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1. Data. It is widely accepted that the Spanish reverse psych verbs like *gustar* ‘to appeal/like’ take an experiencer IO and a stimuli (theme) Subject, and that the unmarked word order is IO_v Subject, as shown in (1a) (Cuervo 2003, Gutiérrez-Bravo 2007; *inter alia*). Also widely assumed in theoretical syntax literature is that the dative clitic is obligatory in this word order; thus, (1b) is ill-formed for the lack of a clitic.

- (1) a. *A Pepe LE gusta el fútbol* b. **A Pepe gusta el fútbol*.
to Pepe clitic-dat.3sg appeals the football to Pepe appeals the football
‘Football appeals to Pepe/Pepe likes football.’

The two arguments can appear in the reversed order, as shown in (2); this sentence is felicitous as a response to: a) What about football? or b) Who does football appeal to? In either case, the Subject (football) assumes the pragmatic relation *topic* (Lambrecht 1994).

- (2) *El fútbol LE gusta a Pepe*. ‘Football appeals to Pepe.’

It has been largely overlooked in previous studies, but in sentences like (2), where the Subject is preverbal, the dative clitic is not obligatory, as shown in (3). (All examples hereafter were extracted from the Spanish Royal Academy’s online corpus, *Corpus de Referencia de Español Actual – CREA*), focusing on Peninsular Spanish data.

- (3) *Les decía, además, que el fútbol Ø gusta a los grandes tenores . . .*’
‘He would tell them, besides, that football appeals to great tenors . . .’

Sentences like this are not restricted to journalistic language but broadly found across genres in the Peninsular Spanish database. The non clitic-doubled experiencer is particularly frequent in relative clauses, where the (subject) relative pronoun serves as the topic (Lambrecht 1994), as in (4).

- (4) *... y el resultado es un guión que no Ø gusta a Hitchcock, ...*
‘...and the result is a script that does not appeal to Hitchcock, ...’

Moreover, both clitic-doubled (CLD) and non clitic-doubled (NCLD) variants are equally frequent in the corpus consulted, demonstrating syntactic variation, as shown in two similar sentences, (5)&(6).

- (5) *Josefa habla de él todo el tiempo, un tipo que LES gusta a las mujeres...*
‘Josefa talks about him all the time, a guy who appeals to women...’
(6) *...era un rubio que Ø gustaba a las chicas ...* ‘...he was a blond man who appealed to girls ...’

2. Research questions. Using corpus data, this paper seeks to answer five questions: A. Do all psych verbs show the variation at issue?; B. What is the syntactic status of the NCLD experiencer, assuming the CLD experience is an IO (or a dative)?; C. Do a CLD sentence and a NCLD sentence differ in meaning?; D. What are the distributional differences between the two variants?; and E. Why is the dative clitic obligatory in one word order and optional in another?

3. Data collection. We selected 6 psych verbs – *gustar* ‘to appeal’, *importar* ‘to matter’, *interesar* ‘to interest’, *encantar* ‘to delight’, *sorprender* ‘to surprise’, and *asustar* ‘to frighten’ and extracted from *CREA* all tokens of sentences with these verbs exhibiting the Subject V IO word order. We surveyed only the Peninsular Spanish data (due to its highest volume), collecting the total of 1,490 tokens.

4. Results. Among the six verbs selected, only *gustar* and *importar* exhibited equally frequent occurrences of two variants (about 250 tokens each), whereas the rest either strongly (*interesar&encantar*) or predominantly (*sorprender&asustar*) favored the NCLD variant. We predict the syntactic variation at issue is most eminent among psych verbs that cannot alternately be used as transitive eventive verbs.

With respect to Question B, focusing on *gustar* and *importar*, we postulate that the CLD and NCLD variants are two instantiations of the same syntactic argument IO (or the dative), rather than analyzing the

former as the IO and the latter as the DO accompanied by a differential object marker (DOM). Evidence for this comes from passages like (7), where a NCLD variant is “pronominalized” as a dative clitic.

(7) *-¿Qué cualidades hay que tener para ponerse delante de la cámara?*

-La principal es arrojo. Y desde luego, que gustes a la cámara.

*-¿Y usted **LE**_{DAT} gusta?*

‘-What qualities does one have to have in order to place oneself in front of the camera?’

‘-The primary one is fearlessness. And of course, that you are appealing **to the camera.**’

‘And are you appealing **to it** (=the camera)?’

Also, similar syntactic variation already exists with the recipient dative of ditransitives, as in (8)&(9).

(8) *El padre Michel **LE** entregó a Sole una pequeña campana de bronce.*

‘Father Michel gave Sole a little bronze bell.’

(9) *... a su vez, **Ø** entregó a Cortés un collar de caracoles,...*

‘... in return, he gave a necklace of shells to Cortés’

Regarding Question C, we argue that the two variants do not differ in meaning. This is supported by (10) & (11), which appeared in the same newspaper article referring to the same event.

(10) *La operación que **no Ø gusta a nadie.*** ‘The operation that does not appeal to anyone.’

(11) *La operación en Chechenia no **LE gusta a nadie.***

‘The operation in Chichnya does not appeal to anyone.’

For Question D, we examined the nominals used in both variants in terms of their referential properties since referential effects on argument realization have been widely reported in typological studies (cf. van Lier 2012). First, we found that non pronominal DPs (*Pedro, mi hijo* ‘my son’, etc.) are compatible with both variants, but pronominal ones are restricted to the CLD variant, (which in general is the case with all types of verbs in Spanish). Second, the NCLD variant may occur with various kinds of nominals not directly denoting animate entities: a) institutional/organizational terms (*el gobierno* ‘government’), b) locational terms referring to their institutional aspect (*Moscú* ‘Moscow’); c) abstract terms signifying groups of individuals (*la propiedad* ‘the property’ to mean owners); and d) inanimates not implying animacy (*la fabula* ‘the fable’). None of these occurs as a CLD variant. From these results, we conclude that *pronominality* and *animacy* are critical factors for the argument realization of the IO in reverse psych verb constructions that exhibit the subject V IO order.

Regarding Question E, the analysis of the dative clitic as the head of ApplicativeP (Cuervo 2003) or as an agreement marker (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2007) does not offer a solution. Alternatively, we postulate that the dative clitic is obligatory if the IO is preverbal (just like in all other cases of the left dislocated object), but it is optional if it is postverbal (just like in exx, 8 and 9).

Finally, the syntactic variation reported here appears to be more pervasive in the Peninsular Spanish, which corroborates the observation made by Dufter&Stark (2008) that the grammaticalization of dative clitic doubling in general is in a more advanced stage in the Latin American varieties.

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