

The role of animacy and definiteness in the clitic-DP nexus

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Abstract

We extend Cuervo's (2003) analysis of the Lower Applicative Dative DP in Spanish to account for the animate definite DP preceded by *a* and the fact that it is not possible to have both an animate dative definite direct object and a dative indirect object in the same clause. We argue that the presence of such a dative DP 'blocks' the upward movement of the direct object DP to the specifier of the Lower Applicative phrase. We analyse the case 'mismatch' between the third person accusative clitic and the co-referring dative DP with animate definite reference in River Plate Spanish as resulting from the raising of the accusative clitic to the head of the Applicative phrase and the movement of the DP to its specifier, where dative case is always assigned in Spanish. We propose that similar phenomena observed in some Australian languages are amenable to a similar analysis.

Keywords

Accusative, Animacy, Applicative, Dative, Definiteness, Direct Object Promotion, Guugu-Yimidhirr, Pronominal Clitics, Spanish, Warlpiri

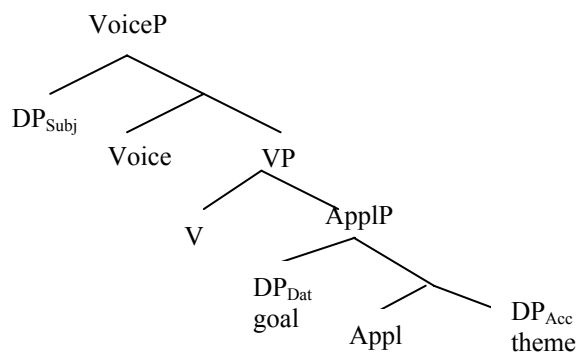
1. Introduction

Our paper has two aims: (i) to extend Cuervo's (2003) analysis of clitic doubled dative DPs in Spanish to account for the dative case marked animate direct object in Spanish and its 'optional' doubling, in River Plate Spanish, by the accusative third person clitic *le* if definite – in addition to the obligatory clitic doubling of pronominal DPs; (ii) to extend our analysis to similar phenomena in some Australian languages such as the promotion of direct object over indirect object driven by animacy and definiteness factors in Warlpiri (Legate 2003) and some case-marking splits between pronouns and coreferential DPs in Paman languages such as Guugu Yimidhirr.

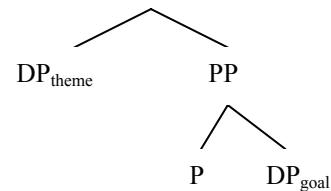
2. Cuervo's analysis

Cuervo (2003) argues that some Spanish dative DPs doubled by a dative pronominal clitic are licensed by a "Low Applicative" head¹ (following work by Pytkänen (2002) *inter alia*). This category projects an Applicative Phrase (ApplP) in which the dative DP (marked by *a*) occupies the specifier position (1a). The dative clitic is the overt spellout of the applicative head and serves to check the person and number features of the DP phrase in the specifier position. A direct object *theme* DP may occupy the complement position in the ApplP as in (1a), so it is C-commanded by the Dative *goal* DP. This contrasts with the Direct Object+PP construction in (1b) in which the DO phrase C-commands the DP in the associated PP.

(1) a. Low Applicative (Cuervo, 2003)



b. Direct Object + PP



Pablo mandó a Gabi le un diccionario un diccionario a Gabi
 Pablo sent dat Gabi CL a dictionary' a dictionary to Gabi

Cuervo equates the low applicative dative DP *a Gabi* in (2a) with the first object in the corresponding English double object construction, and the homophonous PP phrase headed by the preposition *a* in (2b) with the *to* (or *for*) phrase as in the English translation². The PP phrase

¹ This paper is only concerned with the Low Applicative dominated by VP, which contrasts with a High Applicative which dominates the VP. The semantic relation between DP_{dat} and DP_{acc} in (1a) is roughly paraphrasable as 'DP_{dat} has DP_{acc}' (Cuervo 2003:89).

² See Demonte (1995) and Masullo (1992) for an earlier discussion of the English 'dative alternation' and its Spanish equivalent.

in (2b) is not doubled by a dative clitic as it is not licensed by the applicative head, but rather is licensed by the preposition *a* in a position that is outside the ApplP.

- (2) a. *Pablo le mandó un diccionario a Gabi.* (Cuervo 2003:46 (28a))
 "Pablo sent Gabi a dictionary."
 b. *Pablo mandó un diccionario a Gabi.* (Cuervo 2003:46 (28b))
 "Pablo sent a dictionary to Gabi."

In (2a) the dative DP *a Gabi* C-commands the theme DO DP as in (1a). In (2b) the theme DO *un diccionario* C-commands the goal DP *Gabi* embedded in the PP *a Gabi* corresponding with (1b).³

3. Extending Cuervo's analysis to the animate direct object

In all varieties of Spanish an animate DO DP – whether definite or indefinite – receives dative case marked by *a* as in (3a&c) (but only in the absence of an IO doubled by a dative clitic (6a)).

- (3) a. *Vi a una mujer.*
 see:PAST:1SG DAT a woman
 "I saw a woman."
 b. *?Vi una mujer.*⁴
 see:PAST:1SG a woman
 "I saw a woman."
 c. *Vi a la mujer.*
 see:PAST:1SG DAT the woman
 "I saw the woman."
 d. **Vi la mujer.*
 see:PAST:1SG a woman
 "I saw the woman."

If the animate DO is definite, River Plate Spanish (RPS)⁵ allows the accusative clitic to double a non-pronominal dative DO phrase as in (4a). In all varieties of Spanish, a direct object pronoun must be doubled by the accusative clitic as in (4b); compare ungrammatical (4d).

³ Cuervo (2003) accounts for a range of syntactic contrasts including binding and weak crossover asymmetries in terms of these structural differences. McGinnis (2001:137-8) discusses quantification asymmetries in Spanish which correlate with them as well.

⁴ While (3b) is not totally rejected by Spanish speakers, unlike (3d) where the object is both animate and definite, it is not considered as acceptable as (3a).

⁵ River Plate Spanish is spoken in parts of Argentina and Uruguay.

- (4) a. **(La)** vi a la mujer.
 (3SG.FEM.ACC) see:PAST:1SG DAT the woman
 "I saw the woman."
- b. **La** vi a ella.
 3SG.ACC see:PAST:1SG DAT her
 "I saw her."
- c. **La** vi.
 3SG.FEM.ACC see:PAST:1SG
 "I saw her."
- d. ***Vi** a ella.
 see:PAST:1SG DAT her
 "I saw her."

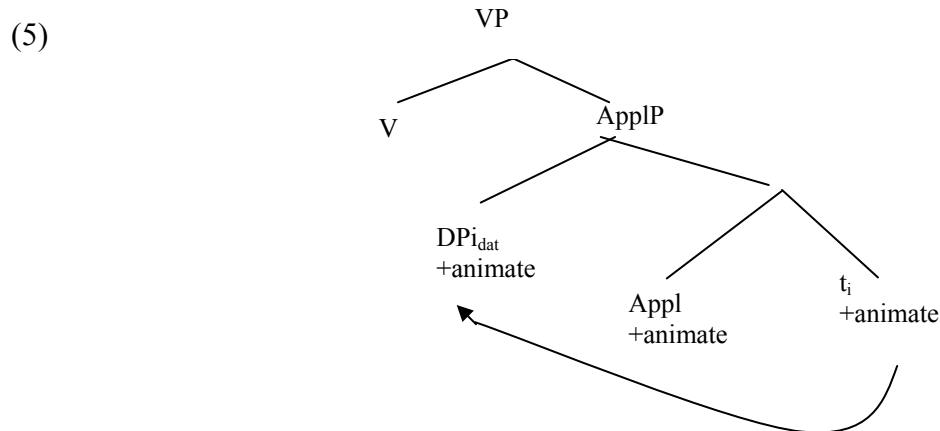
Specific reference of the animate dative DO is not sufficient to license clitic doubling (4e).⁶

- e. ***La** busco a una mujer que habla cien idiomas.
 3SG.FEM.ACC seek:PAST:1SG DAT a woman that speak:INDIC:PRES:3SG 100 languages
 "I'm looking for a woman who speaks one hundred languages."⁷

3.1 Our Proposal

3.1.1 Animacy checking of Direct Object

The dative case assignment on animate DOs results from the need to associate the feature [+animate] of the object DP with the lower applicative head which, we argue, can be projected in the absence of the overt applicative/dative clitic. This movement then triggers movement of the DO phrase into the specifier of the ApplP in order to check its animate feature as seen in (5).



⁶ Suñer (1988) argues that it is the feature 'specific' which licenses clitic doubling of the direct object DP in Porteño (our River Plate) Spanish. Native speakers we consulted unanimously rejected all clitic doubled inanimate DO phrases as reflected in (10c) and all clitic doubled indefinite animate DO phrases with specific reference.

⁷ The use of the indicative mood inflection *habla* rather than the subjunctive *hable* unambiguously signals specific reference.

The movement of the DO DP is blocked by a dative clitic in Appl (which licenses an additional dative argument in specifier of ApplP). Both *a una/la mujer* and *a su amigo* in (6a) can't occupy the same position, i.e. the specifier of ApplP. The DO *una/la mujer* in (6b) receives accusative case, but its [+animate] feature remains unchecked, as it is blocked from raising into the head of the ApplP due to the presence of the dative clitic *le* which licenses the dative goal phrase *a su amigo*. Consequently, *una/la mujer* in (6b) is interpreted as though an inanimate theme.⁸

- (6) a. **Le_i presentó a una/la mujer a su amigo_i.*
 3SG.DAT introduced:3SG DAT a/the woman DAT her friend.
 ≠ "She introduced a/the woman to her friend."
- b. *Le_i presentó una/la mujer_j a su*_j amigo_i.*
 3SG.DAT introduced:3SG a/the woman DAT her friend.
 "She introduced a/the woman to her friend."
 (lit. She presented her_j friend a/the woman*_j.)

In the absence of the dative clitic in (7), *a su amigo* occupies the PP position shown in (1b) where *a* is not the marker of dative case, but the preposition *a* 'to'. The higher DO *una/la mujer* can raise into the specifier of the ApplP, its animate feature being checked in the head of ApplP.

- (7) ?*Presentó a una/la mujer_i a su_{i/j} amigo.*
 introduced:3SG DAT a/the woman to her friend
 "She introduced a/the woman_i to her_{i/j} friend"⁹

While a non-pronominal dative DP in the specifier of ApplP (unlike DO DP) may have non-animate reference if licensed by the dative clitic Appl head as seen in (8a), a pronominal dative DP in this position must have [+animate] reference (Cuervo 2003:39), whether licensed by a dative clitic (8b) or by virtue of movement of the DO into that position (4b).

- (8) a. *Le_i puse sal a la sopa_i.*
 3SG.DAT put:PAST:1SG salt DAT the soup
 "I put salt in the soup." (cf. *I put the soup salt.)
- b. *Le puse sal a ella.*
 ≠ "I put salt in it."
 = "I put salt on her."

3.1.2 Definiteness checking of Direct Object

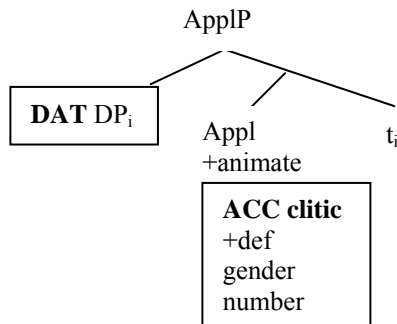
In RPS, the quantificational feature [+definite] of the DO DP may also raise in tandem with the feature [+animate] into the head of the ApplP. This movement is spelt out by the accusative clitic

⁸ This accusative option is not available for a pronominal DO, however, (see (10b)).

⁹ While some speakers find (7) odd, it is not as clearly unacceptable as (6a). In (7) it is possible to interpret *su* as referring to *una/la mujer* which is not possible in (6b).

which checks the person, number and gender features of the definite animate DP as shown in (9) which models the clitic doubling object constructions in (4a&b).

(9) Animate dative DO phrase doubled by accusative clitic



(9) presents a mismatch between the accusative case of the pronominal clitic and the dative case of the coreferent DP, only overtly marked by third person clitics.¹⁰ In other varieties such as standard Peninsular Spanish, the animate DO DP raises to specifier of ApplP and is assigned dative case, but there is no spellout of [+definite] as a clitic and hence no overt feature agreement – unless the dative DP is pronominal.

The third person accusative clitic cannot double an accusative DP whether animate (10a&b) or inanimate (10c).

- (10) a. **La vi la mujer.* ≠ "I saw the woman."
 b. **La vi ella.* ≠ "I saw her."
 c. **La vi la casa.* ≠ "I saw the house."
 d. *Vi la casa.* "I saw the house."

Doubling requires movement of the DO DP to the specifier of ApplP where number (and gender) features of the DP must agree with those encoded in the clitic. DPs associated with this position in Spanish are assigned dative case. If the DO DP cannot raise, either because the specifier of ApplP is already filled by a dative DP licensed by the dative Appl head as seen in (6a), or because the DO DP does not have the feature [+animate] (10c), then the DO DP must remain *in situ* in the complement of ApplP as in (10d).¹¹

3.1.3 Reviewing evidence to support the claim that the doubled phrase is in IO position¹²

A dative IO (in specifier of Lower ApplP) is only incompatible with a dative DO (6a) and (11a). It is compatible with an Accusative DO phrase (6b) and (11b) or with a PP (11c). Similarly a

¹⁰ Spanish first and second person pronominal clitics have identical IO and DO forms.

¹¹ Accusative case is assigned to the DO *la casa* in (10d), but fails to be assigned to it in (10c). It seems reasonable to conclude, following Jaeggli (1982) that the overt definite accusative clitic is implicated in the blocking of accusative case assignment to the DP.

¹² For additional evidence see Torrego (1995).

dative DO is compatible with a PP phrase headed by preposition *a* (7) and (11d), but not with a dative IO (6a) and (11a).

- (11) a. **Le_i* *diste* *a la mujer* (*a Juan_i*).
 3SG.DAT give:PAST:2SG DAT the woman DAT John
 ≠ "You gave him/John the woman."
- b. *Le_i* *diste* *la casa* (*a Juan_i*).
 3SG.DAT give:PAST:2SG the house DAT John
 "You gave him/John the house."
- c. *Le_i/*_j* *envió* *una carta* (*a Juan_i*) *a Londres_j*.
 3SG.DAT sent:PAST:3SG a letter DAT John to London.
 "She sent him/Juan a letter to London."
- d. (*La_i/*_j*) *envió* *a la mujer_i* *a Londres_j*.
 (3SG.FEM.ACC) sent:PAST:3SG DAT the woman to London.
 "She sent the woman to London." (≠ She sent London the woman.)
- e. **Envió* (*a Londres*). ≠ "She sent him/her/it to London."

The accusative clitic is obligatory in Spanish in the absence of an overt DO DP (11e), as well as in the presence of a pronominal object, whether an overt pronoun or the non-overt *pro*. We propose that the accusative clitic obligatorily spells out, in the head of ApplP, some features of a pronominal DO.

It is well known that sequences of IO and DO clitics bearing the same person feature are not allowed in Spanish with the exception of the third person sequences in which the IO clitic must surface as *se* which lacks gender and number features as in (12a). If the Accusative clitic (which has definite reference) must check the number (and gender) features of the non-overt definite DO DP by moving into the head of the ApplP, then we speculate that it may not be possible to have the number features of a dative DP in the specifier of the ApplP checked there as well.¹³

- (12) a. *Se* *lo* *di* *a la mujer*.
 3DAT 3SG.M.ACC give:PAST:1SG DAT the woman
 "I gave it to the woman."
- b. **Le* *lo* *di* *a la mujer*.
 3SG.DAT 3SG.M.ACC give:PAST:1SG DAT the woman
 "I gave it to the woman."

¹³ The constraints on clitic clusters in Spanish are extremely complex, and we do not pursue this matter in this paper.

3.1.4 Summary

The dative case marker *a* is homophonous with a preposition *a* heading a PP not cross-referenced with a dative clitic (Cuervo 2003, Masullo 1992, Strozer 1976). Dative case in Spanish is not an animacy marker (cf. Bello 1970, Suñer 1989), since the applicative head, realized as a dative clitic, may license both animate and inanimate non-pronominal dative phrases (Cuervo 2003). However, the dative case marking on animate DO phrases in Spanish derives from the position to which an animate DO DP may move under certain conditions – to the Specifier of an ApplP. If this movement is blocked, dative case is not assigned irrespective of the semantic animacy of the object DP as seen in (6b).

Unlike the dative clitic which can add an applicative phrase to the argument structure licensed by the verb, the accusative clitic only serves to check features of an argument of the verb. The accusative clitic is not a case assigner or case licenser, hence the only possibility to have accusative clitic doubling is where the doubled DP can get case independently of the clitic. Where an animate direct object moves into the specifier of the ApplP it is assigned dative case, resulting in the Accusative clitic-Dative DP case 'mismatch'.

4. Extending this analysis to Australian languages

4.1 Warlpiri

Warlpiri, like Spanish, has clitic pronouns which may cross-reference either IO or DO DPs, but it never permits the co-occurrence of both IO and DO clitics.¹⁴ The goal DP is typically in dative case and is coreferent with the pronominal clitic (13a). The first or second person DO of a ditransitive verb must be coreferent with the pronominal clitic and it blocks a dative goal DP. The goal can only be expressed in a PP headed by allative as in (13b). The DO *ngaju* in (13b) has its person and number features checked in ApplP (with the overt spellout by the clitic in the Appl head) whereas the DO *karli* 'boomerang' in (13a&d) has not. To bind the reference of a DO phrase to that of the subject phrase, the DO must be associated with the anaphoric clitic =*nyanu* while there can be no overt expression of the DO phrase since this would result in binding condition B or C violations. Consequently the association of the anaphoric clitic *nyanu* with the DO 'forces' the goal expression (if overt) to surface as an allative PP as in (13c) which contrasts with (13d) in which it is the IO goal whose reference is bound by the subject and which is associated with *nyanu*.¹⁵

- (13) a. *Yapa-ngku=lu=rla* *karli* *yungu jintakari-ki*.
 person-ERG=3PLSUBJ=3SG.DAT boomerang gave **another-DAT**
 'They gave **the other one** a boomerang/boomerangs.'

¹⁴ There is no overt spellout of a third person singular DO clitic in Warlpiri, but a dative applicative DP must be associated with the dative clitic *-rla* as in (13a). No other non-subject clitic distinguishes accusative from dative forms, but while additional elements may be added to a clitic complex containing a non-subject clitic associated with a dative DP, they cannot be added to those coreferent with an absolutive DO DP. The first person *ju* and second person *ngku* singular clitics and the anaphoric *nyanu* derive from historical dative pronouns.

¹⁵ The cross-referenced argument ('goal' or 'theme') can control the PRO subject of a non-finite clause headed by *kurra* (Legate 2003, Simpson 1991).

- b. *Yapa-ngku=ju=lu* *ngaju* *yungu* *jintakari-kirra* (**jintakari-ki*).
 person-ERG=1SG.OBJ=PL.SUBJ 1SG gave another-ALLAT (another-DAT)
 “They gave **me** to another one.”

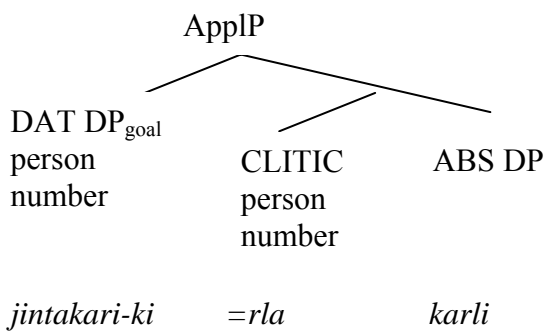
- c. *Yapa-ngku=lu=nyanu* *yungu* *yurrkunyu-kurra* (**yurrkunyu-ku*).
 person-ERG=3PLSUBJ=ANAPH gave police-ALLAT (police-DAT)
 “They gave themselves up to the police.”

- d. *Yapa-ngku=lu=nyanu* *karli* *yungu*.
 person-ERG=3PLSUBJ=ANAPH boomerang gave
 “They gave **each other** a boomerang/boomerangs.”

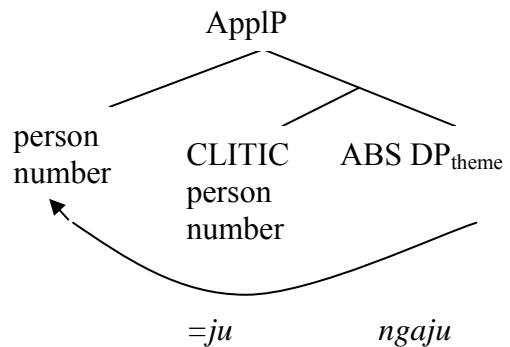
As in Spanish, the Warlpiri IO, which Legate (2003) argues to be a Low Applicative phrase (1a) rather than a PP (1b), is assigned dative case and is associated with an overt clitic, e.g., *rla* in (13a), *nyanu* in (13d). We follow Legate and further claim that the dative clitic in these constructions is the spellout of the Appl head and serves to check person and number features of the dative DP in the specifier of ApplP as Cuervo (2003) proposes for Spanish.

Unlike Spanish, the Warlpiri pronominal DO phrase (e.g., *ngaju* in (13b)) does not surface as a dative DP (compare (4b)) but retains (unmarked) absolutive form even though it enters into an agreement relation (in person and number) with the overt clitic *-ju*,¹⁶ in the head of ApplP as we have argued for the accusative clitic of Spanish. Unlike the Spanish accusative clitic, the Warlpiri clitic pronoun *-ju* (which checks the person and number features of the pronominal DO *ngaju*) does not trigger the overt movement of the DO DP to the specifier of ApplP. The case mismatch is not, as in Spanish, between an accusative clitic and a dative DP in specifier of ApplP, but between an accusative clitic and an absolutive DP at the end of a chain with its person and number features in specifier of ApplP (14b).

(14) a. Dative in specifier of ApplP



b. ABS DP



Unlike Spanish, the Warlpiri accusative clitic does not block an overt DO DP since all DO DPs in Warlpiri are assigned absolutive case by a higher functional head associated with finiteness.

¹⁶ Applicative phrases in Bantu languages do not surface in marked cases either, nor does the applicative 'goal' DP in English double object constructions.

4.1.1 Summary

In Warlpiri ditransitive clauses, the default is for the 'goal' (or 'source') argument to be in the specifier of ApplP – like the English double object construction, and the Spanish clitic doubled dative construction (1a). If the DO DP must have its features checked as in (13b&c) the goal can only be expressed by a PP as in (1b). Warlpiri does not show accusative clitic-dative DP case mismatches of the Spanish type since there is no overt movement of the DO DP to specifier of ApplP, where dative is assigned. Instead there are Accusative-Absolutive mismatches.

4.2 Guugu-Yimidhirr

The features [+animate] and [+definite] are marked by the presence of a nominative third person pronoun for the subject phrase and by an accusative third person pronoun for a direct object phrase. In (15a) the inanimate DO phrase *warrbi* 'axe' is not accompanied by the third person accusative pronoun unlike in (15b) in which the 3dual accusative *bula-an* marks both the definite and animate features of the DO phrase *gudhiiri* 'two'.

- (15) a. *Nyulu bidha-al warrbi dumbi.* (Haviland 1979:101 #181)
 3SG.NOM child-ERG axe:ABS broke.
 “The child broke the axe.”
- b. [...] *dhabi gudhiirri=gu bula-an.* (Haviland 1979:101 #122)
 kicked two:ABS=then 3DU-ACC
 “... kicked them both [...].”

4.2.1 Parallels with Spanish and Warlpiri

In RPS only a [+animate, +definite] dative DP may be doubled by an accusative clitic – the clitic licensed by the definiteness feature, the dative case licensed by the animacy feature as seen in (4a,b). In Guugu-Yimidhirr, on the other hand, the category which encodes person and number features is a free pronoun. However, this free pronoun behaves like the clitic pronouns of Spanish and Warlpiri, in that it doubles an animate DP signalling definite reference. Like the Spanish accusative clitic, the Guugu-Yimidhirr accusative pronoun 'absorbs' the accusative case as it checks [+animate] and [+definite], but does not prevent the overt expression of the DP it governs, since the DP receives absolutive case independently, as in Warlpiri.

We propose that the Guugu-Yimidhirr pronoun moves into specifier of ApplP even though there is no obligatory overt spellout of its features by a clitic in the Appl head (unlike Spanish and Warlpiri) but similar to the Applicative goal DP in the English ‘double’ object construction). The pronoun is assigned accusative case.¹⁷ The associated absolutive DP does not raise. The Guugu-Yimidhirr pattern is the opposite of Warlpiri where the features of the DO are overt in the head of ApplP but covert in specifier of ApplP. In Spanish, the features of the DO may be overt both in the head and in the specifier of ApplP under the conditions we have described.

¹⁷ While Guugu-Yimidhirr does have distinct dative and accusative forms for some pronouns, for many person/number combinations there is no formal distinction, as seen in the other languages discussed.

5. Conclusion

The inability of Spanish to allow both a dative animate definite DO and a dative IO in the same clause suggests that these arguments are vying for the same syntactic position. We have argued that this position is the Specifier of a Lower Applicative phrase, with the clitic occupying the head of ApplP, following Cuervo (2003). We have extended Cuervo's analysis, arguing that the definite animate DO must also be realized in specifier of ApplP with an overt obligatory clitic as the head of the ApplP if the DP is pronominal, and optionally with a non-pronominal phrase in RPS. The motivation for raising an animate and definite DO from its original position to a higher one, a move which may lead to a 'clash' with a dative IO, is equally well attested in many Australian languages. In this paper we have proposed that our analysis of the Spanish facts may be applicable – with some interesting variations – to the relationship between pronominal clitics and full DPs in Warlpiri ditransitive clauses, and also to the role of free third person pronouns in definite, animate (perhaps restricted to human) DPs in Paman languages such as Guugu-Yimidhirr. We suggest that extending this type of approach to similar phenomena in other Australian languages would lead to some insightful results.

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