

DECOMPOSING SPANISH DATIVE CLITICS¹

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ABSTRACT. In Spanish, dative clitics have standardly been analyzed differently from accusative ones. The apparent constraints that regulate each of these clitic doubling constructions have been at the source of the differing analyses. In this paper, we argue that in spite of the alleged differences, clitic doubling in Spanish (both accusative and dative) has more in common than meets the eye. In light of a generally neglected structure in which Spanish dative clitics may not show agreement with their plural double (a.k.a. *le-for-les*), we argue for a decompositional analysis of Spanish dative clitics. For us, dative clitics instantiate an applicative (Cuervo 2003, *a.o.*) morpheme which may be combined with a D^o head (Uriagereka 1995). This analysis allows us not only to explain the *le-for-les* phenomenon, accounting for its distribution and syntactic licensing, but also the definiteness interpretation that an agreeing dative clitic is subject to. This in turn provides a uniform account for the parallelisms between accusative (i.e., purely D^o) and dative (i.e., Applicative + optional D^o) clitic doubling. Finally, we explain certain contexts in which *les* surfaces and that fail to be accounted for under our proposal in terms of “harmonic agreement”.

Keywords: dative clitics; applicative; agreement; definiteness; *le-for-les*

RESUMEN. En español, los clíticos de dativo han sido analizados tradicionalmente de una forma diferente que los de acusativo. Las aparentes restricciones que regulan cada una de estas construcciones de doblado de clíticos han servido como base para estos diferentes análisis. En este trabajo, argumentamos que, a pesar de las presuntas diferencias, el doblado de clíticos en español (tanto acusativo como dativo) tiene más en común de lo que a simple vista se podría observar. A partir de una estructura generalmente ignorada en la cual los clíticos de dativo en español pueden no mostrar concordancia con el elemento plural al que doblan (denominado *le-por-les*), presentaremos un análisis composicional de los clíticos de dativo en español. Para nosotros, los clíticos de dativo manifiestan un morfema aplicativo (Cuervo 2003, *e.o.*) que puede combinarse con un núcleo D^o (Uriagereka 1995). Este análisis nos permitirá no solo explicar el fenómeno de *le-por-les*, dando cuenta de su distribución y condiciones sintácticas de legitimación, sino también de la interpretación en términos de definitud a la que un clítico dativo concordante está sujeto, al mismo tiempo que proveemos una explicación uniforme para el paralelismo entre el doblado de clíticos en acusativo (i.e., D^o únicamente) y en dativo (i.e., aplicativo + D^o opcional). Por último, ciertos contextos en los que *les* se manifiesta y que no se siguen de la propuesta se explican en términos de “concordancia armónica”.

Palabras clave: clíticos de dativo; aplicativo; concordancia; definitud; *le-por-les*

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1. Introduction

One aspect of Spanish grammar that has captured the interest of scholars from different backgrounds and theoretical orientations is pronominal clitics. As is well-known, Spanish has a series of unstressed pronouns that need to be attached to the verb. Thus, a natural answer to a question like “¿Viste a Juan?” (‘Did you see Juan?’) would be (1).

- (1) Sí, lo vi ayer.
yes, him.CL saw.1sg yesterday
 ‘Yes, I saw him yesterday.’

In (1), the pronoun “*lo*” is unstressed and does not appear in the canonical postverbal object position but preverbally, immediately before the verb. Spanish has accusative clitics for direct objects like “*lo*” in (1) but also dative clitics for indirect objects like “*le*” in (2).

- (2) (A Marta) no le dije la verdad.
to Marta not her.CL told.1sg the truth
 ‘I didn’t tell Marta the truth.’

There has been a long debate regarding the nature of Spanish clitics. Should they be considered pronouns, agreement morphemes, functional categories, or something else? An important issue in this debate has been the phenomenon of clitic doubling. The clitic can co-appear with an object in its canonical postverbal position, as in (3b), but this is not always allowed, as in (3a). Differences in the status of clitic doubling between dative and accusative clitics have sometimes been used to argue that these two clitics are essentially different. This paper intends to be a contribution to this debate.

- (3) a. (**La*) consideraremos la propuesta.
it.CL consider.fut.1pl the proposal
 ‘We will consider the proposal.’
 b. (*Le*) prestaremos atención a la propuesta.
it.CL pay.fut.1pl attention to the proposal
 ‘We will pay attention to the proposal.’

There is considerable dialectal variation regarding Spanish clitics. The standard accusative “*lo*” in (1) is replaced with “*le*” in some dialects (the so-called *leísmo*, and *leísta* dialects), and in others, the standard feminine dative “*le*” in (2) is replaced with “*la*” (the so-called *laísmo*, and *laísta* dialects). Phenomena like *leísmo* and *laísmo* concern gender features. However, the expression of number in clitics is also subject to variation in many – if not all – dialects of Spanish, and most of this paper will be concerned with this phenomenon.

In general, the number of the clitic must match the number of its antecedent / referent. Thus, the clitic in (4) must be plural because the antecedent “*dos libros*” (‘two books’) is plural.

- (4) Me compré dos libros y ya me {los / *lo} he leído.
rfl.CL bought.1sg two books and already rfl.CL them.CL it.CL have.1sg read
 ‘I bought two books for myself and I have already read them.’

However, there are some contexts in which there is a clear lack of number agreement.

- (5) Dale las lilas a las niñas.²
give-LE the lilacs to the girls
 ‘Give the lilacs to the girls.’ RAE (1885: 287) quoted in Casares (1918)

Here, even though the dative phrase is plural (“*las niñas*” – ‘the girls’), the clitic is singular (“*le*”). That is to say, instead of the expected plural “*les*”, the singular “*le*” is being used, hence the name “*le-for-les*” or “invariant *le*” for this phenomenon. Over the past several years, Ausín & Fernández-Rubiera (2017, 2021, to appear) have been arguing that the best way to account for *le-for-les* is to assume that dative clitics in Spanish should be decomposed into an invariant applicative morpheme and a nominal morpheme, and that the cases where the dative clitic shows up as an invariant *le* are those where only the applicative morpheme is realized. On the other hand, when the dative clitic shows up as a fully agreeing element, the applicative morpheme is combined with a nominal morpheme. In this paper, we aim to refine Ausín & Fernández-Rubiera’s previous proposals by providing additional evidence and addressing the arguments that have been made in favor of assuming that dative and accusative clitics are completely different.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the data and distribution of *le-for-les*, showing the different characteristics of this construction that have been pointed in the literature, and introduces new data identified through internet searches. Our theoretical background and assumptions regarding accusative (as D^o) and dative clitics (as Applicative heads) are laid out in section 3. Section 4 introduces our analysis, in which we claim that dative clitics are composed of either a purely applicative morpheme or an applicative plus a D^o head. The analysis we are arguing for is then applied in section 5 to the contexts discussed in section 2, showing how it can account for both old and new data, particularly the *le-for-les* phenomenon. Section 6 offers future points of research.

2. Data

The main goal of this section is to describe the phenomenon of *le-for-les*. We first review some previous studies on this topic including corpus studies. Then, we show how some simple internet searches can reveal some of the peculiarities of the phenomenon. Finally, we highlight the parallelism between the distribution of *le-for-les* and the presence and absence of accusative clitics.

2.1. Previous studies

To our knowledge, the first grammarian to discuss *le-for-les* is Rufino José Cuervo (1885: §309). He says that examples like the following are easy to find in day-to-day conversations.

- (6) a. Le dice adiós a las garzas que pasan.
LE say.3sg goodbye to the herons that fly-by.3pl
 ‘S/he says goodbye to the herons that fly-by.’

² In the glosses to follow, the dative clitic that shows the lack of agreement – and that will be one of the central aspects of this article – will be glossed as *LE*, whereas the plural agreeing dative clitic form will be glossed as *LES*.

- b. Yo no le tengo miedo a las balas.
I not LE have.1sg fear to the bullets
'I am not scared of bullets.'
- c. Le dice a todos que vengan.
LE say.3sg to all that come.3pl
'S/he tells everyone to come.'
- d. Este suceso le ha enseñado a los partidos el modo como han de
This event LE has taught to the parties the way how have to
manejarse.
behave
'This event has taught the parties how to behave.'

To show that that the use of singular “*le*” is a mistake and that plural “*les*” should be used, Cuervo points out that if the order of the verb and the phrase is reversed and the indirect object appears in preverbal position as in (7), then nobody would say “*le*”. Cuervo’s reasoning is interesting because it reveals a pervasive descriptive generalization: *le-for-les* is mostly found when the dative phrase appears in postverbal position.

- (7)
- a. A las garzas les dice adiós.
to the herons LES say.3sg goodbye
'Herons, s/he says goodbye to them.'
 - b. A las balas no les tengo miedo.
to the bullets not LES have.1sg fear
'Bullets, I am not scared of them.'
 - c. A todos les dice que vengan.
to all LES say.3sg that come.3pl
'S/he tells them all to come.'

Cuervo seems to be concerned about the systematicity of the use of *le-for-les*. To show that it is more than just a mistake found in oral, colloquial Spanish, Cuervo notes that *le-for-les* is also found in written Spanish in the writings of both contemporary and older, classic authors. Furthermore, he considers the possibility that *le-for-les* are actual printing errors, rejecting this idea on the basis of metric considerations. He notes that many intentional cases of *le-for-les* can be found in poetry: if an “*s*” were to be added, the metric of the poem would be off by one syllable. Some of the examples that Cuervo collects appear in (8). The metric of these verses requires that the “*s*” be missing because with it, the verses would have 12 instead of the 11 syllables needed for the hendecasyllable.

- (8)
- a. Dale a mis obras el debido premio
give.imp-LE to my works the owed recognition
'Give my works the recognition they are owed.'
(From Juan de la Cueva, *El infamador*)
 - b. Y débale a mis números el mundo
and owe.imp-LE to my numbers the world
Del fénix de los Sandos un segundo
of-the phoenix of the Sandos a second
'And may the world of the Sandos' phoenix owe my numbers a second.'
(From Góngora, *Panegírico al duque de Lerma*)

As for his personal assessment of the use of *le-for-les*, Cuervo seems ambivalent. On the one hand, he classifies it as a mistake. On the other, he claims that “out of all the facts that grammarians classify as mistakes, few are more brilliant” (translation ours).³ Cuervo also notes that the use of *le-for-les* has some antecedents in the development of invariant “*se*” in dative and accusative clitic combinations (i.e., “*les lo di*” > “*se lo di*” – ‘I gave it to them’), and that this construction also has some correlates in Portuguese and Galician, such as the Galician example below.⁴

- (9) Dille a todos que estou preso
tell.imp-LE to everyone that am prisoner
 N-os calabozos d’Oran
in-the dungeons of-Oran
 ‘Tell everyone that I am a prisoner in the dungeons of Oran.’
 (Eduardo Pondal, in Saco Arce, *Gram.*, p. 298)

A similar ambivalent attitude is found in Casares (1918: 107-120). Even though he still considers the use of *le-for-les* a blatant and reprehensible mistake,⁵ he acknowledges that in cases like that in (10), the non-agreeing “*le*” sounds better than the agreeing “*les*” that the prescriptive grammar requires.⁶

- (10) Todo se acabaría si le pegaran cuatro tiros a unos cuantos granujas.
all rfl.CL would-end.3sg if LE shoot.3pl four shots to some few crooks
 ‘It would all be over if they shot dead a few crooks.’

Casares agrees with Cuervo that the use of *le-for-les* is common among all registers. He makes his point loud and clear by quoting the example in (5), which the Spanish Royal Academy uses to illustrate cacophony without realizing that the Spanish language authority is using a defective *le*.

Casares not only attests to the use of *le-for-les*, but he also makes a proposal which will be echoed years later by others and which we will adopt in this paper. He starts by pointing out a context in which *le-for-les* is not possible.

- (11) Aquí hay dos caballeros que desean ver al señorito. ¿Qué les digo?
here are two gentlemen that wish.3pl see.inf to-the master What LES say.1sg
 ‘Here are two gentlemen who wish to see the master. What should I tell them?’

In examples like (11) where the dative doubling phrase is not present in the sentence and only the dative clitic appears, *le-for-les* is not possible. Based on examples like (11), Casares makes the descriptive generalization that *le-for-les* is only possible when both the dative clitic and the dative phrase are present in the sentence, as in (10). He then proposes that the status of the clitic is different in the two types of

³ Cuervo (1885) wrote “entre los hechos que los gramáticos califican de errores, pocos hay que sean mas geniales de nuestra lengua”.

⁴ See Pineda (2018) for the same phenomenon in Catalan.

⁵ In Casares’ words: “el mal uso de «le» por «les», con ser manifiesta y reprehensible incorrección, no es de las que mayormente me ofenden” (‘the bad usage of “le” for “les”, in spite of being a clear and reprehensible ungrammaticality, it is not one of those that I am majorly offended by.’).

⁶ Referring to the sentence in (10), Casares indicates that it “suena casi más espontánea y natural con el «le» defectuoso, que con el «les» que exige la gramática” (‘sounds almost more spontaneous and natural with the defective “le” than with the “les” that the grammar requires.’).

configurations that we are considering. In the cases where the clitic appears by itself without the presence of the dative phrase as in (11), Casares proposes that the clitic is a pronoun. However, in the cases where both the clitic and the phrase are present (that is, in clitic doubling configurations, which allow *le-for-les*), the clitic is not a pronoun but an “expletive or adverbial particle”. According to Casares, the clitic “becomes a little arrow pointing forward to indicate the presence of an indirect object”.⁷

Even though the study of *le-for-les* has not played a central role in grammatical and linguistic theory (as opposed to other clitic related phenomena such as *leísmo* and *laísmo*), several scholars after Cuervo and Casares have studied this phenomenon: Sturgis (1927), Marcos Marín (1978), Rini (1988), DeMello (1992), Soler Arechalde (1992), Roca (1992, 1996), Fernández-Soriano (1999), Boeckx and Jeong (2004), Huerta Flores (2005), RAE/ASALE (2009, §35.2j-k), Soto, Sadowsky and Martínez (2014), Guajardo (2020), and references therein.

The RAE/ASALE describes the use of *le-for-les* as frequent in many Spanish speaking countries, and even possible in educated speech, but still recommends the use of the agreeing *les*, especially in formal registers. In the line of Cuervo’s remarks, they note that the frequency of *le-for-les* decreases notably if the dative phrase precedes the clitic, and they also point out that the phenomenon is particularly prevalent if the dative is inanimate. They use the following examples to illustrate this last point.

- (12) a. Él no le presta atención a las ramas espinosas que lo rozan...
he not LE pay.3sg attention to the branches thorny that him.CL graze.3pl
 ‘He doesn’t pay attention to the thorny branches that graze him (while passing by)’.
 (Santiago, Sueño)
- b. Este hecho en humanos le da apoyo a las observaciones de que en
this fact in humans LE give.3sg support to the observations of that in
el dengue los monocitos son las células más importantes para la
the dengue the monocytes are the cells most important for the
replicación viral.
Replication viral
 ‘This fact, in humans, lends support to the observations that in dengue,
 monocytes are the most important cells for viral replication.’
 (Vitae 10/2004)

⁷ Casares’ words are reproduced here: “*el pronombre, privado a cada paso de su función de tal, haya descendido unas veces a la categoría de mera partícula expletiva ..., o haya adquirido en otras circunstancias un carácter marcadamente adverbial que le exime de toda concordancia. En este último caso el le ha venido a convertirse en algo así como una flecha o manecilla indicadora de dirección, que, señalando hacia atrás o hacia adelante, recuerda o anuncia el complemento indirecto de la acción, sin aspirar a representarlo propiamente.*” (‘the pronoun [*le*], voided of such a function, has been downgraded in some instances to become a mere expletive particle..., or in other instances, it has acquired a clear adverbial character that exonerates it from agreeing. In this latter case, *le* has evolved to become a little arrow of sorts or a hand indicating direction, which pointing backward or forward, reminds or announces the indirect object, without aiming at properly represent it.’).

- c. Y, si le hace caso a las estadísticas para el próximo siglo referentes
and if LE make.3sg case to the statistics for the next century related
 a la curva de natalidad, tampoco se reproducirá.
to the curve of natality neither rfl.CL reproduce.fut.3sg
 ‘And, if s/he pays attention to next year statistics related to the birth rate, s/he
 won’t reproduce either.’

(Nacional 19/1/1997)

So far, the description of *le-for-les* that we have presented has been based on the intuitions of grammarians and the examples that they collected. These intuitions have been essentially confirmed in several corpus studies with different data sets and technologies: Soler Arechalde (1992), Huerta Flores (2005), Soto, Sadowsky and Martínez (2014), Guajardo (2020). A thorough discussion of these studies will take us too far afield. Instead, using these corpus studies and other descriptions, we will draw a picture of what we believe are the most important characteristics of *le-for-les*. Next, we will provide an explanation for this state of affairs.

A. *Dative phrase must be present*

Examples like (11) from Casares seem to indicate that *le-for-les* is only possible in cases where the dative phrase is overtly present. That this is a strong generalization seems to be supported by the fact that most studies (Huerta Flores 2005; Soto et al. 2014; Guajardo 2020) don’t even consider this variable and assume that *le-for-les* is only possible when the dative phrase is present in the sentence. However, Soler Arechalde (1992) finds examples of *le-for-les* without doubling, and Marcos Marín (1978: 274) discusses the examples in (13) that follow this pattern. In this paper, we will not provide an account for this type of example and assume that they are some sort of performance/production error. In other words, we follow Casares in assuming that *le-for-les* is only possible when the dative phrase is present.

- (13) a. Ellos ... poseen frente al desprecio que éste le inspira ...
they possess.3pl versus to-the disdain that this LE inspire.3sg
 ‘They ... possess as opposed to the disdain that this inspires them.’
 (J. L. Abarca, 28·IV-74)
- b. Por temor a que nuestro contacto con los indios le acarree de
for fear to that our contact with the Indians LE lead-to.3sg of
 algún tipo de enfermedad.
some kind of illness
 ‘For fear that our contact with the Indians will lead to some kind of
 illness for them.’
 (A. Domínguez, 3-III-74).
- c. Comparados con la monarquía moderna, no son sólo el comunismo
compared.pl with the monarchy modern not are only the communism
 o socialismo, son mucho más fáciles de sostener, pues le basta
or socialism are much more easy.pl of uphold.inf since LE suffices
 la fuerza.
the strength
 ‘Compared (pl.) to modern monarchy, these are not just communism or
 socialism, they are much easier to uphold, since their strength is more
 than enough.’

B. Pre- vs Post-verbal dative phrases

As we saw in the contrast between (6) and (7), Cuervo (1885) identified the relative order of the dative phrase and the verb as a crucial factor determining the availability of *le-for-les*. For Cuervo, *le-for-les* is only possible when the dative phrase appears in postverbal position as in (6); it is impossible when it appears in a preverbal position as in (7). Cuervo's view has been mostly confirmed in the corpus studies that have considered this factor. For example, Huerta Flores (2005) found, working with Mexican Spanish, that whereas the rate of use of *le-for-les* when the dative phrase appears in postverbal position is 57%, the use of *le-for-les* with the dative phrase in preverbal position drops to 4%. Similar numbers are reported by Soto *et al.* (2014) working with Chilean Spanish: 52.3% of invariant *le* with a postverbal dative phrase, but only 11.3% when the dative phrase is preverbal. Guajardo (2020) does not seem to consider the pre / postverbal variable, and it seems that all the data that he considers are postverbal datives, for which he found an overall 79% of invariant *le*.⁸

C. Animacy of the dative phrase

We saw earlier that the RAE/ASALE points out that the use of *le-for-les* is particularly common with inanimates (see (12)). Both Huerta Flores (2005) and Guajardo (2020) confirm this tendency. Huerta Flores found that whereas the rate of *le-for-les* with animate dative phrases is 52%, the rate of *le-for-les* increases to 82% with inanimate dative phrases. Guajardo, on the other hand, found that the rate of *le-for-les* is 70% with animate datives, and 90% with inanimates. Similar observations can be found in Soler Arechalde (1992), who claims that *le* is the most common option when the dative phrase is inanimate. She lists the following examples to illustrate her point:

- (14) a. la forma de parar la ciudad era quitándole la corriente a los tranvías
the way to stop the city was removing-LE the current to the trams
 'The way to bring the city to a halt was removing the current to the trams.'
- b. ... en lo que le corresponderían a las murallas
in the that LE would-correspond.3pl to the walls
 '... in what would correspond to the walls.'
- c. ... elementos que le dan cierta vitalidad a las plantas
elements that LE give.3pl certain vigor to the plants
 '... elements that give certain vigor to the plants.'

D. Pronominal dative phrases

Most of the descriptions of *le-for-les* do not make any reference to the pronominal status of the dative phrase as a relevant variable. However, both Soler Arechalde (1992) and Guajardo (2020) note that *le-for-les* is almost absent if the dative phrase is pronominal, as in the following examples from Soler Arechalde (1992).

- (15) a. Nosotros les hemos enseñado a ellos algunos vicios.
we LES have.1pl taught to them some vices
 'We have taught them some vices.'

⁸ Soler Arechalde (1992), working with different dialects, presents similar overall rates but finds clear differences across dialects. In fact, in one of the dialects (Buenos Aires Spanish), she found *le-for-les* to be slightly more common with preverbal than with postverbal dative phrases. We take this to be an anomaly of the data and will not try to provide an explanation for it.

- b. La maestra les habla a ellas.
the teacher LES talk.3sg to them
 ‘The teacher talks to them.’
- c. No les va a eliminar a ellos toda esa serie de traumas.
not LES goes to eliminate to them all this series of traumas
 ‘S/he is not going to eliminate all that kind of traumas (for them).’
- d. De lo chileno, ¿qué les pareció a ustedes?
of the Chilean what LES seemed.3sg to you.formal
 ‘And about the Chilean (stuff), what did you think of it?’

Soler Arechalde (1992) points out that “with very few exceptions, [plural] *les* is kept” even when the dative phrase appears postverbal position. Along the same lines, Guajardo (2020) claims that “when the indirect object is a pronoun, the relative frequency of the singular clitic is extremely low and this is the only time in which the plural clitic is the preferred form (0.90 vs. 0.10).”⁹

E. Presence of a(n intervening) DO

Huerta Flores found, as shown in (16), that the presence of a direct object (underlined) favors the use of *le-for-les*; however, it seems that it is irrelevant whether the indirect object is adjacent to the verb or not (Huerta Flores 2005: fn 11). On the other hand, Guajardo (2020) found that the presence of an intervening singular DO increases the possibility of invariant *le*. We will come back to these facts later in section 5.5.

- (16) a. Todavía le da domingo a sus hijos.
yet LE give.3sg Sunday to her children
 ‘She still gives her children pocket money.’
- b. ... les sabrá exigir a sus jugadores.
LES know.fut.3sg require.inf to its players
 ‘(S/he will know how to demand (the best) to its players.’

F. Only datives / all datives

It is implicit in most of the discussions of *le-for-les* that the use of the invariant clitic is only possible with dative phrases. The use of an invariant accusative clitic is not possible even in those contexts or dialects where accusative clitic doubling is allowed.

- (17) a. *Lo vi a los chicos anoche.
CL.acc.masc saw.1sg to the guys last-night
 ‘I saw the guys last night.’
- b. *La invité a mis amigas a casa ayer.
CL.acc.fem invited.1sg to my friends to house yesterday
 ‘I invited my friends over yesterday.’ (Guajardo 2020)

As discussed in Ausín & Fernández-Rubiera (2021), this is true even in those dialects that use *le(s)* for direct objects (*leísta* dialects). Some of these dialects accept

⁹ We return to the analysis of this structure (i.e., doubling of pronominal dative phrases) in section 5.4.

clitic doubling of full DPs in direct object position as illustrated in (18) to some degree. Crucially, defective *le* is not possible in these contexts, as illustrated in (19).

- (18) a. (?)Les_i vimos [a los chicos]_i en el parque.
LES saw.1pl to the kids in the park
 ‘We saw the kids in the park.’
 b. (?)Les_i conocen [a los famosos]_i.
LES know.3pl to the famous
 ‘They know the famous people.’
 c. (?)La policía les_i capturó [a los terroristas]_i.
the police LES captured.3sg to the terrorists
 ‘The police captured the terrorists.’
- (19) a. *Le_i vimos [a los chicos]_i en el parque.
LE saw.1pl to the kids in the park
 ‘We saw the kids in the park.’
 b. *Le_i conocen [a los famosos]_i.
LE know.3pl to the famous
 ‘They know the famous people.’
 c. *La policía le_i capturó [a los terroristas]_i.
the police LE captured3SG to the terrorists
 ‘The police captured the terrorists.’

Ausín & Fernández-Rubiera (2021)

The data just discussed show that what allows *le-for-les* is not any clitic *le*, but the clitic *le* used as dative / indirect object.¹⁰ As for the type of datives that allow *le-for-les*, it seems that it is not restricted to any particular theta role. Huerta Flores (2005: fn11) found that the type of verb was not a relevant factor, and Guajardo (2020) found no difference between goal datives and beneficiary ones.¹¹

¹⁰ See also Ordóñez and Treviño (2016), who use the possibility of having invariant *le* as a tool to distinguish true datives / IO (which allow invariant *le*) from other instances of *le(s)*.

¹¹ Guajardo (2020) did find that *le-for-les* is less common with experiencers in raising constructions with *parecer*. However, it is not clear whether this is due to their experiencer status, or to some peculiarities of the raising construction. After all, *le-for-les* is fairly common with experiencers in psych verbs, as we will see below. Also, it is not clear that *le-for-les* is always less common with *parecer*. Twitter searches of a sequence such as “*parecerle/s a los demás*” (‘seem to the rest’) show that the option with defective *le* is much more frequent than the agreeing one. Although Twitter does not offer an estimate of the number of results, it does have the option of listing the results in chronological order. This gives us the possibility of making some rough estimates of the different frequency of some constructions. The strategy we developed was the following: we performed an exact search (with quotes) on Twitter and then we organized the results chronologically by selecting “latest”. We then determined how far in time we had to go to reach the 10th example: the longer the time, the less frequent the sequence. These are the results for *le-for-les* with a raising predicate like *parecer* (‘to seem’):

- (i) a. "parecerle a los demás" 163 days till 10th example
 b. "parecerles a los demás" 2476 days till 10th example
seem.inf-LE(S) to the rest.pl
- (ii) a. años de duro trabajo pueden parecerle a los demás suerte o talento.
years of hard work might seem.inf.LE to the rest luck or talent
 ‘Years of hard work might seem to the rest to be luck or talent.’
 b. qué rarete debía parecerle a los demás...
how weirdish must.past seem.inf.LE to the rest
 ‘How weirdish it must have seemed to the rest...’

2.2. Internet searches

Many of the characteristics of *le-for-les* described in the literature can be corroborated with simple internet searches, and we will be using internet searches via Google and Twitter throughout the paper to obtain clarification on some data. In both we will be searching for exact phrases using quotes alternating *le* with *les*. In our experience, Google searches can be a bit volatile, especially the number immediately returned below the search box (“About ___ results (___ seconds)”). To try to get more reliable results, we restricted searches making them more specific (“pay lots of attention” instead of “pay attention”), and we always scrolled down until the last page with the message “In order to show you the most relevant results, we have omitted some entries very similar to the ___ already displayed.” This number of hits is the one that we recorded.¹² An example Google search is shown below.

- (20) a. "prestarle mucha atención a las cosas" 23 hits on last page
 b. "prestarles mucha atención a las cosas" 7 hits on last page
 borrow.inf-LE(S) much attention to the things
 ‘to pay lots of attention to the things’
 c. "darle mucha importancia a las cosas" 50 hits on last page
 d. "darles mucha importancia a las cosas" 6 hits on last page
 give.inf-LE(S) much importance to the things
 ‘to give lots of importance to the things’¹³

These results corroborate that inanimate *le* is the preferred option with inanimates. Similar results can be obtained in Twitter searches. Following the same strategy indicated in fn. 11, we performed an exact search (with quotes) on Twitter and then we organized the results chronologically by selecting “latest”. Then we determined how far in time we had to go to reach the 10th example: the longer the time, the less frequent the sequence. Some sample searches appear below.

- (21) a. "prestarle atención a las cosas" 15 days till 10th example
 b. "prestarles atención a las cosas" 1680 days till 10th example
 borrow.inf-LE(S) much attention to the things
 ‘pay lots of attention to the things’
 c. "darle importancia a las cosas" 3 days till 10th example

¹² Google and Twitter searches performed August-September, 2021 from Michigan.

¹³ A reviewer points out that “*las cosas*” (‘the things’) may be a special indefinite. This could be true, but for the purposes of our argumentation, what is important is that it is clearly plural, as shown by subject-verb agreement:

- (i) No me {interesan / *interesa} las cosas aburridas.
 not me.dat interest.3pl interest.3sg the things boring
 ‘Boring things don’t interest me.’

The same reviewer points out that *le-for-les* is fairly common with conjunction of two singular DPs as in (ii), from Camacho (1999).

- (ii) Le traje un regalo a Juan y a Miguel.
 LE brought.1sg a gift to Juan and to Miguel
 ‘I brought Juan and Miguel a gift.’

We will not be addressing this issue in this paper, but see Rini (1988) for a historical account of *le-for-les* that is based on this type of construction.

- d. "darles importancia a las cosas" 1485 days till 10th example
give.inf-LE(S) importance to the things
 'to give importance to the things'

As we can see, the option with the invariant *le* is much more frequent in these constructions than the option with the agreeing *les*. For example, if we consider the results for "*darle(s) importancia a las cosas*", we can see that the tenth example with invariant *le* was found within three days from the moment the search was performed. However, in order to reach the tenth example of the agreeing *les*, we need to go down 1485 days.

2.3. Accusative clitic doubling and *le-for-les* parallelism

There is a parallelism between the *le-for-les* phenomenon and the presence of the accusative clitic (Ausín & Fernández-Rubiera 2017, to appear). It seems that the contexts where *le-for-les* is not possible (that is, the contexts where the agreeing *les* is required) are the same contexts where an accusative clitic needs to appear.

In the same way that *le-for-les* is not possible if the dative phrase is not present (property A as in (11), repeated below), an accusative clitic is required as shown in (22). We could say that whenever there is a null pronoun (*pro*) in object position, the presence of the accusative clitic is required and invariant *le* is not possible.

- (11) Aquí hay dos caballeros que desean ver al señorito. ¿Qué les digo?
here are two gentlemen that wish.3pl see.inf-to-the master What LES say.1sg
 'Here are two gentlemen who wish to see the master. What should I tell them?'
- (22) Cuando viste a Marta, ¿cómo *(la) encontraste?
when saw.2sg to Marta how her.CL.acc found.2sg
 'When you saw Marta, how did you find her?'

Earlier (Property B) we saw that *le-for-les* is not possible if the dative phrase appears in a preverbal position as illustrated in (7). ((7a) is repeated below.) Similarly, the accusative clitic is required when the accusative phrase appears in a left dislocated position, as illustrated in (23).

- (7a) A las garzas les dice adiós.
to the herons LES say.3sg goodbye
 'Herons, s/he says goodbye to them.'
- (23) Las garzas, *(las) vi en el lago.
the herons them.CL.acc saw.1sg in the lake
 'The herons, I saw them at the lake.'

Property D also has a clear parallelism in the realm of accusative clitic doubling. The examples in (15) – (15a) repeated below – show the absence of *le-for-les* with pronominal dative phrases. Similarly, accusative clitic pronouns are required when the accusative phrase is pronominal, which is formally identical to the pronoun we find in dative doubling constructions, as shown in (24).

- (15a) nosotros les hemos enseñado a ellos algunos vicios.
we LES have.1pl taught to them some vices
 'We have taught them some vices.'

- (24) Juan (*los) vio a ellos.
Juan them.CL.acc saw.3sg to them
 ‘Juan saw them.’ (RAE/ASALE 2009:§16.14f)

Whereas accusative clitic doubling is obligatory with pronouns in all dialects, accusative clitic doubling of non-pronominal DPs is optional. The conditions that govern accusative clitic doubling are fairly intricate and are subject to many different considerations, such as dialectal, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. See for instance Gutiérrez-Rexach (1999), Leonetti (2008) and Belloro (2010), among others. We will discuss some of these conditions later in the paper. For now, we want to highlight the parallelism between the variability of accusative clitic doubling with non-pronominal objects and the variability of agreement in dative clitic doubling with the same non-pronominal objects.

A final parallelism that we would like to highlight is the relevance of person feature. In the studies of accusative clitic doubling, a factor that is frequently discussed is person / animacy. A prevalent (but not universal) opinion is that accusative clitic doubling is only possible with animates. This is clearly the position taken by DiTullio *et al.* (2019). They formalize this view by proposing that the relevant feature involved in accusative clitic doubling is person. Inanimates, which lack a person feature, do not participate in accusative clitic doubling.¹⁴ Crucially, inanimacy strongly favors invariant *le* as discussed earlier under Property C.

- (25) Question: Vos, ¿qué vas a comprar antes de subir?
you what go.2sg to buy.inf before of come-up.inf
 ‘What will you buy before you come up?’
 Answer: Yo (#lo) voy a comprar el diario.
I it.CL.acc go.1sg to buy.inf the newspaper
 ‘I am going to buy it, the newspaper, just before coming up.’

The following table summarizes the correlation between the presence of the accusative clitic and the presence of agreement on the dative clitic.

¹⁴ Clitic doubling, as in (25), must not be confused with right-/left-dislocations. In these syntactic structures, whether the element is animate or not, clitic-doubling becomes obligatory:

- (i) a. El Prado, no *(lo) podremos ver. [Left-dislocation]
The Prado not it.CL.acc can.fut.1pl see.inf
 ‘The Prado (museum), we will not be able to see (it).’
 b. No *(lo) podremos ver, el Prado. [Right-dislocation]
not it.CL.acc can.fut.1pl see.inf the Prado
 ‘We will not be able to see (it), the Prado (museum),’

However, accusative clitic doubling as in (25) is restricted to Southern Cone varieties of Spanish (Suñer (1988)). In section 5.1 below, we discuss left-/right-dislocation structures and accusative clitic doubling.

Table 1. Presence of accusative clitic vs. presence of agreement on dative clitic

(26)	Accusative clitic presence	Dative clitic agreement
<i>pro</i>	Required *(La) vimos. 'We saw her.'	Required Les / *Le dimos un libro. 'We gave them a book.'
Left dislocation	Required A Marta, *(la) vimos. 'Marta, we saw her.'	Required A los estudiantes, les /*le dimos un libro. 'We gave the students a book.'
Pronominal double	Required *(La) vimos a ella. 'We saw her.'	(??)Required Les / ??le dimos a ellos un libro. 'We gave them a book.'
Non pronominal animate double	Dialectal variation #(La) vimos a Marta. 'We saw Marta.'	Variation Les / Le dimos a tus hijos un libro. 'We gave your children a book.'
Non pronominal inanimate double	(Almost) impossible *Lo leímos el diario. 'We read the newspaper.'	Strongly dispreferred ¹⁵ No ??les / le presto atención a los rumores. 'I do not pay attention to rumors.'

3. Theoretical Background

In order to account for the parallelism between accusative clitics and agreeing dative clitic we have just discussed in the previous section, we have been developing an account over the last few years. We will discuss that account in the next section. This section will be devoted to the three pillars of our proposal: the Big DP approach to clitics, the applicative analysis of datives, and lexical decomposition.

3.1. Clitics and the Big DP

The status and composition of clitics has been a topic of heated debate over the past 50+ years within the generative enterprise (since Kayne 1975). From full pronouns to agreement morphemes to decompositional and hybrid analyses, proposals put forth to analyze clitics have been vast. In this section, we lay out our assumptions about clitics, both accusative and dative, which we will then flesh out to account for the *le-for-les* phenomenon, as well as for clitic doubling in general in Spanish.

Kayne's (1975) proposal in which clitics are analyzed as pronouns of sorts (thus occupying the corresponding object position) was quickly shown to be difficult to adapt to Spanish clitic doubling constructions illustrated in (27)

- (27) a. Lo vieron a él.
him.acc saw.3pl to him
'They saw him.'
- b. Le dijeron la verdad a él.
LE said.3pl the truth to him
'They told him the truth.'

In short, if the clitic is argued to be a pronoun that occupies the object position, the status (and availability) of the doubling element ("*a él*" in the examples above)

¹⁵ In section 5.4 below, we present a potential analysis for the lack of a stronger parallelism between accusative and dative clitic doubling when compared to the other contexts indicated in the table.

presents a challenge to Kayne's proposal. To overcome this shortcoming, Strozer (1976) and Rivas (1977) resorted to an analysis of clitics as agreement elements (later developed by Suñer 1988 and others). For this approach to clitics, the doubled element occupies the object slot in the structure, with clitics acting as morphological elements that agree with the accusative or dative complement in a similar way to verb-subject agreement.

Suñer's (1988) work was crucial in the articulation of the analysis of clitics as agreement morphemes, but at the same time it opened a line of research that undermined the view of clitics as agreement morphemes. In her investigations on clitic doubling, she noticed that there is a clear contrast between accusative and dative clitic doubling, as illustrated in (28), Suñer's opening examples. Accusative clitic doubling –but not dative clitic doubling –is subject to certain semantic restrictions. To account for these differences, she proposed that accusative clitics bear a [+ specific] feature and therefore, are not compatible with non-specific arguments.

- (28) a. ¿A quién le regalaron un auto?
 to whom LE gave.3pl a car
 'Whom did they give a car to?'
 b. *¿A quién lo condecoraron?¹⁶
 to whom him.CL.acc decorated.3pl
 'Whom did they decorate?'

Technical details aside, the realization that accusative clitics are linked to some sort of semantic interpretation undermined an agreement approach to clitics¹⁷ and opened the road to other alternatives, such as the Big DP approach to clitics initially developed by Uriagereka (1995, 1996), among others.

Under the Big DP hypothesis, accusative clitics are analyzed as D heads heading a Big DP. Later in the derivation, that D head cliticizes onto the verb. Several types of evidence support this analysis. Historically, accusative clitics and the definite article (i.e., D^o) have the same origin – the Latin demonstrative *ille-illa-illud*.¹⁸ Consider the

¹⁶ An anonymous reviewer indicates that examples showing accusative clitic doubling like (28b) improve if the speaker is included, especially in riddles as in (i) below:

- (i) ¿A que no sabes a qué secretario estupendo lo han ascendido? ¿A mí!
 to that not know.2sg to what secretary fantastic him.CL.acc have.3pl promoted to me
 'I bet you don't know which fantastic secretary they have promoted... Me!'

Another context pointed out by the same reviewer is shown in (ii):

- (ii) ... el futuro de James Rodríguez, a quien lo han vinculado con el Milán
 the future of James Rodríguez to whom him.CL.acc have.3pl linked with the Milan
 'James Rodríguez's future, who has been linked to AC Milan.'

In both cases, the direct object has a D-linked interpretation. This is a welcome result as it is predicted under our proposal. See the discussion in sections 5.1 and 5.2.

¹⁷ Kramer (2014) explicitly uses the semantic effects to distinguish between clitics and agreement: Clitics, but not agreement, are supposed to have semantic restrictions.

¹⁸ More concretely, accusative clitics – and the definite article – come from the accusative form for this demonstrative in Latin (*illum – illam – illud* in the singular, and *illos – illas – illa* for the plural), forms which evolve into modern "lo/la" and "los/las" after the neutral gender was lost and reanalyzed as masculine. The gender markings in Latin account for the different forms we have of the accusative clitic in Spanish. In turn, the dative clitic comes from the dative form *illi / illis* – singular and plural,

following table which shows the morpho-phonological parallelism that these elements have in present-day Spanish:

Table 2. Morphophonological parallelisms between articles and clitics

	Masculine & Singular ¹⁹	Masculine & Plural	Feminine & Singular	Feminine & Plural
Definite article	<i>El</i>	<i>Los</i>	<i>La</i>	<i>Las</i>
Accusative clitic	<i>Lo</i>			

This parallelism has then been used to argue that both types of elements (namely, the definite article and accusative clitics) can also be captured syntactically by assuming that their similar nature and origin lead to an analysis of these elements as D°. Consider (29).

- (29) a. Definite article
- ```

 DP
 / \
 D'
 / \
 D° NP
el/la/los/las ...

```
- b. Accusative clitics
- ```

      DP
     /  \
    DO double D'
           /  \
          D°   NP
lo/la/los/las pro
    
```

A further motivating factor that has driven Uriagereka (1995) and others to argue for an analysis of accusative clitics as D° part of a Big DP is the fact that accusative clitic doubling is subject to interpretive restrictions of the doubled-DP. In short, accusative clitic doubling is subject to the [+definite] nature of the DO double, which is an inherent feature that the D° clitic is argued to encode. The following data show the connection between the [+definite] nature of the accusative double and the presence/absence of the accusative clitic:²⁰

respectively, which already in Latin failed to differentiate between genders (i.e., the same form was used regardless of gender), thus only marking number, which is what we find in dative clitics in all Romance languages.

¹⁹ Spanish also exhibits neuter gender in the article with the form *lo* (homophonous to the third person masculine and singular accusative clitic) to refer to abstract entities (e.g., “*lo blanco*” – ‘the white [things]’), and which also appears in demonstratives with the abstract references (i.e., “*esto/eso/aquello*” – ‘this/that/that [over there]’).

²⁰ An anonymous reviewer rightly points out data that indicate that accusative clitic doubling may refer to [-definite] entities, as in (i):

- (i) Hay algunos que tienen suerte > Los hay que tienen suerte.
there-are some that have.3pl luck them.CL.acc there-are that have.3pl luck
 ‘There are some that are really lucky.’

In this type of example, the direct object “*algunos*” – ‘some’ – is not definite, yet it may be substituted by the accusative clitic “*los*”. We agree with the reviewer, but we consider these instances a “clitic recycling” strategy (in the sense of Longa, Lorenzo & Rigau 1998) to refer to a partitive structure. Evidence for this partitive interpretation comes from the fact that (i) is grammatical in the plural, but not in the singular:

- (30) a. Lo vieron a él.
him.CL.acc saw.3pl to him
 ‘They saw him.’
- b. (Lo) vieron a Pedro.
him.CL.acc saw.3pl to Pedro
 ‘They saw Pedro.’
- c. No (*lo) vieron a nadie.
not him.CL.acc saw.3pl to nobody
 ‘They saw nobody.’

The examples in (30) show some of the restrictions that Uriagereka’s account of accusative clitics attempts to capture. In short, accusative clitic doubling is linked to definiteness: pronouns require clitic doubling as in (30a), full DPs optionally allow clitic doubling as in (30b) (depending on the Spanish variety, see Suñer’s 1988), and negative DPs bar clitic doubling as in (30c). Thus, as Leonetti (2008) already indicates, the availability of accusative clitic doubling with [+definite] elements is a natural extension of Uriagereka’s analysis of accusative clitics.

3.2. *Applicative approach to dative clitics*

We assume an applicative analysis of dative clitics. (Masullo 1992; Cuervo 2003; Pineda 2019, 2020). Consider the following pair:

- (31) a. Juan puso azúcar en el café.
Juan put_{3SG} sugar in the coffee
- b. Juan le puso azúcar al café.
Juan LE put_{3SG} sugar to-the coffee
 ‘Juan put sugar in the coffee.’

Masullo (1992) compares data as in (31) to similar structures in languages that morphologically exhibit an applicative morpheme, as the one we find in Bantu languages:

- (32) a. Umwaana y-a-taa-ye igitabo mu maazi.
child SP-PAST-throw-ASP book in water
- b. Umwaana y-a-taa-ye-**mo** amaazi igitabo
child SP-PAST-throw-ASP-APPL water book
 ‘The child has thrown the book into the water.’
 (Kinyarwanda; from Baker 1988: 10, cited in Masullo 1992:20)

In the same way that the applicative morpheme *mo* in (32b) allows for “water” to become an applied object of the verb, Masullo argues that the presence of the dative clitic in (31b) allows for “coffee” to become an *applied* object. Further evidence for this parallelism comes from the fact that the contexts in which we find an applicative morpheme in Bantu languages resemble those in which we find a dative clitic in

-
- (ii) *Lo hay que tiene suerte.
him.CL.acc there-is that has.3sg luck
 ‘There is someone that is really lucky.’

Spanish. Consider the following contexts and examples from Swahili in (33), which resemble those from Spanish in (34).

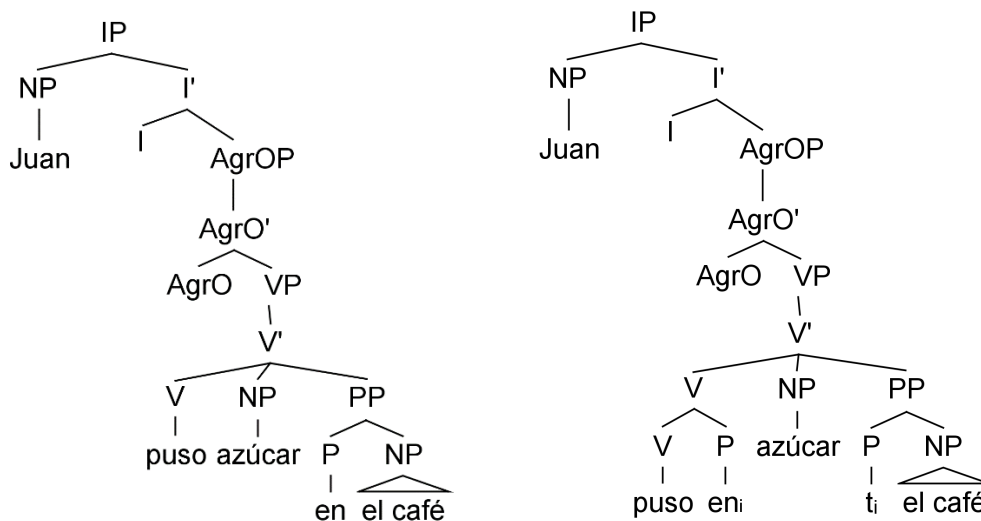
- (33) Applied arguments in Swahili (data and labels from Ngonyani 1996:4)
- a. mama a-li-wa-pik-i-a wa-toto ch-akula. (Benefactive)
1mother 1SA-PST-2OA-cook-APP-FV 2-child 7-food
'The mother cooked the children some food.'
 - b. bibi a-li-wa-sukum-i-a wa-vulana wasichana. (Goal)
1grandma 1SA-PST-2OA-push-APP 2-boy 2-girl
'Grandma pushed the girls to the boys.'
 - c. nyani wa-li-wa-maliz-i-a ma-ji wa-windaji. (Malefactive)
2baboon 2SA-PST-2OA-finish-APP-FV 6-water 2-hunter
'The baboons finished the hunter's water.'
 - d. ma-we, wa-li-vunj-i-a ch-ungu. (Instrumental)
6-stone 2SA-PST-break-APP-FV 7-pot
'The stones, they broke the pot with them.'
 - e. wa-windaji wa-li-wind-i-a pesa. (Motive)
2-hunter 2SA-PST-hunt-APP-FV 10money
'The hunters hunted for money.'
 - f. wa-windaji wa-li-chun-i-a m-nyama ma-nyasi-ni. (Locative)
2-hunter 2-PST-skin-APP-FV 1-animal 16-grass-LOC
'The hunters skinned the animal on the grass.'
 - g. m-toto a-li-lil-i-a ki-su. (Reason)
1-child 1SA-PST-cry-APP-FV 7-knife
'The child cried for a knife.'
- (34) Dative arguments in Spanish (data and labels from Cuervo 2003)
- a. Pablo le mandó un diccionario a Gabi. (Recipient)
Pablo CL.dat sent.3sg a dictionary to Gabi
'Pablo sent Gabi a dictionary.'
 - b. Pablo nos preparó sandwichitos de miga a todos. (Benefactive)
Pablo CL.dat prepared.3sg tea-sandwiches to all
'Pablo fixed us all tea sandwiches.'
 - c. Pablo le sacó la bicicleta a Andreína. (Source)
Pablo CL.dat took-away.3sg the bicycle to Andreína
'Pablo took the bicycle from Andreína.'
 - d. Pablo le lavó el auto a Valeria. (Possessor)
Pablo CL.dat washed.3sg the car to Valeria
'Pablo washed Valeria's car.'
 - e. A Gabi le llegaron dos cartas de Londres. (Location/recipient)
to Gabi CL.dat arrived.3sg two letters from London
'Gabi received two letters from London.'
 - f. Emilio le rompió la radio a Carolina. (Affected)
Emilio CL.dat broke.3sg the radio to Carolina
'Emilio broke the radio on Carolina.'
 - g. A Daniela no le gustan los gatos. (Experiencer)
to Daniela not CL.dat like.3pl the cats
'Daniela doesn't like cats.'
 - h. Mafalda no les toma la sopa (*a sus padres) (Ethical datives)
Mafalda not CL.dat take.3sg the soup to her parents

‘Mafalda doesn’t eat the soup on them (on her parents).’

The similarity between Spanish dative structures in Bantu applicative structures has been the basis for the applicative analysis of dative clitics in Spanish. Although not complete, the parallelism is strong enough to support a common analysis. The specific implementation of the applicative analysis has changed as the theoretical framework has evolved.

For Masullo (1992), who assumes Baker’s (1988) incorporation theory within the LGB framework, dative clitic constructions in Spanish are the result of the incorporation of a null preposition. The clitic is analyzed as a manifestation of agreement with the dative object (following Suñer’s 1988 view of clitics as agreement), in turn related to the assumption that dative is a structural case. Sentences as those in (31) are analyzed as in (35). In (35a), a full preposition introduces the relevant NP (i.e., “*el café*”). In (35b), there is a null preposition which incorporates into the verb. This incorporation makes “*el café*” become an argument of the verb and receives structural Dative case, with “*a*” – ‘to’- being the morphological case marker. In turn, this case assignment triggers agreement, which is spelled out as the clitic *le* as shown next.

- (35) a. Juan puso azúcar en el café. b. Juan le puso azúcar al café.
Juan put.3sg sugar in the coffee *Juan LE put.3sg sugar to-the coffee*



It is clear in Masullo’s analysis that the clitic is not responsible for the DP becoming the argument of the verb. That job corresponds to the incorporation of the null preposition. Masullo had evidence that the agreement (in his analysis, the dative clitic) had to be different from the incorporation process. Examples like the following from Chichewa showcase different morphemes for the applicative morpheme and the agreement. As the following sentences show, the applied (or promoted) object can show agreement and can pro-drop as a result:

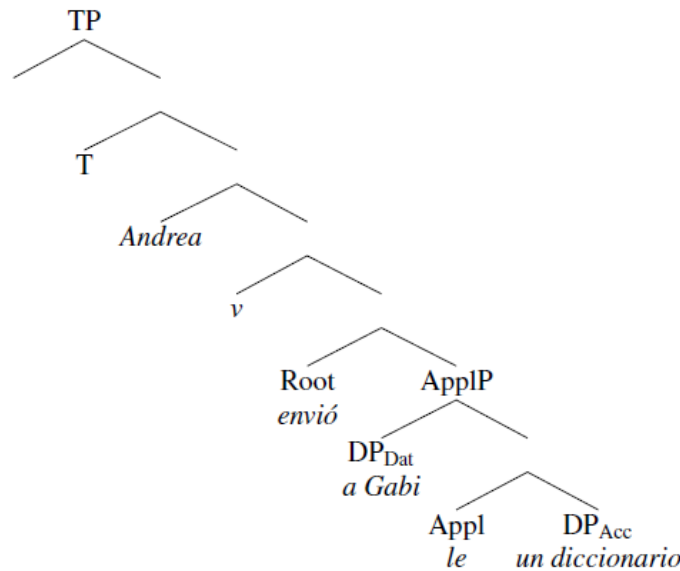
- (36) a. Amayi a-ku-mu-umb-ir-a mtsuko mwana.
woman SP-PRES-OP-mold-for-ASP waterpot child
 ‘The woman is molding the waterpot for the child.’

- b. Amayi a-ku-mu-umb-ir-a mtsuko.
woman SP-PRES-OP-mold-for-ASP waterpot
 ‘The woman is molding the waterpot for him.’
 (From Baker 1988: 266-7, reported in Masullo 1992:101)

The view and analysis for applicatives changed in the 1990s, a period during which rich functional projections were proposed. Marantz (1993), McGinnis (1998), Pylkkänen (2008) and others developed the view that the applicative should be categorized as an argument-introducing functional category. A popular application of this proposal to Spanish dative constructions was developed by Cuervo (2003, 2010) and has been expanded and modified recently by Pineda (2019, 2020). Under Cuervo’s analysis, the structure of a ditransitive sentence like (37a) would be (37b).

- (37) a. Andrea le envió un diccionario a Gabi.
Andrea CL.dat sent.3sg a dictionary to Gabi
 ‘Andrea sent Gabi a dictionary.’

b.



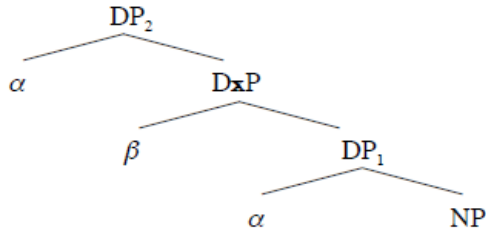
An important feature of Cuervo’s analysis is that she takes the clitic to be the spell-out of the applicative head. This applicative phrase heads an applicative head that relates the theme / accusative DP (“*un diccionario*” in (37)) to the goal / dative DP (“*a Gabi*” in (37)). As Cuervo (2003:45) acknowledges, identifying the pronominal clitic *le* with the applicative is problematic because we do not find that pattern in languages that have applicative morphemes. We will come back to this important issue when we develop our proposal in section 4.

3.3. Decompositional approach

Decompositional analyses of different morphological aspects are not new. Freeze (1992) and Kayne (1993) have argued for an analysis of “have” as “be” + an incorporated functional element. In a similar fashion, Gallego and Uriagereka (2016) propose that Spanish “*estar*” may be analyzed as a composite of “*ser*” + an incorporated functional element.

More relevant to our purposes, dative clitics have also received a decompositional account. For instance, Martín (2012) and Martín and Boeckx (2013) propose that dative clitics in Catalan may be analyzed as shown in the structure below:

(38) Martín (2012) decompositional analysis of dative clitics in Catalan



For this proposal, a dative clitic in Catalan instantiates the composite of a D° morpheme (represented as alpha under DP1) and a so-called Deixis Phrase (DxP), which combined give rise to the dative clitic. The motivation for this proposed DxP comes from the parallelism/syncretism that dative clitics exhibit in Catalan with the locative (i.e., deixis) pronouns/elements in Latin. Thus, the Catalan dative clitic *li* for Martín is the combination of *l-* + the evolution of Latin deictic *ubi* > *-i* (alpha and beta in (38), respectively).

Next, we extend to Spanish Martín’s (2012) idea that dative clitics may receive a decompositional analysis. In order to capture the strong parallelisms between the dative clitic and the applicative morpheme in Spanish and Bantu languages respectively, we follow Masullo (1992), Cuervo (2003) and Pineda (2019, 2020) and relate it to an applicative morpheme – rather than a Deixis Phrase, which similar to Martín’s proposal, may be optionally combined with a D° head.

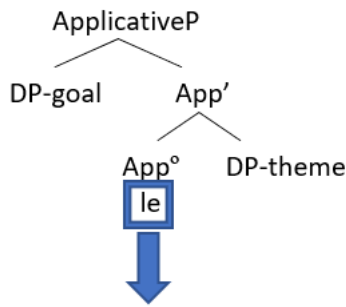
4. Proposal

We discussed in section 3.2 the similarities between applicative constructions in Bantu languages and dative clitics in Spanish that are the bases for the applicative analysis of dative clitics. We finished that section highlighting a very important difference between Bantu applicatives and Spanish dative clitics: agreement (Cuervo 2003:45). Putting aside for the moment cases of *le-for-les*, Spanish dative clitics typically have an agreement feature that agrees with the double DP in clitic doubling constructions – or helps determine the number feature of the null indirect object as in the examples below:

- (39) a. Les entregamos a ellas el libro.
LES gave.1pl to them the book
 b. Les entregamos el libro.
LES gave.1pl the book
 ‘We gave them the book.’

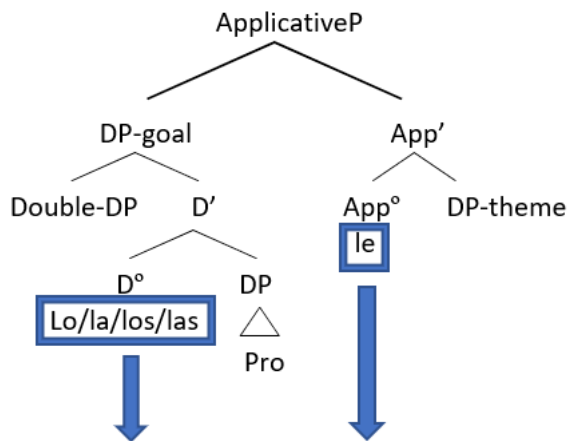
Applicative morphemes in Bantu languages are invariant and they do not agree with the applied object. There might be agreement between the verb and the applied object, but that agreement is expressed by a different morpheme, as was already pointed out by Masullo regarding the Chichewa examples in (36). The same point can be made using other Bantu languages. In Swahili and Ndendeule, some applied objects can agree with the verb as illustrated in the following Swahili examples, where the

(44) Exclusive applicative morpheme = *le* (source of *le-for-les*)



Bare *le* (i.e., exclusive applicative morpheme): source of *le-for-les*

(45) Applicative morpheme + D° = Source of agreeing dative clitic



Applicative + D° = Agreeing dative clitic (surfacing as *le/les*)

Under this proposal, all the instances of invariant *le*, as in (5), repeated here, are the result of there not being a D in the structure – as in (44). In other words, the *le* in examples like (5) is not a pronominal clitic but just an applicative morpheme. In a way, we are formulating in modern terms Casares' idea that this invariant *le* is just a particle that warns us of the presence of the dative object.²²

- (5) Dale las lilas a las niñas.
give-LE the lilacs to the girls
 'Give the lilacs to the girls.'

On the other hand, whenever the dative clitic shows agreement as in (15a) repeated below, we assume that this is the result of D being present in the structure as in (45).²³

- (15a) Nosotros les hemos enseñado a ellos algunos vicios.
we LES have.1pl taught to them some vices
 'We have taught them some vices.'

²² Roca (1992: 294) uses the same expression when he argues that dative clitics are “a sort of dative marker that ‘warns us’ of the presence of a dative argument in the sentence”.

²³ However, see section 5.5 for other possible ways of explaining agreement in dative clitics.

Since this D that we are assuming in (45) is the same D that appears in accusative clitics, we account for the parallelism between the distribution of accusative clitics and agreeing dative clitics uniformly. Thus, in the same way the accusative clitic is required in left dislocated constructions or *pro* contexts as in (46), agreement is required in the dative clitics in (47).

- (46) a. A Marta, *(la) vimos *pro*.
to Marta her.CL.acc saw.1pl
 ‘Marta, we saw her.’
 b. *(La) vimos.
her.CL.acc saw.1pl
 ‘We saw her.’
 c. *(La) vimos a ella.
her.CL.acc saw.1pl to her
 ‘We saw her.’
- (47) a. Les / *Le dimos un libro *pro*_{plural}.
LES/LE gave.1pl a book
 ‘We gave them a book.’
 b. A los estudiantes, les /*le dimos un libro.
to the students LES/LE gave1.pl a book
 ‘We gave the students a book.’
 c. Les / ??le dimos a ellos un libro.
LES / LE gave.1pl to them a book
 ‘We gave them a book’

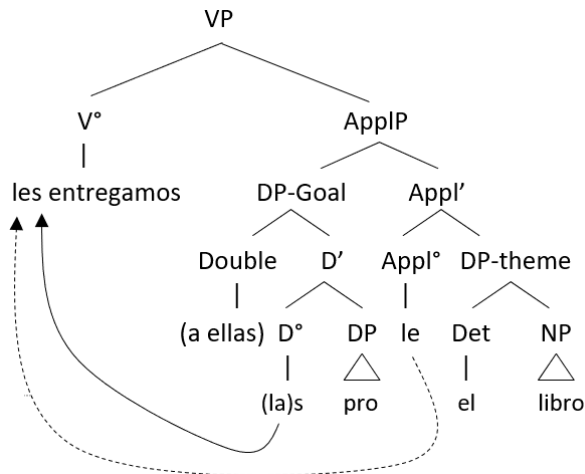
Similarly, in the same way that accusative clitic doubling is virtually impossible with inanimates as in (48a), dative agreement with inanimates is strongly dispreferred as in (48b).

- (48) a. *Lo leímos el diario.
it.CL.acc read.1pl the newspaper
 ‘We read (it) the newspaper.’
 b. No ??les / le presto atención a los rumores.
not LES LE pay.1sg attention to the rumors
 ‘I do not pay attention to rumors.’

The core of our proposal is that dative clitics are the result of combining an applicative head and optionally a D head as in (44) above. Both elements are two different syntactic heads, so there must be some syntactic process that brings them together. To accomplish this, we propose that both heads move independently to V. Once there, they combine to form the dative clitic. The process is illustrated as in (50) for sentence (49). Here, since both the applicative head and the determiner head are present, the result is the pronominal agreeing dative *les*.

- (49) Les entregamos (a ellas) el libro.
LES gave.1pl to them the book
 ‘We gave them the book.’

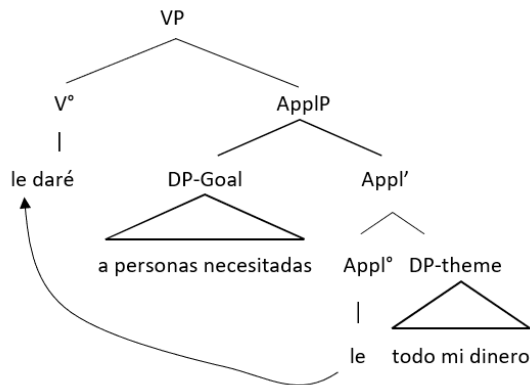
(50)



For a sentence like (51), we propose the structure in (52). Here only the applicative head is present, which is spelled out as the defective *le*.

- (51) Le daré todo mi dinero a personas necesitadas.
LE give.fut.1sg all my money to persons needed
 ‘I will give all my money to people in need.’

(52)



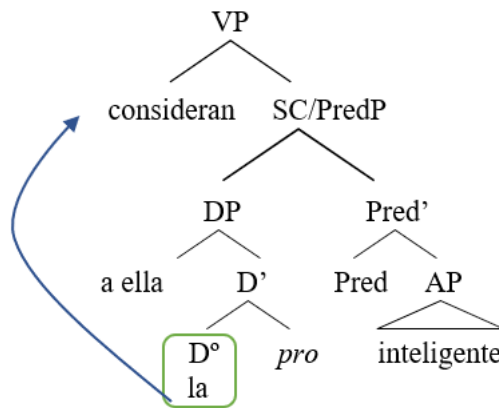
There is a potential problem in the structure in (50) since there is head movement out of a specifier, which is not supposed to take place (see Huang’s (1982) Condition on Extraction Domains or any of its descendants). However, this problem does not only affect our analysis, but the Big DP proposal in general, as the Big DP can appear in the subject position of small clauses – an example in (53).

- (53) La consideran a ella inocente.
her.CL.acc consider.3pl to her innocent
 ‘They consider her intelligent.’

Under all standard accounts of small clauses (see Citko (2011) for a review of different alternatives), “*la ... a ella*” in (53) is a subject. At the same time, “*la... a ella*” is a typical instance of accusative clitic doubling generally associated with the Big DP. Thus, the structure of (53) has to be something along the lines of (54), and the D head must be moving out of the Big DP in the subject position. We assume that the reason

that allows the D in (54) to move out the Big DP is the same as the one that allows the D to move out of the specifier position in (50).

(54)



5. Re-evaluation of previous evidence

We discussed in section 2.3 the strong parallelism between the presence or absence of accusative clitics, and the absence or presence of number agreement in dative clitics. In section 4 we developed a proposal to account for that parallelism. If we put invariant *le* aside, we are claiming that the distribution of dative clitics and accusative clitics is essentially the same. This goes against the standard view on the literature that assumes that accusative and dative clitics are essentially different. The standard view is supported by alleged differences in the conditions for accusative and dative clitic doubling. A fairly popular variant of the standard view is presented in Ormazabal and Romero (2013), who argue that in Standard Spanish, only 3rd person accusative clitics are truly pronominal and thus incompatible with true instances of clitic doubling. The rest of the clitics (i.e., 1st and 2nd accusative clitics, and all dative clitics) are agreement morphemes that impose no restriction on clitic doubling. Their views can be summarized as follows:

(55) Ormazabal and Romero (2013)

	Accusative	Dative
1	Me, nos	Me, nos
2	Te, os	Te, os
3	Lo, Los, la, las	Le, les

We, on the other hand, are saying that all clitics have a D element in them, with the exception of invariant *le*. Thus, our proposal can be visually summarized as follows:

(56) This paper

	Accusative	Dative	
1	Me, nos	Me, nos	
2	Te, os	Te, os	
3	Lo, Los, la, las	Le, les	Invariant LE

In this section, we will try to show that our proposal is empirically superior to the alternatives, and that putting aside invariant *le*, the alleged differences between accusative and dative clitics vanish under closer scrutiny.

5.1. Doubling with non-pronominal DPs

It is well known that accusative clitic doubling of non-pronominal DPs is subject to many dialectal, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic considerations. Thus, the following are possible with Argentinian Spanish, but they are not possible in most of the other dialects.

- (57) La oían a Paca/ a la niña/ a la gata.
her.CL.acc heard.3pl to Paca/ to the girl/ to the cat
 ‘They heard (her) Paca/the girl/the cat.’ (Argentinian Spanish, Suñer 1988)

Even in the most permissive dialects, accusative clitic doubling is not always possible. For instance, accusative clitic doubling is not possible with negative quantifiers, such as “*nadie*” (‘nobody’) in (58a). In contrast, dative clitic doubling is always possible, even required in some circumstances, as in (58b).

- (58) a. No (*lo) conozco a nadie.
not him.CL.acc know.1sg to nobody
 ‘I don’t know anybody.’
 b. No le entregué el dinero a nadie.²⁴
no LE gave.1sg the money to nobody
 ‘I didn’t give the money to anybody.’

This contrast is frequently repeated in the literature to argue that accusative clitic doubling and dative clitic doubling are essentially different. Pronominal accusative clitics cannot double negative quantifiers, but dative clitics can. In (58b) the compatibility between the clitic *le* with the negative quantifier “*nadie*” (‘nobody’) is taken to show that dative clitic doubling is compatible with negative quantifiers. This is necessarily true if one assumes that *le* is always a pronominal clitic. However, that is not the case under our proposal, since under our analysis, *le* can be the spell-out of just the applicative head. The fact that *le* is compatible with “*nadie*” in (58b) does not necessarily mean that pronominal dative clitic doubling is compatible with negative quantifiers; a different approach to the data is assuming – like we do – that the *le* in (58b) is just the spell-out of the applicative morpheme. In other words, our argument is that both accusative and dative pronominal clitics are incompatible with negative

²⁴ An anonymous reviewer indicates an interpretation difference between (58b) and (i) below related to the presence/absence of the dative clitic, whereby (58b) has a D-linked interpretation (“nobody from the group”) that (i) does not.

- (i) No entregué el dinero a nadie.
not gave.1sg the money to nobody
 ‘I didn’t give the money to anybody.’

We are uncertain about the status of the contrast between (58b) and (i). For the speakers for whom this contrast holds, it could be that *le* in (58b) would instantiate Appl^o + D^o, thus explaining the D-linked interpretation. See fn. 30 regarding the possibility of having D^o associated with negative quantifiers in some dialects.

quantifiers. (58b) is not a counterexample to our proposal because for us, *le* in (58b) is not a dative pronominal clitic but just the spell-out of the applicative morpheme.

There is ambiguity between pronominal dative clitics and applicative clitics only with singular doubles. In the plural, there is no such ambiguity because the applicative clitic is still *le* but the pronominal dative clitic is *les*. If we are saying that the restrictions on pronominal clitic doubling applies to both dative and accusative pronominal clitics, we should expect some contrasts with dative plural DPs. First, let's start with bare plurals. Accusative clitic doubling is not possible with bare plural nouns.

- (59) a. Siempre *(las) necesitamos a personas inteligentes.
Always them.CL.acc need.1pl to persons smart
 'We always need smart people.'
- b. Este año *(los) suspenderé a menos estudiantes.
This year them.CL.acc fail.fut.1sg to less students
 'This year I will fail less students.'

As for dative bare plurals, there has been a debate whether dative clitic doubling is possible with these elements in indirect object position. Some scholars argue that it is possible (see (60)), but others argue that it is not (see (61)-(62)).

- (60) Les ofrecieron queso a familias de pocos medios.
them.CL.dat offered.3pl cheese to families of few resources
 'They offered cheese to families of few resources.'

Suñer (1988)

- (61) a. Creo que (*les) daré todo mi dinero a personas necesitadas.
believe.1sg that LES give.fut.1sg all my money to persons needed
 'I think I will give all my money to people in need.'
- b. No se (*les) debe pegar a mujeres indefensas.
not rfl.CL LES must.3sg beat.inf to women defenseless
 'One must not beat defenseless women.'

Fernández-Soriano (1989)

- (62) a. (*Les) regalaré todos mis libros a mujeres.²⁵
LES give.fut.1pl all my books to women
 'I will give all my books to women.'
- b. (*Les) entregarán las frazadas contaminadas a indios makas.
LES give.fut.3pl the blankets poisoned to Indian makas
 'The poisoned blankets will be given to the Makas Indians.'

Jaeggli (1982)

Interestingly for the purposes of our argumentation, some scholars use examples like those below to argue that bare plurals can be doubled but only by the defective *le*.

- (63) Luis nunca (le) da dinero a niños.²⁶
Luis never LE give3.sg money to kids
 'Luis never gives kids money.'

Roca (1992)

²⁵ This example feels odd independently of the presence of the clitic. This is because, as discussed by Bosque (1996) and Laca (1997), unmodified bare plurals like "*mujeres*" ('women') in the example under consideration are odd indirect objects. It seems that the same restrictions that apply to bare plurals in (preverbal) subject position also apply to indirect objects.

²⁶ See previous footnote.

- (64) a. Por su tono se notaba que no (le) estaba hablando a subordinados
by his tone CL.rfl noticed that not LE was talking to subordinates
 sino a amigos.
but to friends
 ‘One could tell by his/her tone that s/he was not talking to subordinates
 but to friends.’
- b. Un accidente puede ocurrirle incluso a personas precavidas.
an accident can happen.inf-LE even to people cautious
 ‘Even cautious people are likely to have an accident.’ Laca (1999: 909)

The generalization that emerges from these examples is that dative clitic doubling with bare plurals is only possible with invariant *le*. Under this view, (60) should be odd not because of the presence of a doubling clitic, but because of the presence of the plural doubling clitic. If we assume that dative clitic doubling is only possible with defective *le*, then there is another clear parallelism between accusative clitic doubling and dative clitic doubling. In both cases, pronominal clitic doubling is not possible with bare plurals. Cases of dative clitic doubling with defective *le* and bare plurals are not really cases of pronominal clitic doubling but, under our proposal, instances involving an applicative morpheme spelled out as the *le* clitic.

Suñer (1988) and many others after her have noted that accusative clitic doubling in Argentinian Spanish is sensitive to the type of direct object. For instance, it is possible with definite DPs but impossible with quantifiers such as “*muchos*” (‘many’) or “*varios*” (‘several’).

- (65) (*Los) entrevistaron a muchos/varios candidatos.
them.CL.acc interviewed.3pl to many several candidates
 ‘They interviewed (them) many/several candidates.’

The examples above show that in those dialects that allow accusative clitic doubling of full DPs, doubling is not possible with these quantifiers. Since we are saying that both accusative and dative pronominal clitic doubling are subject to the same restrictions, we should expect to find similar restrictions in the cases of pronominal dative clitic doubling (that is, agreeing *le(s)*). Although the contrasts are subtle and might be obscured by considerations to be discussed in section 5.5, we believe that the prediction is to some extent confirmed. It seems to us that the invariant *le* feels more natural in (66b) than in (66a).

- (66) a. Le(s) devolví la tarea a {mis / esos} estudiantes.
LE(S) returned.1sg the assignment to my those students
 ‘I returned the assignment to my / those students.’
- b. Le(s) devolví la tarea a {varios / muchos} estudiantes.
LE(S) returned.1sg the assignment to several many students
 ‘I returned the assignment to several / many students’

To try to confirm these contrasts, we performed a Google search of the sequence “*le(s) interesa a ___ personas*” (‘it interests to ___ people’) changing the modifier of the noun. The results appear in the table below, with some representative examples of invariant *le*.

Table 2. Google searches.

	Esas <i>those</i>	Las <i>the</i>	Muchas <i>many</i>	Algunas <i>some</i>	Varias <i>several</i>	∅	Más <i>more</i>
“les interesa a ___ personas” LES interests to ___ persons	51	73	35	19	6	11	8
“le interesa a ___ personas” LE interests to ___ persons	29	82	40	26	15	30	42
Invariant le %	36%	53%	53%	58%	71%	73%	84%

- (67) a. Lo que le interesa a esas personas es que los recursos les lleguen para poder empezar la reconstrucción.
the that LE interest.3sg to these people is that the resources LES arrive.3pl to be-able.inf start.inf the reconstruction
‘What these people are interested in is for the resources to arrive in order to begin the reconstruction.’
- b. El dragón tiene una cualidad que le interesa a las personas.
the dragon has one quality that LE interest.3sg to the people
‘The dragon has one quality that is appealing to people.’
- c. Si le interesa a varias personas que acompañan este blog, haré un artículo sobre eso.
if LE interest.3sg to several people that follow.3pl this blog make.fut.1sg an article about that
‘If several people that follow this blog are interested, I will write an article about that.’
- d. Crees que este artículo le interesa a más personas, compártelo!
believe.2sg that this article LE interest.3sg to more people share-it.CL
‘(If you) believe that more people are interested in this article, share it!’
- e. Recomiendo esta excursión y pude comprobar que le interesa a personas de distintas nacionalidades e idiomas.
recommend.1sg this excursion and could.1sg prove.inf that LE interest.3sg to persons of different nationalities and languages
‘I recommend this fieldtrip and could attest that people from different nationalities and languages are interested in it.’

Even though the results are not completely conclusive, they do seem to point towards a preference of invariant *le* with more indefinite, vague quantifiers. If we look at both ends of the table, we see a clear difference in the percentages of invariant *le*: much more common with “*más personas*” (‘more people’) than with “*esas personas*” (‘those people’). It is true that the contrasts we see in the distribution of the agreement with dative clitics are not as strong as the contrasts we find in the distribution of doubling accusative clitics. The presence of agreement in dative clitics seems probabilistic, whereas the presence of the accusative clitic seems more categorical. This is probably due to the possibility of post-syntactic agreement with dative clitics, which we discuss in section 5.5.

We have just covered the alleged differences between accusative and dative clitics with respect to the possibility of doubling a given non-pronominal DP. Let’s turn now to some alleged differences with respect to the semantic interpretation of some DPs.

Suñer (1988) follows Hurtado in assuming that accusative, but not dative, clitic doubling forces the wide scope interpretation of the indefinite “*algunos*” (‘some’).

- (68) a. Todos los electores los votaron a algunos de los candidatos.
all the voters them.CL.acc voted.3pl to some of the candidates
 ‘Every voter voted for some of the candidates’
 (i.e., There are some candidates *x* such that every voter *y* voted for *x*: wide scope)
- b. Todos los candidatos les han dicho la verdad a algunos electores.
all the candidates LES have.3pl told the truth to some voters
 ‘Every candidate has told the truth to some candidates’
 (i.e., All candidates have told the truth to some voters: narrow scope).

According to Suñer, the accusative clitic in (68a) forces the wide scope interpretation but not the dative clitic in (68b). We have two main concerns about these examples. First, the alternative *le/les* is not considered, and second, the double is not the same. In (68a) the double DP is “*algunos de los candidatos*” (‘some of the candidates’), which is clearly partitive / D-linked, whereas the double in (68b) is “*algunos electores*” (‘some voters’), which is not clearly marked as partitive. A better example is (69). It seems to us that the presence of the agreeing *les* (a pronominal clitic in our account) in (69) has a similar semantic effect as the presence of the accusative clitic in (68a).

- (69) Todos los profesores les / le han devuelto la tarea a dos de los estudiantes.
all the professors LES/LE have returned the homework to two of the students
 ‘Every professor has returned the homework to two of the students.’
 $Le = \forall > 2, 2 > \forall$ $Les = \text{strong preference for } 2 > \forall$

Although the judgments are subtle,²⁷ we believe that the presence of *les* (a pronominal clitic in our account) favors the wide scope reading of the numeral (i.e., there are two students *x* such that every professor *y* has returned the homework to *x*).²⁸ If so, there is a further parallelism between the presence of the accusative clitics and the presence of the agreeing *les* – in our terms, an applicative + D°.

²⁷ An anonymous reviewer provides the following pair of sentences, and indicates that (ib) has a more *de re* (in our terms, definite) interpretation:

- (i) a. Le quiere devolver *El Quijote* a unos alumnos.
LE want.3sg return.inf El Quijote to some students
 b. Les quiere devolver *El Quijote* a unos alumnos.
LES want.3sg return.inf El Quijote to some students
 ‘S/he wants to return *El Quijote* to some students.’

We believe that contrasts like this are expected under our account since the agreeing *les* would be the result of Applicative + D, with this latter head triggering the [+definite] interpretation of the indirect object “*a unos alumnos*” – ‘to some students’. On the other hand, in the absence of D, defective *le* instantiates purely the applicative head, thus explaining the difference in interpretation between these two examples indicated by the reviewer.

²⁸ On the possibility of interfering post-syntactic agreement, see section 5.5.

5.2. Doubling with 1st and 2nd person quantifiers

Ormazabal and Romero (2013) (henceforth OR2013) present several arguments to support their view that 1st and 2nd person accusative clitic together with dative with all dative clitics are essentially different from 3rd person accusative clitics. We, on the other hand, are claiming that, with the exception of defective *le*, all clitics are essentially the same. In this section we address some of their arguments. OR2013 claim that 1st and 2nd person pronouns can double negative quantifiers, something that 3rd person pronouns cannot do even in those dialects that allow accusative clitic doubling (see (58a)). Their examples are:

- (70) a. No **os** encontraron a nadie /ninguno.
Not you.CL.acc found.3pl to nobody/none
 ‘They found none of you.’
- b. Me han dicho que **os** han pillado a unos
me.CL.dat have.3pl told that you.CL.acc have.3pl caught to some
fumando.
smoking
 ‘I was told that some people (you included) have been caught smoking.’

They take these examples to show that 1st and 2nd (together with dative clitics) are compatible with quantifiers. However, OR2013 do not consider that, as suggested by RAE/ASALE (2009:16.14j), there is a covert partitive complement in these sentences (“*ninguno de vosotros*” – ‘none of you’, “*unos de vosotros*” – ‘some of you’) and that the clitic is doubling not just the quantifier, but the quantifier with the implicit/covert partitive pronominal complement. In fact, if the partitive complement to 3rd person is added explicitly/overtly, then 3rd person accusative clitic doubling is possible with the quantifiers as noted by Suñer (1988) and shown in the following example:

- (71) No los examinaron a ninguno de ellos.
not them.CL.acc examined.3pl to none of them
 ‘They didn’t examine any of them.’

Similar considerations apply to the other type of examples that OR2013 use in their argumentation, one such case being interrogative structures as the one below:

- (72) a. ¿A quiénes / cuántos **os** han elegido para el puesto?
to who.pl / how-many you.acc have.3pl selected for the position
 ‘Who/how many (of you) did they choose for the position?’
- b. *¿A quiénes / cuántos **los** han elegido para el puesto?
to who.pl / how-many them.acc have.3pl selected for the position
 ‘Who/how many (of them) did they chose for the position?’

OR2013 take the contrast in (72) as evidence that accusative clitic doubling is possible with 1st and 2nd person clitics, but not with 3rd person clitics. As before, and following RAE/ASALE (2009:16.14j), we would like to suggest that in these examples the clitic is doubling not the wh-word but the implicit partitive complement (“*a quién / cuántos de vosotros*” – ‘who / how many of you’). If we modify (72b) to include an

explicit pronominal partitive complement – as in (73), then accusative clitic doubling is possible.²⁹

- (73) a. ¿A cuáles de ellos los han elegido para el puesto?
to which.pl of them them.CL.acc have.3pl selected for the position
 ‘Which (of them) did they choose for the position?’
 b. ¿A cuántos de ellos los han elegido para el puesto?
to how-many of them them.CL.acc have.3pl selected for the position
 ‘How many (of them) did they chose for the position?’

To conclude this section, we do not believe that there is clear evidence to assume that 1st and 2nd accusative clitics are essentially different from 3rd person accusative clitic.³⁰

5.3. Doubling with accusative pronouns

A very well-known fact about clitic doubling is that clitic doubling is required when the object phrase is pronominal. This is true both for accusative and dative clitic doubling.

- (74) a. Juan *(me) vio a mí.
Juan me.CL.acc saw.3sg to me
 ‘Juan saw me.’
 b. Juan *(te) vio a ti.
Juan you.CL.acc saw.3sg to you
 ‘Juan saw you.’

²⁹ Similar considerations apply to the examples below from OR2013:

- (i) Os han visto a los niños.
you.CL.acc.pl have.3pl seen to the children
 ‘They saw you the children.’
 (ii) Os vimos a algunos/muchos niños.
you.CL.acc.pl saw.1pl to some / many children
 ‘We saw some/ many of you children.’

We would like to suggest that in these examples, the clitic is doubling an implicit pronominal partitive complement (“*entre vosotros*” - ‘among you’). This implicit partitive argument seems required in order to properly characterize the meaning of these sentences. In both cases, the referent of the object (“*niños, algunos/muchos niños*”) is necessarily a proper subset of the addressees.

³⁰ As further evidence for their proposal that clitics should be divided between agreement morphemes and determiners, OR2013 argue that in *leísta* dialects, 3rd person accusative clitics *le(s)* are agreement morphemes and hence they do not impose any semantic restriction on its double. They use examples like (i) as evidence.

- (i) No le han visto a ningún estudiante en la universidad.
Not LE have.3pl seen to no student in the university
 ‘They saw no student at the university.’

However, see Franco (2001) who argues that even in *leísta* dialects, accusative clitic doubling is subject to some restrictions. He talks about a “discourse-linked requirement for [accusative] clitic-doubled overt operators”, including negative quantifiers like (i). Under this discourse-linked requirement, the reference for the quantifier would be interpreted as “out of a group of x, y, z, etc., it is the case that none of them was seen at the university”.

- (75) c. Juan *(la) vio a ella.
Juan her.CL.acc saw.3sg to her
 ‘Juan saw her.’
- a. Juan *(me) entregó un libro a mí.
Juan me.CL.dat gave.3sg a book to me
 ‘Juan gave me a book.’
- b. Juan *(te) entregó un libro a ti.
Juan you.CL.dat gave.3sg a book to you
 ‘Juan gave you a book.’
- c. Juan *(le) entregó un libro a ella.
Juan her.CL.dat gave.3sg a book to her
 ‘Juan gave her a book.’

At face value, these facts seem to support a uniform approach to dative and accusative clitic doubling, as the one we are advocating for in this paper. These facts are somewhat problematic for those approaches that assume that dative and accusative clitics are essentially different, especially in those versions that argue that accusative clitic doubling is never possible in Standard Spanish. One way to reconcile the examples in (74) with the idea that there is no accusative clitic doubling is to assume that the stressed pronouns are dislocated in a right peripheral position (Roca 1992, 1996, Guajardo 2020). The strategy of relating clitic doubling to right dislocation was one of the first strategies of accounting for clitic doubling under the movement approach to clitics (Hurtado 1984 in Suñer 1988). However, DiTullio *et al.* (2019) present several arguments against the idea that all instances of clitic doubling be reduced to right dislocation. Specifically, they note that a clitic doubled DP (CD) in Argentinian Spanish can be associated with focus, signaled as it is customary by the use of capitalization to indicate the rising intonation of the phrase and which semantically brings about an exhaustive interpretation of the phrase that is focalized (cf. (76c)), an interpretation that right dislocated elements never bear.

- (76) a. ¿Juan [besó a CECILIA]?
Juan kissed.3sg to Cecilia
 ‘Did Juan kiss CECILIA?’
- b. No, [la saludó a MARÍA]. [CD]
no her.CL.acc greeted.3sg to María
 ‘No, he greeted María.’
- c. Juan (la) besó solo [a MARÍA]^F. [CD]
Juan her.CL.acc kissed.3sg only to María
(no besó a nadie más).
not kissed.3sg to nobody else
 ‘Juan kissed only María, (he didn’t kiss anybody else).’

Crucially for our discussion on the status of full pronouns in clitic doubling constructions, DiTullio *et al.*’s argument can be replicated with full pronouns.

- (77) a. - ¿A quién viste primero, a Juan o a Marta?
to who saw.2sg first to Juan or to Marta
 - La vi primero a ella.
her.CL.acc saw.1sg first to her
 ‘- Who did you see first? Juan or Marta? - I saw her first.’

- b. Quería ver a Juan y a Marta,
wanted. 1sg see.inf to Juan and to Marta
 pero al final solo la vi a ella.
but at.the end only her.CL.acc saw. 1sg to her
 ‘I wanted to see Juan and Marta, but in the end, I only saw her.’

In these examples, the pronoun “*a ella*” – ‘to her’ – belongs to the focus (i.e., it is associated with new or contrastive information) and therefore cannot be considered a right dislocation. In fact, a pause before the pronoun would render the sentences ungrammatical. The conclusion that must be drawn is that the stressed pronoun in these examples appears in argument position, not in a right dislocated position, and therefore, these examples must be considered typical clitic doubling constructions. Similar patterns can be observed with 1st and 2nd pronouns.

- (78) a. - ¿A quién viste? - Te vi a ti.
to who saw.2sg you.CL.acc saw. 1sg to you
 ‘Who did you see? I saw you.’
- b. No quiero verlos a ellos.
not want. 1sg see.inf-them.CL.acc to them
 Solo quiero verte a ti.
only want. 1sg see.inf-you.CL.acc to you
 ‘I do not want to see them. I only want to see you.’

The examples above show that full pronouns can appear in argument position. Now the question that can be asked is whether they can also appear in a right dislocated position. In our opinion, the answer is no. The following examples are clear cases of Clitic Right Dislocation (CLRD henceforth):

- (79) a. La golpearon cuando salía del bar, a Marta.
her.CL.acc hit.3pl when left.3sg of.the bar, to Marta
 ‘They hit Marta when she was leaving the bar.’
- b. Los volveremos a ver el año que viene, a los abuelos.
them.CL.acc return.fut. 1pl to see the year that comes to the grandparents
 ‘We will see our grandparents again next year.’

In these examples, the presence of the comma before the double DP represents the pause typically associated with CLRD constructions. The acceptability of these constructions worsens considerably if the full DP is replaced with a pronoun. Most likely, this worsening is due to the fact that whatever discourse function CLRD constructions have is not compatible with pronouns.

- (80) a. ??La golpearon cuando salía del bar, a ella.
her.CL.acc hit.3pl when left.3sg of-the bar, to her
 ‘They hit her when she was leaving the bar.’
- b. ??Los volveremos a ver el año que viene, a ellos.
them.CL.acc return.fut. 1pl to see.inf the year that comes to them
 ‘We will see them again next year.’

In our opinion, all of these arguments support the idea that when appearing in a clitic doubling construction, the pronoun needs to be in an argument position.³¹ This strongly argues against the idea that accusative and dative clitic doubling are fundamentally different, and supports our view that, putting aside defective *le*, there is not an underlying difference between accusative and dative clitics in Spanish.

5.4. Doubling with dative pronouns

Under our proposal, there is a parallelism between accusative clitic doubling and true instances of pronominal dative clitics doubling (those cases in which the dative clitic shows agreement). A set of data that shows this parallelism is the doubling of pronouns. In the same way that accusative pronouns require clitic doubling, dative pronouns require the presence of agreement in the dative clitic. See the contrast between (15a) and (24) repeated below. In both cases, the pronoun is associated with a Big DP, which triggers the presence of the accusative clitic in (24) and the presence of the agreeing pronominal *les* in (15a).

- (15a) Nosotros les hemos enseñado a ellos algunos vicios.
we LES have.1pl taught to them some vices
 ‘We have taught them some vices.’
- (24) Juan (*los) vio a ellos.
Juan them.CL.acc saw.3sg to them
 ‘Juan saw them.’

In the previous section, we rejected the possibility that the pronominal double is right dislocated, which would mean that they are not real instances of clitic doubling. In this section, we would like to address the issue of the status of examples like (15a). (15a) has the agreeing *les*. To obtain a full parallelism with (24), (15a) should be ungrammatical with the invariant *le*. However, that does not seem to be the case. Both Guajardo (2020) and Soler Arechalde (1992) found a very strong preference of agreeing *les* with pronouns, but both of them also found exceptions. Also, speakers’ intuitions about these contrasts also seem to judge worse the lack of the clitic in (24) than the lack of agreement in (15a). In other words, there is a clear contrast between (81a) and (81b).

- (81) a. *Vi a ellos. (Accusative pronoun, no doubling)
saw.1sg to them
 ‘I saw them.’
- b. (?)Le entregué un libro a ellos. (Dative pronoun, no agreement)
LE gave.1sg a book to them
 ‘I gave them a book.’

Whereas (81a) is clearly ungrammatical, (81b) is much better, and it is easy to find examples that follow the pattern in (81b). One could argue that the incomplete parallelism depicted in (81) goes against our proposal. The goal of this section is to introduce some modifications so our proposal can handle the lack of full parallelism in (81). But first, we will discuss some data that support the view that *le-for-les* is not the preferred option with pronouns. Consider the search results for variations of “*le(s)*”

³¹ See Bosque & Gutiérrez-Rexach (2009: 688) and RAE/ASALE (2009: 16.14d) for similar views.

interesa a ____” (‘it interests ____’). As before, the digit represents the number of returned instances after scrolling down to the last page of the Google search.

- (82) a. "les interesa a ellos" 120
 b. "le interesa a ellos" 26
LE(S) interest.3sg to them
 c. "les interesa a los hombres" 79
 d. "le interesa a los hombres" 38
LE(S) interest.3sg to the men
 ‘... interests them / the men...’

When the double is the DP “*a los hombres*” (‘to the men’), there is a preference for the agreeing *les* (79 to 38). However, when the double is the pronoun “*a ellos*” (‘to them’), the preference for the agreeing *les* is much stronger (120 to 26). Similar results are obtained with the sequence “*le(s) gusta mucho a ____*”.

- (83) a. "les gusta mucho a ellos" 30
 b. "le gusta mucho a ellos" 7
LE(S) like.3sg much to them
 c. "les gusta mucho a los hombres" 36
 d. "le gusta mucho a los hombres" 28
LE(S) like.3sg much to the men
 ‘They / the men like a lot ...’

With the full DP “*a los hombres*” (‘to the men’), we obtained a slight preference for the agreeing *les*. However, with the pronoun “*a ellas*” (‘to them [fem.]’) as double, the preference of the agreeing *les* is much stronger: 30 to 7.

A Twitter search using the strategy described above (chronologically ordering the results and counting the days until the 10th result) returns similar results:

- (84) a. "les interesa a ellos" 2 days till 10th result
 b. "le interesa a ellos" 14 days till 10th result
LE(S) interest.3sg to them
 c. "le interesa a los hombres" 202 days till 10th result
 d. "les interesa a los hombres" 213 days till 10th result
LE(S) interest.3sg to the men
 ‘... interests them / the men...’
 (85) a. "les gusta mucho a ellos" 129 days till 10th result
 b. "le gusta mucho a ellos" 1313 days till 10th result
LE(S) like.3sg much to them
 c. "les gusta mucho a los hombres" 326 days till 10th result
 d. "le gusta mucho a los hombres" 351 days till 10th result
LE(S) like.3sg much to the men
 ‘They / the men like a lot ...’

In the searched patterns, when the double is the full DP “*a los hombres*” (‘to the men’), there is almost no difference between the agreeing *les* and the invariant *le*. However, as we saw before, when the double is the pronoun “*ellos*” (‘them’), the agreeing *les* is overwhelmingly more common than the invariant *le*.

The data show that the use of *le-for-les* with personal pronouns is a lot less frequent than with full DPs. However, it is more frequent than we would expect according to our proposal, since we expect no instances of invariant *le* with “ellos” (‘them’). We believe that an answer to this problem can be found in the semantic motivation of clitic doubling. We follow Leonetti (2008) and others in assuming that animacy and definiteness scales as those in (86) play a crucial role in the distribution of clitic doubling:

- (86) a. Animacy Scale
Human > Animate > Inanimate
b. Definiteness Scale
Personal Pronoun > Proper Name > Definite NP > Specific Indef. NP > Non-specific Indef. NP

Elements on the left of the scales are more likely to be clitic doubled. Two points need to be set in that scale: at what point (if any) clitic doubling is possible, and at what point (if any) clitic doubling is required. In Standard Spanish, those two points would be between personal pronouns and proper names, which makes accusative clitic doubling both possible and required with personal pronouns. In Argentinian Spanish, the situation would be different: the point at which clitic doubling is possible would move to the right of the scale, allowing for optional clitic doubling of definite NPs.

We would like to suggest that the distribution of agreeing dative clitics follows the animacy and definiteness scales mentioned above. Contrary to what happens with accusative clitics, the presence of the agreement is never categorical with datives, but always probabilistic. There are more agreeing dative clitics on the left side of the scale because the probability of having an agreement triggering D is higher on the left side of the scale. There are fewer agreeing dative clitics on the right side of the scale because the probability of having an agreement triggering D is lower, which results in more cases of invariant (that is, applicative only) *le*.

The next question that we need to answer is why the presence of accusative clitics is categorical to some extent in most dialects, but the presence of agreement in datives always seems to be probabilistic. We believe that an answer to this question can be found in the different alternatives that we find in each case. In the case of accusative clitics, the alternatives are the presence of a clitic or its absence. However, in the case of dative clitics, the alternatives are the presence of the agreeing clitic or the presence of a defective *le*, which is homophonous to one of the variants of the dative clitic (i.e., singular pronominal *le* = applicative *le*). We hypothesize that the morphophonological similarities of the different forms have hindered the development of a more categorical system. Furthermore, an additional confounding factor is that it is possible that some of the agreeing dative clitics that can be found are not the result of the presence of a D head, but some sort of post-syntactic agreement of the type discussed in the next section.

5.5. Intervention effects

Boeckx and Jeong (2004) present an analysis of *le-for-les* in terms of a defective intervention effect. They claim that in cases of *le-for-les* as in (87a), the clitic cannot agree with its double because of the presence of the intervening accusative object. Lack of agreement triggers the appearance of a default *le* in their terminology. Agreement is possible in (87b) because there is no intervening accusative object.

- (87) a. Le envié las notas a mis alumnas.
LE sent.1sg the grades to my students.fem
 ‘I sent the grade to my students.’
- b. Les dije a Pedro y Juan que se fuesen.
LES told.1sg to Pedro and Juan that rfl.CL go.3pl
 ‘I told Pedro and Juan that they should leave / I told Pedro and Juan to leave.’

A similar approach is defended in Guajardo (2020) with a much more sophisticated data analysis. Guajardo notes that the presence of a singular direct objects increases the probability of having invariant *le*. He studies the interaction between DO>IO order, the number marking of the DO, and the probability of invariant *le*. His results are summarized in the following data set with our own sample sentences.

- (88) Number and complement order interaction (Guajardo (2020))
- a. Le(s) conté una historia a los niños. (V>DO>IO; sg. DO; 70% *le*)
LE(S) told.1sg a story to the kids
 ‘I told the kids a story.’
- b. Le(s) conté unas historias a los niños. (V>DO>IO; pl. DO; 40% *le*)
LE(S) told.1sg some stories to the kids
 ‘I told the kids some stories.’
- c. Le(s) conté a los niños una historia. (V>IO>DO; sg. DO; 30% *le*)
LE(S) told.1sg to the kids a story
 ‘I told a story to the kids.’
- d. Le(s) conté a los niños unas historias. (V>IO>DO; pl. DO; 40% *le*)
LE(S) told.1sg to the kids some stories
 ‘I told some stories to the kids.’

The strongest contrast is found when a singular DO intervenes between the verb and the IO. In those cases, the probability of having invariant *le* is 70% in Guajardo’s data. Under Guajardo’s account, dative clitics in doubling constructions are agreement morphemes, which may surface as singular *le*, especially when an intervening singular DO is present (due to an agreement attraction effect triggered by the singular DO).

We do not believe that this is the right approach to *le-for-les* since it does not account for many of the properties of *le-for-les* that we have been discussing in this paper. Under an intervention approach, we should not expect to find *le-for-les* when there is no accusative object, contrary to facts. That is, in the absence of an intervenor, no intervention effect should arise, which is not borne out.

We have discussed many instances of *le-for-les* where there is no accusative object at all, as in the examples with psych verbs from the previous section - (82) and (83). Also, under an intervention approach, the status of the dative complement should be irrelevant. However, we have seen that the status of the dative complement is crucial in determining the possibility of having *le-for-les*. The invariant *le* is almost the only option when the dative complement is an inanimate bare plural noun (“*prestarle atención a cosas...*” – ‘to pay attention to ___ things’), whereas the invariant *le* is clearly dispreferred when the dative double is a pronoun (“*les interesa a ellos*” – ‘___ interests them’). Guajardo is aware of the preference for agreeing *les* with pronouns. In fact, in his data, the probability of agreeing *les* with personal pronouns was 90% (see section 5.4). To account for that behavior of full pronouns, he assumes that double

speakers might accidentally spread the number feature of the double³² to the applicative clitic, as in (92c).

- (91) Le(s) conté a unos niños una historia.
LE(S) told.1sg to some kids a story
 ‘I told so me kids a story.’
- (92) a. Syntactic Structure:
 le conté [ApplP [IO a unos niños] [Appl’ Appl⁰ [DO una historia]]]
 b. Expected output: Le conté a unos niños una historia
 c. After number harmony: **Les** conté a unos niños una historia

Under the reasonable assumption that this post-syntactic agreement is subject to some adjacency condition, we can account for some of the intervention effects discussed by Guajardo, in particular the fact that the presence of an intervening singular direct object increases the probability of lack of agreement.³³ Thus, the reason we have more invariant *le* in sentences like (88a) is not because of agreement attraction triggered by the singular DO as Guajardo argues, but because the presence of the singular DO is interfering with number harmony.

The number harmony / post-syntactic agreement might be helpful in dealing with some data related to interrogative words, which would seem to argue against our proposal. Many scholars have pointed out the interaction between clitic doubling and interrogative pronouns. Suñer (1988) uses the contrast in (93) to argue that clitic doubling is possible with dative interrogative phrases, as in (93a), but impossible with accusative interrogative phrases, as in (93b).

- (93) a. ¿A quiénes les dieron los patrocinadores el premio?
 to whom.pl them.CL.dat gave.3pl the sponsors the prize
 ‘Whom did the sponsors give the prize to?’
 b. *¿A cuántas / cuáles pasajeras las rescataron?
 to how-many/which passengers them.CL.acc rescued.3pl
 ‘How many/which passengers did they rescue?’

³² If the post-syntactic agreement were not restricted to the double, that is, if the dative clitic could agree with anything including the direct object, we would expect cases of *les-for-le* as in (i) to be acceptable, contrary to facts.

- (i) *Les di los libros a Juan.
 LES gave.1sg the books to Juan
 ‘I gave the books to Juan.’

On the other hand, (i) feels better than (ii) and (iii), which seems to indicate that some type of number agreement can take place between the dative clitic and an adjacent direct object.

- (ii) **Les di un libro a Juan.
 LES gave.1sg a book to Juan
 (iii) **Les di a Juan los libros.
 LES gave.1sg to Juan the books

³³ Under this proposal, it is less straightforward to account for why an intervening plural DO does not seem to interfere with number harmony (relevant examples in (88)). One possibility would be that the DO and the IO form a constituent of some sort (possibly some extension of the applicative phrase), and that since both DO and IO are plural, this constituent can be marked as plural and thus trigger plural number harmony.

Under our analysis, there is a correlation between the presence of the accusative clitic and the presence of the agreeing pronominal dative clitic. Thus, since in (93b) the accusative clitic is not possible, we would not expect the agreeing pronominal clitic in (93a) – contrary to facts. In the *le-for-les* literature, we have not been able to find an explicit discussion of invariant *le* and interrogative contexts. In order to have a clearer picture of the data, we performed Google and Twitter searches of “*a quiénes le(s) dijiste*” (‘to whom did you say’) and “*a cuántos le(s) dijiste*” (‘to how many did you say’). The results appear below. Some sample sentences of defective *le* are also included.

(94) Google search

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| a. | "a quiénes les dijiste" | 38 |
| | <i>to whom.pl LES said.2sg</i> | |
| b. | "a quiénes le dijiste" | 8 |
| | <i>to whom.pl LE said.2sg</i> | |
| | ‘Who[pl.] you said...’ | |
| c. | "a cuántos les dijiste" | 18 |
| | <i>to how-many LES said.2sg</i> | |
| d. | "a cuántos le dijiste" | 10 |
| | <i>to how-many LE said.2sg</i> | |
| | ‘To how many (people) did you tell...?’ | |

(95) Twitter search

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. | "a quiénes les dijiste" | 142 days till 10 th item |
| | <i>to whom.pl LES said.2sg</i> | |
| b. | "a quiénes le dijiste" | 588 days till 10 th item |
| | <i>to whom.pl LE said.2sg</i> | |
| c. | "a cuántos les dijiste" | 75 days till 10 th item |
| | <i>to how-many LES said.2sg</i> | |
| d. | "a cuántos le dijiste" | 172 days till 10 th item |
| | <i>to how-many LE said.2sg</i> | |

- (96) a. ¿A cuántos le dijiste lo mismo? (Google)
to how-many LE said.2sg the same
 ‘How many people did you tell the same to?’
- b. Ahora sí, quedó claro a quiénes le dijiste inmorales (Twitter)
now yes stayed.3sg clear to who.pl LE said.2sg immoral
 ‘Yes! Now it’s clear who you called immoral’
- c. ¿A cuántas muchachas le habrá dicho usted lo mismo?
to how-many girls LE have.fut.3sg said you.formal the same
 ‘How many girls would you have said the same to?’ (Kany 1945)

Descriptively, it is clear that the dative wh-words (both interrogative and relative) in the searched sequences are more likely to appear with the agreeing *les* than with the invariant *le*. However, the likelihood of agreeing *les* is slightly lower with “*cuántos*” (‘how many’). This clearly supports our proposal of linking the *le/les* alternation to the type of constituent being doubled: “*cuántos*” (‘how many’) is more likely to have an indefinite interpretation, which results a lower probability of being associated with a

Big D, and hence a higher probability of invariant *le*.³⁴ However, a purely syntactic-semantic account does not expect the agreeing option to be the preferred output, as the data reveals. We believe that the overwhelming preference of agreeing *les* with dative wh-phrases is due to post-syntactic agreement / number harmony.

- (97) a. Syntax:
 [[A cuántas personas] [le dijiste [AppIP [IO t] [AppI' Appl⁰ [DO la verdad]]]]]
 b. Expected output: A cuántas personas le dijiste la verdad?
 c. After number harmony: A cuántas personas **les** dijiste la verdad?

This analysis predicts that if the wh-word stays in situ, then there should be a stronger preference for the invariant *le*. We believe that this prediction is borne out. Although the contrasts are subtle, it seems to us that the invariant *le* is the preferred option when the wh-word stays in situ as in the following:

- (98) Al final, ¿le dijiste la verdad a cuántas personas?
at-the end LE said_{2SG} the truth to how-many persons
 ‘In the end, you told the truth to how many people?’

One could wonder whether the post-syntactic agreement process that we are postulating to explain some of the cases that do not fall under our main proposal is all that is needed to explain the alternation between agreeing *le(s)* and invariant *le*. Under this possibility, all we would need would be an agreeing *le* for null object contexts (possibly the result of ‘clitic mutation’ as in Ormazabal and Romero (2020)) and a non-agreeing *le* which would optionally show post-syntactic agreement. However, under that scenario, it is not clear how to explain the preference for agreeing *les* with pronouns or the semantic factors involved (i.e., less agreement with inanimates and indefinites).

6. Conclusion

In this paper we have been concerned with agreement in dative clitics in Spanish. Although there is a lot of variation in the data and contrasts are rarely categorical, there is also a clear pattern. There is a clear parallelism between the distribution of agreement in dative clitics and the presence of accusative clitics. The contexts where dative clitics show more agreement are the contexts where accusative clitics are required. To account for this pattern, we developed our core proposal that dative clitics should be decomposed into two different morphemes: an applicative morpheme and a determiner head. This determiner is the same type of element that is found in accusative clitics, thus accounting for the similar distribution of accusative clitics and agreement in datives. When the determiner is not present with a dative clitic, the invariant *le* is spelled out. The two morphemes that we assume compose dative clitics are the same two morphemes that are independently realized in Bantu languages. This parallelism between Spanish dative clitics and Bantu applicative constructions provides strong crosslinguistic support for our core proposal.

Although our core proposal accounts for the general tendencies observed in the distribution of agreement in dative clitics, there are still some patterns that needed to be accounted for. In particular, we needed to account for unexpected cases of agreeing

³⁴ A further semantic reason to account for the high probability of *les* with plural “*quiénes*” (‘who’ [pl.]) could be linked to the fact that plural “*quiénes*” is D-linked according to Maldonado (2020).

les. To do that, we adopted Ormazabal and Romero's (2020) number harmony proposal and assumed that some instances of agreeing *les* are the result of some post-syntactic agreement.

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