BLOCKING EFFECTS IN THE DOUBLE OBJECT CONSTRUCTION

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Abstract. In this paper we examine the contrast between the morpho-syntactic properties of the two objects in the double object construction and the prepositional dative construction. The intriguing properties of the indirect object in the double object construction (DOC) are explained by hypothesizing that (i) the English morphological poverty of case marking on objects has blocking effects on A' movements of the two objects in the DOC, and (ii) blocking A' movement of the two objects in the DOC vs. non-blocking A' movement of the two objects in the prepositional dative construction have to do with neutralisation of meaning of the two dative constructions.

1. The prepositionless IO in the double object construction has intriguing syntactic properties. On the one hand, it can undergo passivization, just as a genuine DO can. In a double object construction, illustrated in (1), the IO Sue, adjacent to the verb, can undergo A-movement, as in (2), just as a bona fide DO can:

(1) Bill gave Sue a book
(2) Sue was given a book
(3) A pizza was eaten for lunch

Passivization of the IO *Sue* in (2) seems to be explained in terms of Case or EPP requirements. In a prepositional dative construction, such as (4), the DO 'a book', adjacent to the verb, can undergo passivization as well (5):

(4) Bill gave a book to Sue
(5) A book was given to Sue

However, the prepositionless IO in the double object construction cannot undergo any A' movements that a genuine DO can. For instance, a true DO can but the IO in the double object construction cannot undergo Wh-movement, Extraction, Tough Movement, Relativization or Topicalization.

As a matter of fact there is a two-way contrast that bears on both objects in the double object construction and on both objects in the prepositional dative construction.Firstly, both objects in the double object construction (the prepositionless IO and the DO) cannot undergo the above-mentioned A' movements while both objects in the prepositional dative construction (the DO and the oblique IO) can. The two objects in the double object construction become frozen. Secondly, certain diagnostics of surface objecthood indicate that the prepositionless IO in the double object construction behaves unlike the prepositional IO but like the DO in the prepositional dative construction (Şerban 1982, Emonds and Ostler 2005).

The purpose of this paper is to tentatively propose an explanation for the diverting properties of the two objects in the two dative constructions in terms of Williams' (1997) Blocking Principle Effects, suggested to us by Alexandra Cornilescu (p.c.).

2. We assume that the two dative constructions in (6) are distinct constructions in semantic roles. Specifically, 'a book' in (6a) bears the theta-role Theme and 'to Sue' bears the theta-

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role Goal, while in (6b) 'Sue' bears the theta-role Goal-Receiver and 'a book' bears the theta-role Theme.

(6) a. Bill gave a book to Sue (to-dative construction)
b. Bill gave Sue a book (DOC)

The semantic constraints on the prepositionless IO in the double object construction distinguish between the two dative constructions. Among other things, in the double object construction the IO has the feature [+animate] and it is both a 'delimiter' and an 'affected' Goal (in the sense of Tenny (1987)). No such restrictions hold for the IO in the to-dative construction where it can be [+/-animate] and is only a locative 'delimiter'.

Since the two dative constructions are distinct semantically we assume that they have different and non-derived syntactic structures.

2.1 Let us consider the data that illustrate the contrast in A above. The contrast points to the inability of both objects in the double object construction to undergo A' movements vs. the ability of both objects in the to-dative construction to undergo A' movements. Although slightly different semantically, we subsume the 'for (benefactive) dative construction' to the 'to dative construction'. For clarity, the data are presented in parallel.

(7) Wh-movement (DOC)
a. *Who did Carol bake that cake?
b. *?What did Carol bake the children?
(derived from 'Carol baked the children that cake')

(7') Wh-movement (to-dative construction)
a. What did Carol bake for the children?
b. Who did Carol bake that cake for?
(derived from 'Carol baked that cake for the children')

(8) Extraction (DOC)
a. *Who did John send a friend of a book about exotic plants?
b. *?What did John send a friend of mine a book about?
(derived from 'John sent a friend of mine a book about exotic plants')

(8') Extraction (to-dative construction)
a. Who did John send a book about exotic plants to?
b. What did John send a book about to a friend of mine?
(derived from ' John sent a book about exotic plants to a friend of mine')

(9) Tough Movement (DOC)
a. *?Young couples are easy to rent such spacious flats
b. *Such spacious flats are easy to rent young couples
(derived from 'It is easy to rent young couples such spacious flats')

(9') Tough Movement (to-dative construction)
a. Such spacious flats are easy to rent to young couples
b. Young couples are easy to rent such spacious flats to
(derived from 'It is easy to rent such spacious flats to young couples')

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(10) Relativization (DOC)
a. *?The girl [Ø / that / who(m)] John gave a present is his fiancée
(derived from 'John gave the girl a present and that girl is his fiancée')
b. *?The present [Ø / that / which] John gave the girl is valuable
(derived from 'John gave the girl a present and that present is valuable')

(10') Relativization (to-dative construction)
a. The girl [Ø / whom] John gave a present to is his fiancée
(derived from 'John gave a present to the girl and that girl is his fiancée')
b. The present [Ø / that / which] John gave to the girl is valuable
(derived from 'John gave a present to the girl and that present is valuable')

(11) Topicalization (DOC)
a. ?My lawyer in the States I sent a telegram every month but…
b. ?A telegram I sent my lawyer in the States every month but…
(derived from 'I sent my lawyer in the States a telegram every month', in Şerban 1982)

(11') Topicalization (to-dative construction)
a. To my lawyer in the States I sent a telegram every month but…
b. A telegram I sent to my lawyer in the States every month but…
(derived from 'I sent a telegram to my lawyer in the States every month')

The data above conspicuously show that both objects in the double object construction must share a property that inhibits their movement to the left periphery of the sentence. It is true that some de-transitive verbs form a kind of gradient as to the IO-DO properties and they fair A' movement better when the moved constituent is [+animate] (as in (?) *This girl is easy to wish good luck* , cf. Şerban 1982).

This puzzling syntactic behaviour of the two objects is not an idiosyncrasy of the English double object construction. Emonds and Ostler (2005) show that the inability of both objects to A' move holds in all languages which like English, have a two-way case marking system (Nom – Acc) (for example, it is also manifest in non-Indo-European applicative languages).

So far linguists have not managed to fall in with a plausible, comprehensive explanation for the freezing properties of the two objects of dative shift verbs.

3. For instance, Wexler and Culicover (1980) treat the DOC as a non-structure preserving operation and explain the frozenness of the two objects in terms of the Generalised Freezing Principle which states that "a node is frozen if its immediate structure is non-base or it has been raised" (in Corver (2005)). The frozenness of the two objects follows: the structure is non-base and since the DO is dominated by the frozen IO, the former becomes frozen as well. Under this analysis, passivization of the IO should be blocked. However, it is possible.

Emonds and Ostler (2005) treat the Dative Shift as a structure preserving transformational interchange of the DO and IO (i.e., "3 to 2 advancement" accompanied by demotion of the DO). They contend that English and applicative languages have a specific lexical property that allows licensing empty prepositions, equivalent to the overt to and for. At PF, to/for enter derivations to assign Case to the second NP but only in the absence of Dative Shift. They argue that in the derived structure send ^ NPj (IO) ^ Øj (PP) ^ NPi (DO) the promoted IO cannot A' move because in this case both the trace of the IO and the empty headed PP are

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bound by the same operator. This configuration violates Koopman and Sportiche's (1982) Bijection Principle prohibiting an A' constituent from locally binding two empty categories. The same explanation might motivate blocking A' movement of the Theme object in the DOC.

Johnson (1986) (in Corver 2005) argues that islandhood of moved constituents follows from Chomsky's Barrier Theory However, in the DOC the prepositionless IO remains L-marked and the Subjacency Condition is not violated. The Barrier Theory explains why the prepositionless IO can passivize but is unable to explain why the two objects in the DOC cannot A' move.

We are impartial as to the many differing non-derivational syntactic proposals of the DOC but we believe that its SC analysis with a silent head HAVE (as in Beck and Johnson 2004) for instance) is the most congruous with the construction's blocking A' movements. (For a survey of about 30 possible derived and non-derived analyses of the DOC proposed in the literature see Emonds and Ostler (2005)).

4. The second set of data announced in B above concerns the possibility of both the prepositionless IO in the double object construction and the DO in the prepositional dative construction to occur with floating quantifiers, as in (12a, b) (in Emonds and Ostler 2005). However, floating quantifiers as illustrated in (12c, d) cannot modify the prepositional IO in the to-dative construction

(12) a. Mary sent the boys each / both a present
b. We sent the books all by mail to that man
c. We sent a refund to those men ??all by mail
d. I fixed those drinks for the girls ??both with ice

Emonds and Ostler (2005) propose an explanation for the ill-formedness of (12c, d) in terms of proper c-command failure: the DP those men in the PP to those men fails to properly c-command the shifted quantifier. However, the prepositionless IO the boys in (12a) and the DO the books in (12b) can properly c-command the right shifted quantifier.

5. We identify two sets of problems raised by the two dative constructions.

5.1 One set concerns the properties of the prepositionless IO in the double object construction:

(i) why at all does the goal DP undergo Dative Shift to produce a structure like *John sent Mary a present?*

(ii) why is it unable to undergo further A' movements?

(iii) why does the prepositionless IO have scope freezing effects (i.e. a quantified IO always has wider scope over a quantified DO)?

(iv) why can prepositionless IOs and true DOs be modified by floating quantifiers while prepositional IOs cannot?

5.2 The other set of problems concerns the syntactic behaviour of the two objects in the two dative constructions:

(i) why are the two objects able to undergo various types of A' movements in the to/for-dative constructions?

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(ii) why are the two objects unable to undergo A' movements in the double object construction?

In what follows we propose an explanation for the syntactic quibbles posed by the prepositionless IO in the double object construction in terms of its animacy semantic property in conjunction with Williams' (1997) Blocking Principle effects.

The problems raised by the ability of both arguments in the prepositional dative constructions to A' move vs. the inability of both arguments in the double object construction to A' move are explained in terms of these objects morphological shapes and the effects of the Blocking Principle.

5.3 The Blocking Principle in Williams' acceptation is a 'meta'-principle in the sense that it governs the applicability of other principles and operations. The Blocking Principle is operative both in morphology and in syntax.

In morphology, blocking explains why certain words do not exist (e.g., *gloriosity) because others do (e.g., glory).

With respect to meaning, the Blocking Principle is construed as language 'hatred of synonymy': "if two forms exist (in syntax or morphology) they must have different meanings; if two forms cannot be assigned different meanings, then one of them cannot exist" (Williams 1997: 578). In a paradigm, difference in meaning is perhaps more fundamental than meaning itself.

An essential feature of blocking is the notion of 'specificity', in the broadest sense. An underived word like glory is a more specific nominalization of the adjective glorious than the derived noun *gloriosity. The more specific form is the marked one and blocks the less specific one, which is the unmarked form. In general, a single word is more specific than a derived one or a syntactic phrase, and it will block the latter two.

6. In terms of the Blocking Principle effects, let us consider the Dative Shift operation, a clear case of A movement which produces structures such as John sent Mary a present.

6.1. It seems that the reason of IO movement adjacent to the verb is semantic in nature. Recall that one of the semantic constraints on the IO in the double object construction is that it must be [+animate]. The animacy restriction is directly related to the possession relation between the Goal and the Theme. That's why John sent Mary a present is well formed while *John sent Tokyo a present is ill formed.

Following Williams (1997) we claim that movement can be driven by animacy as well as by specificity (as 'scrambling' is in German). Faltz (1979) (in Şerban 1982) makes exactly the same point in arguing that the IO usurps the DO position due to its greater cognitive salience contributed by its [+animate] feature.

In Williams' Blocking Principle terms, the IO reaches a semantically privileged position accessible only to [+animate] IOs. In the double object construction, the occurrence of the non-specific [-animate] IO is blocked.

The other A' positions to the left periphery of the sentence are accessible to everything: they are the elsewhere case and other objects can move to these positions, except for the highly specific, one-word IO.

6.2. The [+animate] feature and the highly specific position of the IO in the double object construction can also explain its wider scope in structures where both objects are quantifiers

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(Aoun and Li 1989). Thus, in (13) below, the scope of the animate IO is 'frozen' in the sense that it is always wider, as in (14) but not narrower, as in (15):

(13) John gave someone every book
(14) There is one person that got all the books
(15) *For each book there is someone that got that book

In contrast, if the DO and the prepositional IO in the to-dative construction are quantified, as in (16), the quantified [+animate] prepositional object may have either wider or narrower scope than the quantified, inanimate DO (17-18):

(16) John gave some book to everyone
(17) There is one book that John gave to everyone
(18) Every person got at least one book from John

6.3 The restriction on floating quantifiers that can modify only DOs and prepositionless IOs but not prepositional IOs can be explained in terms of 'ambiguity of signalling device' (Williams 1997). It is apparent that sameness in structural position of the two objects counts more than their dissimilarity in semantic roles or animacy. Thus, blocking fails to have effects where the signalling device is ambiguous in language.

So far, we have explained the syntactic properties of the promoted IO via its animacy semantic property and the Blocking Principle effects.

6.4 However in the double object construction it is not only the highly specific IO that cannot move to the left periphery of the sentence but the DO can't either. In contrast, in the prepositional dative construction both objects can move to A' positions in the left periphery of the sentence.

We contend that the syntactic contrast between the two objects in the two dative constructions is induced by English poverty of case marking on objects, corroborated with the Blocking Principle effects.

In morphological term, the important property that distinguishes English from other languages such as Romanian for instance is that English has a two-way case system (Nom-Acc) while Romanian has a three-way case system (Nom-Acc-Dative).

Faltz (1979) (in Şerban 1982) notes that English, among other languages, evinces a 'levelling' in case marking its objects. In particular, the IO, either prepositional or prepositionless, has an equivocal status.

In the double object construction, the IO is formally identical with the DO. Thus, in the double object construction the IO and the DO are distinct in semantic roles (Goal and Theme, respectively) but are indistinct morphologically. These morphological properties of the two objects will be crucial in accounting for blocking their A' movements.

In the prepositional dative construction, the two objects are distinctly case marked: the Theme DO bears structural Acc case while the Goal IO bears Oblique case, assigned by the preposition to or for.

In sum, English is a language that 'channels' its semantic IO into 'syntactic slots' used for DOs and Obliques (Faltz 1979, in Şerban 1982).

Generally, if two forms are possible a different meaning is associated with each and blocking has no effects. The Blocking Principle has effects only where meaning is neutralised (cf. Williams 1997).

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We may envisage the following scenario in explaining blocking A' movements of the two objects in the double object construction related to non-blocking A' movements of the two objects in the prepositional dative construction.

The explanation has to do with neutralisation of meaning. The speaker will perceive no difference in A' moving the Goal and the Theme that originate from either the double object construction or the prepositional dative construction. Otherwise, the same A' slots would be filled twice with no difference in meaning.

Both of the forms that lack morphological case identification are blocked from moving. The speaker simply can't choose which of the two objects to move and A' movements are blocked for both objects in the double object construction since they are indistinct morphologically. In this case, it is natural to prefer moving the two objects from the prepositional dative construction since these objects are distinct in case marking and one can keep track of them.

Thus, if neutralisation of meaning occurs, both in English and in applicative languages, the morphologically unmarked objects are blocked from moving and the other available choice is taken: A' movements of the morphologically distinct objects in the prepositional dative construction.

In sum, blocking spans morphology and syntax and does not respect the boundary: lack of morphological marking has syntactic reflexes and consequences.

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