IN FAVOR OF AN AGREE-BASED DOM DATIVE IN BASQUE (AND BEYOND)

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I. Certain southwestern Basque dialects display Differential Object Marking (DOM): instead of the canonical absolutive (ABS) (1), human and specific direct objects (DO) bear dative (DAT) case and trigger DAT agreement (2), as indirect objects (IO) do (3) [1]. In this paper, I argue against the claim that Basque DAT arguments are all inherently assigned, leading thereby to a clitic-doubling approach for the DAT marker in the auxiliary verb [2] [3]. Instead, I argue that the DAT arguments in (2) and (3) differ in terms of how DAT is assigned to them, and propose that, in contrast to IOs –whose DAT Case seems to be inherent, DAT Case in DOM is structurally checked via an Agree relation against a functional head constituting the agreement complex.

II. Three observations support the differentiated nature of DAT Case in DOM and IO. (i) In Double Object Constructions, where DOM occurs together with an IO, it is impossible for both DAT arguments to trigger agreement in the same verbal auxiliary (4a). When the DOM is 3rd person, it tends to be marked ABS as canonical DOs –maybe due to the optional nature of DOM with 3rd person objects, in contrast to the obligatory nature with 1st/2nd person objects. When it is 1st/2nd person, certain DOM speakers make use of Double Dative Constructions (DDC) (4b); constructions with two DAT arguments but a sole DAT agreement marker always agreeing with the DOM –where the DOM precedes the IO, breaking up with the canonical word order and indicating an object-shift-like movement, common to DOM crosslinguistically [4] [5]. Crucially, Basque is not an exception in this respect, and other DOM languages like Amharic (5) [6] or the leísta Spanish spoken in the Basque Country (6) [7] show the same behavior. It thus seems that contrary to what happens with IOs, the need to trigger agreement links DOM’s DAT with structural Case assignment. (ii) Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) constructions point to the same direction; DOM is available in transitive predication structures that are analyzed as ECM (7) [8]. Although the small clause subject of these constructions bears no selectional relationship with the main verb, the verb checks its DAT Case, corroborating that Case in DOM must be checked on a probe-goal basis. (iii) Moreover, a number of Basque dialects showing DOM are influenced by the T(ense) and Fin(i teness) heads of the auxiliary verb, a pattern which supports the structural nature of DAT Case in DOM. In these dialects, DOM is only –or at least, more frequently– attested in past tense constructions, as well as preferably used in finite rather than non-finite contexts. Differing once again from DOM, IOs are invariant under changes in functional structure; they make no difference between past vs. present and finite vs. non-finite contexts, and dative Case is always licit in all these configurations.

III. Causative ditransitive constructions (8) independently support the idea that DAT arguments may but not need to be always theta-related. (i) As the DOM of DDCs used to obviate ungrammatical DOCs (4b), the causee DAT of ditransitive causative DDCs always triggers agreement in the auxiliary verb –although when being 3rd person, it is quite deviant for some speakers, perhaps due to the Person Licensing Condition (PLC) [9]. (ii) The ungrammaticality of constructions containing both a DOM object and a causee DAT (9a) corroborates the claim that, at least for these arguments, case and agreement go hand by hand –none of these arguments can appear without agreement–, and that hence, DAT Case must be checked on a probe-goal basis. This is not the case of inherent DAT IOs: these arguments can occur either with a DOM object (4b) or with a causee DAT (9b) dropping their agreement marker –a strategy not available for DOM and causee DATs. (iii) Pro-drop provides additional evidence in favor of Agree-based DOM and causee DATs. Assuming that only those objects with structural Case can be elided [10], the fact that in DDCs only DOM and causese DATs can be dropped reinforces the claim that Case is structural for them, and inherent for IOs (10). This pattern indicates once again that the same morphological case does not imply the same abstract Case assignment and yields a challenge to proposals arguing that DAT marked DOM and goal IOs show the same syntax [11].
IV. Examples

(1) Ni-k zu-ø ikusi z-a-it-u-t
I_E you_A see 2_A-ep-plA-root-1sgE
'I have seen you.'

(2) Ni-k zu-ri ikusi d-i-zu-t
I_E you_D see expl-(root)-DF-2D-1sgE
'I have seen you.'

(3) Ni-k zu-ri liburu-o eman d-i-zu-t
I_E you_D book_A give expl(3A)-(root)-DF-2D-1sgE
'I have given you the book.'

(4) a.*Traido-ri ek zu-ri etsaia-ri saldu d-i-zu-o-te
traitors-e you-D enemy-D sell expl-(root)-DF-2D-3sgO-3plE
'The traitors have sold you to the enemy.'

b. Traido-ri ek zu-ri etsaia-ri saldu d-i-zu-te/*d-i-o-te
traitors-e you_D enemy-D sell expl-(root)-DF-2D-3plE/*expl-(root)-DF-3D-3plE
'The traitors have sold you to the enemy.'

(5) Almaz set-wa-ni d3-wa-n Girma säi-te-t/*säi-te-t* f'tf* ʃ-1w
Almaz fem-F DEF child-her-ACC Girma give-PR-3FS-3FS/*give-PR-3FS-3MS,0
'Almaz gave her daughter to Girma.'

(6) Les/*le enviaron a los enfermos a la doctora
3pl/*3sg sent.they P the sick people P the doctor
'They sent the sick people to the doctor.'

(7) a. Beti edukiko d-i-a-zu ne-ri albuian always have expl-(root)-DF-2D-1sgO-2E I_D beside
'I will always be beside you.'

b. *Eliza-k aberatsei gu-ri dirua-o eman-arazten d-i-e
church-the rich-D we-D money_A give-CUS DITR(3sgE-3plD)
'Church makes us give money to poor people.'

(8) a. Eliza-k gu-ri pobre-ei dirua-o eman-arazten d-i-gu
church-E we_E the poor-D money_A give-CUS DITR(3sgE-1plH)
'Church makes us give money to poor people.'

b. *Eliza-k gu-ri pobre-ei dirua-o eman-arazten d-i-gu
church-E we_E the poor-D money_A give-CUS DITR(3sgE-1sgD)
'Church makes us give money to poor people.'

(9) a. *Ama-k ni-ri zu-ri etxe-ra ekar-arazi d-i-t
mum-E I_D you_D house-ALL bring-CUS DITR(3sgE-1sgD)
'Mum has made me bring you home.'

b. Ama-k ni-ri zu-ri liburu-eman-arazi d-i-t
mum-E I_D you_D book_A give-CUS DITR(3sgE-1sgD)
'Mum has made me give you the book.'

(10) a. Traidori-ek (zu-ri) *(etsaia-ri) saldu d-i-zu-te
traitors-e you_D enemy-D sell DITR(3plE-2sgD)
'The traitors have sold you to the enemy.'

b. Eliza-k (gu-ri) *(pobre-ei) dirua-o eman-arazten d-i-gu
church-E (we-E) the poor-D money_A give-CUS DITR(3sgE-1plD)
'Church makes us give money to poor people.'