

Dative arguments in psychological predicates in Spanish

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In this paper, we will discuss the properties of psychological predicates with a dative experiencer argument in Spanish. Psychological predicates typically describe concepts such as *fear*, *enjoy*, *hate*, *worry*, *frighten*... and involve two arguments that have the role of experiencer and theme or stimulus/cause. However, these arguments map into different grammatical functions and so they have been traditionally grouped according to their mapping patterns. In English, verbs such as *fear* map the experiencer as SUBJ and the theme as OBJ and verbs like *frighten* show an ‘inverted’ mapping by which the experiencer is OBJ and the theme is SUBJ. A third class of verbs marks the experiencer argument with case or a preposition, such as the Italian *piacere* ‘please’. Spanish displays all three patterns and also a fourth group of reflexive verbs with no specified theme but an optional phrase, for example a PP¹:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) Laura odia las películas
Laura hate.3SG.PRS the.FPL movie.PL
románticas
romantic.FPL
‘Laura hates romantic movies.’ | (3) Le gustan las plantas
3SG.DAT like.3PL.PRS the.FPL plant.PL

‘To him/her please the plants.’
= ‘S/he likes plants.’ |
| (2) Los niños enfadan a
the.MPL child.PL anger.3PL.PRS [+ANIM] their
sus madres
mother.PL
‘Children anger their mothers.’ | (4) Los niños se aburren (en clase)
The.PL child.PL REFL get.bored.3PL.PRS in class

‘Children get bored in class.’ |

The dative argument in (3) can optionally be doubled by a full NP²:

- (5) (A Juan_i) le_i gustan las plantas
 DAT Juan 3SG.DAT like.3PL.PRS the.FPL plant.PL
 ‘To Juan please the plants.’
 = ‘Juan likes plants.’

The main issues arising from the configuration in (5) are: (i) what GF the dative argument maps to and (ii) how to deal with doubling. (i) has been the focus of much discussion as evidenced by the varied array of possible solutions that have been proposed in the literature. We will deal with (ii) by giving the dative NP and the dative weak pronoun distinct GFs.

Spanish is generally speaking an SVO language, so based on ordering, we could consider the dative phrase to be the SUBJ. However, SUBJ in Spanish agrees with the verb in PERSON and NUMBER and in (5), the verb is plural, agreeing therefore with the phrase at the end of the sentence - *las plantas*. This mismatch between ordering and agreement has been the basis for many arguments in the literature that consider the dative phrase as either SUBJ or as some other function. Basing their proposal on the treatment of the Icelandic passive by Zaenen et al. (1985), Masullo (1992) or Fernández Soriano (1999) claim the existence of some sort of *quirky* dative case in Spanish that would allow non-nominative subjects. Cuervo (2010) proposes a specialised applicative head that allows the experiencer to be added to the structure as an extra external argument which makes it similar to a SUBJ. Alarcos Llorach (1994) dismisses the possibility of the phrase being a SUBJ as he argues *a*-phrases are PPs and these can never be SUBJ. Mendivil Giró (2002) argues for a system for Spanish that maps the dative experiencer as an ergative SUBJ while the postposed argument is an absolutive direct object. Alsina (1996) and Vanhoe (2002) propose to treat the dative experiencer as OBJ.

We show that the experiencer dative argument is not a SUBJ by applying subjecthood tests that include the ability for the participants to be dropped. Spanish is a PRO-DROP language, so if an argument can get dropped without major

¹The class of verbs illustrated by (2) can also show the same mapping as the verbs exemplified by (3), which merits the creation of a fifth group for Vogel and Villada (1999). However, the pattern is identical so we will not consider it a separate class.

²Note that *a* in (2) marks the accusative argument as animate. Accusative case is however only visibly marked in pronominal elements:

- (i) Los niños las enfadan
 the.PL child.PL 3PL.ACC anger.3PL.PRS
 ‘Children anger them.’

This contrasts with the *a* in (5), which is a dative marker.

Semantically, we can account for binding in the fashion of Asudeh (2012)’s approach to resumptive pronouns that are syntactically active:

$$(10) (\uparrow \text{FOC})_{\sigma} = ((\uparrow \text{OBJ}_{\theta})_{\sigma} \text{ ANTECEDENT})$$

To summarise, this paper will argue that from an LFG perspective, we make the theoretical contribution that Spanish has an $\text{OBJ}_{\theta-exp}$ function and will propose a novel way to account for clitic doubling that can be extrapolated to instances of doubling in other configurations such as ditransitives.

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