

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EXTERNAL POSSESSION IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper offers a comparative examination of external possession in Spanish and English. While English predominantly resorts to internal possession to express inalienable possession between a possessor and a body-part noun (BPN) ('James saw her arm'), English mirrors Spanish and other Romance languages in allowing for this construal to emerge between a possessor surfacing as the verb's internal argument and marked with accusative case, and a BPN headed by a definite determiner and occurring inside a locative PP ('Carlos hit him on the arm'; 'Carlos lo golpeó en el brazo'). We argue that the possessor originates inside the DP containing the BPN in both languages, and propose a possessor raising analysis whereby the possessor, unable to get case inside the possessum DP, raises to the specifier of the argumental locative PP to receive case from the verb (Landau 1999; Sánchez López 2007; Suárez-Palma 2024). Interestingly, while Spanish allows external possession between an external argument and a BPN inside an instrumental PP, English does not ('James abrió la puerta con la/su mano;' 'James opened the door with \*the/his hand'). We claim, contra Landau (1999), that instrumental PPs are adjuncts from where possessor raising cannot occur. The difference between English and Spanish is that Spanish BPNs allow an implicit possessor variable as an argument, which we model syntactically as PRO (Guéron 1985), whereas English BPNs do not. In the absence of an explicit possessor argument, PRO is controlled by a local c-commanding antecedent, i.e. the external argument Spec, Voice, perpetuating the inalienable possession interpretation. English possessors must always be overt, forcing BPNs to be internally possessed in these contexts.

**Key words:** Inalienable possession; external possession; possessor raising; English; Spanish; Romance.

**RESUMEN.** Este trabajo ofrece un estudio comparativo de la posesión externa en español e inglés. Mientras que el inglés recurre predominantemente a la posesión interna para expresar la relación inalienable entre un poseedor y un sustantivo que hace referencia a una parte del cuerpo (SPC) ('James saw her arm'), esta lengua permite, al igual que el español y otras lenguas románicas, codificar esta relación entre el argumento interno del verbo, marcado con caso acusativo, y el SPC precedido por un artículo definido, dentro de un SP locativo ('Carlos hit him in the face;' 'Carlos lo golpeó en la cara'). Argüimos que el poseedor se genera dentro del SDet que contiene el SPC en ambas lenguas, y proponemos un análisis de ascenso de poseedor por el cual este argumento, incapaz de obtener caso dentro del SDet, debe desplazarse al especificador del SP locativo argumental, desde donde recibe caso del verbo (Landau 1999; Sánchez López

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2007; Suárez-Palma 2024). Curiosamente, al contrario que el español, el inglés no permite la posesión externa entre un argumento externo y un SPC dentro de un SP instrumental (‘James abrió la puerta con la/su mano;’ ‘James opened the door with\*the/his hand’). Argumentamos, contra Landau (1999), que los SPs instrumentales son adjuntos desde donde el ascenso del poseedor resulta imposible. La diferencia radica en que los SPCs del español toman como poseedor una variable implícita, que modelamos sintácticamente como PRO (Guéron 1985), mientras que los del inglés no. En ausencia de un poseedor explícito, el control de PRO se produce mediante un antecedente local que lo manda-c, es decir, el argumento externo en Espec,Voz, perpetuando así la interpretación de posesión inalienable. En inglés, los poseedores deben ser siempre explícitos, lo cual fuerza la posesión interna de los SPCs en estos contextos.

**Palabras clave:** posesión inalienable; posesión externa; ascenso de poseedor; inglés; español; lenguas románicas.

## 1. Introduction<sup>2</sup>

This paper offers a comparative study of external possession in Spanish and in English, a phenomenon commonly associated with contexts where a relationship of inalienable possession arises between a noun denoting a body part (henceforth, BPN) and a possessor argument outside the DP containing the BPN. Guéron (2006, 2017) identifies three external possession configurations in French, which are also attested in Spanish, and classifies them according to how the possessor surfaces outside the possessum DP: (i) as the verb’s external argument (1a); (ii) as a dative argument, optionally doubled by a dative DP (1b); and (iii), as the verb’s internal argument (1c). In all these constructions, a definite determiner heading the DP containing the BPN suffices to convey the relationship of possession, and this is in fact the preferred choice in most Spanish varieties; instead, a possessive determiner would be the marked option. Additionally, the BPNs in (1a) and (1b) can be interpreted as a type (Rosa’s own hand) or as a token (e.g., a prop, a hand-shaped object not inherently linked to Rosa).

- (1) a. *Possessor = External Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 [Rosa<sub>i</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> movió [la/?su mano<sub>i</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub>  
 Rosa moved the/her hand  
 ‘Rosa moved her/the hand.’
- b. *Possessor = Dative Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 Nuria<sub>i</sub> le<sub>j</sub> sostiene [la/?su mano<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub> ([a Rosa<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub>)  
 Nuria 3SG.DAT holds the/her hand.ACC to Rosa.DAT  
 ‘Nuria holds Rosa’s hand.’
- c. *Possessor = Internal Argument; BPN = Inside Locative PP*  
 Nuria<sub>i</sub> agarró [a Rosa<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> [PP de [la/?su mano<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub>]  
 Nuria grabbed to Rosa.ACC of the/her hand  
 ‘Nuria grabbed Rosa by the hand.’

On the other hand, English predominantly resorts to internal possession to denote a relationship of (inalienable) possession, as shown in (2a); should the BPN in this example be

<sup>2</sup> List of abbreviations: 1= first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; ACC = accusative; D = determiner; DAT = dative; DOM = differential object marking; F = feminine; INSTR = instrumental; LOC = locative; NOM = nominative; OBL = oblique; PL = plural; RFL = reflexive; SG = singular

in a DP headed by a definite determiner, the BPN is necessarily interpreted as a token, i.e. as a prop. Moreover, the dative possessor configuration is not available in this language as it is in Romance (2b). Nonetheless, external possession does seem to be possible in English in the third structure, i.e. where the possessor surfaces as the verb's internal argument, and the BPN occurs inside a locative PP (2c). Crucially, in this case, a definite determiner does favor a type interpretation of the BPN and, in fact, it is preferred over a possessive determiner, thus patterning with the Spanish construction in (1c).

- (2) a. *Possessor = External Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 [Kyle<sub>i</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> moved [the<sup>e</sup>/<sub>i</sub>/his<sub>i</sub> hand]<sub>Possessee</sub>.  
 b. *Possessor = Dative Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 \*Kyle<sub>i</sub> held [her<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> [the hand<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub>.  
 c. *Possessor = Internal Argument; BPN = Inside Locative PP*  
 Kyle<sub>i</sub> grabbed [her<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> [PP by [the<sub>j</sub>/?<sub>j</sub>her<sub>j</sub> hand]<sub>Possessee</sub> ].

While external possession configurations have been studied extensively in the literature on Romance languages like Spanish (Guéron 1983, 1985; Vergnaud and Zubizarreta 1992; Sánchez López 2007, among others), the English construction in (2c) has received little attention. Here, we follow previous analyses (Landau 1999; Sánchez López 2007) in assuming that locative PPs are argumental in Spanish and in English, merging as the root's complement, and show evidence to propose a possessor raising analysis whereby the possessor argument originates inside the DP containing the BPN in both languages; unable to be case-licensed in its merging position, the possessor subsequently raises to the specifier of the locative PP, where the verb marks it with accusative case.

In addition to locative PPs, Landau (1999) argues that source and instrumental PPs in Hebrew are also argumental, therefore not adjuncts, which favors possessor raising from within them. This would explain why an inalienable possession reading obtains in Spanish between the verb's external argument and a BPN in a DP headed by a definite determiner, which is, at the same time, inside an instrumental PP (3). Interestingly, a possessive determiner co-referring with the external argument in these contexts is not as marked as it is in the locative PP construction above.

- (3) Carlos<sub>i</sub> abrió la puerta [PP con [la/su mano]<sub>i</sub> ].  
 Carlos opened the door with the/his hand  
 'Carlos opened the door with his hand.'

English, however, differs from Spanish in this regard, for BPNs inside instrumental PPs in this language must be internally possessed via a possessive determiner co-referring with the verb's external argument for the inalienable possession reading to obtain (4).

- (4) Charles<sub>i</sub> opened the door [PP with \*the<sub>i</sub>/his<sub>i</sub> hand].

Our proposal structurally accounts for this typological difference. We offer evidence demonstrating that instrumental PPs are adjuncts, and therefore islands for extraction and possessor raising, both in Spanish and in English, unlike in Hebrew. Additionally, we argue that BPNs are inherently relational and select for a possessor argument (Partee and Borschev 2003, *inter alia*); the difference between the two languages lies in that in Spanish, this

possessor argument is realized as an implicit possessor variable, which we model syntactically as PRO (Guéron 1985). On the contrary, English lacks this option, requiring overt saturation of the possessor argument within the DP containing the BPN. In the absence of an explicit possessor argument, the external argument in Spec, Voice becomes a legitimate possible controller for PRO in (3); on the other hand, the lack of PRO in English BPNs forces these nominals to be internally possessed for the inalienable possession interpretation to obtain, as in (4). Finally, we show that our analysis successfully explains the distribution of external possession when applied to other seemingly challenging contexts in Spanish and English.

The paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, we discuss the different strategies of internal possession in Spanish and English, and explain how we analyze it, which will become relevant for the understanding of external possession configurations. Section 3 is devoted to external possession; in Section 3.1, we analyze dative possessors in Spanish, and explain why this phenomenon is absent in the syntax of English; Section 3.2 tackles accusative possessors and BPNs inside locative PPs in both languages; Section 3.3 deals with nominative possessors and BPNs inside instrumental PPs; finally, in Section 3.4 we address nominative possessors of accusative BPNs. Section 4 concludes the paper.

## 2. Internal possession

Internal possession refers to alienable and inalienable configurations where both the possessum and its possessor surface inside the same constituent. In Spanish, this can be accomplished by means of a possessive determiner (5a), which agrees in person and number with the possessor and in number with the possessee,<sup>3</sup> or via a strong possessive (5b), agreeing in person and number with the possessor and also sharing the gender and number features with the possessee; in this case, the nominal denoting the possessee may undergo ellipsis (5c). Additionally, when the possessor is realized as a full proper or common noun, it may surface internally inside a PP headed by *de* ('of'), which marks it with genitive case (5d).

- (5) a. Mis        manos.  
          my.PL hands  
          'My hands.'
- b. Las        manos    mías.  
          the.F.PL hands.F mine.F.PL  
          'My hands.'
- c. Las ~~manos~~ mías.  
          'Mine.'
- d. Las        manos de María/mi abuela.  
          the.F.PL hands of María/my grandmother  
          'María's/my grandmother's hands.'

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<sup>3</sup> The first and second person plural possessive determiners also agree in gender with the possessee:

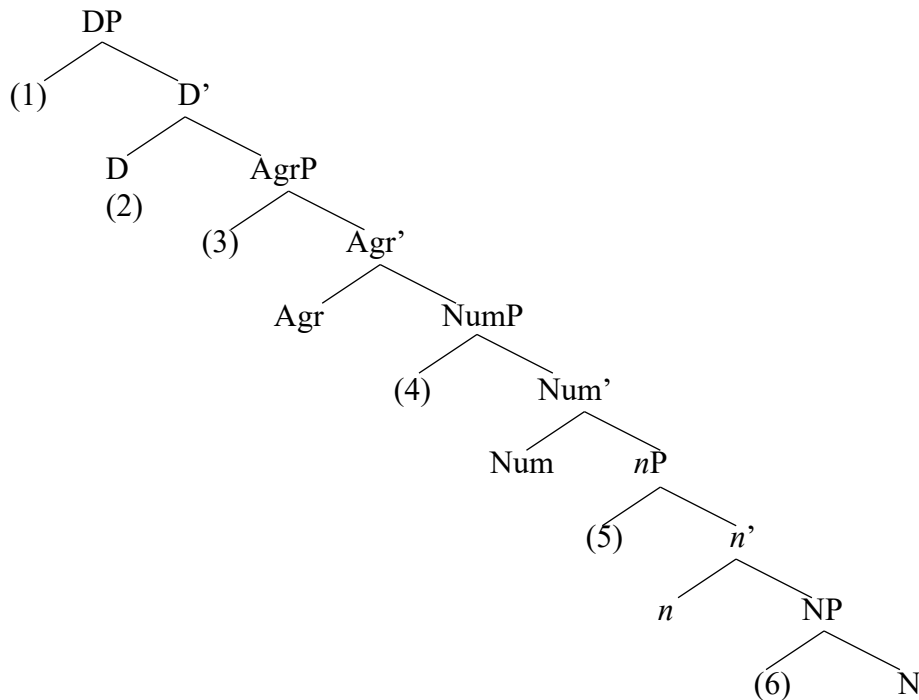
- (i)        Nuestras/vuestras        manos.  
          our.1PL.F.PL/your.2PL.F.PL hands  
          'Our/your hands.'

In English, on the other hand, internal possession is expressed by means of a possessive determiner (6a), or via a possessive pronoun (6b). Moreover, nominal possessors may occur in a Saxon genitive configuration (6c), or as the complement of the genitive preposition *of* (6d); this last option is particularly productive with relational nouns.

- (6) a. My hands.  
 b. Mine.  
 c. María's hands.  
 d. The hands of my grandmother.

In earlier work, Suárez-Palma (2024) accounted for internal possession in Spanish by adapting Alexiadou et al.'s (2007) proposal for the different positions where internal possessors can merge and be licensed inside the possessum DP.

- (7) 1. Lexical DP possessives            *John's book*    (English)  
 2. Clitic possessives                *Su libro*        (Spanish)  
 3. 'Weak' pronoun possessives      *El seu llibre*   (Catalan)  
 4. Post-nominal strong possessors *El libro suyo*   (Spanish)  
 5. Alienable possessors  
 6. Inalienable possessors



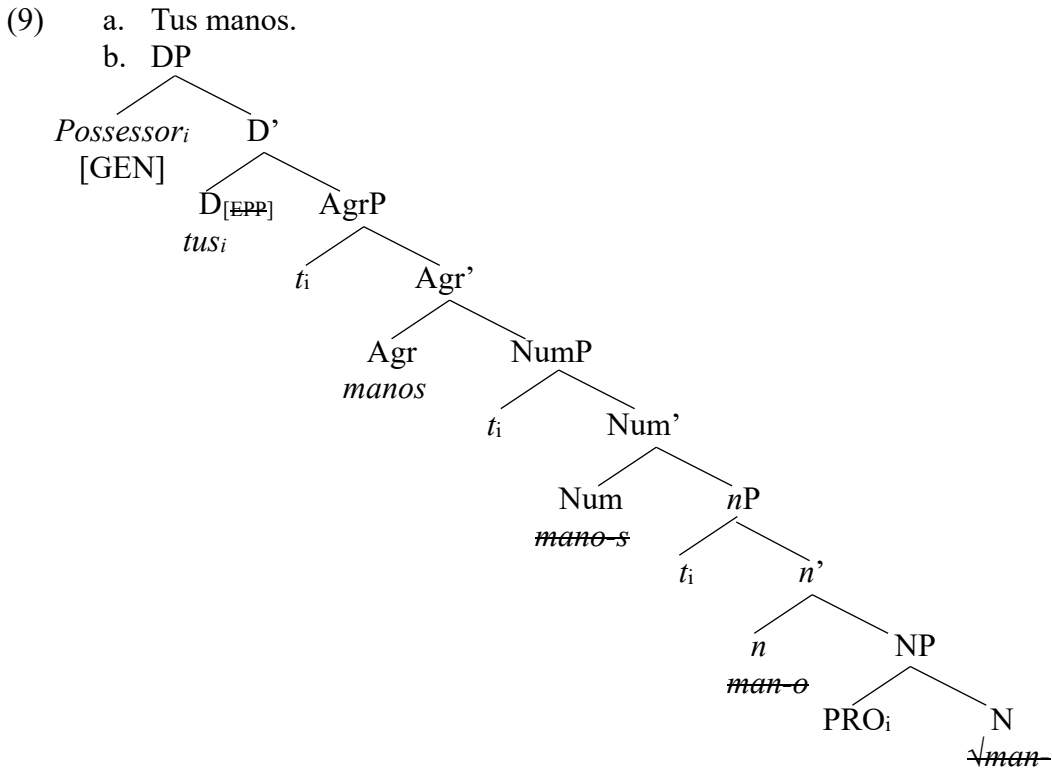
This analysis assumes that alienable and inalienable possessors occupy different positions inside the possessum DP, as proposed by Español Echevarría (1997) and Fábregas (2011). Moreover, this hypothesis is based on the idea that body-part nouns are inherently relational and select for a possessor argument (Partee and Borschev 2003). Crucially, we propose that this argument is an implicit possessor variable in Spanish BPNs, which we model syntactically as PRO (Guéron 1985); PRO is then controlled by a local c-commanding

antecedent in this language, i.e., a possessor in Spec,*nP*, therefore giving rise to the inalienable possession interpretation. In English, on the other hand, possessor arguments must be overt, which means that inalienable possessors are generated in Spec,*NP* in full form.

Suárez-Palma (2024) also adopts the featural endowment for Spanish possessors proposed in Fábregas (2011), shown in (8), whereby, in addition to its own bundle of interpretable phi-features, the possessor also hosts several uninterpretable ones it needs to check against the possessee, such as a number and a gender feature, which are visible in first and second person plural pronominal possessives in Spanish (e.g. *nuestr-aF-SPL manOF-SPL*; ‘our hands’).

- (8) Suárez-Palma (2024: 118)
- a. Feature endowment of the possessive: [Person, Num, uNum, uGen]
  - b. Feature endowment of the determiner: [D, uNum, uGen]

With this, the derivation of an internally possessed BPN like *tus manos* (‘your hands’) would look like (9).



The derivation in (9) proceeds as follows: the root  $\sqrt{\text{man-}}$ , being inherently relational, takes a PRO as an argument in its specifier, controlled by the possessor argument in Spec,*nP*. The root head-moves to Agr<sup>o</sup>, and from there it establishes an agreement relation with the c-commanding determiner, which results in the latter getting its gender and number uninterpretable features valued: [D, Num<sub>PL</sub>, Gen<sub>F</sub>]. The possessor raises from Spec,*nP* to Spec,AgrP, where it receives genitive case from Agr<sup>o</sup>; this is also the position where Ticio (2005) argues internal possessor PPs are licensed. The possessor’s [Gen<sub>F</sub>] and [Num<sub>PL</sub>] features are valued in Spec,*nP* and Spec,NumP, respectively. Possessors would remain in

Spec,AgrP in languages with weak possessives like Catalan (*les teves mans*; ‘your hands’) or Italian (*le tue mani*; ‘your hands’). However, according to this proposal, in Spanish, which shows possessive determiners, the possessor would further raise to Spec,DP to check an [EPP] feature in D<sup>o</sup>.<sup>4</sup> At this point, three alternatives are possible: (i) when Lexical Insertion happens, Spanish utilizes the possessive determiner *tus* to spell out D<sup>o</sup> and the possessor in its specifier, in what constitutes an instance of Phrasal Spell-Out (Fábregas 2009; Starke 2009); (ii) under a morphophonological approach, this may well be analyzed as cumulative exponence (Stump 1998), whereby different feature bundles are realized by a single lexeme (Fábregas 2011); and (iii), it may be that the definite determiner is unpronounced in this configuration for the same reason why a complementizer is not realized when a *wh*-phrase occupies its specifier (*I wonder who (\*that) she invited*).

On the other hand, Spanish and other Romance languages show strong possessors, which occur post-nominally. These arguments have been argued to convey a contrastive focus interpretation (Fábregas 2011), as in (10), where a strong possessor is more felicitous.

(10) Fábregas (2011: 22)

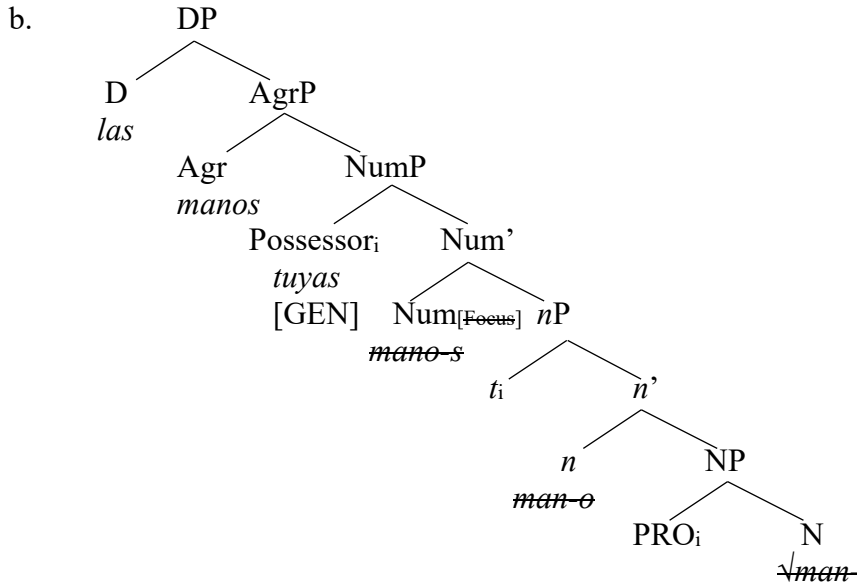
- a. Me gusta el color de ojos suyo, no el tuyo.  
     1SG.DAT like the color of eyes his not the yours  
     ‘I like HIS color of eyes, not yours.’
- b. # Me gusta su color de ojos, no el tuyo.  
     1SG.DAT like his color of eyes not the yours  
     ‘I like his color of eyes, not yours.’

We propose that strong possessors raise to the specifier of NumP and remain there to check a [Focus] feature in Num<sup>o</sup>, having valued all their uninterpretable features at that point. From there, strong possessors receive genitive case from Agr<sup>o</sup> via Agree.

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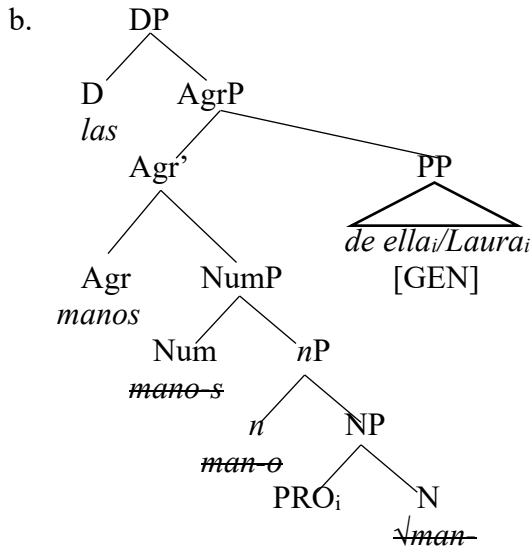
<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, it could be that the possessor argument remains in Spec,AgrP in Spanish, as it does in Catalan or Italian, and that the possessive determiner *mis* spells out both DP and AgrP when Vocabulary Insertion takes place. Since these fine-grained details are not necessarily the scope of this paper, we leave them open for further study.

(11) a. Las manos tuyas.



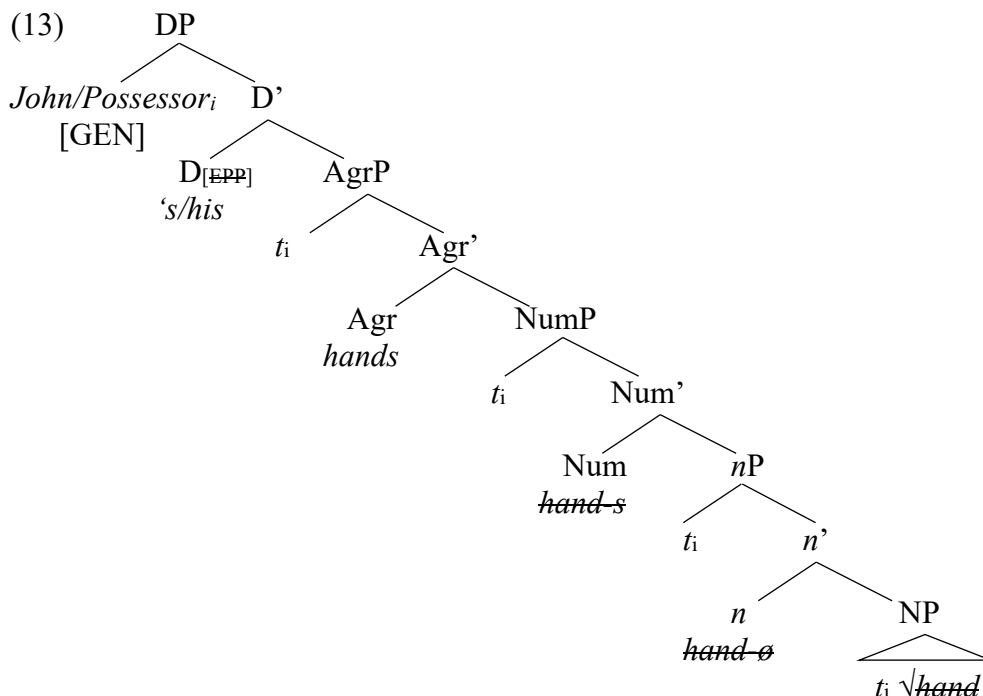
Finally, in the event that the possessor is instantiated by a noun or a full pronominal, it is assigned genitive case by the preposition *de*, and the PP it heads adjoins to AgrP, from where the possessor argument controls the PRO inside the NP, as in (12).

(12) a. Las manos de ella/Laura.



Here, we would like to propose the structure in (7) above to also analyze internally possessed BPNs in English, albeit slightly different: we claim that BPNs in this language cannot take an implicit possessor argument variable; instead, alienable and inalienable possessors in this language must be overt, the former being generated in Spec,*nP*, and the latter in the specifier of the BPN. In both cases, the possessor argument raises to Spec,*DP* to check an [EPP] feature in *D*<sup>o</sup>, after being marked with genitive case in Spec,*AgrP*. In the context of nominal possessors, *D*<sup>o</sup> is spelled out as the Saxon genitive 's, while pronominal

ones trigger the emergence of possessive determiners. Alternatively, nominal possessors may sometimes occur adjoined to AgrP, marked with the genitive preposition *of* (e.g. *the voice of my father*), like we saw for Spanish; the postnominal genitive construction in English seems to be restricted to part-whole or inalienable relations (e.g. *?the car of my father*). The derivation of an internally possessed DP like *John's/his hands* is given below.



In (13), the possessor of the BPN *hand* originates inside the NP; the BPN raises to Agr<sup>o</sup> via head movement, while the possessor, be it nominal or pronominal, moves to the specifier of the DP where it is realized either as a full NP in a Saxon genitive configuration, or as a possessive determiner, respectively.

Finally, Partee and Borschev (2003) point out that, under certain circumstances, relational nouns –including BPNs– allow a sortal interpretation; this occurs when these nouns are generated without a possessor argument, i.e. as a simple category-denoting predicate that does not encode a relation to a possessor. This explains the lack of an inalienable possession reading in the Spanish examples in (14) and in their corresponding English translations.

- (14) a. Esta depiladora elimina [el ø vello]<sub>arb</sub> sin dolor.  
 this epilator eliminates the hair without pain  
 ‘This epilator eliminates hair without pain.’
- b. Esta dermatóloga<sub>i</sub> elimina [las ø verrugas]<sub>arb/?\*i</sub> sin anestesia.  
 this dermatologist eliminates the warts without anesthesia  
 ‘This dermatologist removes warts without anesthesia.’

One could assume that BPNs in these contexts may still project a PRO in their specifier, which simply remains uncontrolled, thus favoring the arbitrary interpretation of the BPN’s possessor. While this could be true for (14a), where our encyclopedic knowledge restricts the possibility of an epilator machine to possess hair, the example in (14b) refutes this hypothesis.

In that second example, the dermatologist is a legitimate c-commanding antecedent whose animacy would allow her to control the PRO inside the BPN; however, this expectation is not borne out. Notice that the lack of inalienable possession effects in these contexts also rules out the possibility of the possessor (i.e. the dermatologist) having originated inside the possessum DP and undergone possessor raising to the external argument position. Therefore, it must be the case that in both sentences in (14), we are dealing with sortal instances of BPNs in Spanish and in English.

In this section, we have discussed the different strategies to encode internal possession in Spanish and in English, and proposed an analysis based on Alexiadou et al.’s (2007) internal structure of the DP. Our proposal is consistent with previous work supporting two different loci for alienable and inalienable possessors to merge –in Spec,*n*P and Spec,NP, respectively– and, most importantly, we have argued that Spanish BPNs but not English ones take an implicit possessor variable as an argument, which we instantiate syntactically as PRO. This will prove crucial for our analysis of the different external possession configurations that we will be dealing with next.

### 3. External possession in Spanish and in English

In this section, we provide a description and analysis of the three external possession configurations of Spanish outlined in (1), repeated below as (15). As we mentioned before, these constructions are common in contexts where a relation of inalienable possession is conveyed between a possessor argument and a BPN, or nominals denoting kinship, items of clothing, personal traits, and any other elements ascribed to someone’s personal sphere (Bally 1926; Herslund and Baron 2001).

- (15) a. *Possessor = External Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 [Ros<sub>a</sub><sub>i</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> movió [la/?su mano<sub>i</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub>  
 Rosa moved the/her hand  
 ‘Rosa moved her/the hand.’
- b. *Possessor = Dative Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 Nuria<sub>i</sub> le<sub>j</sub> sostiene [la/?su mano<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub> ([a Ros<sub>a</sub><sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub>)  
 Nuria 3SG.DAT holds the/her hand.ACC to Rosa.DAT  
 ‘Nuria holds Rosa’s hand.’
- c. *Possessor = Internal Argument; BPN = Inside Locative PP*  
 Nuria<sub>i</sub> agarró [a Ros<sub>a</sub><sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> [PP de [la/?su mano<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub>]  
 Nuria grabbed to Rosa.ACC of the/her hand  
 ‘Nuria grabbed Rosa by the hand.’

It is important to note that the first two sentences in (15) are ambiguous between a type and a token interpretation of the BPN. In the type reading of (15a), for instance, Rosa performs a natural bodily gesture (Hatcher 1944) which results in a movement of her own hand; in other words, the hand enters a part-whole relation with its inalienable possessor, i.e. Rosa. On the other hand, in (15a)’s token reading, the hand is understood to be a prop that is not inherently linked to a specific possessor; e.g. Rosa moves a prosthetic hand that is not attached to her. Interestingly, the example in (15c) resists a token interpretation of the BPN *hand*, i.e. the hand is necessarily Rosa’s. Rooryck (2022) attributes this restriction to the concept of “expectedness”, usually associated to BPNs in DPs headed by a weak definite determiner; according to this author, these nominals are expected to be located in or on their

possessors. Moreover, this reading is reinforced in (15c) by the locative configuration relating the BPN to its inalienable possessor: as a human, Rosa is expected to have hands, therefore a scenario where Nuria grabs one of those hands located on Rosa is more salient and accessible than another where, for instance, Rosa wears or holds a hand-shaped ornament which Nuria grabs.

Another property of external possession configurations is the fact that the definite determiner heading the DP containing the BPN suffices to denote the relationship of inalienable possession between the latter and the external possessor (Guéron 1983, 1985; Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992; Demonte 1995; Rooryck 2022); in most Spanish varieties, a possessive determiner heading the BPN in contexts of external possession becomes redundant.<sup>5</sup> Sánchez López (2007) explains that possessive determiners co-referring with a dative possessor in Spanish are spurious or expletive emphatic pronominals. Moreover, Demonte (1995) demonstrates that the complementary distribution between a dative possessor and a possessive determiner heading the possessum DP in Spanish is predominant with inalienably possessed nouns (16a,c), while it may be overridden in contexts of alienable possession (16b,d).

(16) *Demonte (1995: 92)*

- a. A Juan<sub>i</sub> se le<sub>i</sub> quemó la<sub>i</sub>/\*su<sub>i</sub> mano.  
to Juan.DAT RFL3SG.DAT burned the/his hand  
'Juan's hand (got) burned.'
- b. A Juan<sub>i</sub> se le<sub>i</sub> quemó la<sub>i</sub>/°su<sub>i</sub> casa.<sup>6</sup>  
to Juan.DAT RFL3SG.DAT burned the/his house  
'Juan's house (got) burned.'
- c. Carlos me<sub>i</sub> susurraba dulzuras al<sub>i</sub>/a \*mi<sub>i</sub> oído.  
Carlos 1SG.DAT whispered sweetness.PL to.the/to my ear  
'Carlos whispered sweet things in my ear.'
- d. Carlos me<sub>i</sub> cantaba canciones en la<sub>i</sub>/°mi<sub>i</sub> verja.  
Carlos 1SG.DAT sang songs in the/my fence  
'Carlos sang me songs at my fence.'

The contrasts observed in (16) can also be found with external possessors marked with accusative case when the possessum DP surfaces inside a locative PP; thus, in the context of BPNs or relational nouns, the definite determiner is preferred over the possessive one to encode the relationship of possession in these structures, while alienably possessed nominals are compatible with both, as shown in (17).

- (17) a. La policía golpeó a los atacantes<sub>i</sub> [PP en [DP la<sub>i</sub>?su<sub>i</sub> cara]].  
the police hit to the attackers.ACC in the/their face  
'The police hit the attackers in the face.'

<sup>5</sup> However, it has been noted that dative possessors are compatible with possessive determiners in certain Latin American Spanish varieties, like Mexican Spanish and others in contact with indigenous languages (Escobar 1992; Rodríguez Mondoñedo 2019; Giancaspro and Sánchez 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Demonte (1995) uses the % symbol to indicate stylistic markedness, rather than ungrammaticality.

- b. El testigo vio a los atacantes<sub>i</sub> [PP en [DP el<sub>i</sub>/su<sub>i</sub> coche]].  
 the witness saw to the attackers.ACC in the/their car  
 ‘The witness saw the attackers in their car.’

In their study of external and inalienable possession in French, Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992) point out another important property of external possession constructions, which is also attested in Spanish, namely, the fact that BPNs in external possession configurations favor a distributive reading when their possessor is a plural entity. In other words, although the BPNs in (18) are all singular, all these sentences imply a plurality of them.

- (18) a. Los estudiantes<sub>i</sub> levantaron [la mano]<sub>i</sub>.  
 the students raised the hand  
 ‘The students raised their hand.’  
 b. El doctor les<sub>i</sub> examinó [la garganta]<sub>i</sub> a los pacientes<sub>i</sub>.  
 the doctor 3PL.DAT examined the throat to the patients.DAT  
 ‘The doctor examined the patients’ throats.’  
 c. El asaltante golpeó a las víctimas<sub>i</sub> en [la cara]<sub>i</sub>.  
 the attacker hit to the victims.ACC in the face  
 ‘The attacker hit the victims’ faces.’

When it comes to English, the data in (19) contrast with the Spanish sentences in (15) above, in that English must resort to internal possession in (19a,b) for the inalienable possession interpretation to obtain; otherwise, the BPN receives a token interpretation. However, the sentence in (19c), where the inalienable possessor surfaces as the verb’s internal argument and the BPN merges inside a locative PP, is perfectly grammatical, even when the BPN is headed by the definite article *the*, mirroring the Spanish sentence in (15c); in fact, this strategy is preferred over a possessive determiner in this language.

- (19) a. *Possessor = External Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 [Kyle<sub>i</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> moved [the<sub>i</sub>\*/his<sub>i</sub> hand]<sub>Possessee</sub>.  
 b. *Possessor = Dative Argument; BPN = Internal Argument*  
 \*Kyle<sub>i</sub> held [her<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> [the hand<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessee</sub>.  
 c. *Possessor = Internal Argument; BPN = Inside Locative PP*  
 Kyle<sub>i</sub> looked [her<sub>j</sub>]<sub>Possessor</sub> [PP in [the<sub>j</sub>/?her<sub>j</sub> eye]<sub>Possessee</sub> ].

In addition to the striking structural similarity with its Spanish counterpart (15c), the sentence in (19c) also allows for a distributive reading of the BPN inside the locative PP, when the accusative possessor is plural (20a). Note that this distributive reading is typical of this particular context, and is unavailable in other transitive sentences like (20b).

- (20) a. Matthew hit the attackers<sub>i</sub> in [the face/\*faces]<sub>i</sub>.  
 b. Matthew hit their faces/?face.

Surprisingly, structures like (19c) have received little attention in the literature on English, with few exceptions. Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992), for instance, point out the availability of an inalienable possession reading in the French example in (21a), which is absent in the corresponding English sentence in (21b).

- (21) Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992: 636)
- a. Les enfants<sub>i</sub> ont ouvert [lesyeux]<sub>i</sub>.  
the children have.3PL opened the eyes  
'The children opened their eyes.'
  - b. \*The children<sub>i</sub> opened [the eyes]<sub>i</sub>.

Vergnaud and Zubizarreta analyze the contrast in (21) by claiming that “the definite determiner may function as an expletive from the point of view of denotation in French but not in English” (1992: 642); in other words, the English definite determiner must be absent in a type-denoting expression, i.e. in inalienable possession readings, otherwise the nominal expression denotes a token. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that an indefinite determiner does favor an inalienable possession interpretation, as in (22).

- (22)
- a. The children<sub>i</sub> raised [a hand]<sub>i</sub>.
  - b. The children<sub>i</sub> opened [an eye]<sub>i</sub>.
  - c. The children<sub>i</sub> moved [an arm]<sub>i</sub>.

However, Vergnaud and Zubizarreta’s hypothesis appears to be challenged by examples like those in (23), where the definite determiner heads the DP containing the BPN, and yet the inalienable possession reading obtains.

- (23)
- a. John kissed Mary on the cheek.
  - b. John punched his enemy in the nose.
  - c. John tickled the children on the foot.

These authors argue that verbs like *kiss*, *punch*, or *tickle* license metonymy, allowing the BPN in the locative PP to be identified with the possessor in the verb’s complement position, both of which enter a part-whole relationship. Such metonymic relationship between the part and the whole is what makes it possible for sentences like (23) to entail those in (24), respectively.

- (24)
- a. John kissed Mary (on the cheek).
  - b. John punched his enemy (on the nose).
  - c. John tickled the children (on the foot).

Nonetheless, Nakamoto (2010) identifies several counterexamples that pose a challenge to Vergnaud and Zubizarreta’s proposal, for they seem to allow an inalienable possession reading, yet the metonymic relationship between the part and the whole does not allow rephrasing in the same fashion as in (24).

- (25)
- a. She took him \*(by the shoulders).
  - b. He looks me \*(straight in the eyes).

The explanatory power of metonymy-licensing verbs does not apply to examples like those in (25). The admissibility of the definite determiner must therefore be due to some structural relationship absent in (21b), which does not rely on the lexical semantics of the

verb. Here, we show that a possessor raising approach accounts for the data in (24) and (25) straightforwardly.

Finally, we want to consider one last configuration from Spanish where external possession appears to be possible, which has gone unnoticed in the literature. In (26), the external argument *Pedro* is interpreted as the inalienable possessor of the BPN *pie*, which merges inside the instrumental PP headed by *con*. As in the case of the locative configuration in (15c) above, here the BPN can also appear headed by a definite determiner, without preventing the inalienable reading. Although this appears to be the preferred option by most speakers, our consultants notice that the presence of a possessive determiner in this context is not as marked as it would be in (15c).

- (26) *Possessor = External Argument; BPN = Inside Instrumental PP*  
 Pedro<sub>i</sub> cerró la puerta [PP con [el<sub>i</sub>/su<sub>i</sub> pie]].  
 Pedro closed the door with the/his foot  
 ‘Pedro closed the door with his foot.’

Crucially, English does not allow external possession in these contexts, as evidenced in (27).

- (27) Peter<sub>i</sub> opened the door [PP with [the\*/his<sub>i</sub> hand]].

The sentence in (27) shows that for BPNs to be interpreted as possessed by the external argument, the former must be internally possessed by means of a possessive determiner co-referring with the latter. In this case, a definite determiner heading the DP containing the BPN forces a token reading. Interestingly, the only way a definite determiner can head a DP containing a BPN in these configurations while preserving the inalienable reading is if the BPN is modified by a restrictive adjective with focus intonation, as in (28). The focus intonation is not required when a possessive determiner heads the possessum DP.

- (28) Peter<sub>i</sub> opened the door [PP with [DP the/his BROKEN hand]<sub>i</sub>].

The role of the restrictive adjective *broken* in (28) is to single out a subset belonging to a closed superset, i.e. Peter’s two hands, excluding a non-broken hand of his, thus allowing for the possession interpretation to obtain without necessarily resorting to a possessive determiner. However, notice that, should the BPN denote a body part that is not part of a set, i.e. a superset which includes a single member, the inalienable possession interpretation is lost in the presence of a definite determiner, and a possessive determiner is required, as in (29). In other words, a definite determiner can head these DPs whenever a restrictive adjective modifies the BPN in the context of a defined set of alternatives.

- (29) Peter<sub>i</sub> smelled the rose [PP with [DP the\*/his<sub>i</sub> BROKEN nose]].

Spanish also allows restrictive adjectives modifying a BPN inside a DP headed by a definite determiner when the BPN denotes a member of a set; as in English, the DP containing the BPN may also be headed by a possessive determiner.

- (30) Pedro<sub>i</sub> abrió la puerta [PP con [DP la<sub>i</sub>/su<sub>i</sub> mano rota]].  
 Pedro opened the door with the/his hand broken  
 ‘Pedro opened the door with the/his broken hand.’

Nonetheless, when the BPN refers to the single member of its own superset, this nominal may still be the complement of a definite determiner. Crucially, when this is the case, the PP containing the BPN displays an array of possible interpretations; first, it may be understood as a depictive referring to the external argument (31a), thus favoring the inalienable possession reading. Additionally, this phrase may have comitative reading (31b), which appears to block the inalienable possession construal. Finally, should the instrumental reading be forced (31c), the BPN *nariz* receives a token interpretation, as in the English example in (29).

- (31) a. *Depictive PP*  
 Pedro<sub>i</sub> olió la rosa [PP con [DP la<sub>i</sub> nariz rota]].  
 Pedro smelled the rose with the nose broken  
 ‘Pedro smelled the rose when his nose was broken.’
- b. *Comitative PP*  
 Pedro<sub>i</sub> olió la rosa [PP con [DP la\*<sub>i</sub> nariz rota]].  
 Pedro smelled the rose with the nose broken  
 ‘Pedro smelled the rose while holding a broken nose.’
- c. *Instrumental PP*  
 Pedro<sub>i</sub> olió la rosa [PP con [DP la?<sub>i</sub> nariz rota]].  
 Pedro smelled the rose with the nose broken  
 ‘Pedro smelled the rose using a/the broken nose.’

Here, we have discussed different external possession strategies available in Spanish, whereby the inalienable possessor surfaces independently from the BPN. Specifically, the possessor may be realized (i) as the verb’s external argument and the BPN as the verb’s theme; (ii) as a dative argument while the BPN merges as the verb’s complement; and (iii) as the internal argument when the BPN is inside a locative PP. The latter structure is the only instance of external possession available in English, and we showed evidence to claim that the Spanish and English configurations are structurally identical. Finally, we presented an additional configuration of Spanish where external possession seems to occur, namely one where the possessor surfaces as the verb’s external argument, and the BPN is inside an instrumental PP. However, this construction is not possible in English, the BPN needing to be internally possessed, unless the latter denotes a member of a set which is singled out by a restrictive adjective. The table below summarizes the data presented in this section.

Table 1. External possession in Spanish and English.

Configuration		SPANISH		ENGLISH
(1) Possessor <sub>NOM</sub> – BPN <sub>ACC</sub>	□	<i>Jaime levantó la mano</i>	□	* <i>Jaime raised the hand</i>
(2) Possessor <sub>DAT</sub> – BPN <sub>ACC</sub>	□	<i>Jaime le<sub>i</sub> vio [las arrugas]<sub>i</sub> a Miguel</i>	□	* <i>Jaime saw Miguel the wrinkles.</i>
(3) Possessor <sub>ACC</sub> – BPN <sub>OBL (loc)</sub>	□	<i>Noelia golpeó a Nuria<sub>i</sub> en [la cara]<sub>i</sub></i>	□	<i>Noelia hit Nuria<sub>i</sub> in [the face]<sub>i</sub></i>
(4) Possessor <sub>NOM</sub> – BPN <sub>OBL (ins)</sub>	□	<i>Irene<sub>i</sub> abrió la puerta con [la mano]<sub>i</sub></i>	□	* <i>Irene<sub>i</sub> opened the door with [the hand]<sub>i</sub></i>

Next, we develop a hybrid possessor raising-control analysis that can not only account for the instances of internal and external possession in both languages successfully, but also explain the crosslinguistic variation presented in this section. We will begin by looking at dative possessors.

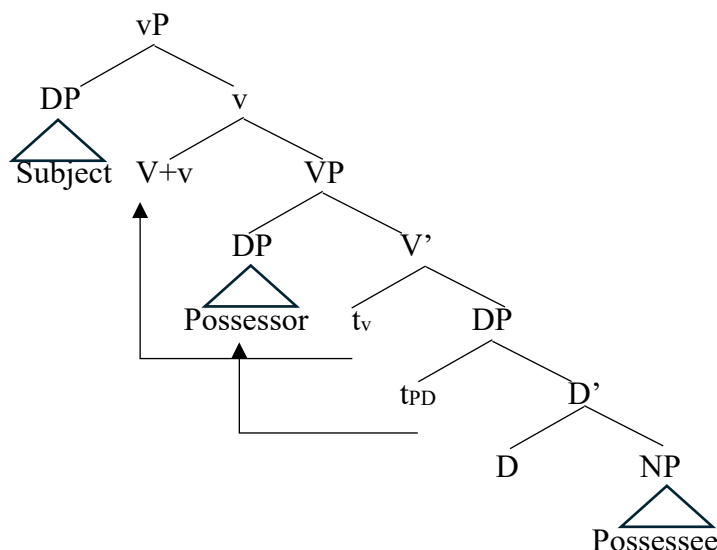
### 3.1. Dative possessors

Landau (1999) develops a possessor raising analysis for dative possessors in Hebrew (32a) and in Romance (32b), whereby these arguments are generated with dative case features in the specifier of the DP containing the possessee. Landau argues that this is a caseless position, and the possessor must therefore raise to check its case features against V; the author explains that this approach, illustrated in (32), accounts for the strict locality that exists between the possessor and the possessee in these languages.

- (32) a. *Landau (1999: 8)*  
 Gil šataf le-Rina et ha-panim.  
 Gil washed Rina.DAT ACC the-face  
 ‘Gil washed Gina’s face.’  
 b. *Jean lui lave le visage.<sup>7</sup>*  
 Juan 3SG.DAT washes the face  
 ‘Juan washes his/her face.’

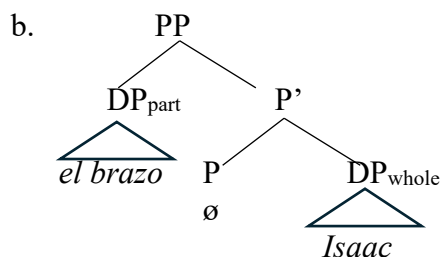
<sup>7</sup> Example from French.

c. Landau (1999: 10)



Sánchez López (2007) argues that Spanish BPNs in a part-whole relationship with dative possessors are in a locative predication relationship, which is obtained by means of a null preposition of central coincidence relating both arguments sitting in its specifier and complement positions, respectively (33); the main point of this proposal is that the BPN in these contexts is not simply possessed by the possessor but is part of the latter.

- (33) a. Ismael le golpeó el brazo a Isaac.  
 Ismael 3SG.DAT hit the arm to Isaac.DAT  
 ‘Ismael hit Isaac’s arm.’



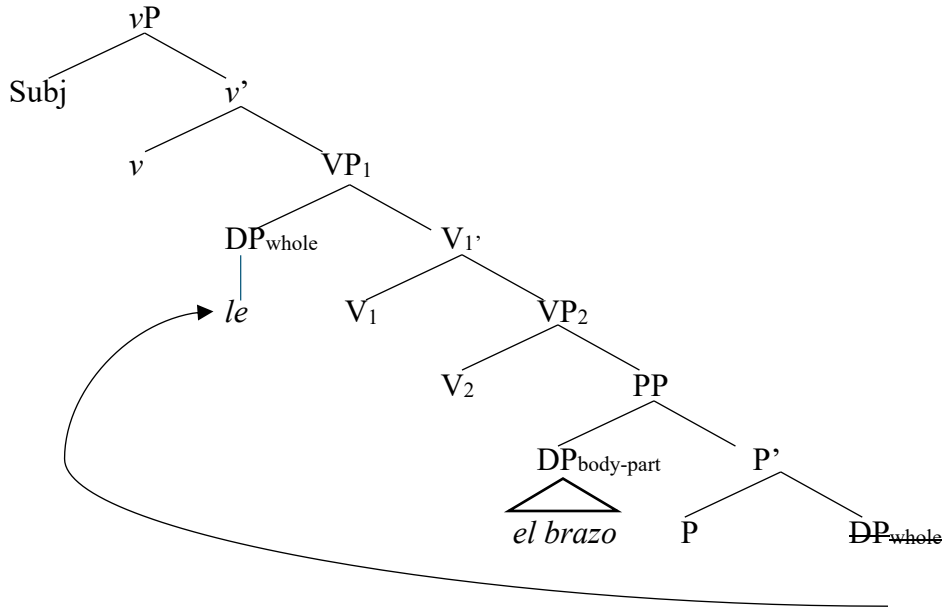
According to Sánchez López, the dative possessor configuration is the result of the promotion of the whole argument and its licensing with dative case when the BPN has a holistic affectation reading.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the derivation for a sentence like (33a) would proceed as

<sup>8</sup> Sánchez López (2007) notes that only affectation predicates allow dative possessors, but not stative ones, like unaccusative psych predicates (e.g. *gustar* ‘to like’, *admirar* ‘to admire’, etc.) since they do not select affected experiencers; datives in sentences with these predicates cannot be interpreted as the inalienable possessors of the BPN in them, as in (i):

- (i) [A Juan]<sub>i</sub> le<sub>i</sub> gusta [el pelo]<sub>\*i</sub>.  
 to Juan.DAT 3SG.DAT likes the hair  
 ‘Juan likes the/\*his hair.’

in (34). A null preposition of central coincidence relates the part argument *el brazo* in its specifier with the whole argument in its complement position, thus giving rise to the inalienable possession construal. An affectedness feature would project an additional verbal layer (VP1), responsible for marking the DP denoting the whole argument, i.e. the clitic pronoun *le*, with dative case after the latter raises to its specifier. The verb, in V<sub>2</sub> undergoes head movement to V<sub>1</sub>, incorporates the clitic, and raises to *v* and, ultimately, to T°. Finally, the external argument merges in the specifier of the verbal subevent *vP*.

(34) *Sánchez López (2007: 165)*



Building on Cuervo (2003), Suárez-Palma (2024) develops a hybrid analysis of dative possessors in Spanish which combines the notions of applicatives and possessor raising.<sup>9</sup> Under this approach, dative possessors, like internal ones, originate inside the possessum DP

Sánchez López explains that verbs of physical perception like *ver* ('to see'), which are stative but not affectation predicates, do allow dative possessors. Sánchez López suggests that this is due to the fact that these verbs select for a small clause involving a predication relation between two arguments, including a locative predicate in a part-whole relation with its subject.

- (ii) *María le<sub>i</sub> vió [las cicatrices]<sub>i</sub> a Silvia<sub>i</sub>.*  
 María 3SG.DAT saw the scars to Silvia.DAT  
 'María saw Silvia's scars.'

On the other hand, Cuervo (2003) points out that stative predicates like *admirar* may license dative possessors lacking an affectation reading, as in (iii). This might be a phenomenon subjected to dialectal variation; we leave this issue open for further review.

- (iii) *Cuervo (2003: 84)*  
 Pablo le<sub>i</sub> admira [la paciencia]<sub>i</sub> a Valeria<sub>i</sub>.  
 Pablo 3SG.DAT admires the patience to Valeria.DAT  
 'Pablo admires Valeria's patience.'

<sup>9</sup> See Armstrong (2021) for a similar proposal.

and later on raise to the specifier of a low applicative projection where they are case-licensed,<sup>10</sup> for they are unable to do so inside the possessum DP. In order to demonstrate that dative possessors are base-generated inside the possessum DP, Suárez-Palma replicates data from Ticio (2005); in her work on the internal structure of Spanish DPs, Ticio shows that possessor PPs merge higher than argument and argument-like PPs (35a), which results in the former blocking extraction of the latter (35b). However, extraction of possessor PPs is perfectly possible in Spanish, since no other phrase intervenes in their path out of the DP (35c).

- (35) a. Sujeté [DP varios bolsos [ de cuero]<sub>Arg</sub> [ de Ana]<sub>Poss</sub>].  
 I-held several bags of leather of Ana  
 ‘I held several of Ana’s leather bags.’  
 b. \*¿[De qué (material)]<sub>i</sub> sujetaste [DP varios bolsos *t<sub>i</sub>* [ de Ana]<sub>Poss</sub>]?  
 of what material you-held several bags of Ana  
 c. ¿[De quién]<sub>i</sub> sujetaste [DP varios bolsos [ de cuero]<sub>Arg</sub> *t<sub>i</sub>* ]?  
 of whom you-held several bags of leather  
 ‘Whose leather bags did you hold?’

Suárez-Palma shows that the same contrasts can be observed in contexts with dative possessors (36a), i.e. these arguments also block the extraction of argument and argument-like PPs inside the possessum DP (36b), while extraction of the dative possessor is licit (36c), suggesting that dative possessors also originate inside the possessum DP.

- (36) *Suárez-Palma (2024: 126)*  
 a. Le<sub>i</sub> vi [DP varias heridas [ de arma blanca]]<sub>i</sub> a Antonio<sub>i</sub>.  
 3SG.DAT I-saw several wounds of weapon white to Antonio.DAT  
 ‘I saw several stab wounds on Antonio.’  
 b. \*¿[De qué (tipo)]<sub>k</sub> le<sub>i</sub> viste [DP varias heridas *t<sub>k</sub>*]<sub>i</sub> a Antonio<sub>i</sub>?  
 of what kind 3SG.DAT you-saw several wounds to Antonio.DAT  
 c. ¿[A quién]<sub>i</sub> le<sub>i</sub> viste [DP varias heridas [ de arma blanca]] *t<sub>i</sub>*?  
 who.DAT 3SG.DAT you-saw several wounds of weapon white  
 ‘On whom did you see several stab wounds?’

This evidence, combined with the derivation in (9) above for internally possessed DPs in Spanish, leads Suárez-Palma to propose the following derivation for dative possessor DPs in the context of BPNs.

<sup>10</sup> Cuervo proposes the semantics below for low applicative heads in charge of relating a possessor argument in their specifier with a possessum DP in their complement position, thus favoring a static relation of possession, which can be alienable or inalienable. In her proposal, dative possessors originate in Spec,ApplP directly.

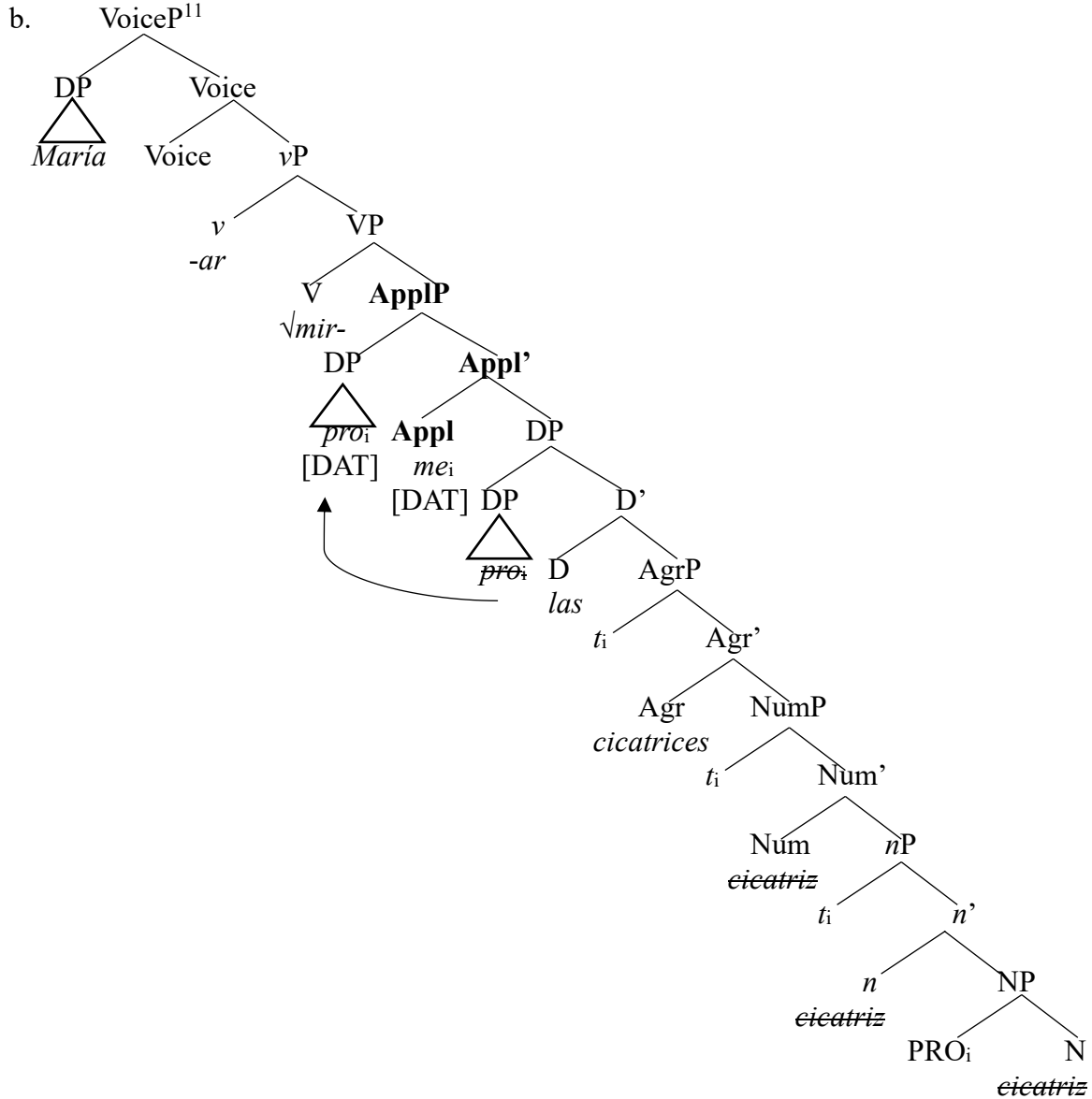
(i) *Cuervo (2003: 73)*

Low-APPL-AT (Possessor Applicative)

$\lambda x.\lambda y.\lambda f_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle}.\lambda e. f(e, x) \ \& \ \text{theme}(e, x) \ \& \ \text{in-the-possession}(x, y)$

(37) *Suárez-Palma (2024: 124)*

- a. (A mí) María me<sub>i</sub> miró las<sub>i</sub>/\*?misi/\*tus<sub>k</sub> cicatrices.  
 me.DAT María 1SG.DAT looked the/my/your scars  
 ‘María looked at my scars.’



<sup>11</sup> Irina Burukina (p.c.) points out that the possessor’s movement from Spec,DP to Spec,AppIP might pose a violation of antilocality. We have two ways of explaining this is not the case; first, since applicative heads are argument introducing/licensing heads, it seems reasonable to assume they host an [EPP] feature, which can be checked either by externally merging an argument from the Numeration, or by internally merging an existing one in the derivation, i.e. the possessor argument, being the closest goal in this case; this would make this movement a feature-driven one, independently of how local it is, thus avoiding a potential antilocality violation. Alternatively, if we assume that possessor arguments raise to Spec,AgrP in all Romance languages, like we contemplated in footnote 2, movement of the possessor from that position to Spec,AppIP would involve crossing DP, a real boundary, making between them allowed according to antilocality.

In (37), the BPN *cicatriz* takes a PRO as an argument, which is controlled by the pronominal possessor in Spec,nP; the latter raises to the specifier of D° seeking case, while the BPN undergoes head movement to Agr° in order to establish all the necessary agreement relations. Unable to be case-licensed inside the possessum DP, the possessor raises to the specifier of a low applicative head, where it is marked with dative case, and spelled-out as *a mí*, while the applicative head surfaces as the dative first person clitic pronoun *me*.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Suárez-Palma’s analysis accounts for dialectal variation, specifically variants of Spanish where dative possessors may co-occur with possessive determiners on a regular basis. According to this proposal, the BPN in (38) is internally possessed by means of a possessive determiner which co-refers with a dative argument originating in Spec,AppIP; in other words, the applicative in these contexts is responsible for introducing and licensing an additional argument in the Numeration, not simply licensing an existing one that’s been promoted from a lower position for case reasons.

- (38) a. María me<sub>i</sub> miró mis<sub>i</sub> arrugas.  
 María 1SG.DAT looked my wrinkles  
 ‘María looked at my wrinkles.’  
 b. [<sub>VP</sub> mir- [<sub>AppIP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> pro<sub>i</sub>] me<sub>i</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> mis<sub>i</sub> arrugas]]]

At this point, one might wonder why English lacks dative possessor configurations, as shown in (19b) above, repeated below as (39).<sup>13</sup>

- (39) \*Kyle<sub>i</sub> held her<sub>j</sub> the hand<sub>j</sub>.

By adopting an applicative analysis of these arguments, this issue can be easily accounted for: languages differ with respect to the kinds of applicative heads they can license. On the one hand, the grammar of Spanish makes all three types of low applicatives available, i.e. in addition to the low applicative of possession proposed by Cuervo (2003), this language also shows two more types of low applicatives which are able to convey dynamic transfers of possession in double object constructions; their semantics are given in (40).

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<sup>12</sup> Notice that this example from Suárez-Palma (2024) shows a dative possessor in the context of a verb of physical perception, therefore lacking affectedness, as pointed out by Sánchez López (2007). Suárez-Palma’s analysis deals with affectedness in the same way proposed by Cuervo (2003): some predicates of affectation (e.g. *cortar*, ‘to cut’) comprise two subevents, one of change and a stative one denoting the theme’s end state (V<sub>GO</sub> and V<sub>BE</sub>, respectively); when these structures host a non-core dative argument, including a dative possessor (e.g. *María le cortó el pelo a Luis*, ‘María cut Luis’ hair’), it is licensed in the specifier of a middle/affected applicative head, sandwiched between both subevents. This way, the dative argument is applied to the resulting state of the theme, thus structurally accounting for the affected reading. Suárez-Palma (2024) claims that when the theme in these contexts is a BPN and the dative is interpreted as its inalienable possessor, the latter raises from inside the theme to the specifier of such middle/affected applicative, therefore preserving the possessor interpretation along with the affected reading. For details on these proposals, see Cuervo (2003) and Suárez-Palma (2024).

<sup>13</sup> Although very restricted to a handful of verbs, one could argue that sentences like *your mistake cost me a finger* is an instance of a dative possessor configuration in English. If so, it would be compatible with the analysis presented here for dative possessors in Spanish: a possessor argument originating inside the DP *a finger* raises to the specifier of a low applicative of possession to be marked with dative case. We leave this issue open for further inquiry.

- (40) *Adapted from Pyllkkänen (2002: 22)*
- a. Low-APPL-FROM (Source Applicative)  
 $\lambda x.\lambda y.\lambda f_{\langle e,s,t \rangle}.\lambda e. f(e,x) \& \text{theme}(e,x) \& \text{from-the-possession}(x,y)$
  - b. Isabel  $le_i$  robó un libro a David.  
 Isabel 3SG.DAT stole a book to David.DAT  
 ‘Isabel stole a book from David.’
  - c. Low-APPL-TO (Recipient Applicative)  
 $\lambda x.\lambda y.\lambda f_{\langle e,s,t \rangle}.\lambda e. f(e,x) \& \text{theme}(e,x) \& \text{to-the-possession}(x,y)$
  - d. Isabel  $le_i$  dio un libro a David.  
 Isabel 3SG.DAT gave a book to David.DAT  
 ‘Isabel gave David a book.’

On the other hand, English only appears to license recipient applicatives (41a), but not source (41b) or possessor datives (41c). Thus, while the grammar of Spanish shows a richer inventory of low applicative heads, English only makes one available; such cross-linguistic differences are to be expected under a theory of applicative arguments.

- (41) a. Elizabeth gave David a book.  
 b. \*Elizabeth stole David a book.  
 c. \*Elizabeth examined David the wounds.

To conclude this section, Suárez-Palma’s hybrid proposal captures the intuition that dative inalienable possessors are base-generated inside the DP containing the BPN, an idea put forth in previous possessor raising proposals including Szabolcsi (1984) and Landau (1999), among others; moreover, this hypothesis accounts for the extraction data in (42) above. Additionally, by resorting to the notion of applicatives as the functional heads in whose specifiers dative possessors are licensed, his proposal does not rely on *ad hoc* extra verbal projections for this to happen. Still, we believe Suárez-Palma’s account is still able to capture most of the data brought up by Sánchez López (2007), including the affectedness reading, and lack thereof, of Spanish dative possessors. Therefore, we will assume this proposal and base our analysis of accusative possessors on it in the next section.

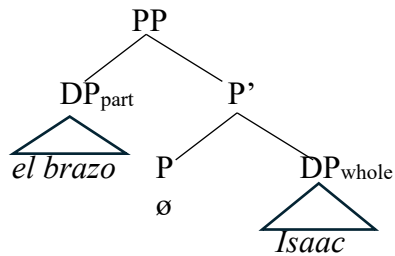
### 3.2. Accusative possessors in Spanish and English locative prepositional configurations

Recall that Spanish and English show an external possession configuration involving accusative possessors of BPNs that merge inside a locative PP. The accusative possessors are obligatorily understood as the inalienable possessors of the BPNs, which typically surface in a DP headed by a definite determiner, a possessive one becoming redundant in most Spanish dialects. In both languages, these structures display a distinctive feature of inalienable possession, i.e. a distributive reading of the BPN with plural possessors.

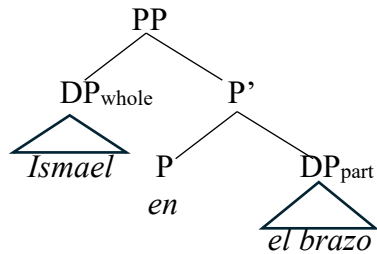
- (42) a. Luisa golpeó a los atracadores [PP en [DP  $la/?su$  cara/\*las caras]].  
 Luisa hit to the muggers.ACC in the/their face the faces  
 ‘Luisa hit the muggers in the face.’  
 b. Luisa hit the muggers/them [PP in [DP the/their face/\*faces]].

Several possessor raising analyses of these sentences have been proposed in the literature, e.g. Landau (1999) for Hebrew and Romance, or Sánchez López (2007) for Spanish, but, as far as we know, none for English. Sánchez López, for instance, explains that the internal argument in these Spanish structures (e.g. *a los atracadores*, in (42a)) denotes an affected object, and that the locative PP in them, which is optional, expresses the part of such internal argument that is concerned by the affectation process, i.e. *la cara*. When this is the case, this author explains that the whole argument, i.e. the accusative DP, and the part argument, i.e. the BPN inside the locative PP, enter a locative predication relation by means of a preposition of central coincidence (43). Notice that this was also the situation for dative possessors and BPNs in the configurations examined in the previous section, the only difference being that, in those structures, the preposition is null. Sánchez López’s proposal establishes that dative and accusative possessors are derivationally related; thus, if the possessum DP sits in the specifier of the relational preposition, and the possessor does so in its complement position, the preposition remains covert, and a dative possessor configuration arises (43a). On the other hand, if the possessee merges as the prepositional complement and the possessor is in Spec,PP, the preposition becomes overt, deriving an accusative possessor structure (43b).

- (43) a. Ismael le golpeó el brazo a Isaac.  
 Ismael 3SG.DAT hit the arm to Isaac.DAT  
 ‘Ismael hit Isaac’s arm.’



- b. Ismael golpeó a Isaac en el brazo.  
 Ismael hit to Isaac.ACC in the arm  
 ‘Ismael hit Isaac in the arm.’

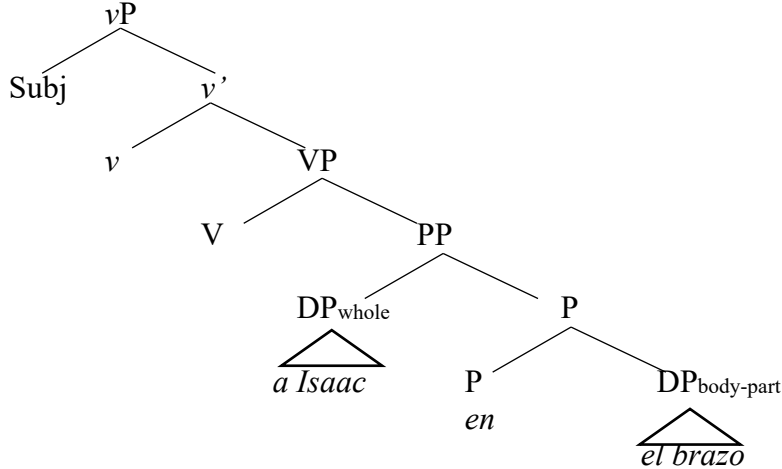


Sánchez López, like Landau (1999), claims that these locative PPs are argumental, i.e. they merge as the verb’s internal argument and not as adjuncts, since they do not modify the event, but a part of the subevent structure involved in the affectation of one of their arguments. Evidence for this is the fact that they are compatible with spatial locative PPs modifying the event, which are true adjuncts, as in (44).

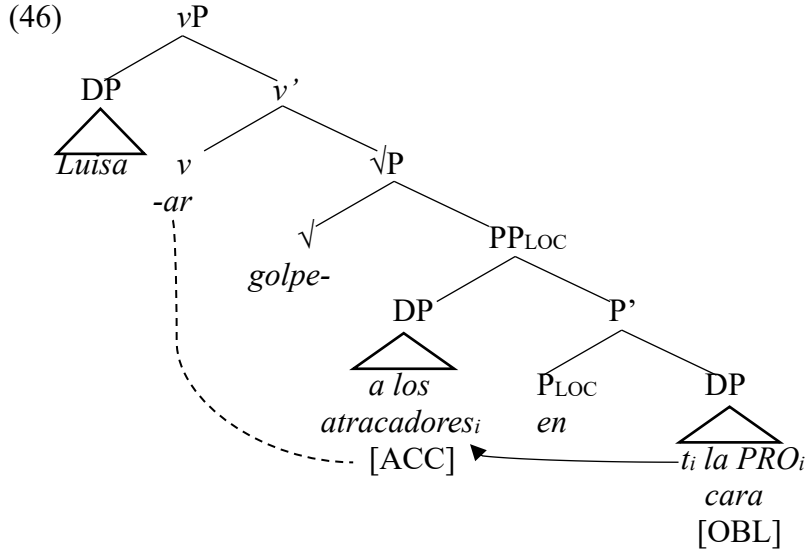
- (44) Ismael golpeó a Isaac<sub>i</sub> en el brazo<sub>i</sub> en la cocina.  
 Ismael hit to Isaac.ACC in the arm in the kitchen  
 ‘Ismael hit Isaac in the arm in the kitchen.’

Thus, the proposed derivation for a structure like (43b) is shown in (45). The DP denoting the whole merges in Spec,PP, while the DP denoting the part does so in its complement position. The entire PP merges as the verb’s internal argument, and the possessor is marked with accusative case by  $v^o$ .

- (45) *Sánchez López (2007: 164)*



While our proposal is similar to Sánchez López’s, i.e. we also claim locative PPs of concerned parts are argumental and not true adjuncts, it differs from hers in that we continue to assume that inalienable possessors, dative or accusative, originate inside the possessum DP. Considering the extraction data in (36) where dative possessors block the extraction of argument-like PPs outside of the possessee, and if dative possessors are indeed derived from accusative ones, it seems reasonable to expect that accusative possessors are also base-generated inside the possessum DP. Therefore, we propose the derivation for (42a) is the one in (46).

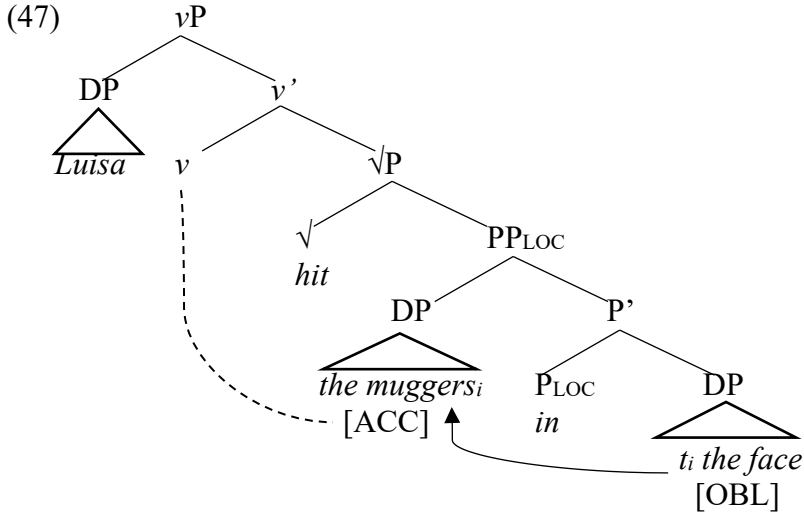


In (46), the oblique DP containing the BPN *brazo*, PRO, and the inalienable possessor *Isaac* merges as the prepositional complement. The possessor controls the PRO in NP headed by the BPN from its base position, i.e. Spec,*nP*, giving rise to the inalienable possession construal; however, this argument is unable to be case-licensed inside this DP, and must raise to an A-position where it can be, i.e. Spec,PP. Finally, because the locative PP is argumental, the complex head comprising the root and *v* can assign accusative case to the possessor in Spec,PP.<sup>14</sup>

Given the aforementioned striking structural similarities between this Spanish configuration and its English counterpart in (42b), we suggest that the same derivation is at play in this language too, the only difference being the fact that English BPNs do not select a PRO as an argument in their specifier; instead, the inalienable possessor merges in that position, and subsequently raises to an A-position to be case-marked, i.e. Spec,PP in this case. The derivation is given in (47).

<sup>14</sup> The possessor in Spec,PP is marked with accusative case; the *a* preceding *los atracadores* is an instance of differential object marking (DOM). Should the argument standing for the whole be inanimate, the preposition would not appear:

- (i) Daniel        agarró    la sartén    por el mango.  
 Daniel.NOM    grabbed    the pan.ACC    by    the handle.OBL  
 ‘Daniel grabbed the pan by the handle.’



As it was the case with the dative possessor configuration in the previous section, here too we might see contexts where accusative possessors co-occur with possessive determiners heading the DP containing the BPN in both languages. As we mentioned above, this option appears to be more marked in English and Spanish, except for speakers of Spanish varieties where doubling of the possessor is possible, as in Mexican Spanish.

- (48) a. Luisa golpeó a los atracadores<sub>i</sub> en su<sub>i</sub> cara.  
 Luisa hit to the muggers.ACC in their face  
 ‘Luisa hit the muggers in the face.’  
 b. Luisa hit the muggers in their face.

Our analysis still accommodates this possibility, whereby the possessor argument gets realized inside the possessum DP and co-refers with a c-commanding additional argument standing for the whole in the part-whole relation, in the specifier of the locative PP, from where it is marked with accusative case. In this sense, this configuration works as Sánchez-López’s, where the preposition of central coincidence relates both constituents, the part and the whole, in the locative predication relationship.

- (49) a. [<sub>vP</sub> *golp-* [<sub>PP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> *a los atracadores*]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>P'</sub> *en* [<sub>DP</sub> *su<sub>i</sub> cara*]]]]  
 b. [<sub>vP</sub> *hit* [<sub>PP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> *the muggers*]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>P'</sub> *in* [<sub>DP</sub> *their<sub>i</sub> face*]]]]

To conclude this section, it should be noted that other prepositions can participate in this locative configuration in both languages, not just *en/in*, as shown in (50).

- (50) a. Marta<sub>i</sub> agarró a su<sub>i</sub> hermana<sub>j</sub> de/por [el pelo]<sub>j</sub>.  
 Marta grabbed to her sister.ACC of/by the hair  
 ‘Marta grabbed her sister by the hair.’  
 b. Ricardo miró a Francisco<sub>i</sub> a [los ojos]<sub>i</sub>.  
 Ricardo looked to Francisco.ACC to the eyes  
 ‘Ricardo looked Francisco in the eye.’

Next, we will discuss nominative possessors of BPNs inside instrumental PPs.

3.3. *Nominative possessors of BPNs inside instrumental PPs*

Another structure where inalienable possession can be attested in Spanish is the one shown in (51), where the verb's external argument is understood as the inalienable possessor of a BPN occurring inside an instrumental PP. The possessum DP in these sentences is also headed by a definite determiner, although a possessive determiner in these contexts is not as marked as in the rest of the external possession configurations examined thus far. Additionally, a distributive interpretation of a singular BPN is available in the context of plural possessors.

- (51) Los estudiantes<sub>i</sub> abrieron la puerta [PP con [DP la<sub>i</sub>/su<sub>i</sub> mano]].  
 the students opened the door with the/their hand  
 'The students opened the door with their hand.'

Interestingly, this type of structure is not possible in English, and the BPN must necessarily surface internally possessed for the inalienable possession interpretation to obtain between the external argument and the BPN inside the instrumental PP. Should a definite determiner head the DP containing the BPN, the latter is interpreted as a token, e.g. a dismembered or prosthetic *hand* in (52).

- (52) The students<sub>i</sub> opened the door [PP with [DP the<sub>i</sub>\*/their<sub>i</sub> hand]].

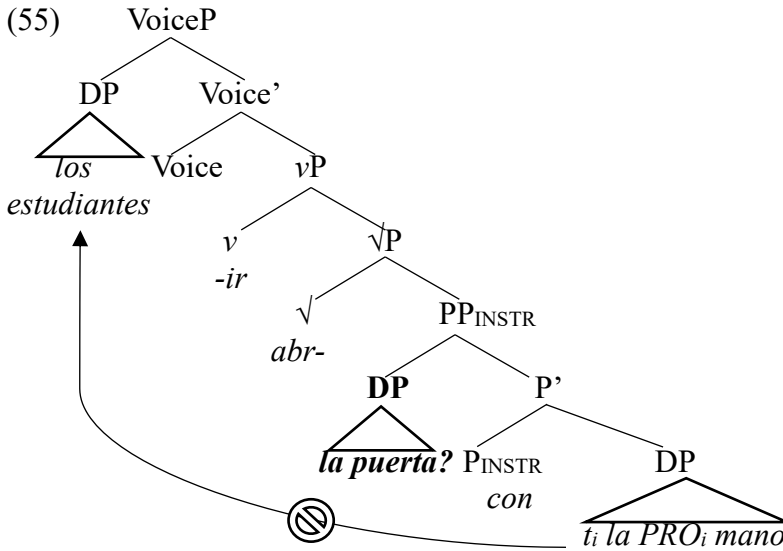
In his study of external possession in Hebrew, Landau (1999) notes that, "although locative [(53a)], source [(53b)], and instrumental PPs [(53c)] do not in general block possessor raising from the prepositional object, typical adjunct PPs (expressing cause, purpose, opposition, etc.) do so" (1999: 17).

- (53) Landau (1999: 18)
- a. Gil niškav le-Rina al ha-mita.  
 Gil lied-down to-Rina on the-bed  
 'Gil lied down on Rina's bed.'
  - b. Gil ganav le-Rina me-ha-tik.  
 Gil stole to-Rina from-the-bag  
 'Gil stole (something) from Rina's bag.'
  - c. Gil hitkaleax le-Rina im ha-sabon.  
 Gil bathed to-Rina with the-soap  
 'Gil took a shower with Rina's soap.'

While this seems to be the case for Spanish and English accusative possessor configurations, when it comes to nominative possessors, it appears as though possessor raising is only available in Spanish but not in English. In this section, we will argue that instrumental PPs in English and Spanish are not argumental but true adjuncts, and therefore islands for extraction, unlike in Hebrew. In English, for instance, VP-ellipsis targets the verb and its internal argument, but may leave adjuncts intact. The ungrammaticality of (54a) is due to the fact that a locative PP remains after VP-ellipsis, showing that such PP is argumental. On the other hand, (54b) is grammatical when an instrumental PP remains after VP-ellipsis, which means this phrase is not part of the ellipsis site, i.e. it is not an argument of the verb, but an adjunct.

- (54) a. \*Peter hit Shawn on the arm and Ben did [PP in the face].  
 b. Peter opened the door [PP with his hand], and Josh did [PP with his foot].<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, if one assumes that instrumental PPs in Spanish but not in English are indeed argumental and merge as the verb's complement like the locative ones examined in the previous section, we should think of an explanation as to why the internal argument, possibly in the specifier of the PP, does not block the raising of the possessor to the external argument position, as shown in (55).<sup>16</sup>



Thus, given the evidence from English in (54), and the potential theoretical shortcoming outlined in (55), we will continue to claim that these instrumental PPs are adjuncts in both languages. It has been argued in the literature that possessor raising out of adjuncts may be possible, as in the case of null possessors inside adjuncts in Brazilian Portuguese, examined by Rodrigues (2010).<sup>17</sup>

- (56) Rodrigues (2010: 139)  
 A Maria<sub>i</sub> viajou [PP com [DP a irmã e<sub>i</sub>]].  
 the Maria traveled with the sister  
 ‘Maria traveled with her sister.’

Rodrigues adopts a movement theory of control (Hornstein 2001) approach whereby the possessor *a Maria* moves out of the adjunct to the external argument position. To accomplish this, Rodrigues’ analysis relies on the notion of sideward movement (Nunes 2001), i.e. an operation whereby a constituent is able to undergo lateral movement from inside a phrase

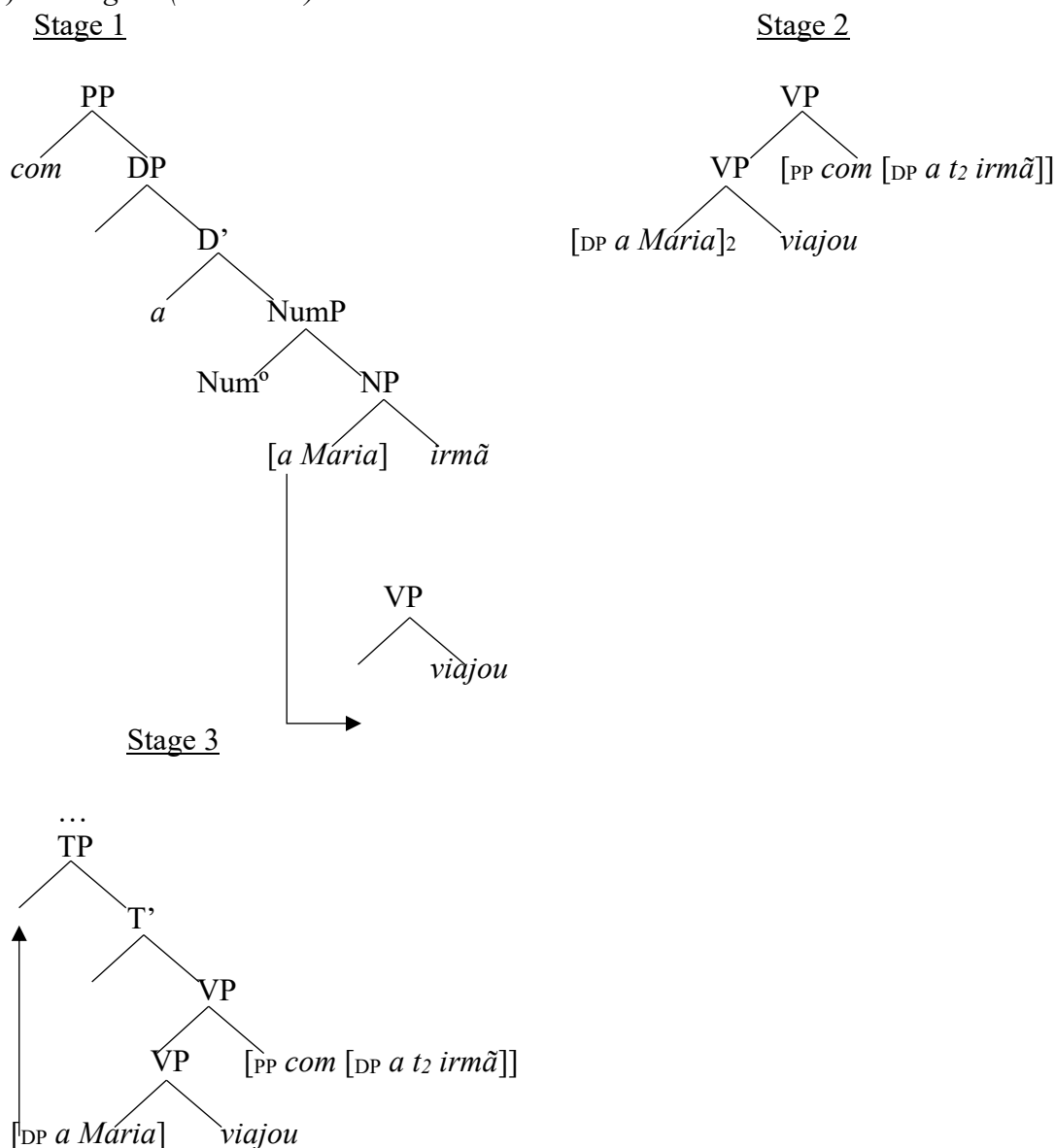
<sup>15</sup> We are thankful to Heidi Harley for these examples.

<sup>16</sup> Antonio Fábregas (p.c.) points out that one could assume that the possessor has some type of strong feature, such as affectedness or animacy, that must be checked via movement to the verbal domain. This would trigger movement of the possessor over the theme, thus respecting relativized minimality (Rizzi 1990); we leave this question open for future research.

<sup>17</sup> See also Nakamoto (2010) for a similar analysis of external possession in French.

before the containing phrase is adjoined to the main spine of the tree and spelled-out. This is exemplified below.

(57) *Rodrigues (2010: 140)*



In (57), the derivation begins by generating the adjunct *com a [a Maria] irmã*, from where the possessor *a Maria* is copied and merged inside the VP; this is possible because the adjunct has not been spelled out at this point, which would turn it into an island for extraction. Next, the adjunct is adjoined to the VP and it is spelled out; finally, the possessor inside the VP is probed by  $T^{\circ}$  and becomes the grammatical subject.

Among the reasons Rodrigues provides to argue that null possessors in Brazilian Portuguese undergo movement is the fact that they show anaphoric behavior, in that they require a sentential antecedent.

(58) *Rodrigues (2010: 128)*

- a. [o João]<sub>i</sub> machucou [o braço *e*<sub>i/\*j</sub>] ontem.  
 the João cut the arm yesterday  
 ‘João hurt his arm yesterday.’
- b. \*Parece que [o braço *e*] quebrou.  
 seems that the arm broke  
 ‘It seems that his/her arm broke.’

Similarly, BPNs in Spanish instrumental PPs require a sentential antecedent for the inalienable possession interpretation to obtain.

- (59) a. Carlos<sub>i</sub> abrió la ventana [PP con [la cabeza]<sub>i</sub>].  
 Carlos opened the window with the head  
 ‘Carlos opened the door with his head.’
- b. \*La ventana fue abierta [PP con [la cabeza]].  
 the window was opened with the head  
 ‘The window was opened with the/\*his head.’

Additionally, Rodrigues shows that the null possessor’s antecedent must be local, i.e. it must be the closes c-commanding DP (60a). This is also the case for BPNs inside instrumental PPs in Spanish (60b).

(60) a. *Rodrigues (2010: 130)*

- \*[a cobra [do João]<sub>i</sub>] mordeu [o braço *e*]<sub>i</sub>.  
 the snake of-the João bit the arm  
 ‘João’s snake bit his arm.’
- b. El hermano<sub>i</sub> de Antonio<sub>j</sub> abrió la puerta [PP con [el pie]<sub>i/\*j</sub>].  
 the brother of Antonio opened the door with the foot  
 ‘Antonio’s brother opened the door with his foot.’

Rodrigues goes on to saying that null possessors in Brazilian Portuguese show properties associated with obligatory control constructions; for instance, under VP ellipsis, only a sloppy reading of an obligatorily controlled gap is possible. The data in (61) show that null possessors in Brazilian Portuguese and BPNs in Spanish instrumental PPs are obligatorily controlled.

(61) a. *Rodrigues (2010: 131)*

- O vovô<sub>i</sub> não corta [as unhas *e*]<sub>i</sub> e a vovó também não.  
 the grandpa not cut the nails and the grandma too not  
 ‘Grandpa does not cut his nails and grandma doesn’t either.’ (*Sloppy/\*Strict*)
- b. Diego cerró la puerta [PP con [el pie]<sub>i</sub>] y Jorge también.  
 Diego closed the door with the foot and Jorge too  
 ‘Diego closed the door with his foot, and Jorge did too.’ (*Sloppy/\*Strict*)

Finally, Rodrigues points out that null possessors in other Romance languages like Spanish are pronominal, since they can occur inside a relative clause taking a non-local DP as their antecedent (62a). On the other hand, null possessors in Brazilian Portuguese cannot

(62b), which indicates they are not pronominal, and in this sense, they pattern with *wh*-traces (62c).

- (62) a. Daniela<sub>i</sub> ha visto a la chica<sub>j</sub> que besó [al novio]<sub>i/j</sub>.  
 Daniela has seen to the girl.ACC that kissed the boyfriend  
 ‘Daniela has seen the girl who kissed her boyfriend.’  
*Rodrigues (2010: 138)*
- b. \*A Maria<sub>i</sub> viu a menina<sub>j</sub> que beijou [o namorado *e*\*<sub>i/j</sub>].  
 the Maria saw the girl that kissed the boyfriend  
 ‘Maria saw the girl who kissed her boyfriend.’
- c. \*[De quem]<sub>i</sub> que você viu a menina que beijou [o namorado *t*<sub>i</sub>]?  
 of whom that you saw the girl that kissed the boyfriend  
 ‘\*Whom did you see the girl that kissed the boyfriend of?’

BPNs inside Spanish instrumental PPs seem to behave like Brazilian Portuguese null possessors in that they refuse being associated with non-local antecedents when headed by a definite determiner, as in (63). However, this is not the case when the DP containing the BPN is headed by a possessive determiner. This indicates that DPs headed by definite determiners and containing BPNs inside instrumental PPs do not host a pronominal inside them.

- (63) Belén<sub>i</sub> vio a la chica<sub>j</sub> que mueve objetos [PP con [los?<sub>i/j</sub>/sus<sub>i/j</sub>ojos]].<sup>18</sup>  
 Belen saw to the girl.ACC that moves objects with the/her eyes  
 ‘Belén saw the girl who moves objects with her eyes.’

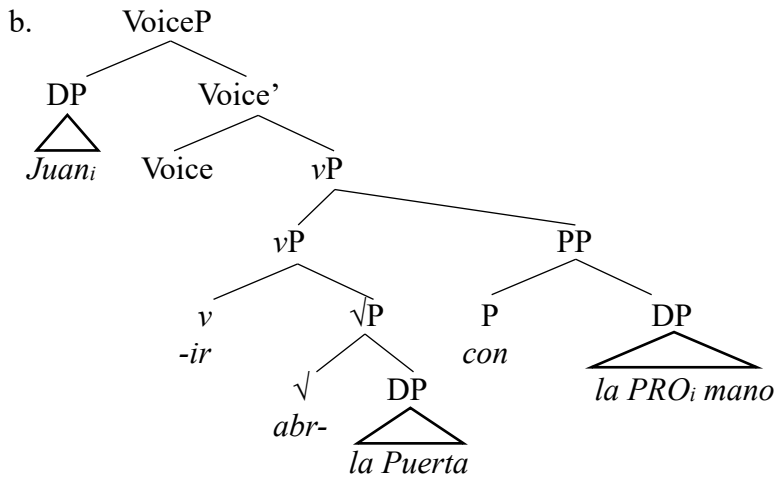
The data in (58)–(63) suggest that Spanish definite DPs containing BPNs in instrumental PPs pattern with null possessors in Brazilian Portuguese inside adjuncts in that these configurations involve control in both languages. We do however reject a movement approach to this phenomenon for several reasons. First, because of the potential intervention effects pointed out in (55) above; if instrumental PPs in Spanish are argumental, the verb’s theme could potentially get in the way of the possessor’s promotion to the external argument position out of the possessum DP.

Additionally, sideward movement out of instrumental adjuncts would be incompatible with a neo-Davidsonian model of event semantics. Instrumental PPs are most definitely event modifiers, and therefore they must adjoin to *vP*; however, sideward movement out of these constituents would be incompatible with a model where external arguments are introduced by a Voice projection (Kratzer 1996), a proposal that is widely accepted in the current literature. Remember that movement of the possessor out of the instrumental PP must occur before the adjunct is adjoined to the main spine of the clause and immediately copied into the latter; this means that the external argument would have to be copied into the specifier of *vP*, not VoiceP, before the instrumental PP is adjoined to it. In other words, by the time Voice<sup>0</sup> merges with *vP*, the instrumental PP must have been already adjoined and spelled out, therefore becoming an island for extraction; this would prevent the computational system from copying the possessor into Spec, VoiceP.

<sup>18</sup> Although rather odd, a reading where the eyes are Belén’s may be forced (‘with her own eyes, Belén saw the girl who moves objects’), and this is to be expected, since the instrumental PP *con los ojos* can also be adjoined to the verb in the matrix clause (*vio*), in which case, *Belén* would be a local antecedent.

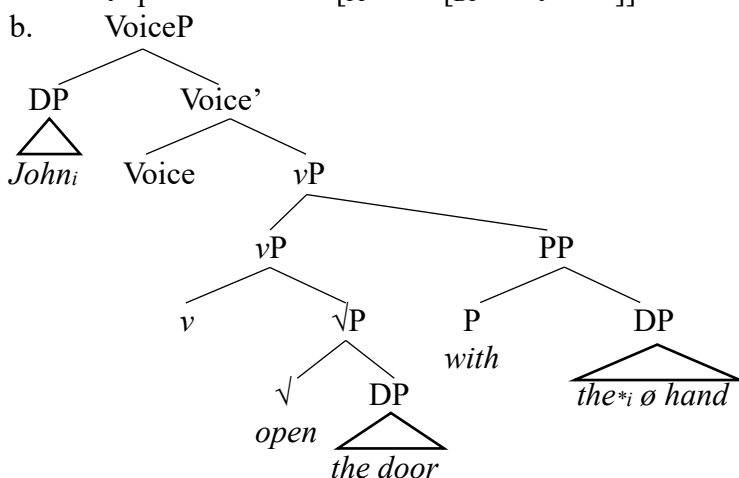
Finally, and even more crucially, defending that sideward movement is possible in the Spanish instrumental configurations would require to explain the reason why this phenomenon is not allowed in languages like English, where extraction out of instrumental PPs is impossible. Instead, we advocate for a much simpler analysis: the phenomena outlined in (58)–(63) can also be accounted for with a more traditional theory of control that does not involve movement, but the presence of PRO in argumental positions. Thus, as we have been pointing out throughout this paper, we propose, following Suárez-Palma (2024), that Spanish BPNs are inherently relational, and take an argumental PRO; this argument may be controlled by a possessor argument in Spec,*nP*, giving rise to an inalienable possession interpretation. However, in the absence of a possessor in Spec,*nP*, PRO will be controlled by a local c-commanding antecedent. We argue that this is exactly what is happening with nominative possessors and instrumental PPs in Spanish. In (64), the DP containing the BPN inside the instrumental PP lacks a possessor argument; because of this, the external argument in Spec,Voice (*Juan*), being the closest c-commanding DP, controls the PRO selected by the BPN, thus favoring an inalienable possessor reading, and creating the illusion that possessor raising has taken place.

- (64) a. *Juan<sub>i</sub> abrió la puerta [PP con [DP la PRO<sub>i</sub> mano]].*  
 Juan opened the door with the hand  
 ‘Juan opened the door with his hand.’



On the other hand, English BPNs do not select a PRO as an argument; instead, inalienable possessors merge in that position. However, when BPNs lack a possessor in this language, the BPN cannot be interpreted as relational, and an inalienable possession reading becomes impossible. This is the situation in (65); when the DP containing the BPN inside the instrumental PP does not contain a possessor argument, an inalienable possession interpretation between *the hand* and *John* in Spec,VoiceP is impossible. This shows that *John* has necessarily been externally merged in Spec,VoiceP, and not promoted to this position via possessor raising. In other words, defective DPs where possessor arguments are unable to be case-licensed internally would lead the derivation in (65) to crash, for instrumental PPs are islands for extraction, unlike what we saw with locative PPs.

(65) a. John<sub>i</sub> opened the door [PP with [DP the\*<sub>i</sub> hand]].

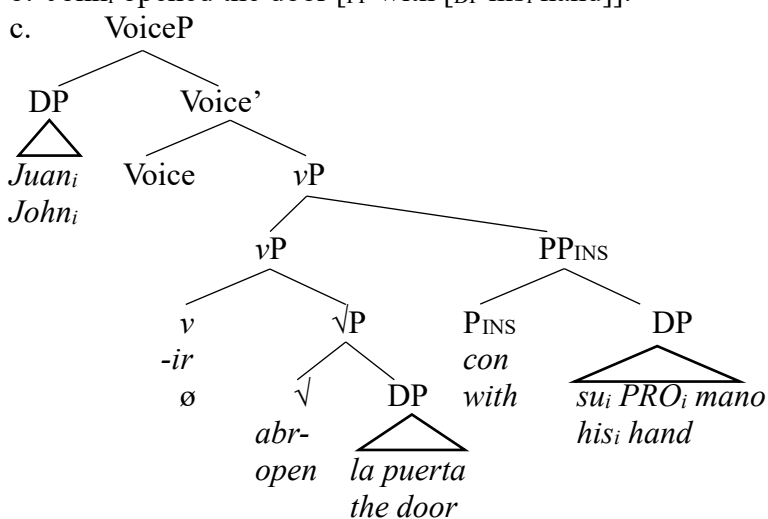


On the other hand, should the BPN be internally possessed, either in Spanish or in English, the possessive determiner may co-refer with the external argument in Spec, VoiceP, giving rise to an inalienable possession construal.

(66) a. Juan<sub>i</sub> abrió la puerta [PP con [DP su<sub>i</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> mano]].

Juan opened the door with his hand

b. John<sub>i</sub> opened the door [PP with [DP his<sub>i</sub> hand]].



Earlier, we mentioned that co-reference between a possessive determiner and a nominative possessor is less marked than it is with accusative and dative possessors in Spanish dialects where possessor doubling is not allowed, such as European Spanish. We take this phenomenon to be a diagnostic for possessor raising in these varieties; in other words, when co-reference between a possessive determiner and an external possessor is perceived as redundant in non-emphatic contexts in these dialects, that signals that this is a context where possessor raising is possible and expected, as in the argumental locative PPs seen in the previous section, and in dative possessor configurations. On the other hand, contexts where co-reference between a possessive determiner and an external possessor is possible and not

necessarily emphatic do not favor possessor raising but, as it is the case with instrumental PP adjuncts, they do allow control into them.

We believe this proposal to be superior to one that relies on sideward movement for several reasons: it homogenizes the idea that instrumental PPs are not argumental but adjuncts in both Spanish and English, and therefore islands for extraction out of which possessor raising is impossible. By adopting a non-movement approach to control whereby Spanish BPNs, but not English ones, select for a PRO as an argument, the contrasts between Spanish and English instrumental PPs in (51) and (52) are accounted for straightforwardly, while being consistent with current theories of event and argument structure where external arguments are introduced by means of a Voice head. Finally, this type of approach to control is still able to capture the properties outlined in (58)–(63) above for Spanish BPNs headed by a definite determiner inside instrumental PPs that liken them to null possessors in Brazilian Portuguese.

At this point, it would be necessary to address what the situation is in English examples like (28) above, repeated below as (67), where an instrumental PP contains a DP headed by a definite determiner along with a BPN that is modified by a restrictive adjective. Interestingly, this type of structures does allow for a relational interpretation between the verb's external argument and the BPN.

(67) Peter<sub>i</sub> opened the door [PP with [DP the broken hand]<sub>i</sub>].<sup>19</sup>

As we mentioned earlier, the role of the restrictive adjective in these configurations is to single out a subset belonging to a closed superset, in this case Peter's two hands, excluding a non-broken hand of his, therefore favoring the possession interpretation to obtain without necessarily resorting to a possessive determiner. This idea is reinforced by the fact that this relational interpretation only arises when the body part is part of a set; single body parts do not allow this reading, even when modified by restrictive adjectives.

(68) \*Peter<sub>i</sub> smelled the rose [PP with [DP the broken nose]<sub>i</sub>].

Similarly, Spanish also allows for an inalienable possession interpretation to arise when restrictive adjectives modify BPNs denoting a member of a set inside a DP headed by a definite determiner in instrumental PPs. This is to be expected since the PRO inside the NP headed by the BPN is controlled by a local antecedent, i.e. the external argument *Pedro*, independently of the presence or absence of the restrictive adjective.

(69) Pedro abrió la puerta [PP con [DP la PRO<sub>i</sub> mano rota]<sub>i</sub>].  
 Pedro opened the door with the hand broken  
 'Pedro opened the door with the broken hand.'

The situation becomes more interesting when the BPN refers to the single member of its own set due to the different contexts where the preposition *con* ('with') can occur. Because Spanish BPNs select a PRO as an argument, the inalienable possession reading between the verb's external argument and the BPN should in theory still be available. However, the data

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<sup>19</sup> Should the DP containing the BPN be headed by an indefinite determiner, the PP's more accessible interpretation is a comitative one rather than an instrumental one: *Peter opened the door in the state of having a broken hand.*

in (70) show that the restrictive adjective is forcing a subset reading of the BPN *nariz* in the instrumental interpretation, which becomes pragmatically odd, and favoring other possible interpretations of such PP, including a depictive (70b) and a comitative one (70c).

- (70) a. *Instrumental PP*  
 Pedro<sub>i</sub> olió la rosa [PP con [DP la?<sub>i</sub> nariz rota]].  
 Pedro smelled the rose with the nose broken  
 ‘Pedro smelled the rose using a/the broken nose.’
- b. *Depictive PP*  
 Pedro<sub>i</sub> olió la rosa [PP con [DP la<sub>i</sub> nariz rota]].  
 Pedro smelled the rose with the nose broken  
 ‘Pedro smelled the rose when his nose was broken.’
- c. *Comitative PP*  
 Pedro<sub>i</sub> olió la rosa [PP con [DP la?<sub>i</sub> nariz rota]].  
 Pedro smelled the rose with the nose broken  
 ‘Pedro smelled the rose while holding a broken nose.’

In this section we have examined the inalienable possession effects arising between an external argument and a DP headed by a definite determiner containing a BPN inside an instrumental PP in Spanish, and how this phenomenon is impossible in English. Landau (1999) claimed that instrumental PPs in Hebrew, along with source and locative ones, are argumental and therefore allow possessor raising. Here, we demonstrated that instrumental PPs are in fact adjuncts in both English and Spanish, and consequently islands for extraction. We contemplated a sideward movement approach to the Spanish data like the one proposed by Rodrigues (2010) for null possessors inside adjuncts in Brazilian Portuguese and concluded that a non-movement approach to control accounts for these structures and the cross-linguistic variation between Spanish and English more elegantly. We provided more evidence showing that Spanish BPNs are inherently relational and subcategorize for an argumental PRO that is controlled by the possessor argument inside the possessum DP, should there be one. Otherwise, this argument will be either controlled by a local c-commanding antecedent, i.e. the verb’s external argument in the structures under consideration here. In English, on the other hand, BPNs do not select for a PRO and, in the absence of an internal possessor, the BPN receives a token interpretation, not a relational one. In the next section, we will discuss one last external possession configuration, namely one where the possessor surfaces as the verb’s external argument, and the BPN as its theme.

#### 3.4. *Nominative possessors of accusative BPNs*

Before concluding the paper, we would like to briefly examine one last external possession configuration. In Spanish, and in other Romance languages like French, it is possible for the verb’s external argument, marked with nominative case, to be understood as the inalienable possessor of a BPN inside a DP headed by a definite determiner and surfacing as the verb’s internal argument, as in (71). This construction is restricted to “verbs denoting motion triggered by an impulse from the central nervous system of the individual whose body part is affected” (Authier 1992: 9, fn. 9).

- (71) a. Martín<sub>i</sub> cerró [ los<sub>i</sub>/?sus<sub>i</sub> ojos].  
 Martín.NOM closed the/his eyes.ACC  
 ‘Martín closed his eyes.’  
 b. Los estudiantes<sub>i</sub> levantaron [ la<sub>i</sub>/?su<sub>i</sub> mano].  
 the students.NOM raised the/their hand.ACC  
 ‘The students raised their hand.’

In most dialects of Spanish, this configuration is not possible with other kinds of predicates, such as verbs of grooming, where an inalienable possession interpretation is impossible between the external argument and a BPN inside a DP headed by a definite determiner (72a).<sup>20</sup> For the possession interpretation to be available, one must resort to a possessive determiner (72b), or to a reflexive dative co-referring with the external argument, in which case the BPN does not require to be internally possessed (71c).

- (72) a. Mario<sub>i</sub> lavó [ los\*<sub>i</sub> dientes].  
 Mario washed the teeth  
 ‘Mario washed the teeth.’  
 b. Juana<sub>i</sub> lavó [ sus<sub>i</sub> dientes].  
 Juana washed her teeth  
 ‘Juana washed her teeth.’  
 c. Guillermo<sub>i</sub> se<sub>i</sub> lavó [ los<sub>i</sub> dientes].  
 Guillermo RFL.DAT washed the teeth  
 ‘Guillermo washed his teeth.’

On the other hand, English does not license the external possession configuration in (71) with verbs denoting internally triggered motion. In this language, a possessive determiner is required for the possession relation to arise between the external argument and the accusative BPN, as shown in (73); otherwise, the body part receives a token interpretation.

- (73) a. Lauren<sub>i</sub> moved [the\*<sub>i</sub>/her<sub>i</sub> arm].  
 b. Brian<sub>i</sub> opened [the\*<sub>i</sub>/his<sub>i</sub> mouth].

By looking at the data in (70), one could hypothesize that Spanish allows possessor raising to occur in these configurations. The possessor argument would therefore originate inside the possessum DP containing the BPN and, unable to be case-licensed in that environment, it raises out of the internal argument DP into the external argument position, i.e. Spec, VoiceP, thus becoming the grammatical subject, marked with nominative case (74); this is, in fact, what authors like Armstrong (2021) propose.

- (74) [VoiceP Martín<sub>i</sub> [Voice [<sub>v</sub>P -ar [VP cerr- [DP *t*<sub>i</sub> los [NP PRO<sub>i</sub> ojos]]]]]]]

<sup>20</sup> One exception to this trend is Asturian Spanish, the dialect of Castilian spoken in the Principality of Asturias, in northern Spain. In this variant, sentences like (72a) are possible, and the relationship of possession obtains. This is due to the influence of Asturian, the minoritized Romance language spoken in the region, where this possibility is also attested: *Xuan, llavó [los dientes]<sub>i</sub>* (‘Xuan brushed his teeth’).

This type of approach, however, would require an explanation as to why this is not the case in English, as evidenced in (73). Alternatively, it might be the case that no possessor raising takes place in (71), and what actually happens is that the external argument in Spec, VoiceP controls the argumental PRO inside the BPN, which lacks an overt possessor, as we saw in the case of BPNs in instrumental PPs; the external argument would qualify as a legitimate c-commanding antecedent, and control would therefore be possible, as shown in (75).

(75) [VoiceP Martín<sub>i</sub> [Voice [vP -ar [VP cerr- [DP los [NP PRO<sub>i</sub> ojos]]]]]]

The derivation in (75) accounts for sentences like those in (71), and for the fact that such configuration is impossible in English; recall that English possessors must always be overt. Nonetheless, this approach faces an additional shortcoming, namely why is it that other predicates, like grooming verbs, must resort to reflexive dative possessors for the inalienable possession construal to arise, as shown in (72). Here, we would like to venture an alternative hypothesis that may overcome this obstacle; let us begin by examining the Spanish data more closely.

Just as it happens with the constructions containing grooming verbs in (72), Spanish also allows the insertion of reflexive dative possessors in contexts with predicates denoting internally triggered motions, as in (76). In such cases, the presence of the dative introduces a semantic difference; while in (71) the external argument resorts to internal biological mechanisms to perform a movement, in (76), the external argument uses their own hands to perform such movement. In other words, while the sentences in (71) could be the result of a natural need or instinct, those in (76) clearly involve a higher degree of agency, as noted by MacDonald (2017).

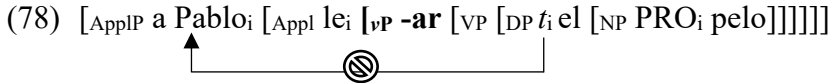
- (76) a. Martín<sub>i</sub>      se<sub>i</sub>          cerró [ los<sub>i</sub>/?sus<sub>i</sub> ojos].  
 Martín.NOM RFL.DAT closed the/his eyes.ACC  
 ‘Martín used his hands to close his eyes.’  
 b. Los estudiantes<sub>i</sub> se<sub>i</sub>          levantaron [ la<sub>i</sub>/?su<sub>i</sub> mano].  
 the students.NOM RFL.DAT raised the/their hand.ACC  
 ‘The students used their hands to raise their hand.’

Suárez-Palma (2026) proposes that possessor raising may only occur within phase boundaries (Chomsky 2001, 2008), but never across them. This would explain why a high dative experiencer cannot be interpreted as the inalienable possessor of a BPN in the verb’s complement position, as in (77).

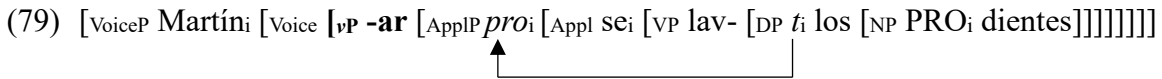
- (77) a. A Pablo<sub>i</sub>      le<sub>i</sub>          gusta [DP el pelo]\*<sub>i</sub>.  
 Pablo.DAT 3SG.DAT likes the hair  
 ‘Pablo likes (the) hair.’  
 b. A Pablo<sub>i</sub>      le<sub>i</sub>          gusta [DP su<sub>i</sub> pelo].  
 Pablo.DAT 3SG.DAT likes his hair  
 ‘Pablo likes his hair.’

If we assume, consistently with the current theory of dative arguments in Spanish (Cuervo 2003), that dative experiencers of psych predicates are introduced in the specifier of a high

applicative head that merges above *vP*, and if *vP* is indeed a phase boundary, we could explain why no possessor interpretation can be obtained between the dative DP and the BPN in (77a): the possessor's raising to Spec,ApplP would be blocked because it would imply having to cross a phase boundary, i.e. *vP*. This is schematically shown in (78). Thus, the only option to derive the possession relation is by having the BPN surface internally possessed via a possessive determiner, as in (77b). This also suggests that dative experiencers in these contexts are externally merged in Spec,ApplP, not anywhere else in the sentence.

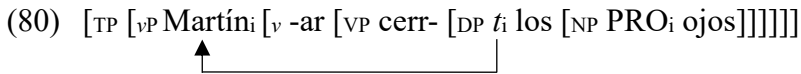


If Suárez-Palma's proposal is on the right track, then we might have an explanation for the contrasts in (71)–(73). The sentences containing grooming verbs in (71) require a reflexive dative possessor to case license the inalienable possessor originating inside the possessum DP; this argument would raise to the specifier of an applicative head below *vP* and, because it co-refers with the external argument that is introduced in Spec,VoiceP, it surfaces with reflexive morphology. In other words, the applicative saves the derivation from crashing, because the possessor argument would not be able to raise above *vP* to find case. This is shown in (79).



The derivation sketched in (79) would also be at play for the sentences in (76); the co-occurrence of a dative possessor and a co-referring external argument in Spec,VoiceP would explain the higher degree of agency perceived in these sentences. Two arguments co-referring with each other are each assigned a possessor and an agent theta role by two different functional heads.

Finally, it may be the case that sentences in (71) lack a Voice projection above *vP*, and that the possessor argument originating inside the possessum DP raises to Spec,*vP*, i.e. the edge of the phase boundary, from where it can be assigned nominative case by T via Agree. The raising of the possessor would be licit in this case, because it still occurs inside the same phase boundary, as shown in (80). Additionally, if this configuration truly lacks a Voice projection, and its external argument is originated elsewhere, this could explain the different degree of agency conveyed by these sentences, as opposed to those in (76).



While Suárez-Palma's (2026) hypothesis appears to solve some of the questions left unanswered by other alternatives, some details still need to be polished, including the fact that the external argument in sentences like (80) are still agentive enough to be able to control into purpose clauses, just like those in (79) do, as in (81). We leave these issues open for future investigations.

- (81) a. Martín<sub>i</sub> cerró [los ojos]<sub>i</sub> para no ver la película.  
 Martín closed the eyes for not watch the movie  
 ‘Martín closed his eyes to not watch the movie.’
- b. Martín<sub>i</sub> se cerró [los ojos]<sub>i</sub> para no ver la película.  
 Martín RFL.DAT closed the eyes for not watch the movie  
 ‘Martín closed his eyes with his hands to not watch the movie.’

#### 4. Conclusions

In this paper, we have examined the phenomenon of inalienable possession in external possession contexts, both in Spanish and in English. First, we revisited dative possessor configurations in Spanish, and adopted Suárez-Palma’s (2024) possessor raising proposal to account for these sentences; according to his analysis, dative possessors originate inside the possessum DP and raise to the specifier of an applicative projection to be case-licensed, since they are unable to do so inside such DP. We attributed the absence of dative possessors in English to the lack of applicative heads of possession in this language, *à la* Cuervo (2003).

Next, we analyzed accusative possessors of oblique BPNs inside locative PPs; interestingly, this construction exists both in Spanish and in English, although it has not received a lot of attention in the literature of English. In both languages, these sentences share properties traditionally associated with inalienable possession contexts in Romance, including the fact that a definite determiner heading the possessum DP suffices for the inalienable possession interpretation to arise, and how these structures allow a distributive reading of singular BPNs in the context of plural possessors. We followed Sánchez López’s (2007) observation that this type of construction is derivationally related to a dative possessor one, and proposed a possessor raising analysis along the lines of Suárez-Palma’s (2024) for dative possessors in Spanish. In our proposal, the DP containing the BPN and its possessor merges as the complement of an argumental locative preposition; when the possessor is unable to check its uninterpretable case features inside the possessee, it raises to the specifier of the locative PP, from where it checks accusative case against the verb.

Furthermore, we discussed sentences where a nominative external argument is interpreted as the inalienable possessor of an oblique BPN inside an instrumental PP. While in Spanish the possessum DP can be headed by a definite determiner in these contexts, and the inalienable possession interpretation still obtains, in English, it must be headed by a possessive determiner. Landau (1999) proposed that locative, source and instrumental PPs are argumental in Hebrew, and therefore allow for possessor raising to occur. While this could be the interpretation for why Spanish behaves the way it does, we showed evidence supporting the idea that instrumental PPs are adjuncts, and therefore islands for extraction, in both Spanish and in English. We then contemplated a sideward movement analysis similar to the one proposed by Rodrigues (2010) for null possessors inside adjuncts in Brazilian Portuguese, which would allow possessor raising outside adjuncts. We showed that this type of analysis cannot successfully account for the Spanish data for it is incompatible with a theory of argument structure where external arguments are introduced in the specifier of a Voice projection; moreover, this account would require explaining how it is that sideward movement can operate in Spanish but not in English adjuncts. Instead, we showed that a non-movement approach to control can account for the Spanish and English data more straightforwardly: we proposed, following Suárez-Palma (2024), that body-part nouns in Spanish are inherently relational and select for a PRO as an argument; when a possessor argument originates in Spec,*n*P in this language, it controls the PRO inside the NP containing

the BPN, thus giving rise to the inalienable construal. On the other hand, when the possessum DP lacks a possessor argument, PRO can be controlled by the most local c-commanding DP, including the external argument when the BPN is inside an instrumental adjunct PP. In English, however, body-part nouns do not subcategorize for an argumental PRO; instead, inalienable possessors are generated in that position. Consequently, when there is no possessor argument inside the DP, the English BPN receives a token interpretation, and the inalienable reading becomes unavailable. Lastly, we considered examples where a definite determiner can head a possessum DP containing a BPN inside an instrumental PP in English allowing the possession interpretation, which is when a restrictive adjective modifies such noun (*Joanne opened the door with the broken hand*). We showed that this is only possible with nouns denoting a body part that is part of a set, like *hands*. We argued that the role of the restrictive adjective is to single out an element of a closed superset, e.g. someone's broken hand, excluding a non-broken hand of theirs, constraining therefore the possible interpretations of the BPN, and favoring the inalienable possession interpretation. If this idea is on the right track, a semantic analysis of this phenomenon would be necessary to fully understand it.

Finally, we weighed in on different approaches to account for the fact that Spanish allows external possession between an external argument and a BPN merging as the verb's complement in contexts where the predicate denotes an internally triggered motion, while this option is not available in English. We explained why an account where the possessor raises from inside the possessum DP to the specifier of Voice falls short, since this phenomenon is only possible with this group of verbs. Additionally, an analysis grounded purely in control of the PRO inside the BPN by the external argument also fails to explain why this strategy does not occur across the board with other predicates, such as grooming verbs, which require reflexive dative possessors for the relationship of inalienable possession to obtain. Finally, we advanced an alternative approach, based on Suárez-Palma (2026), whereby possessor raising may only occur within phase boundaries; according to this hypothesis, verbs denoting internally triggered motion may or may not project a Voice head. When Voice is absent, the possessor inside the possessee may raise to the specifier of  $\nu$ P, from where it is case licensed by T, thus avoiding the crossing of a phase boundary. On the other hand, if Voice is present, and an external argument is introduced in its specifier, then the possessor, which co-refers with the external argument in Spec, VoiceP, will raise to the specifier of an applicative head of possession below  $\nu$ P, thus being materialized with reflexive dative morphology. While this approach seems promising, we also pointed out some aspects that would require more insight, which we leave open for further inquiry.

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