To in two places and the dative alternation

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1 The Problem

- Sentences such as those in (1) are syntactically different, but semantically similar:

  (1) a. John sent a letter to Mary. (PP Goal)
      b. John sent Mary a letter. (DP Goal)

- But no syntactic alternation?
  - Larson (1988), Baker (1988), and Dikken (1995), among others, have argued for a syntactic derivational relation between such sentences
  - But, for a variety of reasons, most recent literature has argued to the contrary for an “alternative projection” approach, which derives each variant entirely independently (Pesetsky 1995, Harley 2002, Beck and Johnson 2004)
  - This leaves us without a good explanation for the systematic nature of the alternation.

- While those supporting an alternative projection approach set aside the importance these similarities due to a perceived lack of systematic correspondence, I will show that, once we place aside irrelevant data, the alternation is systematic

- I will focus on alternations with to-PPs, but a similar analysis should cover the for-PP alternation as well
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2 Two places for to (and only one relevant one)

2.1 Why do only a subset of to-PPs alternate?

• There is a well-documented possessor, or animacy, constraint on English
  DP Goals, as described in Pinker (1989), Harley (2002), Pylkkänen (2002)\(^1\)

• Such a constraint is meant to account for the ungrammaticality of examples
  such as (2):

  (2) * John sent London a letter.

• However, I will argue that what this constraint on DP Goals corresponds
  to the same constraint on objects of the preposition to when it appears in a
  particular structural position

• I will informally refer to these selected objects as ‘Animate Recipients’

• While to can take a variety of object types, we see that only Animate Recip-
  ient objects of to will alternate with the DOC

• I will show that such PPs form a natural class, beyond their alternation with
  DPs

2.2 Structural Differences in to-PPs

• Although Animate Recipient and Directional PPs look similar in English,
  they are structurally different, which we can diagnose by their wh behavior and ability to co-occur with British do-ellipsis

• British do-ellipsis is as illustrated in (3)

  (3) John didn’t sent the letter to London, but he will do to Sydney.

  where the do stands in for an elided constituent, here ‘sent the letter’. \(^2\)

\(^1\)Green (1974) proposed that the possession constraint was due to the presence of HAVE in the
DOC. This has been taken up by Dikken (1995) and Harley (2002), in very different approaches.
However, as noted in Pylkkänen (2002), such an analysis does not produce the expected semantic
results. For one, an Animate Recipient need not end up possessing the Theme, but is only an
intended recipient.

\(^2\)The precise analysis of British do-ellipsis is not important here, I simply use it as a diagnostic
of some structural difference between PP types, as illustrated below.
(4) a. John sent the letter to Mary.
   b. Who did John send the letter to?
   c. ?* John didn’t send the letter to Mary, but he will do to Jane.
   d. John sent Mary the letter.

(5) a. John sent the letter to London.
   b. Where did John send the letter?
   c. John didn’t send the letter to London, but he will do to Sydney.
   d. * John sent London the letter.

(6) a. John gave ten dollars to Jane.
   b. Who did John give ten dollars to?
   c. * John didn’t give ten dollars to Mary, but he will do to Jane.
   d. John gave Mary ten dollars.

(7) a. John donated ten dollars to Kerry.
   b. Where did John donate ten dollars? / Who did John donate ten dollars to?\(^3\)
   c. John didn’t donate ten dollars to Dean, but he will do to Kerry.
   d. * John donated Kerry ten dollars. (But see section 3)

- (4) and (5) vary with the ‘Goal’ type \(^4\) (Mary / London)
- (6) and (7) vary with the verb (gave / donated)
- These distinctions are due to the presence of two distinct positions for to-PPs, which I will call to(f), for ‘functional’ to, and to(dir), for ‘directional’ to.
- Only objects of to(f) share the same ‘theta role’ as that required for the DOC, so only these should be expected to appear in the same part of the thematic hierarchy, and thus alternate (see section 5)
- A summary of the properties of to(f) and to(dir) is given in 8:

\(^3\)to(dir) can also be realized as to-what or to-who, as seen here, but if where is possible, this is a definite diagnostic for to(dir)
\(^4\)‘Goal’ to be construed in a very informal fashion
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PP</th>
<th>object-type</th>
<th>wh</th>
<th>OK w/British do-ellipsis</th>
<th>Alternates with DOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to(dir)</td>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>where</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to(f)</td>
<td>Recipient</td>
<td>to-who</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- suggests that the DOC alternation is not dependent on the verb, but rather on the type of relation between the arguments

3 Morpho-phonological Constraints?

- The non-alternation of some verbs (such as donate) has been attributed to their morpho-phonological properties, or their being a part of the Latinate (vs. Germanic) lexicon (Storm 1977, Pinker 1989, Harley 2002)
- Indeed, seems very non-syntactic... HOWEVER –
- donate in the DOC is not ungrammatical for all speakers
- Keeping the facts from the previous section in mind, we will see that this seems to be due to speaker variation in allowing a to(f) type interpretation for donate, and not on a morpho-phonological constraint
- For these speakers, donate is like send (optionally taking a to(f) or to(dir) complement)
- When there is an Animate Recipient object, then the DP Goal is acceptable
- Some speakers find DP Goals with donate more acceptable in the context of organ donation, so that (9) is better than (10)

(for some speakers)

(9) John donated Mary a kidney. (cf. John donated a kidney to(f) Mary.)
(10) * John donated the ASPCA money. (cf. John donated money to(dir) the ASPCA.)

This is consistent with the wh behavior: (11)

(11) * Where did John donate a kidney? (with the answer (9))

and judgments of British English speakers who accept (9), and also find (12) degraded (since they would have to(f)):

(12) ?* John didn’t donate a kidney to Mary, but he will do to Jane.
4 First Conclusions

- No need to resort to Latinate/Germanic lexicon distinction or the stress patterns of verbs
- DOC compatibility is not a property of verbs, but depends on the relations between the arguments
- If we ignore the irrelevant (e.g., Directional) cases, then we see no thematic differences between the DP and PP Goals

5 In the spirit of a thematic hierarchy...

- A thematic hierarchy has been posited to explain recurrent patterns in argument structure (Baker 1988, Damonte 2004)
- I adopt a loose interpretation of theta roles and UTAH, in the sense that thematic arguments should be consistently ordered with respect to each other, though not necessarily always in the same positions
- The Animate Recipient Goals under discussion should both be generated either above or below the Theme. I will advocate the hierarchy Goal > Theme
- The difference between the structures reduces to:
  - DP Goals are introduced by null applicative heads (see below)
  - PP Goals merge with VP
- Applicative heads are primarily associated with affixes found on English DOC-like structures in Bantu, where an additional affix is found on the verb (vs. sentences with only one DP object)
- This is illustrated in the Chichewa example below, with the *ir* applicative morpheme: (Baker (1988) example 121)

(13) a. Ngombe zi-na-tumiz-a mitolo ya udzu *kwa mbuzi*. cows SP-PST-send-ASP bundles of grass to goats
    The cows sent bundles of grass to the goats.

b. Ngombe zi-na-tumiz-*ir*-a mbuzi mitolo ya udzu.
cows SP-PST-send-APPL-ASP goats bundles of grass
    The cows sent the goats bundles of grass.
A sketch of the structures for English, with APPL as the null applicative head:\n\begin{itemize}
\item \begin{equation}
\text{(14)}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{DP Recipient:} \\
\text{YP} \\
\text{Mary YP} \\
\text{APPL} \\
\text{sent a letter}
\end{array}
\end{equation}
\end{itemize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \begin{equation}
\text{(15)}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{PP Recipient:} \\
\text{YP} \\
\text{to Mary} \\
\text{sent a letter}
\end{array}
\end{equation}
\end{itemize}

On this account, semantic differences which do remain between alternating forms are due to the differing properties of the applicative head which introduces a DP as in (14) and a PP (15).

6 The Syntactic Alternation

There is a position FP which serves some kind of discourse-related function for DPs, a type of ‘scrambling’

The structures are illustrated below, with the addition of a particle in ‘PartP’ to illustrate that a particle generated in this position would derive the correct word order, at least for the cases currently under consideration

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5I abstract away from what may or may not be in Spec,VP
(16) a. **PP Recipient:**
John sent a letter off to Mary.

```
FP
   \   / \
 a letter, PartP
    \  /
     off  YP
      \ /
       to Mary VP
```

b. **PP Recipient with Heavy Theme:**
John sent off to Mary a really long letter about Alaska.

```
PartP
   \   / \
 off  YP
    \  /
     to Mary VP
```

t\_t\_ t\_V

```
a really long letter about...```

c. **PP Recipient with Weak Pronoun Theme:**
John sent it off to Mary.

```
FP
   \   / \
 it  PartP
    \  /
     off  YP
      \ /
       to Mary VP
```

t\_t\_ t\_V
(17)  

a. **DP Recipient**: John sent Mary off a letter.

b. **DP Recipient with Heavy Theme**:  
   John sent Mary off a really long letter about her trip to Alaska.

c. **DP Recipient with Weak Pronoun Theme**: * John sent Mary off it.
• Not motivated by Case, because we find that the movement is not wholly obligatory –
  – heavy DPs often remain low, not moving to FP (‘Heavy NP shift’) (16b)
  – weak pronouns obligatorily move to FP (16c), (17c)

• Object shift was also proposed for English in Johnson (1991), but in that analysis the movement was for Case reasons

• The current analysis shares more in common with proposal for English object shift as scrambling in Takano (1998), though I am claiming that the closest DP moves to FP, not just a Theme DP

• Movement of the closest DP, including the Goal DP, allows us to also provide an account for the ungrammaticality of weak pronoun Themes in the DOC, as the result of a Relativized-Minimality-type effect

7 Conclusion

• The to-PPs which alternate with DP Goals form a class syntactically, not just semantically

• This provides further evidence in support of a syntactic alternation

• A syntactic alternation analysis which gives all Animate Recipient Goal arguments the same position in the thematic hierarchy is tenable, and plausibly extendable to other DP-PP alternations

• Such an analysis with “object shift” to FP seems compatible with argument weight phenomena found in these constructions
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References


