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SPANISH QUIRKY SUBJECTS,
PERSON RESTRICTIONS, AND THE
PERSON-CASE CONSTRAINT
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Icelandic quirky subject constructions display person restrictions, which have attracted much attention recently (see, e.g., Anagnostopoulou 2003 for a syntactic analysis, Boeckx 2000 for a morphological analysis, and Sigurðsson 2002 and references therein). The received view is that such restrictions are particular to Icelandic, and Spanish is considered a language with quirky subject constructions free of such restrictions.¹

This squib has three aims. The first is to identify in Spanish some previously unnoticed quirky constructions with person restrictions reminiscent of Icelandic. The second is to use Bonet's (1991) Person-Case Constraint (PCC) as a preliminary tool to capture the difference in Spanish between quirky subject constructions with person restrictions and the familiar type without person restrictions. The third is to distinguish via the PCC between Spanish and Bulgarian quirky constructions with similar syntax but different person effects.

In section 1, I introduce a class of Spanish quirky constructions with person restrictions. In section 2, I argue that the PCC can capture the formal difference between this new class and the type without restrictions. In section 3, I examine a difference between Spanish and Bulgarian quirky constructions, arguing that it further supports the suggestion made in section 2.

1 Spanish Quirky Subjects and Person Restrictions

I first illustrate person restrictions in Icelandic. The sentences in (1a–c) from Sigurðsson 2002:719–720 show that in the presence of a dative

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¹ In this squib, I adopt the familiar *quirky subject* label as a descriptive term. See Masullo 1993 for differences between Spanish and Icelandic quirky subjects, and Masullo 1992, Fernández Soriano 1999, and Cuervo 1999 for diagnostics of quirky subjects in Spanish. See also Rivero and Sheppard 2003 and Rivero 2003 for different types of quirky subjects in Slavic, including a class without counterparts in Spanish.

subject, a nominative object triggering verb agreement must be 3rd person and cannot be 2nd or 1st.

- (1) a. Ég veit að honum líka þeir.
I know that he.DAT like.3PL they.NOM
'I know that he likes them.'
- b. *Ég veit að honum líkið þið.
I know that he.DAT like.2PL you.NOM.PL
'*I know that he likes you.'
- c. *Ég veit að honum líkum við.
I know that he.DAT like.1PL we.NOM
'*I know that he likes us.'

Many familiar languages lack the above person restriction, and Spanish sentences equivalent to (1a–c) do not display it, as (2a–c) with *gustar* 'like' illustrate. That is, nominative logical objects triggering verb agreement can be 3rd, 2nd, or 1st person in the presence of a dative logical subject. The dative must be obligatorily doubled by a dative clitic glossed *DAT.CL* from now on, which in (2a–c) is 3rd person singular *le*.

- (2) a. Yo sé que a Ana le gustan ellos.
I know that Ana.DAT DAT.CL like.3PL they.NOM
'I know that Ana likes them.'
- b. Yo sé que a Ana le gustais vosotros.
I know that Ana.DAT DAT.CL like.2PL you.NOM.PL
'I know that Ana likes you.'
- c. Yo sé que a Ana le gustamos nosotros.
I know that Ana.DAT DAT.CL like.1PL we.NOM
'I know that Ana likes us.'

The dative in (2a–c), then, does not seem to interfere with finite verb agreement by, roughly speaking, entering into an agreement relation with its person, in contrast to what is suggested for Icelandic. Many verbs behave like *gustar* in (2), so it would seem that person restrictions of the Icelandic type do not exist in Spanish.

However, it has escaped notice that some quirky constructions in Spanish display person restrictions like those in Icelandic, as with *antojar* (*se*) 'fancy, take a fancy to' in (3). This verb resembles *gustar* 'like' in (2) because it takes (a) a dative subject obligatorily doubled by a clitic, and (b) a nominative object that triggers verb agreement. An important difference between the two, though, is that (3) falls under a person restriction of the Icelandic type, as (4a–c) illustrate. *Antojar* (*se*) differs from *gustar* because its nominative object must be 3rd person, 2nd or 1st person nominatives being clearly ungrammatical.

- (3) A Ana siempre se le antojan los mismos
Ana.DAT always 3.REFL DAT.CL fancy.3PL the same
libros.
books
'Ana always takes a fancy to the same books.'

- (4) a. A Ana siempre se le antojan {los mismos
Ana.DAT always 3.REFL DAT.CL fancy.3PL {the same
chicos/ellos}.
guys/they.NOM}
'Ana always takes a fancy to {the same guys/them}.'
- b. *A Ana siempre nos le antojamos nosotros.
Ana.DAT always 1PL.REFL DAT.CL fancy.1PL we.NOM
'*Ana always takes a fancy to us.'
- c. *A Ana siempre os le antojais
Ana.DAT always 2PL.REFL DAT.CL fancy.2PL
vosotros.
you.NOM.PL
'*Ana always takes a fancy to you.'

Antojarse is restricted to dative-nominative patterns, as illustrated in (3)–(4). By contrast, *olvidarse* 'forget' can participate in three different case frames: with nominative logical subjects and accusative logical objects as in (5), with nominative logical subjects and PP complements as in (6), or with dative logical subjects and nominative logical objects with verb agreement as in (7). The only pattern with a 3rd person restriction is the last one.

- (5) Ana olvidó las llaves de Pedro.
Ana.NOM forgot.3SG the keys of Pedro
'Ana forgot Pedro's keys.'
- (6) Ana se olvidó de las llaves de Pedro.
Ana.NOM 3.REFL forgot.3SG of the keys of Pedro
'Ana forgot Pedro's keys.'
- (7) A Ana se le olvidaron las llaves de Pedro.
Ana.DAT 3.REFL DAT.CL forgot.3PL the keys of Pedro
'Ana forgot Pedro's keys.'

The nominative in (7) must be 3rd person as in (8a), and 1st or 2nd person nominatives as in (8b–c) are clearly unacceptable.

- (8) a. A Ana se le olvidaron {esos
Ana.DAT 3.REFL DAT.CL forgot.3PL {those
chicos/ellos}.
guys/they.NOM}
'Ana forgot {those guys/them}.'
- b. *A Ana nos le olvidamos nosotros.
Ana.DAT 1PL.REFL DAT.CL forgot.1PL we.NOM
'*Ana forgot us.'
- c. *A Ana os le olvidasteis vosotros.
Ana.DAT 2PL.REFL DAT.CL forgot.2PL you.PL.NOM
'*Ana forgot you.'

An anonymous reviewer notes that the contrast reported for Spanish is absent in Icelandic. Icelandic *gleymast* 'happen to forget', equipped with the middle marker *-st*, resembles Spanish *olvidarse* in (8), as it

takes a dative logical subject and a nominative logical object triggering verb agreement. However, the difference is that the Icelandic construction with *gleymast* shares person restrictions with (1), while Spanish (8) contrasts with (2).

Another relevant verb is *ocurrir (se)* ‘imagine, think of’ in (9)–(10), which like *antojar se* is restricted to dative subjects and nominative objects. Again, the nominative must be 3rd person, as the contrast between (10a) and (10b) illustrates.

- (9) A Ana se le ocurren muchas ideas.
 Ana.DAT 3.REFL DAT.CL imagine.3PL many ideas
 ‘Ana has many ideas./Many ideas come to Ana’s mind.’
- (10) a. A Ana se le ocurrió
 Ana.DAT 3.REFL DAT.CL imagined.3SG
 {un personaje/ella} para su novela.
 {a character/she.NOM} for her novel
 ‘Ana {imagined/thought of} {a character/her} for her novel.’
- b. *A Ana nos le ocurrimos nosotros para
 Ana.DAT 1PL.REFL DAT.CL imagined.1PL we.NOM for
 su novela.
 her novel
 ‘*Ana {imagined/thought of} us for her novel.’

In contrast with those in (2), then, the dative-nominative patterns in (3)–(10) may suggest that the dative in Spanish interferes with finite verb agreement, entering into an agreement relation with the person encoded in inflection.

In sum, in Spanish there are two kinds of quirky constructions. The familiar type without person restrictions illustrated with *gustar* ‘like’ in (2) makes Spanish contrast with Icelandic, and the less familiar patterns illustrated with *antojar (se)* ‘take a fancy to’, *olvidar (se)* ‘forget’, and *ocurrir (se)* ‘imagine’ in (3)–(10) display person restrictions reminiscent of Icelandic. In section 2, I propose that the PCC is a preliminary tool to capture the difference between the two types. The comparison of Spanish and Bulgarian quirky constructions in section 3 further motivates this proposal.

2 The Person-Case Constraint and Quirky Subjects in Spanish

Bonet (1991, 1994) proposes the morphological condition in (11) for combinations of weak elements such as clitics, agreement affixes, or weak pronouns.

- (11) *Person-Case Constraint* (PCC) (Bonet 1994:36)
 If DAT then ACC-3rd.

In Spanish, the PCC serves for ditransitive contrasts such as the following. On the one hand, *Ana nos los envía* ‘Ana sends them to us’ complies with (11) because it combines a dative clitic *nos* ‘to us’ with a 3rd person accusative clitic *los* ‘them’. On the other hand, **Ana nos*

os envía ‘Ana sends you to us’ is deviant because the dative combines with a 2nd person *os* ‘you.PL’.

I propose that the PCC serves as a preliminary tool to distinguish between the Spanish quirky constructions with and without person restrictions in section 1.² Both types contain nominative subjects triggering verb agreement and an obligatory dative clitic, but nevertheless differ in one respect. The constructions with person restrictions in (3)–(10) combine a dative clitic with a reflexive clitic, while those without person restrictions in (2) contain only a dative clitic. I propose that this difference in clitic composition is at the core of the contrast in person effects.

The PCC tells us that an accusative clitic must be 3rd person in the presence of a dative clitic. Adopting two standard assumptions about reflexive clitics in Spanish, such a condition can correctly rule out the ungrammatical constructions in (4b–c), (8b–c), and (10b). The first assumption is that reflexive clitics in these and several other constructions are accusative. Recall that in Government-Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981 and references therein), a familiar view was that Romance reflexives were Case “absorbers” that triggered NP-movement of nominative objects, an example being passive *se* in *La casa se construyó* ‘The house was built’. In view of Chomsky’s recent work, a minimalist implementation of this idea could be that in the constructions we are looking at, *se* signals that little *v* cannot value structural Case on the logical object, which is valued nominative via entering an Agree relation with the finite inflection. The second assumption is that Spanish reflexives are person forms, or carry a person specification, which seems uncontroversial on morphological grounds for 1st and 2nd person forms such as *nos* and *os* in the above examples.³

² The PCC has been an influential source of subsequent proposals. Using evidence from ditransitive sentences, Ormazabal and Romero (1998, 2002) argue that the PCC is a syntactic condition on animacy. Boeckx (2000) uses the PCC for a morphological account of person restrictions in Icelandic quirky subject constructions. Anagnostopoulou (2003) develops a syntactic account based on movement for feature checking that unifies person restrictions in ditransitive sentences and in quirky constructions in Icelandic.

³ It is not clear if Spanish *se*-reflexives should be considered person or nonperson forms. On the basis of French, Bonet (1991) proposes that Romance reflexive clitics consistently pattern with 1st and 2nd person pronouns (see also Kayne 2000:chap. 8). On this view, French (i) violates the PCC because of the accusative reflexive.

- (i) *Elle se lui est donnée entièrement.
 she REFL he.DAT.CL is given completely
 ‘She has completely given herself to him.’

Bonet’s idea cannot be adopted in exactly this form in Spanish, because equivalents of (i) are fully grammatical, as (ii) illustrates.

- (ii) Ella se le entregó en cuerpo y alma.
 she REFL he.DAT.CL gave in body and soul
 ‘She gave herself to him in body and soul.’

The sentence in (ii) obeys the PCC if Spanish *se* is either a nonperson form or a person morpheme lacking specification for 1st or 2nd (a “zero” person); see Kayne 2000:152 for the distinction between zero person and nonperson.

Given these assumptions, the PCC rules out quirky constructions that combine a dative clitic and a 1st or 2nd person accusative reflexive clitic in (4), (8), and (10). By contrast, the quirky patterns in (2) contain a dative clitic and no accusative clitic, so are free of person restrictions because the PCC does not apply to them.

Thus, it is only indirectly that the dative in Spanish quirky constructions can interfere with finite verb agreement or enter into an agreement relation with its person. The crucial factor for person restrictions in the Spanish quirky constructions in (4), (8), and (10) is the interaction between the dative clitic and the accusative clitic, which can be shown in two ways. On the one hand, as in other clitic-doubling languages, dative clitics are always obligatory in quirky constructions in Spanish, but if the dative-nominative relation is not mediated by a reflexive clitic, no person restrictions arise, as with *gustar* ‘like’ in (2). On the other hand, the relation between dative and nominative phrases in (3)–(10) must also be mediated by the clitics, as I show next. In Spanish, 3rd person nominative subjects can cooccur with 1st/2nd person verbs, as (12a–b) illustrate.

- (12) a. Los españoles pertenecemos a la Unión Europea.
 the Spaniards belong.1PL to the Union European
 ‘We Spaniards belong to the European Union.’
 b. Ayer llegamos los españoles.
 yesterday arrived.1PL the Spaniards
 ‘Yesterday we Spaniards arrived.’

This phenomenon, known as ‘unagreement’ (Hurtado 1984, Jaeggli 1986), suggests that there is no interaction between person in finite inflection and the nominative phrase. For instance, if (following Chomsky 2001), it is proposed that Agree determines Case on *los españoles* in (12b) on the basis of the ϕ -features of inflection, the person feature seems to play no role.

‘Unagreement’ is grammatical with nominative objects in quirky constructions without person restrictions of the type in (2), as illustrated in (13).

- (13) A Ana siempre le gustamos los españoles.
 Ana.DAT always DAT.CL like.1PL the Spaniards
 ‘Ana always likes us Spaniards.’

Thus, if the dative interferes with person in finite inflection, this fails to affect the relation between nominative and inflection in the absence of an accusative clitic. However, quirky constructions with person restrictions of the types in (4)–(10) are ungrammatical if they combine 3rd person nominative subjects with 1st/2nd person verbs, as (14) illustrates.

- (14) *A Ana siempre nos le antojamos los
 Ana.DAT always 1PL.REFL DAT.CL fancy.1PL the
 españoles.
 Spaniards
 ‘*Ana always takes a fancy to us Spaniards.’

To repeat, the contrast between (13) and (14) suggests that the person content of the logical subject in the nominative in relation to inflection does not determine restrictions in Spanish quirky constructions unless the accusative mediates.

In sum, the PCC in (11) captures the contrast between the two types of quirky constructions in Spanish that are the topic of this squib, the new ones with person restrictions in (3)–(10) and (14), and the old ones without person restrictions in (2).

3 Bulgarian Quirky Subject Constructions and a Contrast with Spanish

Bulgarian exhibits PCC effects in ditransitive sentences, so a dative clitic *im* ‘to them’ combined with a 2nd person accusative *te* ‘you.SG’ is ungrammatical: **Az im te preporâchvam* ‘I am recommending you to them’. Bulgarian also exhibits quirky subject constructions that resemble the Spanish types in section 1, but they are free of person restrictions. Here, I argue that the PCC can also capture this contrast, further motivating the proposal in section 2.

On the one hand, *xaresva* ‘like’ is rather similar to Spanish *gustar* in (2). We see in (15a–c) that this verb takes a dative subject obligatorily doubled by a dative clitic *mu* in colloquial Bulgarian (in literary style, the clitic can be absent), and a nominative object triggering verb agreement in a construction always free of person restrictions. A difference from Spanish that raises a red flag is that *xaresva* can cooccur with an optional literary-sounding reflexive clitic *se*, without an effect on the nominative person.

- (15) a. Na Ivan mu (se) xaresvat tezi momicheta.
 Ivan.DAT DAT.CL (REFL) like.3PL these girls
 ‘Ivan likes these girls.’
 b. Na Ivan mu (se) xaresvame nie.
 Ivan.DAT DAT.CL (REFL) like.1PL we.NOM
 ‘Ivan likes us.’
 c. Na Ivan mu (se) xaresvate vie.
 Ivan.DAT DAT.CL (REFL) like.2PL you.PL.NOM
 ‘Ivan likes you.’

On the other hand, Bulgarian quirky patterns with the same syntax as the Spanish constructions with restrictions in (3)–(10) also exist. Consider *privizhda* (*se*) ‘imagine, have a vision of’ in (16a–c); its dative logical subject is obligatorily doubled by clitic *mu*, the accusative reflexive *se* is also obligatory, and the nominative triggers verb agreement. In contrast with Spanish, however, the nominative can also be 2nd or 1st person, as shown in (16b–c). Like the optional literary-sounding reflexive in (15), then, the obligatory reflexives in (16) do not affect nominative person in Bulgarian.

- (16) a. Na Ivan mu se privizhdat tezi momicheta.
 Ivan.DAT DAT.CL REFL imagine.3PL these girls
 ‘Ivan has a vision of these girls.’

- b. Na Ivan mu se privizhdame nie.
 Ivan.DAT DAT.CL REFL imagine.1PL WE.NOM
 ‘Ivan has a vision of us.’
- c. Na Ivan mu se privizhdate vie.
 Ivan.DAT DAT.CL REFL imagine.2PL YOU.PL.NOM
 ‘Ivan has a vision of you.’

I propose that Spanish and Bulgarian reflexive clitics differ in person status, because reflexive clitics in Bulgarian are nonperson forms. One fact that supports this idea is that they are invariable and serve for all persons, as (15)–(16) illustrate. On this view, the contrast in person effects in the quirky constructions of the two languages can be captured by the PCC. If Bulgarian reflexive clitics are nonperson forms, they do not violate the PCC when they combine with dative clitics in the quirky constructions in (15)–(16), so no person restrictions arise. In sum, the PCC can also serve as a preliminary tool to successfully capture the difference in person effects between Spanish and Bulgarian quirky constructions with similar syntax.

4 Conclusion

In this squib, I identified some new quirky subject constructions in Spanish with person restrictions of the Icelandic type, which are characterized by the combination of a dative clitic with a reflexive clitic. I showed that there is no direct interaction between dative logical subjects and finite agreement or nominative logical objects, and I used the PCC to explain why quirky constructions with reflexives display person restrictions and those without reflexives do not. The concluding step was to show a difference in person effects between rather similar Spanish and Bulgarian quirky subject constructions captured by the PCC under the hypothesis that reflexive clitics in the two languages differ in morphological specification. That is, in Spanish they are person forms, and in Bulgarian they are nonperson forms.

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