

Introduction

The argument structure of Romance causatives, e.g. (1) is a long-standing issue in generative linguistics. Competing proposals have been advanced in the literature (Kayne 1975, Zubizarreta 1985, Burzio 1986, Guasti 1993, 1996, Folli and Harley 2007, 2013 a.o.); we concentrate on the apparent realignment of cases from nominative(?)–accusative to dative–accusative in the embedded sentence:

- (1) Maria ha fatto riparare la macchina a Gianni.
Maria. NOM Aux.3SG made repair.INF the car to Gianni
“Maria made Gianni repair the car”

Previous analyses of the Romance Causee

Kayne (2004) raising analysis:

- The author proposes that some prepositions, including French à “to” and its Italian counterpart a, are probes in the sense of Chomsky (1998, 1999, 2001).
- Romance causative verbs embed dative–post-infinitival subjects which are not found in canonical main sentences. This fact according to Kayne can be taken to indicate that the preposition is related to the causative verb, hence a/a is located in a higher functional projection above the causative verb.
- The derivation proceeds as in (2):

- (2) ...fait [_{VP} Paul [_{VP} manger une tarte]]
...[_{AgriOP} Paul AgrIO..fait [_{VP} t_i [_{VP} manger une tarte]]]
...[_{AP} ..[_{VP} fait [_{VP} t_i [_{VP} manger une tarte]]] à [_{AgriOP} Paul AgrIO t_j]]]

Advantages: - the proposal straightforwardly derives the desired word order

- it draws a parallel with formally similar structures i.e. double object constructions (Collins and Thráinsson (1993) postulate a higher Agr-IO which licenses the indirect object in double object constructions)

Potential problems: - it is not obvious that à is in the matrix clause, nor that it enters the derivation after the merger of an IO higher functional head

- Having functional heads that are not spelled-out in a derivation is not theoretically unproblematic. This assumption might be in contrast with Chomsky’s (1995) minimalist idea of Projection from the Lexicon which amounts to the claim that morphosyntactic structures are built from overtly realized lexical items.

Applicative treatments (Cuervo 2003, Pykkänen 2002, 2008, Boneh and Nash 2012 a.o.)

These approaches take the dative arguments to be licensed in the specifier of a functional ApplP taking the lower vP in its object position as in (3):

- (3) ...[VoiceP DP_{Subj} Voice [_{VDO} fare [_{ApplP} DP_{Dat} Appl [_{vBE} DPObj v_{be} [Root]]]]] (from Cuervo (2003))

Specifically, in terms of Appl structures, causees are high applicatives, introducing a relation between a DP and a predicate/event.

Advantages: the assignment of dative case is accounted for.

Potential problems: the Appl head lacks an overt morphological realization in Romance.

Proposal: The Romance Causee is an oblique subject

Our key observation is that independently of causative environments, dative/oblique subjects are strongly attested crosslinguistically. Instances often quoted in the formal literature are the ‘quirky’ subjects of Icelandic, e.g. (4). We may add oblique subjects in ergativity splits, e.g. Kurmanji Kurdish (5) from Baker and Atlamaz (2013); in Latin as well, in necessity constructions with the gerund, the subject (external argument of transitive and internal argument of unaccusatives) is turned into a dative e.g. (6):

- (4) Henni leiddust strákarinn Icelandic (from Svenonius 2002)
Her(dat) bored boys-the(nom)
She found the boys boring
- (5) Te ez di-m Kurmanji Kurdish (from Baker and Atlamaz 2013)
You(obl) I(dir) see.PAST.1sg
You(sg) saw me
- (6) Hominibus moriendum est enim omnibus Latin (Cicero, Tuscolanae Disputationes 1.9.15)
men(dat) to die is indeed all(dat)
“All men must indeed die”

We argue that the Romance causee is nothing but an oblique “quirky” subject as in (7). The difference between (7) and the quirky subjects of the Icelandic type is that analyses of the latter identify quirky subjects with the [Spec, TP] position – we propose that the causee is in its base-generated [Spec, vP] position. In other words, the oblique/dative case assigned to it is better compared to the oblique assigned to the Kurmanji Kurdish external argument in the ergative alignment in (5).

- (7) ...fare [_{VP} QUIRKY SUBJECT [v VP]]

Oblique subjects appear in functionally-deficient structures

We claim that Romance causees are formally identical to the oblique subjects found in the ergative alignment of Indo-European languages because both Italian-type causative complements and perfective sentences featuring ergative subjects in languages like Kurmanji Kurdish or Georgian are structurally-impoorished structures. Indeed there are reasons to assume that these apparently dissimilar structures are characterized by the same degree of structural reduction i.e. they are vPs hosting oblique subjects in their specifiers.

Ergative subjects and Romance causees are licensed vP-internally

- Evidence for structural reduction in perfective sentences in the ergative alignment:

Languages like Kurmanji Kurdish have tense-based split ergativity: imperfective sentences follow the nominative alignment (8a) whereas perfective sentences follow the ergative alignment (8b):

- (8) a. Ez Eşxan-ê di-vun-im-e
I.DIR Eşxan-OBL IMPF-see.PRES-1SG-PRES.COP
“I am seeing Eşxan”
b. Eşxan-ê ez di-m
Eşxan-OBL I.DIR saw.PAST-1SG
“Eşxan saw me”

- Baker and Atlamaz (2013): the past V stem in Kurmanji is defective in that it is not phasal, whereas the present V stem is a strong phase head.

- Further evidence for structural reduction in the ergative alignment comes from Georgian.

- Nash (2014): the transitive subject can be theta-licensed and by consequence case-licensed, in a position outside vP only in the nominative type, hence, the ergative subject is licensed in vP.

- (9) a. [_{TP} T _{<CASE>} [_{EvP} DP _{CASE} EV _{<CASE>} [_{vP} v [_{DP} DP_{CASE}]]]] nominative system
b. [_{TP} T _{<CASE>} [_{vP} DP_{ERG} v [_{DP} DP_{CASE}]]]] ergative system
(10) a. vano-ø xaT-av-s mankana-s (Georgian from Nash 2014)
Vano-NOM draw-TS-3SG car-ACC
“Vano is drawing a car”
b. vano-m xaT-a mankana-ø
Vano-ERG draw-AOR3SG car-NOM
“Vano drew a car”

- Ergative tenses are aspectually deficient, neither perfective nor imperfective: the aspectual category Event, equivalent to Kratzer’s (1994) Voice, is absent in ergative tenses, as opposed to nominative tenses where the former is lexicalized by the suffix “-av-”. Structural reduction in ergative tenses has a clear interpretive cost: the Georgian aorist describes events which are terminated before the reference time. But although the latter are concluded, they are interpreted as non-cumulative, i.e. sentence (10b) simply states that Vano was engaged in a car-drawing event, but it is not entailed that Vano finished the drawing of a car.

- Evidence for structural reduction in restructuring predicates:

- Common view: restructuring predicates (which subsume Faire-Infinitive causatives) are in some way or another **deficient** (Wurmbbrand 2001) in that they lack certain projections. The degree of structural deficiency is a debated issue (VP-Preposing approaches (Kayne 1975, Burzio 1986, Rouveret and Vergnaud 1980) vs. head incorporation approaches Baker 1988, Guasti 1993 a.o.)

- Crucially, restructuring predicates lack an embedded structural case position/assigner as their behavior under passive shows:

- (11) La macchina, fu fatta riparare(t_i).
The car was made to repair
The car got repaired.

If the matrix verb is passivized the embedded object cannot receive Case within the embedded complement as no structural case position/assigner is present, hence it must move to the Spec of TP in order to check Nominative case and satisfy the EPP.

- The incorporation approach to complex predicate formation has recently been revived by Wurmbbrand (2013). Relying on evidence coming from German and various Austronesian languages, Wurmbbrand proposes that restructuring complements feature an additional (default) Voice head. It is the latter that undergoes incorporation into the matrix restructuring verb.

Main point: the complement selected by fare is effectively a predicate, possibly vP, or VoiceP, but with Voice incorporated to the matrix. In the absence of a T layer, is clear that the subject of the embedded verb cannot be assigned Nominative Case; this is exactly why the causee shows up as a “quirky” dative subject.

The **status of oblique case** is a debated issue: some authors argue that ergative case is an inherent case assigned by v (Woolford 2006 a.o), other authors treat oblique case as a default (Baker and Atlamaz 2013), while others analyze it as a dependent case (Nash 2014).

In order to formally characterize the “quirky subject” status of the a-causee we adopt Manzini and Savoia’s (2011), Manzini and Franco’s (forthcoming) analysis of Oblique case which reduces the descriptive dative to a more elementary predicate introducing a part-whole relation (notated as Q_⊆), ultimately a possession relation, saying that the event is “included by” the argument (similarly, Boneh and Sichel (2010) take the part-whole relation to be the conceptual core of partitives (e.g. three of them) and of alienable possession (e.g. John’s car).

Under this approach, “inclusion” (part-whole) is the primitive content of the preposition a, which in turn is the lexicalization of the Q_⊆ elementary predicate. We propose that the causee receives dative case via the Q_⊆ elementary predicate.

Conclusion

In short, we treat the dative argument of Romance causatives as an oblique subject.

The parallel is with oblique subjects in the ergative alignment of Indo-European languages.

We have reviewed evidence that suggests that both the Romance causative complement and perfective sentences in the ergative alignment are structurally deficient structures, possibly vPs. Such impoverished environments crucially lack a structural case position/assigner: the subject must be licensed vP-internally. Oblique case-marking is a reflex of the vP-internal licensing of the subject.

Finally, we take inclusion/part-whole to be the conceptual core of obliques following Manzini and Savoia (2011), Manzini, Savoia and Franco (forthcoming) and we propose that the causee gets dative case via the Q_⊆ elementary predicate.

Selected References

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