

On the Dual Nature of Applicatives

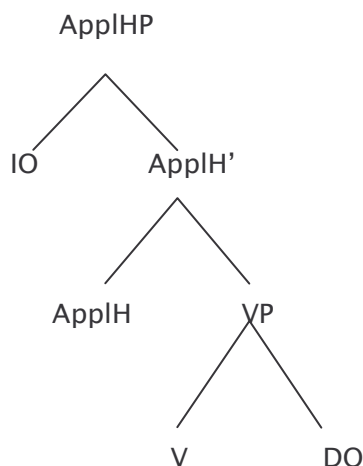
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Following a large part of recent research on the assignment of arguments in predicates, for every argument assigned there needs to be one functional head which licenses it (Chomsky 2001; Borer 1994, 1998, in press). This paper is concerned with argument licensing within the domain of what is generally referred to as the ‘double object construction’ (1), with the emphasis on indirect objects (IO).

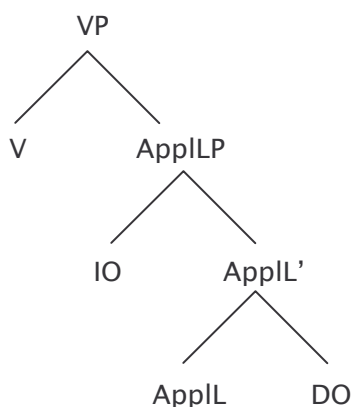
(1) John baked Mary (IO) a cake (DO).

In recent analyses (McGinnis 2001, Pylkkänen 2001, 2002, Cuervo 2003) it is assumed that the IO of a double object construction is merged in specifier position of an applicative head (Spec, ApplP). Following Pylkkänen (2001, 2002), there are two possible ways for the applicative head to be realized: as *high* or *low* applicative. The high applicative merges with a verbal projection, whereas the low applicative merges with a DP, as in (2a) and (2b) respectively.

(2) a.



b.



The differences between the two representations are also reflected in interpretation. With low applicatives, a possessor relation is always entailed between the IO and the DO. The high applicative, on the other hand, relates the IO to the event specified by the internal VP. Languages can be divided with respect to whether they license a *high* applicative or a *low* applicative. Languages like Kichaga and Albanian allow the former, while English and Icelandic allow the latter.

Things get more interesting when we turn to a language like Polish, where the two types of applicative heads seem to co-exist.

(3) a. Marysia upiekła Tomkowi ciasto. (low applicative)

Mary baked Tom-DAT a cake-ACC

b. Zosia napisała Tomkowi pracę magisterską. (high applicative)

Zosia wrote Tom-DAT an MA thesis-ACC

Following constructionist and neo-constructionist models, certain patterns of meaning may be taken as tentative diagnostics of structural peculiarities. In (3a), Tom gets the cake as a result of Mary baking it, thus a possessive relation between Tom and the cake is established – an interpretation characteristic of low applicatives. The meaning of (3b), on the other hand, is that Tom is the beneficiary of the event of Zosia writing the thesis for him (high applicative).

The remaining part of the paper is devoted to a more detailed analysis of the applicative construction, both with respect to Polish and English. The aim of this comparative study is to determine the nature of this discrepancy between those two languages and its further implications for the theory of argument licensing.

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