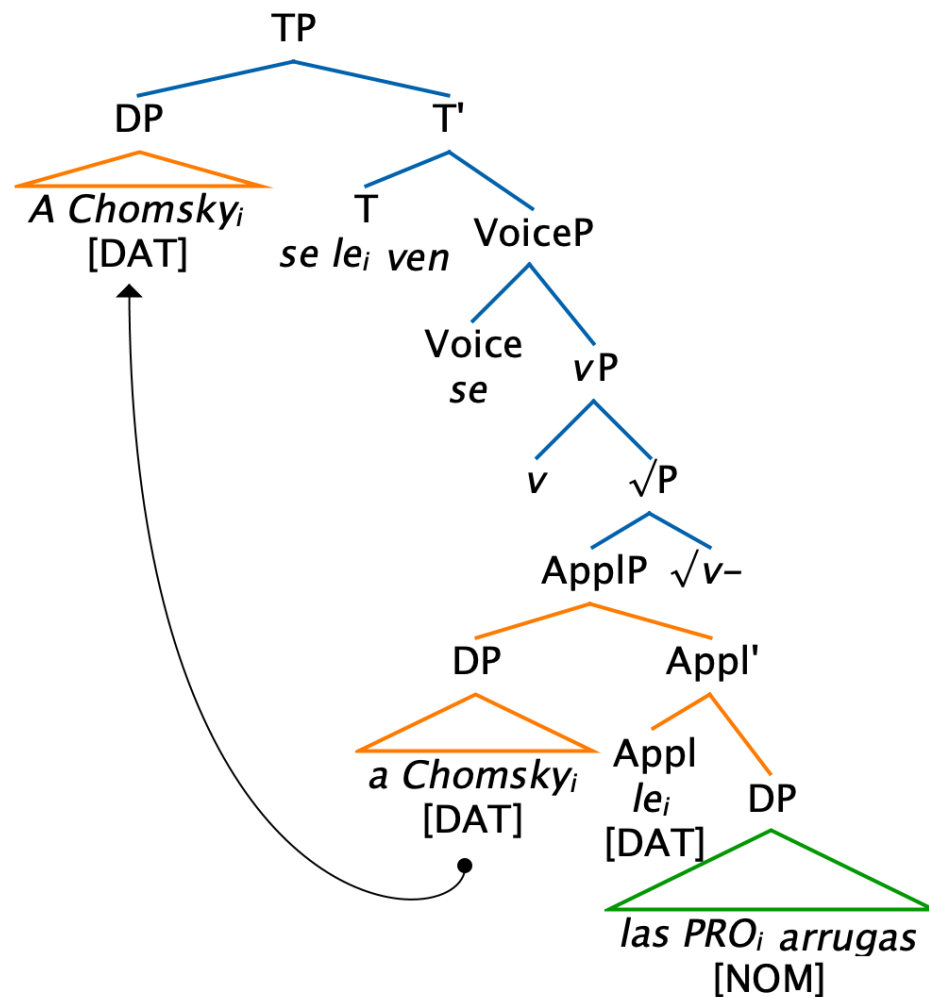
- (18) a. [_{TP} A nadie_i se le_i ven [las arrugas]_i fácilmente].
b. *A nadie_i, [_{TP} [las arrugas]_i se le_i ven fácilmente].

Dative possessors

- (19) a. *Dative DP in preverbal subject position*
[_{TP} A Chomsky_i se le_i ven [las arrugas]_i fácilmente].
- b. *Left-dislocated dative DP*
A Chomsky_i, [_{TP} [las arrugas]_i se le_i ven fácilmente].

The data

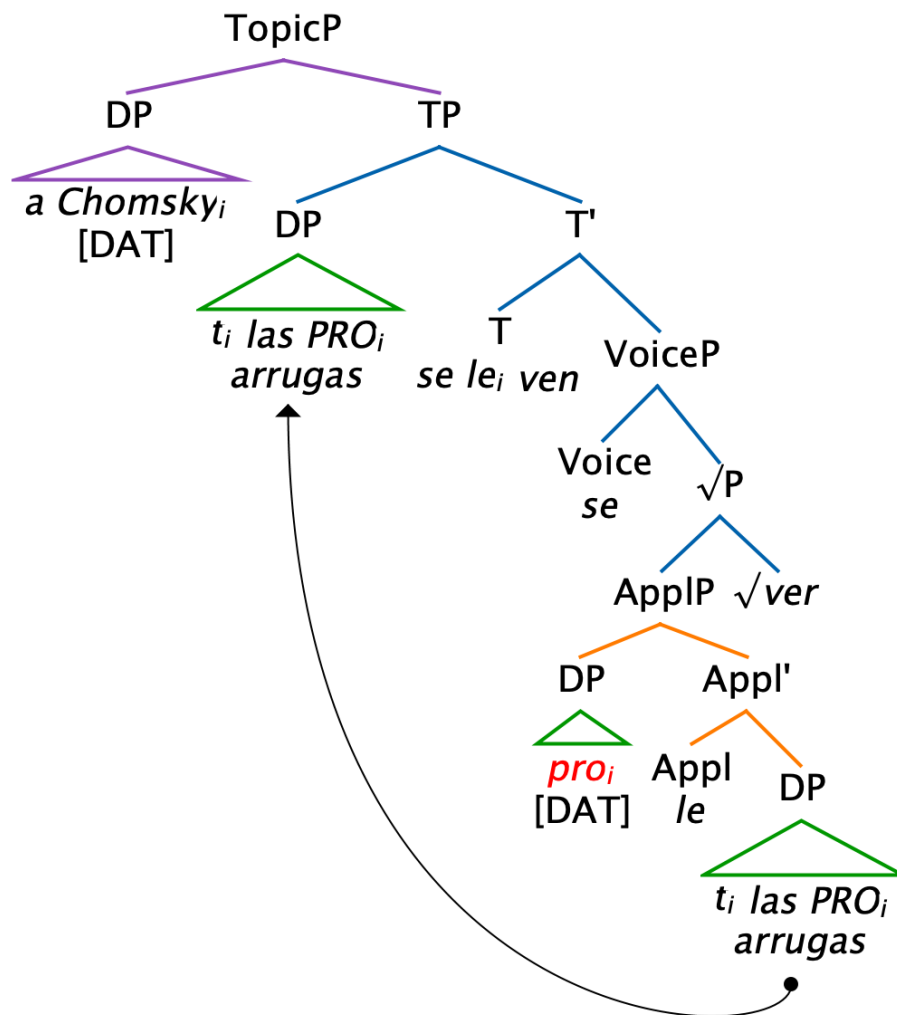
(5) *A Chomsky_i se le_i ven [las arrugas]_i fácilmente*



The data

(19) *A Chomsky_i [las arrugas], se le_i ven fácilmente.*

If we assume that the theme raises to preverbal subject position – presumably Spec,TP– we run into a locality violation.



INTERVENTION EFFECTS

Analysis

As we have seen previously, the possessor must raise to Spec,ApplP to be case-licensed; otherwise, the semantic definition of the low applicative of possession would not be respected:

APPL_{AT} (Possessor Applicative):

$\lambda x. \lambda y. \lambda f_{\langle e \langle s, t \rangle \rangle}. \lambda e. f(e, x) \ \& \ \text{theme}(e, x) \ \& \ \text{in-the-possession}(x, y)$

Let's play with the data...

Analysis

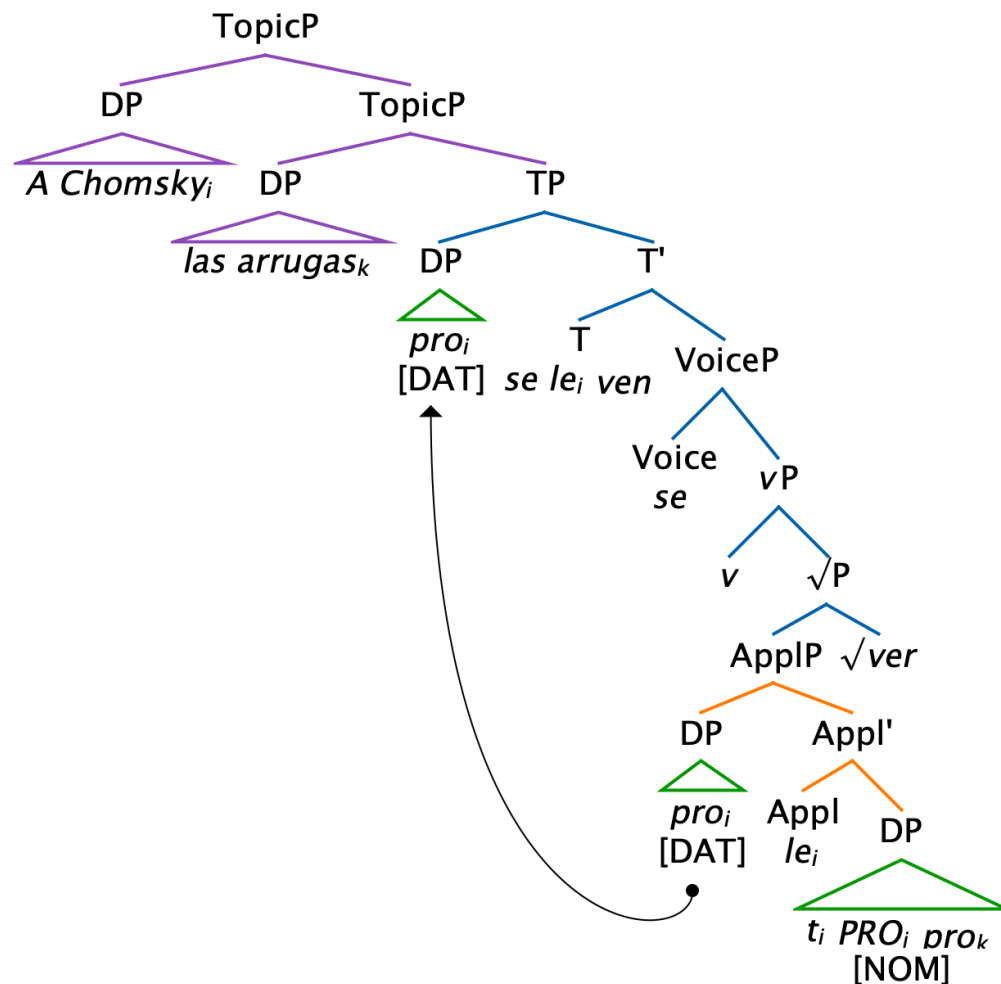
- (20) a. Las arrugas, a nadie_i se le_i ven fácilmente.
 b. Las arrugas_k [_{TP} a nadie_i se le_i ven *pro*_k fácilmente]

Recomplementation (Villa-García 2012)

- (21) a. Dice que a Chomsky, que las arrugas, que se le ven fácilmente.
 b. Dice [_{CP} que [*a Chomsky*_i][_{CP} que [*las arrugas*]_k [_{CP} que [_{TP} *pro*_i se le_i ven *pro*_k fácilmente]]]]
 c. Dice que a Chomsky, que las arrugas se le ven fácilmente.
 d. Dice [_{CP} que [*a Chomsky*_i][_{CP} que [*las arrugas*]_k [_{CP} ∅ [_{TP} *pro*_i se le_i ven *pro*_k fácilmente]]]]

Analysis

(19) *A Chomsky_i [las arrugas]_i,
pro_i se le_i ven pro_k
fácilmente.*



Analysis

(22) Dice [_{CP} que [_{sus arrugas}]_k [_{CP} que [_{TP} *pro*_k se ven fácilmente]]]

(23) Dice [_{CP} que [_{A Juan}]_i [_{CP} que [_{TP} *pro*_i se le_i ven [_{las arrugas} fácilmente]]]

An analysis of preverbal subjects and datives as clitic left dislocations avoids the minimality conflict mentioned before.

These data support classic proposals by Contreras (1976), Olarrea (1996), Ordóñez & Treviño (1999), among others, and are compatible with Barbosa's (2006) account for consistent Null Subject Languages.

Analysis

(24) Dice que a Chomsky_i que [ninguna arruga]_k (*que) *pro*_i se le_i ve *h*_k fácilmente.

“There is a subset of quantificational expressions that are fronted by A'-movement without requiring contrastive Focus” (Barbosa 2006: 16) (cf. Martins 1994, Raposo 1994, Uriagereka 1995).

Proof of that is the fact that in Asturian (as well as in European Portuguese) when these quantificational expressions appear preverbally, they cause proclisis, as in other contexts where A'-movement takes place.

(25) a. Les engurries véense-y fácil.

b. A Chomsky véense-y les engurries fácil.

c. Diz que a Chomsky que nenguna engurria se-y ve fácil.

Therefore, *ninguna arruga* in (24) would raise to an A'-position above *pro*_i.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

- Possessor datives in Spanish middle constructions are licensed by low (or middle) applicative projections, and tend to occur preverbally, together with the grammatical subject, or without it.
- The configuration where both the dative DP and the theme occur preverbally – the former preceding the latter– can run into intervention effects if we assume that the theme has to raise from inside the VP to preverbal subject position, since the possessor DP must raise to Spec,ApplP to be case licensed.
- An analysis that considers preverbal dative and theme DPs to be clitic left-dislocations in these sentences can avoid this conflict.
- These data offer further insight into what position preverbal subjects occupy in Spanish.

THANK YOU!

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