

**A tale of two datives**  
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**1. Objective**

- Macrovariation vs. microvariation; on the inadequacy of macro-parameters to account for syntactic variation (Roberge 1989)
- We argue that micro-parameters can serve to describe variation between closely related or equivalent syntactic constructions in different grammars that are not otherwise related (Kayne 2000)
- Dative arguments in Russian and Spanish with contrastive interpretation
- L2 acquisition study
- We show that a featural approach to micro-parametric variation can provide insights into the nature of the observed variation.

**2. The issue**

- Semantic contrast between syntactically almost identical constructions
- Russian impersonal constructions with dative experiencers (1a-2a) vs. Spanish dative benefactives (1b-2b) – also known as Datives of Interest/Ethical Datives (Spanish examples are from Rivero (2002/3)).

(1) a. Vchera mne xorosho rabotalo-s'. **Russian (R)**  
 Yesterday I.Dat well work-**Refl.Past**  
 'For some reason, yesterday I {worked / felt like working} well.'

Context: As it was raining yesterday, I wasn't tempted to spend the day outside and instead I worked on my presentation. I am not sure why, but I was so inspired to work and I worked well. (Maybe because rain stimulated the working mood, or because I had a predisposition to work, or else.)

b. A Juan se le trabaja mucho aqui. **Spanish (S)**  
 John.Dat **Refl** he.Dat works a lot here  
 'One / people work a lot on John's behalf.'  
 NOT → 'John feels like working a lot.'  
 NOT → 'John works a lot.'

(2) a. Ran'she, mne eti knigi chitali-s' s udovol'stviev. **R**  
 Before I.Dat these books.Nom read-**Refl.P1** with pleasure  
 'Before, *somehow*, I was reading these books with pleasure.'

b. Antes se me leía estos libros con placer. **S**  
 Before **Refl** me.Dat read.3S these books.Nom with pleasure  
 'Before {one/people} read these books to me with pleasure.'

Contrastive properties:

- 1) Russian: impersonal structure with the reflexive suffix *-sja*, dative Experiencer, non-agreeing verb.
- 2) Spanish: impersonal structure with the reflexive *se*, dative Benefactive obligatorily doubled with the dative clitic *le*, non-agreeing verb.
- 3) Interpretation: Russian sentences convey a mental/psychological state imparted by the verb and are thus contextualized with "[an]y adverb... as long as it lends itself to an interpretation in terms of 'well' or badly'." (Wierbicka 1986: 418).

**2.1. Research Questions:**

- 1) How are these constructions to be analyzed to yield the interpretative differences?
- 2) What does the difference between (1a) and (1b) boil down to?
- 3) Can observations from L2 studies support the characterization of the differences between Russian and Spanish constructions in (1)?

**3. The data**

- Focus only on *dative* experiencer and benefactive arguments in R and S.

**3.1. Dative experiencer arguments in Russian**

**3.1.1. Dative experiencers with *psych/perception* verbs**

- In Russian, Dative arguments standardly occur with *psych/perception* verbs:

(3) a. Vsya sorazmernaya, gordaya, strojnaya, mne eta zhenschina chasto  
 all.F harmonious.F proud.F slender.F I.Dat this woman.Nom often  
 mechtaet-sja. **R**  
 dream-**Refl.3sg**  
 'Somehow, I often dream of this harmonious, proud, and slender woman.'  
 (N.A.Nekrasov, quoted in Janko-Troickaja 1962)

b. Mne slishali-s' shagi na krishe. **R**  
 I.Dat heard-**Refl.Pst.3pl** steps.Nom on roof  
 'Somehow, I could hear steps on the roof.'

### 3.1.2. Dative experiencers with activity verbs

- Dative with psych verbs is an argument-like element in virtue of the conceptual requirements of these verbs. However, dative arguments also occur with non-psych verbs in Russian, in particular with activity verbs as in (4):

(4) a. Aleksandru i Aleksandre tancevalo-s' v Gelendzjike. **R**  
 Alexander.Dat.M and Alexander.Dat.F danced-**Refl.**Neu in Gelendzhik  
 'For some reason, Alexander and Alexandra {danced / felt like dancing} in Gelendzhik.'  
 ([http://www.astrakhanfm.ru/sport/sport\\_41672.html](http://www.astrakhanfm.ru/sport/sport_41672.html))

b. Kak veselo emu bezhalo-s' togda vozle materinskogo xvosta  
 So merrily he.Dat was running-**Refl.**Neut then near mother's tail  
 pod yarkimi osennimi zvezdami! **R**  
 under brightly fall stars  
 'How merrily was he running next to his mother's tail under the bright starts of autumn!'  
 ([topos.ru/article/6165](http://topos.ru/article/6165))

### 3.2. Spanish dative benefactive (/malefactive) arguments<sup>1</sup>

(5b=1b)

(5) a. Juanita ya le camina. **S**  
 JuanitaNom already Cl.Dat walks  
 'Juanita already walks on him/her.'  
 (Cuervo 2003)

b. A Juan se le trabaja mucho aqui. **S**  
 John.Dat Refl he.Dat works a lot here  
 'One / people work a lot here on John's behalf.'  
 (Rivero 2003)

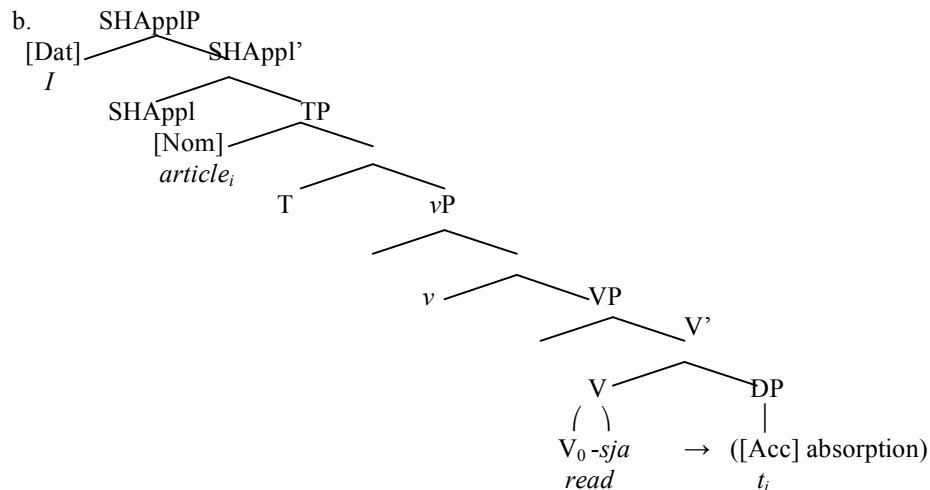
### 3.3. Analyses

#### 3.3.1. Dative experiencers in Russian (Savchenko in prep)

- Dative is licensed by a super high applicative head (cf. Buell 2005; Rivero 2004/9; Sedighi 2005/9)
- Reflexive *-sja* has properties of i) arity reduction (i.e., bars external arguments) and ii) accusative absorption thus leaving no room for the dative experiencer to merge structure-internally (i.e., the structure is impersonal)
- SHAppIP takes TP as a complement (there is no well-formed nominalization corresponding to the impersonal construction (cf. Rivero 2009), and nominalizations lack (syntactic) TPs (Wiltschko 2003))
- Dat Exp is a logical subject of the impersonal construal in Russian; it is an overtly expressed EPP feature of the predication (cf. Cardinaletti 2002)

<sup>1</sup> Spanish, unlike Russian, does not have dative experiencer constructions with the reflexive *se*.

(6) a. Mne stat'ya prochitala-s' s udovol'stvиеm.  
 I.Dat article.Nom read-**Refl.**Pf.Past with pleasure  
 'For some reason, I read an/the article with please.'

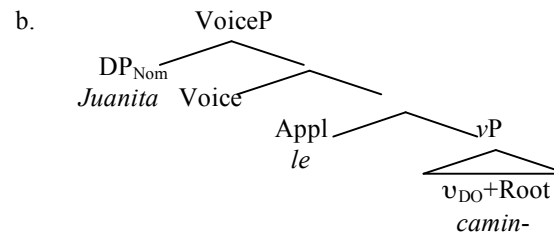


### 3.3.2. Dative benefactives in Spanish

#### 3.3.2.1. Cuervo's (2003) analysis of clitic benefactives:

- Dative clitic *le* is a benefactive argument introduced by high ApplP
- AppIP is defective as it doesn't project a Spec position

(7) a. Juanita ya le camina.  
 Juanita already Cl.Dat walks  
 'Juanita already walks on him/her.'

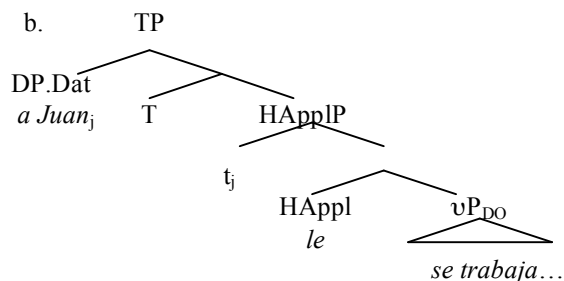


### 3.3.2.2. The new analysis of dative-doubled benefactives

However, there are full dative DPs in Spanish (8a) that receive benefactive interpretation

- The structure is impersonal as indicated by the merge of *se*, which generates as the head of the phrase that normally introduces Ext Arg
- Dat Ben DP is introduced by a (high) HApplP headed by *le*
- Dat Ben subsequently moves in Spec,TP to check its EPP (based on Cuervo 2003))

- (8) a. A Juan se le trabaja mucho aqui.  
John.Dat Refl he.Dat works a lot here  
'One / people work(s) a lot on John's behalf.'



(Note: *se* may move to T, but this is not a focal issue here)

#### Interim summary:

1. Despite structural similarity of the constructions with activity verbs, Russian datives are experiencers, whereas Spanish datives are benefactives.
2. Ben and Exp unselected arguments have different properties so should be introduced by different functional heads (cf. Bosse & Bruening 2011)
3. Russian experiencers are licensed by SHAppl head, whereas Spanish ones merge in the Spec, HAppl phrase.

#### 4. A parametric approach?

- Binary parameter approach
- Example: Null subject language. Pro-drop parameter. A grammar is either [+pro-drop] or [-pro-drop] with a default initial UG setting.
- In our case: [+SHAppl experiencer] or [-SHAppl experiencer]. What does this mean given the data above?
- Problems:
  1. Universal inventory of functional categories

2. Purely descriptive. Useful as a characterization of the difference, but does not account for it.

#### 5. The featural approach

Proposal: we build on variation in feature selection and specification in functional categories (Adger 2006/7, Adger & Smith 2010, Lardiere 2008/9)

i) *Featural combinatorics* (based on Adger's (2006) 'combinatorial variability' and Adger (2007), who, in turn, builds on Chomsky (2001, 2004)):

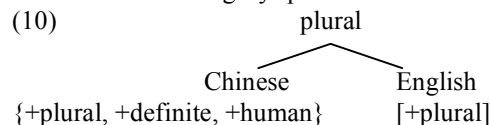
- Features are building blocks of F(unctional) C(ategories) and L(exical) I(tems)
  - LIs and FCs, then, are a set of Fs
  - Features are pairs made up of atomic symbols of attributes (T, past, nominative, etc.) and values (+/-) (e.g. in (9) is from Adger 2007):
- (9) a. {T:+, past:+, nominative:+, singular:+} (is an instance of T)  
b. {D:+, definite:+, nominative:-, singular:-} (is an instance of D)
- Syntax is fed by LIs

ii) *Feature selection and assembly* (based on Lardiere's (2008) 'Feature assembly'):

- First language acquisition is a process of F selection + F assembly into LIs and FCs through primary linguistic data exposure
- In L2, feature selection and (re-)assembly of particular lexical items occurs by means of a 'contrastive analysis' with those of L1 grammar, where contrastive analysis presupposes inductive, and not deductive learning process.

Example of how featural approach handles variation:

- Chinese pluralizer *-men* 'more than one' (Lardiere 2009):
  - if *-men* is attached to a noun, it must be also interpreted as [+definite] and [+human]
  - In language like English nouns marked for plural can be either [+definite] or [-definite] (depending on whether the definite determiner is present or not)
  - The category 'plural' has different feature bundles in the two lgs:



- (Lardiere argues against Chierchia's (1998) *Nominal Mapping Parameter* that incorrectly predicts that languages with classifiers do not have either a count/mass distinction or plural marking.)
- Parametric approach makes a gross overgeneralization wrt to (10)

The advantage: there are identifiable levels to grammatical variation

1. First level is the universal set of features, from where the selection of formal (uninterpretable) and semantic (interpretable) features is happening
2. Features bundle
3. Features and feature-bundles are being mapped into a functional lexicon, or lexical items.

Each level presents a discrete level of grammar and as such each level may pose a problem for an L2 learner thus allowing to determine (or predict) the grammar level a learner may have difficulties with.

## 6. Testing the proposal

- L2 learning mechanism is based on the restructuring of un/interpretable features, which, generally speaking, proceeds from feature selection to feature assembly to mapping.
- For L2-ers it is more challenging to re-assemble pre-existing Fs and F bundles into acquirable L2 categories that have different F bundles than learning entirely new categories and their featural structure

(11) Learning task for Spanish acquirers of Russian within our featural theory:

- a. Spanish L1 representation: {HAppl+, ben+, dat+, control-} ← Initial stage
- b. Russian L1 representation: {SHAppl+, exp+, dat+, control-} ← Final stage  
(note: feature [+/-control] identifies volitional (agent/causer) vs. non-volitional (exp, ben, etc.) argument)

### 6.1. Experimental study (Savchenko in prep)

**RQ:** can Spanish learners of Russian successfully reconfigure features of SHAppl Exp given the contrast in (1a) and (1b) summarized in (11)?

**Prediction:** because target grammar involves restructuring pre-existing L1 feature bundles, less advanced learners will have difficulties distinguishing between Exp and Ben arguments.

### 6.2. Participants:

- Bilinguals (Russian language teachers, graduate and undergraduate students, all from Spain)
  - L2 Fluent n=15
  - L2 Advanced n=8
- Monolinguals n=13 (reside in Canada and Russian-speaking countries)

### 6.3. Method:

(Grammaticality Judgment Task: tests L2 knowledge of Russian morphosyntax)

Main test (32 story-sentences combinations (8 Ben, 8 Exp, 16 distractors)):

Semantic Preference Task tested the contextual sensitivity between dative experiencers (13A) and benefactives (13B). Participants are instructed to choose sentence that is most appropriate for the story (if they chose both as either appropriate (13C) or inappropriate (13D), they were further forced to judge A and B on a 5-point Likert scale)

(13) **Story:** Fodor owns a jewelry factory that produces expensive golden jewelry. Sometimes Fodor makes jewelry by himself because he is a very good jeweler. Fodor doesn't come often to the factory, but to make the factory run flawlessly and bring good profit, he hired a lot of experienced administrators.

- A. Fjodoru rabotaet-sja na fabrike. Experiencer \*  
Fodor-Dat working-Refl on factory  
'Fedor loves/feels like working at the factory.'
- B. Na Fjodora mnogo ljudej rabotaet na fabrike. Benefactor ✓  
P Fodor.Acc many people work-3sg on factory  
'Many people work for Fodor on the factory.'
- C. Both sentences A and B similarly well describe the story.  
Sentence A: 1 2 3 4 5  
Sentence B: 1 2 3 4 5
- D. Neither A nor B describe the story adequately.  
Sentence A: 1 2 3 4 5  
Sentence B: 1 2 3 4 5

**6.4. Results** (standard demographic information about participants and descriptive statistics are not shown here):

- The data was analyzed using logistic regression model (R) and coded accordingly

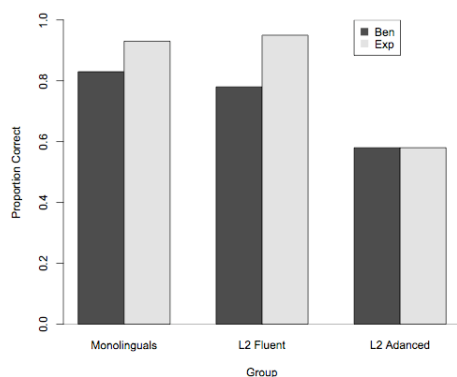
Table 1. Percentages of correct answers for Ben and Exp targets

Group	Ben 75% (n=217)	Exp 86% (n=248)
Monolingual (n=13)	83% (n=86)	93% (n=97)
L2 Fluent (n=15)	78% (n=94)	95% (n=114)
L2 Advanced (n=8)	58% (n=37)	58% (n=37)

Reading Table 1: the numbers refer to the total number of responses. There were 8 items (in each Ben and Exp condition) and 36 participants, which amounts to 288 (=100%) tokens in total per condition. The numbers at the top are the overall percentages of *correct responses* collapsed across groups.

The results in Table 1 are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Proportions (1.0=100%) of correct answers for Ben and Exp targets



## 6.5. Discussion

- **L2 Fluent** attained target grammar knowledge as they performed comparable to monolinguals, i.e. they restructured L1 F bundles and correctly mapped the new bundles into L2 LIs.
- **L2 Advanced** performed at chance. That is, they do not interpret Russian dative experiencers at the rate of monolingual and L2 Fluent groups, which suggests that they did not restructure their L1 set of features to match the L2 set. The prediction is borne out.

## 7. Conclusions

- Russian dative unselected experiencers are licensed by SHAppl phrase
- Their structural Spanish equivalents receive benefactor interpretation and are licensed by HAppl phrases as previously proposed
- Featural analysis is one way to make parameters more explicit and explanatory: its value is in a more fine-grained predictive power
- Micro variation is not only visible between dialects of a same language (Spanish defective vs. non-defective ApplP), but also between different languages, which reduces dialect variation to general variation, a desirable result.

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