

Week 4

The Person/Case Constraint

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1 Introduction

Today's class will revolve around the contrast between these two examples.

- (1) Pedro te lo envía
Pedro CL.DAT.2SG CL.ACC.3SG sends
"Pedro sends it to you"
- (2) * Pedro te me envía
Pedro CL.DAT.2SG CL.ACC.1SG sends
"Pedro sends me to you"

Bonet (1991) refers to this contrast as the I/II constraint or the *me-lui* constraint. Around the same time as Bonet wrote her dissertation, though, other people started referring to this phenomenon as the Person/Case Constraint (PCC). The latter is the name that stuck, and we'll use it.

- (3) *The Person/Case Constraint*
If there is a dative, then the accusative needs to be 3rd person.

More data to exemplify the PCC:

- (4) * Pedro le te envía
Pedro CL.DAT.3SG CL.ACC.2SG sends
"Pedro sends you to him"
- (5) * Pedro le me envía
Pedro CL.DAT.3SG CL.ACC.1SG sends
"Pedro sends me to him"
- (6) Pedro me lo envía
Pedro CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.3SG sends
"Pedro sends me to him"

Importantly, 1st and 2nd person accusative clitics are grammatical if no dative is present.

- (7) Pedro me envía a tu casa
Pedro CL.ACC.2SG sends to your house
"Pedro sends me to your house"

2 Constructions in which the PCC holds

Bonet's original characterization is that the PCC restricts nearly all constructions with both a dative and an accusative clitic (or weak pronoun).

2.1 Ditransitive verbs

These are already exemplified in section 1 above.

2.2 Causative constructions

(8) * Me te va a hacer insultar
CL.ACC.1SG CL.DAT.2SG goes to make insult
"He is going to make you insult me"

(9) Me lo va a hacer insultar
CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.3SG goes to make insult
"He is going to make me insult him"

2.3 Inalienable possession

"Inalienable possession" means that the possessed thing is an inherent part of the possessor. For instance, "my hand" is inalienable possession, but "my house" is not.

(10) * Me te van a poner en mis brazos
CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.2SG go to put in my arms
"They are going to put you in my arms"

(11) Me lo van a poner en mis brazos
CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.3SG go to put in my arms
"They are going to put you in my arms"

It is unclear that this should be treated as a separate case, though, as Bonet's examples look like double object constructions that simply happen to exemplify inalienable possession. Note how the same contrast obtains with regular possession.

(12) * Me te van a traer a mi casa
CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.2SG go to bring to my house
"They are going to bring you to my house"

(13) Me lo van a traer a mi casa
CL.DAT.1SG CL.ACC.3SG go to bring to my house
"They are going to bring you to my house"

3 Constructions in which the PCC does not hold

3.1 "Ethical" datives

"Ethical" datives (or "datives of interest") are a somewhat fuzzy category, where the dative does not constitute an argument of the verb. Ethical datives appear mostly in colloquial speech, and

they are “understood as indicating the interest or involvement of the speaker in the action” (Strozer 1976).

(14) El niño ya me camina
the boy already CL.DAT.1SG walks
“The boy is already walking, and I’m affected by that”

(15) Me le arruinaron la vida a mi hijo
CL.DAT.1SG CL.DAT.3SG ruined the life to my son
“They ruined my son’s life, and I’m affected by that”

(16) *The Person/Case Constraint (2nd trial)*
If there is a dative (except for ethical datives), then the accusative needs to be 3rd person.

Ideally, we should be able to derive the ethical datives exception, rather than having to stipulate it.

4 A weaker formulation?

Bonet (1991) argues that, on top of the strong formulation of the PCC given above, it is also necessary to provide a weaker one, which is operative only for some speakers.

(17) *A weaker formulation of the PCC*
In a combination of a direct object and an indirect object, if there is a third person, it has to be the direct object (but if there is no third person, then all combinations are allowed).

The weaker version is meant to account for the fact that some speakers seem to allow (), in apparent violation of the strong formulation.

- (18) a. * Te le han recomendado para el puesto
CL.ACC.2SG CL.DAT.3SG have recommended for the job
“They recommend you to him for the job”
b. ?? Te me han recomendado para el puesto
CL.ACC.2SG CL.DAT.3SG have recommended for the job
“They recommend you to me for the job”

Nonetheless, Ormazábal and Romero (2007) argue that this is simply an artifact of the data, and that it should not be taken into account. To begin with, it is difficult to find languages beyond Spanish and Catalan where such data hold. Second, even speakers who accept them find a medium deviance. Third, the choice of verb matters, since even near-synonymous ones show big differences in grammaticality.

- (19) a. ?? Te me han **enviado** para que aprendas un oficio
CL.ACC.2SG CL.DAT.1SG have sent for that learn.2SG a profession
“They have sent you to me so that you can learn a profession”
b. * Te me han **mandado** para que aprendas un oficio
CL.ACC.2SG CL.DAT.1SG have sent for that learn.2SG a profession
“They have sent you to me so that you can learn a profession”

In conclusion, it doesn’t look like we need two different versions of the PCC, contrary to what Bonet argued.

5 The PCC and animacy

Ormazábal and Romero (2007) observe that there exist two dialects of Spanish with respect to the clitic system. This is the clitic system of Standard Spanish.

	MASCULINE	FEMININE
ACCUSATIVE	lo	la
DATIVE	le	

Table 1: clitic system in Standard Spanish

And this is the clitic system of the *leísta* dialect. Its peculiarity is that the form of the accusative clitics is sensitive to animacy.

		MASCULINE	FEMININE
ACCUSATIVE	ANIMATE	le	la/le
	INANIMATE	lo	la
DATIVE		le	

Table 2: clitic system in *leísta* dialects

The interesting part is that, in *leísta* dialects, 3rd person accusative clitics trigger PCC effects, but only if they are animate.

(20) PCC effects in *leísta* dialects

- a. Te lo dí
 CL.DAT.2SG CL.ACC.INAN.3SG gave
 "I gave it to you"
- b. * Te le presenté
 CL.DAT.2SG CL.ACC.ANIM.3SG introduced
 "I introduced him to you"

Compare to standard Spanish, where accusative clitics don't have an animacy restriction, and no PCC effects arise.

(21) PCC effects in standard Spanish

- a. Te lo dí
 CL.DAT.2SG CL.ACC.3SG gave
 "I gave it to you"
- b. Te lo presenté
 CL.DAT.2SG CL.ACC.3SG introduced
 "I introduced him to you"

Ormazábal and Romero's proposal is that the PCC is not really about case or person, but actually about agreement. First they make the following assumption (note that they don't motivate this assumption: it is something that we need to take on faith).

(22) Agreement with objects

Animacy is important for object agreement, but not for subject agreement.

Next, they propose the following, which in this case is motivated by the data.

(23) *Animacy in Spanish object clitics*

In standard Spanish, accusative object clitics (*lo/la*) are unmarked for animacy. In *léista* dialects, *lo/la* are unmarked for animacy, whereas *le* is marked as animate.

This much allows them to reformulate the PCC as the Object Agreement Constraint.

(24) *The Object Agreement Constraint (OAC)*

If the verbal complex encodes object agreement, then no other internal argument can be licensed through verbal agreement.

Why is this important? To begin with, it explains why only a subset of clitics in *léista* dialects gives rise to PCC effects. Second, it also explains why ethical datives don't count towards PCC effects: ethical datives are not part of the argument structure of the verb and they do not enter into an agreement relation with the verb. As a consequence, no problem arises wrt the Object Agreement Constraint.

6 Reading

An interesting discussion of these issues can be found in a series of papers by Ormazábal and Romero, but the most important one is the following.

- Ormazábal, Javier, and Juan Romero. 2007. The Object Agreement Constraint. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 25:315-347.

Although this article is very well written, the subject matter is complicated. If you try to read it, don't expect to understand everything immediately.

Reading for next week Franco, Jon. 2000. Agreement as a continuum: the case of Spanish pronominal clitics. In *Clitic phenomena in European languages*, ed. Beukema and den Dikken. Amsterdam:John Benjamins. 147-190.

The important part of this article is section 3 (pages 160-182). Focus on that.