A note on italian datives

Diego Pescarini
University of Padua

Abstract. The paper deals with a possible correlation between the syntax of double object constructions (DOCs) and the restriction termed Person Case Constraint (PCC), that is the ban against clitic combinations in which the direct object is 1st or 2nd person. It has been argued that the latter follows from an animacy restriction holding in DOCs. This paper focuses on some theoretical and empirical consequences of this hypothesis which may shed light on the distribution of dative and locative clitics in Italian.

1. Introduction

Double Object Constructions (DOCs) are, it is argued, subject to animacy restrictions inasmuch as shifted datives are normally interpreted as possessors and, consequently, as human entities.[1] For instance, Green (1974) and Oehrle (1976) pointed out that *Philadelphia* in (1) must reference a group of people such as the branch of a company rather than a location (in what follows, a hash tag will be used to signal sentences whose semantic interpretation is somehow constrained).

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1) #The editor sent Philadelphia the article.

It has also been proposed that an animacy restriction lies at the basis of the Person Case Constraint (PCC), that is the constraint preventing clitic combinations when the Direct Object (DO) is 1st or 2nd person (Bianchi 2006; Adger, Harbour 2007):

2) *Giorgio gli   ti   ha   presentato.
   Giorgio to.him=   you=   has   introduced

'Giorgio introduced you to him.'

Some attempts have been made to establish a link between the facts in (1) and (2) (Ormazabal, Romero 2007; Etxepare, Fernández 2013, inter alia). One might put forward the hypothesis that the restrictions in (1) and (2) result from the mechanism of probe-goal relations (*agree*, in the terms of Chomsky 2000 and following works) holding in DOCs: in a nutshell, as the Indirect Object (IO) must be animate, it prevents the occurrence of intrinsically animate DOs, namely, 1st and 2nd person pronouns.

This hypothesis, however, has two main consequences: i) the same agree mechanism is expected to hold also in languages without *prima facie* evidence of DOCs; ii) as dative clitics are always subject to the PCC, they must be subject to the agree restriction regardless of the syntactic and semantic properties of the arguments they stand for.

This paper elaborates on the latter implication (for the former, see Pescarini 2014): in section 2 I speculate on the theoretical consequences of the proposed analysis; in section 3 I examine some consequences of this assumption on the basis of data from Italian.

2. Exploring the correlation between DOCs and PCC effects

Let us assume that the dative shift is the counterpart of a probe-goal relation triggered by a head searching for a goal with animacy-related properties. The dative shift will take place if the probe, represented as an unvalued feature [F], finds in its constituent-command (c-command) domain a [+F] goal, as schematized below:

3) $v°_{[0F]}$ … $DP_{[+F]}$

Hence, animate/agentive-like complements such as recipients and benefactives are more readily shifted than other complements such as the goal of *throw/send*-verbs.

The thematic restriction, however, is only part of the story. In fact, the DOC turns out to be marginal/ungrammatical when the IO is a Determiner Phrase (DP) and the DO a pronoun as in (4a) and when both are pronominal as in (4b):

4) a.   *I showed John her
   b.   *I showed him her

Furthermore, Bonet (1991) notices that combinations of weak pronouns like (4b) are more acceptable if the IO is $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ person and the DO is 3rd person, otherwise they are subject to the PCC:

5) a   ˀI showed you əm
   b.   *I showed əm you

This entails that the dative shift is not sensitive only to a thematic distinction between agentive-like and non-agentive-like arguments, but to finer distinctions regarding the nominal or pronominal nature of the complement and, to a less extent, its person features.

The idea that animacy-related properties of datives are somehow related via person features to the PCC has been advanced in various works such as Bianchi (2006), and Adger and Harbour (2007) among others. The latter, in particular, argue that datives are applied objects (Pylkkänen 2002) and, as such, are required to reference an individual "capable of mental experience" (Adger, Harbour (2007) quoting Rainhart 2000). Then, the PCC originates from locality conditions. In a nutshell (and abstracting away from technicalities), as the IO is required to be [+F] (cf. (3)), it prevents inherently [+F] objects, such as 1st and 2nd person pronouns, from agreeing with the same head.

This analysis, however, turns out to be rather problematic given that in Pylkkänen's original formulation only shifted datives qualify as applied datives, while the data show that the PCC occurs with any type of dative clitic. In Italian, for instance, the PCC is violated by the arguments of *introduce*-type ditransitives, although the IO of such verbs does not exhibit the syntactic and semantic behaviour of applied datives (in English, for instance, it never shifts):

6) *Giorgio gli   ti   ha   presentato.
   Giorgio to.him=   you=   has   introduced
   'Giorgio introduced you to him.'

Moreover, note that the PCC is independent from the thematic nature of the two arguments. Take the following example, in which the PCC is violated by a 1st person inherent reflexive (whose pronominal nature is controversial) combined with a 3rd person dative clitic, which is the argument of the preposition *accanto* 'near'. In this case, nobody would argue that the PCC is violated because of the presence of an applied dative.

7) *Non mi   gli   posso   sedere accanto
    Not   me=   to.him=   I.can   seat   near
     'I cannot seat near him.'

This means that the PCC is triggered by dative clitics regardless of whether or not the dative is an applied/shifted one. This inevitably ends up weakening the hypothesis of a possible correlation between DOCs and the PCC, unless we assume that dative clitics are always [+F] goals, regardless of the nature of the complement they stand for. At first sight, this conclusion seems counterintuitive and unmotivated. Nonetheless, in the next section I will focus on some data which may support this claim.

3. The distribution of dative and *locative* clitics

Datives are not all created equal and, although in Italian they are all introduced by *a*, some do not behave like other prepositional phrases. Take for instance the verbs *pensare*[2] 'to take care of' and *parlare* 'to speak to' (Rizzi 2001: 529). Both select complements introduced by *a*:

8) a. penso   a   lei
        I.take.care   to   her
        'I take care of her.'
   b. parlo   a   lei
        speak   to   her
        'I speak to her.'

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[2] I am not dealing here with transitive *pensare* 'to think', but with intransitive *pensare a*, which means 'take care of'.

Both complements can be replaced by a dative *wh-* element, while their replacement by a locative pronoun gives rise to ungrammaticality.

9) a.　　　A chi　　　(/*dove)　　　pensi?
　　　　　　To whom　　　(/*where)　　　you.take.care?
　　　　　　'Whom are you taking care of?'
　　 b.　　　A chi　　　(/*dove)　　　parli?
　　　　　　To whom　　　(/*where)　　　you.speak?
　　　　　　'Who are you speaking with?'

However, once these arguments undergo cliticization, the former is re-placed by the locative clitic *ci*, while the other by the dative clitic *le*:

10) a.　　　*ci*　　　penso　　io　　　~~a lei~~

　　　　　　to.it= take.care　I　　　to her
　　　　　　'I'll take care of her.'
　　 b.　　　*le*　　　parlo　　　io　　　~~a lei~~
　　　　　　to.her= speak　　　I　　　to her
　　　　　　'I'll speak to her.'

It is worth noting that *ci* is an invariable form: no matters if the argument of *pensare* is 3rd person as in (10) or $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ person as in (11), the clitic *ci* never shows person inflection. The dative clitic, by contrast, agrees with the cor-responding complement:

11) a.　　　*ci*　　　penso　　　io　　　~~a te~~
　　　　　　to.it= take.care　　　I　　　to you
　　　　　　'I'll take care of you.'
　　 b.　　　*ti*　　　parlo　　　io　　　~~a te~~
　　　　　　to.you=speak　　　I　　　to you
　　　　　　'I'll speak to you.'

Furthermore, *ci* cannot co-occur with a floating quantifier as in (12a) and cannot be replaced by the dative weak pronoun *loro* ('to them', see Cardina-letti 1991) as in (13a):

12) a. *　　ci　　　　penserà　　　　　　a　　　tutti
　　　　　　to.them=　　he/she.will.take.care　　to　　　all
　　　　　　'She/he will take care of all of them'

b.   vi   parlerà   a   tutti
          to.you.pl=   he/she.will.speak   to   all
          'She/he will speak to all of you.'

13) a. * penso   loro[3]
          I.take.care   to.them
          'I take care of them'
    b.   parlo   loro
          I.speak to.them
          'I speak to them.'

The above data show that the verbs *pensare* and *parlare* select different kinds of datives. In particular, the former type of dative (the one selected by *pensare*) seems to behave like a Prepositional Phrase (PP). The so-called *locative* clitic is in fact a pro-PP (Kayne 1975) standing for various types of PPs such as locatives, comitatives, instrumentals, etc.[4]

The pro-PP, unlike the dative clitic, is not subject to the PCC. Bonet (2008) noticed that in Catalan the PCC can be avoided if the third person dative clitic is replaced by the pro-PP *hi*, although referencing a human individual. The same holds for Italian (see Pescarini 2010), where the cluster corresponding to the interpretation 'you to him/her' is marginally allowed if the dative clitic *gli/le* 'to him/her' is replaced by the *locative ci*, as in (14b):[5]

14) a. * gli   ti   presento   io
          to.him=   you=   introduce   I
          'I'll introduce you to him.'
    b.   ti   ci   present   io
          you=   to.him=   introduce   I
          'I'll introduce you to him.'

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[3] The sentence in (13a) is allowed with a different interpretation, 'I think of them', in which *loro* is the DO of transitive *pensare*; see footnote 2.

[4] In substandard registers, as well as in many dialects, the pro-PP frequently functions as a 3rd person dative clitic. Although I think that this is part of the puzzle addressed here, I will not focus on these aspects in the present work.

[5] The fact that the acceptability of (14b) is subject to a certain degree of cross-linguistic variation depends on the fact that the usage of *ci* as a dative clitic is stigmatized in the formal register, as it sounds like a dialectal/substandard construction. However, a brief search on the internet will confirm that sequences like the one in (14b) are far from rare in colloquial registers of Italian.

In the light of the proposal advanced in the previous section, the contrast in (14) means that *gli* is subject to the PCC because it is [+F]. *Ci,* by contrast, is unconstrained, since it stands for a prepositional dative as the complement of *pensare* (see (8)-(13)).

The above analysis is supported by the fact that in some cases the distribution of the clitics *gli/ci* does not follow from the selection properties of the verb – as in the case of *pensare* – but from the animacy features of the IO (see also Rigau (1982) for Catalan). Consider, for instance, an idiomatic expression like *dedicare tempo* 'to devote time', which selects a dative complement, as shown in (15a). Notice that the *a*-complement cannot be considered a locative PP, as it cannot be replaced by the locative *wh*- pronoun *dove*; see (15b):

15) a.   Dedico il   mio   tempo   al   calcio
             I.dedicate   the   my time   to.the soccer
             'I devote my time to soccer.'
     b.   *Dove   dedichi il   tuo tempo   ~~al calcio~~?
             Where   you.devote the your time
             'To what do you devote your time?'

When the dative argument is turned into a clitic pronoun, the following alternation is shown: human IOs are pronominalized by a dative clitic, as in (16a), while the pro-PP *ci* is used to reference non-human IOs, as in (16b).

16) a.   gli   dedico   molto tempo ~~a Carlo~~
             to.him= I.devote   much   time
             'I devote much time to him (Carlo).'
     b.   *gli/ci dedico   molto tempo ~~al calcio~~
             to.it=   I.devote   much   time   (to soccer)
             'I devote much time to it (soccer).'

A similar pattern is exhibited by *complex* PPs, in which a polysyllabic prepositions like *vicino* 'near', *di fronte* 'in front', etc. selects a complement introduced by the preposition *a*. Again, the *a*-phrase does not count as a locative PP since it cannot be replaced by the locative *wh*- *dove*; see (17b):

17) a.   ero   seduto vicino a   Giulia
             I.was   seated near   to   Giulia
             'I was sitting near Giulia.'

       b.   *dove   ero seduto   vicino?
       Where I.was   seated   near
       'Who was I sitting near to?'

However, if the complement of the complex Preposition undergoes cliti-cization, non-human complements, like the one in (18), cannot be replaced by the dative clitic. Rather, they are replaced by the pro-PP *ci* even if the complement – as previously noticed – is not a locative one.

18) a.   le   siedo   vicino ~~a Giulia~~
            to.her=   I.sit   near   (to Giulia)
            'I'll sit near to Giulia.'

      b.   ci/*le   siedo vicino   ~~alla porta~~
            to.it=   I.sit   near   (to.the door)
            'I'll sit near to the door.'

Moreover, notice that, if an inherent reflexive is present, the latter does not trigger the PCC:

19) a. *   mi   le   siedo   vicino ~~a Giulia~~
            me=   to.her=   I.sit   near   (to Giulia)

            'I'll sit near Giulia.'
      b.   mi   ci   siedo   vicino ~~alla porta~~
            me=   to.it= I.sit   near   (to.the door)
            'I'll sit near the door.'

The fact that the dative clitic is restricted to human referents is, histori-cally speaking, a puzzle. In fact, 3rd person dative clitics – like 3rd person accusative clitics – derive from the Latin demonstrative *ILLE* 'that', which in origin did not exhibit any animacy-related restriction. This means that the above restriction emerged as soon as the dative determiner *ILLI(S)* became a clitic pronoun (namely, a head) and, as such, it began to behave as an in-herently [+F] element. For space limitations, I cannot explore diachronical issues here, which will be left open to future research.

    Before concluding, however, two comparative remarks are in order.

    First, note that in Italian the selection of the clitic form is sometimes subject to variation. This is particularly true with periphrases containing the

verb *give*, like (20), which in fact may select either a locative or a dative clitic when the IO is not human:

20) a. dar??le/??ci   una   mano   di   colore, alla casa
        to.give=to.it a coat of   paint, to.the   house
    b. dar??le/??ci   tempo   per   crescere, alla   foresta
        to.give=to.it time   to   grow,   to.the   forest
    c. dar??le/??ci   un   calcio, alla   sedia
        to.give=to.it a   kick   to.the   chair

I have no principled explanation of the variability in (20), but it is worth noting that the same periphrases exhibit a peculiar behaviour in English as well. In fact, although *give*-type verbs always select for a recipient/possessor – which is therefore expected to reference a human or humanized individual – with these idiomatic expressions an inanimate IO can occur in both the DOC and in the PC:

21) a. give the house a coat of paint / give a coat of paint to the house
     b. give each page a number / give a number to each page
     c. give the forest time to grow / give time to the forest to grow
     d. give the chair a kick / give a kick to the chair

The fact that this class of *give*-periphrases has a puzzling behavior in both Italian and English might follow from a lexical property of the verb *give*, which, being the prototypical transfer-of-possession verb, forces all types of IO, regardless of their inherent features, to behave like [+F] possessors. Alternatively, one may think that such idiomatic expressions are akin to light verb constructions and, as such, cannot be treated as true ditransitives.

Second, it is worth noting that the above hypothesis – namely, that all dative clitics are intrinsically [+F] – cannot hold for Spanish, where the dative clitic is also used for inanimate datives. Crucially, this happens in languages that do not display any pro-PP form: in these languages, the 3rd person dative clitic is therefore *syncretic*, as it may stand for both kinds of datives, including inanimate/unaffected ones.

Nevertheless, the distinction between human/affected and inanimate/unaffected datives must be still relevant at some level as the former, unlike the latter, trigger doubling constructions. For instance, Demonte (1995) points out that in a sentence like (22) the doubled IO must be interpreted as affected, that is it must reference an organization rather than a building, while, without the clitic, the IO has an inanimate interpretation:

22) #Le   regalé   un   libro   a   la   biblioteca
    To.it=   I.gave   a   book   to   the   library
    'I gave the library a book.'

This means that the conditions under which the 3rd person dative clitic of Spanish is spelled out are not completely identical to those holding in the other Romance languages, even if it confirms that animacy-related features play a crucial role in clitic selection.

4. Conclusions

This paper has focused on a possible correlation between the syntax of DOC and PCC effects, as both seem related to some sort of animacy restriction. In particular, it has elaborated the hypothesis that both the DOC and the PCC result from an agree relation between a probing element and a dative complement with animacy-related properties endowed with a formal feature [+F].

Although Italian does not allow any overt shift, a reflex of the probe-goal relation surfaces with clitic arguments. In particular, I have assumed that Italian dative clitics (*gli/le*) are endowed with a feature, say [+F], which prevents 1st and 2nd person clitics from occurring in the same construction.

This account may explain why in many Romance languages the 3rd person dative clitic is a human pronoun, while inanimate datives are pronominalized by the so-called *locative* clitic, which is in fact a [-F] goal which cannot trigger the PCC.

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