

Evidence for double object constructions in Italian*

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1. Introduction

Barss & Lasnik¹ 1986 noticed that Double Object Constructions (DOCs) and Prepositional Constructions (PCs) behave asymmetrically with respect to binding: in DOCs, the IO can bind the DO but not *vice versa*, see (1), while PCs, in (2), exhibit the opposite pattern. Descriptively, the antecedent must always precede the anaphor:

- (1) a. I showed Mary herself
b. *I showed herself Mary
- (2) a. *I showed herself to Mary
b. I showed Mary to herself

The Romance languages, on the contrary, do not show any DOC/PC alternation, but the IO and the DO seem to bind each other symmetrically, as shown in (3) (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991:42-43).

- (3) a. Ho mostrato Linda a se stessa
 Have.1SG shown Linda to her self
 'I showed Linda to herself'
- b. ?Ho mostrato se stessa a Linda

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¹ Given the limits of space imposed to the present work, I will not take into consideration here the vast and growing literature on the existence of double object constructions in Romance (see Pineda 2012 for a thorough list of references). Rather, this paper addresses some unnoticed phenomena with the aim of comparing them with basic properties of English DOCs. For this reason, also the list of references on English DOCs has been kept to a minimum.

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I have shown her self to Linda
'I showed Linda to herself'

Several speakers report that the latter sentence, in which the anaphor precedes its antecedent, is degraded. Nonetheless, if we compare dative verbs like (3) with prepositional verbs like (4), we notice that the latter exhibit a clear asymmetric pattern: binding is allowed iff the anaphor is c-commanded by the DO, otherwise the configuration is completely ungrammatical, see (4b). This means that the construction in (3b) and (4b) are different in nature though they both display the same order, namely anaphor > antecedent:

- (4) a. Carlo ha distratto Giulia da se stessa
Carlo has distracted Giulia from her self
'Carlo has distracted Giulia from herself'
- b. *Carlo ha distratto se stessa da Giulia
Carlo has distracted her self from Giulia
'Carlo has distracted Giulia from herself'

The symmetrical behavior of (3) is found elsewhere in Romance. Spanish, however, differs from the other Romance languages in exhibiting a further phenomenon: according to Demonte 1995, when the IO binds the DO – as in (5a) – the former is doubled by a dative clitic:

- (5) a. El tratamiento *le* devolvió la estima de sí misma a María
The therapy to.her gave-back the esteem of her self to Maria
'The therapy gave-back María the esteem of herself'
- b. El tratamiento (**le*) devolvió a María a sí misma
The therapy to.her gave-back to María to her self
The therapy gave-back María to herself'

Moreover, Demonte observes that, when doubled, the IO is interpreted as *affected*, “in the sense that it is taken either as the possessor or as an intrinsic part of the Theme argument”. In (6b), for instance, *la biblioteca* ‘the library’ denotes a collection of human beings (namely, an organization rather than a location) affected by the event, i.e. the IO is interpreted as the possessor of the entity denoted by the DO (from now on, to indicate that a given sentence is grammatical iff the IO has an affected reading I will use the sign ‘#’, leaving the asterisk for constructions whose ungrammaticality does not depend on semantic factors)²:

- (6) a. *Le* regalé un libro a cada uno de los asistentes

² Pineda 2012 observes that the correlation between clitic doubling, binding and affectedness is weaker than stated in Demonte 1995. However, focusing on the right set of ditransitive predicates (see below), many speakers usually end up appreciating the fine-grained contrasts in (5) and (6) even if such contrasts cannot be proved by means of categorical grammatical judgments. This leaving aside cross-linguistic variation, which is found in Spanish as well as in English (see below).

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to.him I.gave a book to each one of the attendants
'I gave each attendant a book'

- b. #*Le* regalé un libro a la biblioteca
to.it I.gave a book to the library
'I gave the library a book'

The same affected reading is found in English DOCs (Green 1974; Oehrle 1976 a.o.). For instance, in (7b), like in (6b), the IO *the library* is interpreted as a set of individuals rather than a building:

- (7) a. I gave my book to the library
b. #I gave the library my book

This contribution aims at accounting for the binding pattern in (3) and investigating the syntax of affected datives in Italian (sections 3-5). The hypothesis at the basis of the present work is that Italian exhibits covert dative shift.

2. Binding

From a theoretical point of view, the binding facts in (3) constitute a serious challenge, in particular for models based on a strict antisymmetric architecture. In a nutshell, they suggest that the IO occupies a position from which it can c-command the trace of the DO although the surface order is DO IO. A possible solution to the puzzle is to assume that Italian, like English, has the DOC/PC alternation, but the dative shift is covert. The hypothesis is as follows: given the canonical order DO IO, certain IOs (those denoting human entities) may shift covertly to a higher position from which they can c-command the DO. According to this hypothesis, the sentence in (8b), where the IO binds the DO, is grammatical because the IO moves covertly to a higher position, represented by the underscore:

- (8) a. Ho mostrato Giulia a se stessa
I.have shown Giulia to her self
'I showed Maria to herself'
- b. ?Ho mostrato _ se stessa a Giulia
I.have shown her self to Giulia
'I showed Maria to herself'

To verify the above theory, let us turn to ditransitive verbs taking two human arguments (e.g. *introduce*, *recommend*), which, in English, do not undergo the dative shift³:

- (9) a. Giulia recommended Carlo to me

³ Intuitively, verbs that do not denote a transfer of possession meaning are excluded from the DOC.

- b. *Giulia recommended me Carlo

What is of interest here is the behavior of the corresponding verbs in Italian, see (10). It is reasonable to think that, if the conditions governing the PC/DOC alternation hold in Italian as in English, the covert movement of the IO will be ungrammatical with verbs like *presentare* ‘introduce’ and *raccomandare* ‘recommend’. The prediction is schematized in (18), recall that the underscore signals covert movement of the IO above the DO:

- (10) a. Giulia ha raccomandato Carlo a me
b. *Giulia ha raccomandato _ Carlo a me

Given (10b), we expect that an IO cannot bind the DO with verbs like *presentare*, *raccomandare*. To test this prediction, we have to imagine a plausible context: for instance, suppose that Giulia sent a cover letter to the wrong address and Carlo, the person who had been recommended, ended up receiving Giulia’s letter. The event can be described as follows:

- (11) a. Giulia ha raccomandato Carlo a se stesso
Giulia has recommended Carlo to him self
‘Giulia has recommended Carlo to himself’
b. *Giulia ha raccomandato _ se stesso a Carlo
Giulia has recommended him self to Carlo
‘Giulia has recommended himself to Carlo’

As predicted, the latter sentence is ungrammatical: with verbs of this type, binding is not symmetrical. This, in my opinion, depends on the fact that these verbs cannot occur in the DOC – as in English – and, consequently, the IO cannot c-command the DO because it does not move covertly above the DO.

Given the above hypothesis, one might finally argue that the order IO DO in (12a) results from an overt shift. If this analysis was correct, the difference between (12a) and (12b) would depend on whether the shift takes place overtly – as in the former case – or covertly:

- (12) a. Ho mostrato a Giulia_i il suo appartamento_i
I have shown to Giulia the her apartment
‘I showed Giulia her apartment’
b. Ho mostrato _ il suo_i appartamento a Giulia_i
I have shown the her apartment to Giulia
‘I showed Giulia her apartment’

This idea, however, proves to be wrong. In fact, if the IO DO order was an overt DOC, it would be impossible for the DO to bind the IO (as in English DOCs). Contrary to this

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expectation, however, binding is symmetrical even with the order IO DO, see (13a). This means that the order IO DO cannot be considered an overt DOC.

- (13) a. ?Ho mostrato a se stessa Giulia
I.have shown to her self Giulia
'I showed Giulia to herself'
- b. Ho mostrato a Giulia se stessa
I.have shown to Giulia her self
'I showed Giulia herself'

Alternatively, I propose that the order IO DO derives from movement of the IO to a Focus position in the Low Periphery (Belletti 2004). In fact, the order IO DO is pragmatically marked: for instance, it is felicitous with a list interpretation, as in (14a), or with a heavy object as in (14b):

- (14) a. Ho dato A CARLO un libro, A GIULIA una penna, ecc.
I.have given to Carlo a book, to Giulia a pen, etc.
'I gave Carlo a book, Giulia a pen, etc.'
- b. Ho dato A CARLO il libro che mi aveva prestato Giulia
I.have given to Carlo the book that to.me had lent Giulia
'I gave Carlo the book that Giulia had lent to me'

Furthermore, following the hypothesis of an \bar{A} -movement, we can argue that, when the IO precedes the DO, the latter can bind the former under reconstruction:

- (15) ?Ho mostrato A SE STESSA Giulia t_{IO}
I.have shown to her self Giulia
'I showed Giulia to herself'

In conclusion, my proposal is that the binding facts in (3) indicate that, in Italian, IOs can undergo two kinds of movements above the DO:

- covert A-movement, giving rise to a DOC;
- overt \bar{A} -movement to a Focus position.

In the following sections, I will focus on some semantic properties of the former construction.

3. An interlude on verbal classes

Ditransitive verbs are not all equal. Consequently, to deal with a language with (alleged) covert DOC, we have to focus on the right class of verbs, otherwise the comparison will be inevitably flawed.

It is normally assumed that DOCs are associated with a possession meaning. Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008, however, notice that the possession meaning is not *exclusive* of DOCs as the same reading can be found in PCs as well.

Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008 elaborate on a distinction between two classes of ditransitive verbs: the *give*-type and the *throw/send*-type. The former have only a cause possession meaning in both DOCs and PCs, while the verbs of the *throw/send*-type have two possible meanings: either a caused possession or a caused motion meaning.

- (16) *Dative verbs having only a caused possession meaning*
- a. Verbs that inherently signify acts of giving: *give, hand, lend, loan*, etc.
 - b. Verbs of future having: *allocate, allow, bequeath, grant, offer, owe*, etc.
 - c. Verbs of communication: *tell, show, ask, teach, read, write, quote*, etc.
- (17) *Dative verbs having both caused motion and possession meanings*
- a. Verbs of sending (*send*-type verbs): *forward, mail, send, ship*, etc.
 - b. Verbs of instantaneous causation of ballistic motion (*throw*-type verbs): *fling, flip, kick, lob, slap, shoot, throw, toss*, etc.
 - c. Verbs of causation of accompanied motion in a deictically specified direction: *bring, take*
 - d. Verbs of instrument of communication: *e-mail, fax, radio, wire*, etc.

Besides their semantic properties, some syntactic tests discriminate between the two classes. The following are a selection from those listed in Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008 (and references therein):

i. the argument of *give*-type verbs cannot be questioned by the locative *wh*-:

- (18)
- a. *Where did you give the ball?
 - b. Where did you throw the ball? To third base.
 - c. Where did you send the bicycle? To Rome.

ii. the *to*-argument of *give*-type verbs must be animate:

- (19)
- a. I gave the package to Maria/*London.
 - b. I sent the package to Maria/London.
 - c. I threw the ball to Maria/the other side of the field.

iii. *give*-type verbs cannot select other spatial prepositions like *from*-PPs:

- (20)
- a. *Fred gave/offered the ball under/behind/over Molly.
 - b. *Josie gave/handed the ball from Maria (to Bill)

What is of interest here is that, according to Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008, the caused motion reading of a *throw/send*-type verbs is incompatible with the DOC. In other words, in the DOC, the IO of *throw/send*-type verbs cannot be a goal.

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This amounts to saying that, if we are looking for traces of the DOC/PC alternation in Romance, we have to wonder in which contexts the location meaning of *send/throw*-type verbs is systematically excluded.

4. Recipients

Recipients usually denote human entities. This principle captures three generalizations⁴:

i. shifted datives, which are associated only with the possession meaning, are normally animate or are interpreted as animate entities. For instance, as Green 1974 and Oehrle 1976 pointed out, in the last sentence *Philadelphia* stands for a group of people (e.g. a branch) rather than for a location.

- (21) a. The editor sent the article to Sue.
b. The editor sent the article to Philadelphia.
c. The editor sent Sue the article.
d. #The editor sent Philadelphia the article.

Kayne 1984 observes that in (certain varieties of) English, the DOC/PC alternation may convey very subtle distinctions like the following one (it is worth noting that British informants do not appreciate the contrast):

- (22) a. I knitted this sweater for our baby. (I could be pregnant)
b. I knitted our baby this sweater. (it entails that the baby exists)

ii. *give*-type verbs, which convey only the cause possession meaning, select human recipients, not inanimate goals (Green 1974:103); I repeat below the relevant examples:

- (23) a. I gave the package to Maria/*London.
b. I sent the package to Maria/London.
c. I threw the ball to Maria/the other side of the field.

⁴ The generalizations in i. and ii. are challenged by a series of examples in which the possession reading – a metaphorical possession – is allowed with inanimate indirect objects. These constructions are found in both the DOC, against the generalization in (i), and in the PC, against the generalization in (ii):

(i) DOCs: give the house a coat of paint, give each page a number, give the forest time to grow, give the chair a kick, etc.

(ii) PCs: give a coat of paint to the house, give a number to each page, give a kick to the chair, etc.

It is worth noting, however, that all counter-examples involve the verb *give*, while other dative verbs, including the other members of the *give*-type class, do not exhibit the same behavior. For this reason, it seems to me that the counter-examples in (i) should be considered a peculiarity of the verb *give* (possibly due to its light-verb nature), rather than a generalized characteristic of ditransitive verbs.

iii. the *to*-argument of *throw/send* type verbs can be either animate or inanimate. If animate, they can act as either recipients or, marginally, goals. When inanimate, on the contrary, they must be interpreted as goals. The asymmetry is reflected by the choice of the corresponding *wh*- element (*where* vs *to whom*), see Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008:143, Harley 2003:

- (24) a. To whom/?where did you throw the ball? To my brother (animate)
b. Where/*to what did you throw the ball? To third base (inanimate)
- (25) a. To whom/?where did you send the package? To my brother (animate)
b. Where/*to what did you send the package? To London (inanimate)

Rappaport Hovav & Levin (2008:142 fn. 10) claim that DOCs require human recipients as a consequence of their possession meaning: “the prototypical recipient is animate because the prototypical relation of possession involves an animate possessor and an inanimate possessum” and, as a consequence, the ban against inanimate shifted datives is “easily mistaken for an animacy restriction”.

For the same reason, the occurrence of human DOs in DOCs gives rise to a very peculiar reading. In fact, a human DO in a DOC is interpreted as an individual without control over action. In (26a), for instance, the object must denote a child sent where she is told to go, ultimately suggesting something like “Her daughter has been a really badly behaved child, has been getting into trouble, for example, with the police, drugs, etc., so Lucy sent her daughter to my cousin who lives, for example, in the countryside where my cousin could sort her out and put her on the right track.” (Adam Ledgeway, p.c.). (26b) implies that the speaker is a professor with control over his/her students, while (26c) entails that the chauffeur was sent there for no other reason than driving her somewhere (e.g. not because we thought that he would be a nice partner for her, for instance).

- (26) a. #Lucy sent my cousin her daughter.
b. I sent her my best students. (→ I am a professor)
c. I sent Mary my chauffer. (→ the chauffeur was sent there for no other reason than driving her somewhere)

If we turn to the corresponding PCs, this peculiar reading disappears:

- (27) a. Lucy sent her daughter to my cousin.
b. I sent my best students to her.
c. I sent my chauffer to Mary.

This means that the sort of animacy restriction observed in (26) occurs iff the possession reading is forced by the DOC.

In conclusion, in this section I have noticed that, since DOCs requires a human recipient and an inanimate theme, DOs denoting a human entity are interpreted as a non-

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volitional patient, without control over action. This restriction is a further test to detect DOCs in Italian, which will be performed in the following section.

5. Italian

In Italian, a human individual can act as the argument of a locative P. In (28), for instance, the proper noun Carlo occurs as the argument of the P *da*⁵:

- (28) Vado *da* Carlo
I.go to Carlo
'I'll go to Carlo's place'

Recipients, by contrast, are introduced by *a*:

- (29) Regalo il libro *a* Carlo
I.give the book to Carlo
'I'll give the book to Carlo'

With ditransitive verbs of the *send/throw*-type (see section 3), the *a/da* alternation turns out to be a clear diagnostic to distinguish animate goals from recipients. In fact, nouns denoting human entities can be introduced by either *da* or *a*, as shown in (30). The former sentence has a locative meaning ('I'll take the book to Carlo's place'), while the latter entails that Carlo ends up possessing the book.

- (30) a. Porto il libro *da* Carlo
I.take the book to Carlo
'I'll take the book to Carlo's place'
- b. Porto il libro *a* Carlo
I.take the book to Carlo
'I'll take Carlo the book'

Substitution tests confirm this semantic asymmetry: the recipient introduced by *a* is resumed by a dative clitic (e.g. *gli*), while the *da*-PP is resumed by the locative clitic, see (31a vs b); second, the former is replaced by the dative wh- *a chi* 'to whom', the latter by the locative *dove*, see (32a vs b).

- (31) a. Da Carlo, *ci* porto il libro.
To Carlo, there I.take the book
'I'll take the book to Carlo's place'
- b. A Carlo, *gli* porto il libro.

⁵ One might argue that Carlo in (28) is not itself the argument of P, but, rather, the possessor of a silent noun denoting an arbitrary location (Terzi 2005 a.o.), cf. English *Carlo's (place)*. Such null noun is not interpreted deictically, but it is normally interpreted as a prototypical location like Carlo's home/office/shop. In some languages, in fact, the preposition used with such "animate goals" derives from the grammaticalization of a place noun, like French *chez* < Lat. *CASA* 'house'.

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To Carlo, to.him I.take the book
'I'll take Carlo the book'

- (32) a. *Dove*/**A chi* porti il libro? Da Carlo
Where/To whom you.take the book? To Carlo
'Where do you take the book? To Carlo's place'
- b. **Dove*/*A chi* porti il libro? A Carlo.
Where/To whom you.take the book? To Carlo
'Who do you bring the book to? Carlo'

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the *a/da* alternation is not allowed with verbs of the *give*-type, whose only possible interpretation is the one denoting caused possession. This confirms that Italian, like English, is sensitive to the division between the *give*-type and the *throw/send*-type verbs.

The following sentences exemplify each verb sub-type. Verbs of instrument communication (point d.) are very rare as speakers usually prefer to use a periphrasis with the verb *spedire* 'send', e.g. *spedire un'e-mail* 'to e-mail', lit. 'to send an e-mail'. I can report a single, marginal example with the verb *faxare*. My intuition is that these verbs, in Italian, have only a transfer of possession meaning.

- (33) a. Spedisco il libro da Carlo
I.send the book to Carlo
'I'll send the book to Carlo's place'
- b. Lancio il pallone da Carlo
I.throw the ball to Carlo
'I'll throw the ball to Carlo's place'
- c. Porto il libro da Carlo
I.take the book to Carlo
'I'll take the book to Carlo's place'
- d. [?]Faxo il libro da Carlo
I.fax the book to Carlo
'I'll fax the book to Carlo's place'

The remainder of the section focuses on verbs of accompanied motion like *portare* ('bring/take'), which can take two human objects. The resulting configuration is grammatical in both the possession and the motion framework, as exemplified below. However, the interpretation of the *a*-construction is peculiar: like English DOCs, the former sentence means that the DO *Giulia* does not have control over action (she might be a pet, a baby or a slave) and Carlo will end up possessing her.

- (34) a. [#]Porto Giulia a Carlo
I.take Giulia to Carlo
'I'll take Giulia to Carlo'

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- b. Porto Giulia da Carlo
I.take Giulia to Carlo
'I'll take Giulia to Carlo's place'

The same holds if the experiencer is expressed by a clitic pronoun: the sentence is perfectly grammatical, but the interpretation is that Giulia must be a baby, a pet or a slave. On the contrary, if the indirect object is pronominalized by a locative clitic – standing for a *da*-phrase, see above – the sentence is fine:

- (35) a. #gli porto Giulia, al dottore.
To.him I.take Giulia, to.the doctor.
'I'll take Giulia to him (the doctor)'
- b. ci porto Giulia
there I.take Giulia
'I'll take Giulia there (doctor's place)'

The peculiar reading of this construction with two human objects becomes self-evident if the DO is a 1/2p reflexive pronoun, as in (36). A sentence like this can be uttered only in fictional contexts where animals and objects can speak.

- (36) a. #mi porti a Carlo?
myself you.take to Carlo
'Can you take me to Carlo'
- b. mi porti da Carlo?
myself you.take to Carlo
'Can you take me to Carlo's place'

In conclusion, I have shown that, with recipients (which are introduced by *a*), Italian ditransitives exhibit the same peculiar reading of English DOCs, which impose semantic constraints on the interpretation of objects denoting human entities.

6. Conclusions

In this paper I have argued for the hypothesis that Italian displays covert Double Object Constructions, i.e. certain Indirect Object – typically, those denoting human entities – may shift to a position from which they can c-command the Direct Object.

This analysis explains why binding between internal arguments is symmetrical (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991) and why such a symmetry is excluded with verbs of the *introduce*-type, which never shift. Moreover, I have argued that the order IO DO is due to an alternative mechanism, namely \bar{A} -movement of the IO to an Information Focus position in the Low Periphery. \bar{A} -movement is compatible with the pragmatic reading of these constructions and accounts for symmetrical binding under reconstruction.

The second part of the paper has dealt with an animacy restriction, which is found in DOCs when both arguments denote a human entity, e.g. #*I sent Mary my wife*. In this

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case, the DO must be interpreted as someone without control over action, a restriction following from the possession reading peculiar to DOCs.

With this in mind, I have addressed some Italian data regarding sentences including a ditransitive verbs denoting either transfer of possession or location (namely, the *send*-type). The two readings have an overt correlate: with the first interpretation, the recipient is introduced by the preposition *a*, while, in the latter, the goal is introduced by *da*. Interestingly, when introduced by *a*, the ditransitive construction is subject to the same animacy restriction found in English DOCs, which strengthens the hypothesis that Italian exhibits a covert DOC/PC alternation.

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