

Inalienable possession effects in Spanish middle passives

Middle passive constructions in Spanish are characterized by the presence of the reflexive clitic *se*, non-perfective tenses (present or imperfect), and verbal agreement between the verb and the DP theme in preverbal position (unmarked). Moreover, any transitive verb can occur in these sentences, and the possibility of introducing an agent by means of a *por*-phrase (by-phrase) is banned.

- (1) Sus arrugas se ven fácilmente (*por todos).
 His wrinkles REFL.CL see.PL easily by everyone
'His wrinkles are easy to see'

However, unlike other Romance languages such as French or Romanian, a dative argument can appear in middle passive constructions with predicates such as *ver* (to see) or *leer* (to read), as in (2); crucially, in those cases the dative entity is interpreted as the inalienable possessor of the DP theme, without any degree of participation in the event.

- (2) (A Juan_i) ?sus/las arrugas se le_i ven fácilmente.
 To Juan.DAT his/the wrinkles REFL.CL 3SG.DAT see.PL easily
'Juan's wrinkles are easy to see'

Two configurations can yield these structures, which I call *inalienable middles*. I distinguish them based on the fact that a negative quantified dative DP loses its scope over the sentence when topicalized (Masullo 1992). In the first, the dative DP merges inside TP and later raises to subject position, preventing the DP theme from escaping the VP (3a). In the second the dative DP is merged in a higher position than TP, permitting the DP theme's promotion to SpecTP (3b).

- (3) a. [_{TP} A nadie se le ven las arrugas fácilmente]
 To nobody REFL.CL 3SG.DAT see.PL the wrinkles easily
 b. *A nadie, [_{TP} las arrugas se le ven fácilmente]
 b'. A Juan, [_{TP} las arrugas se le ven fácilmente]

Within Generative Grammar, inalienable possession between an object and a dative argument has been analyzed under the scope of binding and control (Guerón 1985; Demonte 1995), predication (Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992), and more recently as instances of possessor raising (Landau 1999; Sánchez López 2007; Deal 2013) or low applicatives (Cuervo 2003). Possession in (1) is conveyed by means of a possessive determiner (internal possession); however, once the dative clitic (optionally reduplicated by the dative DP) enters the derivation (2), the possessive determiner becomes redundant, and a definite determiner agreeing in both gender and number with the theme suffices to express the relation (external possession).

I argue that while both possessor raising (4a) and low applicative analyses (4b) successfully account for the non-topicalized configuration in (3a), both make incorrect predictions when dealing with the topicalized one in (3b'). In both proposals, the possession relation originates inside a locative prepositional phrase or a low applicative one, respectively, in whose specifiers sit the possessor, and whose complement is the possessum. In a topicalized inalienable middle of the (3b') type, an empty pronominal is needed for the construal to obtain; this pronoun, presumably *pro*, would intervene when T° probes for a DP to satisfy its EPP, yielding the incorrect word order (5).

- (4) a. [_{TP} A Juan [_T se le ven] [_{VP} [_V] [_{PP} A Juan [_P] [_{DP} las arrugas]]] fácilmente]]
 b. [_{TP} A Juan [_T se le ven] [_{VP} [_V] [_{AppIP} A Juan [_{AppI} le] [_{DP} las arrugas]]] fácilmente]]

- (5) a. [_{TopicP} A Juan [_{TP} *pro* [_T *se le ven*] [_{VP} [_V] [_{PP} ~~*pro*~~ [_P] [_{DP} *las arrugas*]]] *fácilmente*]]]
 b. [_{TopicP} A Juan [_{TP} *pro* [_T *se le ven*] [_{VP} [_V] [_{AppIP} ~~*pro*~~ [_{AppI} *le*] [_{DP} *las arrugas*]]] *fácilmente*]]]
 c. *?A Juan, se le ven las arrugas fácilmente*

Instead, I suggest a sort of combination of the two approaches: a low Appl° enters into an agreement relationship with a DP encoding an inalienable possession relationship, features of which satisfy the selectional requirements of Appl°. I assume, based on Radford (2000) and Alexiadou et al. (2007), that the inalienable possession relationship obtains inside the DP; more specifically inside its complement, *nP* or PossP. The head of these projections is spelled out as weak possessive pronouns in other Romance languages (Cardinaletti 1998) (6a). I suggest that in languages like Spanish, which lack a phonetic form for the weak possessive, the Poss° is composed of genitive and person features (6b).

- (6) a. [_{DP} [_D *Les*+definite] [_{PossP} [_{Poss} *mios*_{GEN;1SG}] [_{NP} *engurries*]]] *ASTURIAN*
 The.PL my.M.PL wrinkles
 b. [_{DP} [_D *Mis*+definite;GEN;1SG] [_{PossP} [_{Poss} ~~*GEN; 1SG*~~] [_{NP} *arrugas*]]] *SPANISH*
 My wrinkles
 '*My wrinkles*'

I propose that this is precisely the configuration which is complement to a low Appl° in inalienable middles. The low Appl°, of the possessor type, probes the genitive and person features that incorporate to D° from Poss°, leaving behind the [+definite] feature whose spell out form is the definite determiner (an instance of feature coalescence (Hsu 2015)). The inalienable possession does not require the presence of Appl° to obtain, for it originates inside DP; evidence for that is the fact that this construct already exists in the DP *Mis arrugas* ('my wrinkles') alone. Because Appl°'s features are valued by the possessor's features, there is no need to stipulate the existence of an empty category to sit in SpecAppIP; this phrase simply does not project a specifier in (3b):

- (7) a. [_{AppIP} [_{AppI} *me*_{GEN;1SG}] [_{DP} [_D *les*+definite] [_{PossP} [_{Poss} *mios*_{GEN;1SG}] [_{NP} *engurries*]]]
 b. [_{AppIP} [_{AppI} *me*_{GEN;1SG}] [_{DP} [_D *las*+definite;GEN;1SG] [_{PossP} [_{Poss} ~~*GEN 1SG*~~] [_{NP} *arrugas*]]]

In sum, my proposal is threefold: (i) *inalienable middles* are analyzed as instances of low applicative constructions; (ii) evidence from subjecthood tests by Masullo (1992) suggest that two different configurations can yield these constructions, namely one where the dative DP is topicalized, favoring the DP theme's promotion to SpecTP, and another in which the dative DP is merged in SpecAppIP and raises to SpecTP to check its EPP feature; (iii) both the low applicative and the possessor raising approaches fall short in accounting for the possession construal in (3b). I show that an analysis where the latter emerges inside DP fares better in accounting for the data under examination here, for no intervention effects blocking raising of the Theme are predicted, since the analysis does not require empty pronominals. Additionally, this presentation highlights the need to establish a more detailed classification of Spanish middle passive constructions with respect to their interaction with dative arguments, a phenomenon which appears to have been overlooked in the literature thus far.

References:

- Alexiadou, A., Haegeman, L., Stavrou, M. (2007). *Noun Phrase in the Generative Perspective*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter; Cardinaletti, A. (1998). On the deficient/strong opposition in possessive systems. *Possessors, predicates and movement in the determiner phrase*, 22, 17-53; Cuervo, M.C. (2003). *Datives at large*. Doctoral dissertation: MIT; Deal, A.R. (2013). Possessor raising. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 44(3), 391-432; Demonte, V. (1995). Dative alternation in Spanish, *Probus*, 7(1), 5-30; Guéron, J. (1985). Inalienable possession, PRO-inclusion and lexical chains. *Grammatical representation*, 43; Hsu, B. (2015). Unification of Feature Scattering and M-Merger as Coalescence. Paper presented at NELS 46. Masullo, P. (1992). *Incorporation and case theory in Spanish. A crosslinguistic perspective*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Washington; Landau, I. (1999). Possessor raising and the structure of VP. *Lingua*, 107(1-2), 1-37; Sánchez López, C. (2007). The possessive dative and the syntax of affected arguments. *Cuadernos de Lingüística del IUI Ortega y Gasset XIV*, 153-173; Radford, A. (2000). NP shells. *Essex Research Reports in Linguistics*, 16, 82-103; Vergnaud, J.R. & Zubizarreta, M.L. (1992). The definite determiner and the inalienable constructions in French and in English. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 23(4), 595-652.