Dative subjects in anticausative constructions
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As it has been argued the type of argument structure variation that allows additional noncore arguments is a pervasive property of human language and most languages have verbs that exhibit this behavior (see e.g. Pylkkänen 2008). In this paper we argue that Spanish has constructions with dative subjects in anticausative contexts, similar to those found in languages like Polish, Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, etc., as discussed by Rivero (2001, 2004, 2009). We analyse the non-selected dative as a ‘quirky’ subject – a non-nominative subject in subject position, as that found in languages like Icelandic and Croatian.

Our hypothesis is that anticausative constructions with dative subjects such as (1) are the result of adding a dative subject A Juan to a typically unaccusative structure like that in (2). This added argument is usually interpreted as an accidental causer.

We follow Levin & Rappaport Hovav’s analysis of unaccusative constructions in that sentences like (2) are derived from transitive structures expressing externally caused change of state events (3). Mendikoetxea (2000) claims that these structures are very similar to true reflexives, but express stative causation: the cause is interpreted as a property of the internal argument, which is understood as both (stative) cause and theme. Syntactically, these structures contain an empty pronominal subject in the specifier of the vP, so they are basically dyadic. The clitic se is analysed as 0-person clitic, along with other person clitics in Romance, like those in reflexive structures, and heads a functional projection immediately above T(ense) (see Mendikoetxea 2008).

As for (1), Fernández Soriano (1999a) has argued that the dative element A Juan has properties typical of an external argument, though not interpreted as an agent, so that (1) and (3) are, in fact, comparable. We offer an analysis of these constructions within the context of Chomsky’s Minimalist Program in which the two structures differ crucially in the checking/agreement operations established between functional heads and the nominal arguments. In (3) an agreement relation is established between Juan and the functional head involved in checking nominative and subject agreement features (T(ense)). In (1), however, that head enters checking operations with both the dative element and the internal argument in the VP, which never externalizes, and it is only in that sense that it can be claimed that both elements have subject-like properties. Thus the internal argument can be realized as a bare plural (4a), as opposed to the theme argument of typical change of state constructions, which must externalize and cannot be a bare noun (4b). Verbal agreement is the result of the (long distance) agreement relation established between T/V and the internal argument. The syntactic properties of these constructions are the result of the complex agreement operations between the nominal arguments - the dative subject, the internal argument and the empty pronominal in Spec,v - and the functional heads T, se and v, as well as the features of V.

The behaviour of the structure is thus similar to other (unaccusative) constructions that have been claimed to have quirky (locative or dative) subjects in languages like Georgian, Icelandic and many others (see Sigurdsson 1996, Pylkkänen 2008, McGinnis 1998, 2000, among others). The paper discusses also some of the similarities and
differences found between the Spanish construction and parallel constructions in Slavic, as discussed by Rivero (2003, 2004)

**Examples:**

(1) **A Juan se le ha roto el vaso**  
To Juan-DAT se CL-dat.sg has-3sg broken the glass  
(lit: ‘To Juan the glass has broken = ‘Juan has (unintentionally) broken the glass.’)

(2) **Se ha roto el vaso**  
se has-3sg broken the glass  
‘The glass has broken.’

(3) **Juan ha roto el vaso**  
Juan has-3sg broken the glass.  
‘Juan has broken the glass.’

(4) a. **A Juan se le rompen vasos continuamente,**  
To Juan se CL-dat.sg break-3pl glasses continuously  
‘Juan is always breaking glasses (unintentionally).’

b. *Se rompen vasos*  
se break-3pl glasses

**References:**


RIVERO, M. L (2009) Intensionality, high applicatives, and aspect: involuntary state constructions in Bulgarian and Slovenian, NLLT 27: 151–196