

Chapter 2

Literature Review

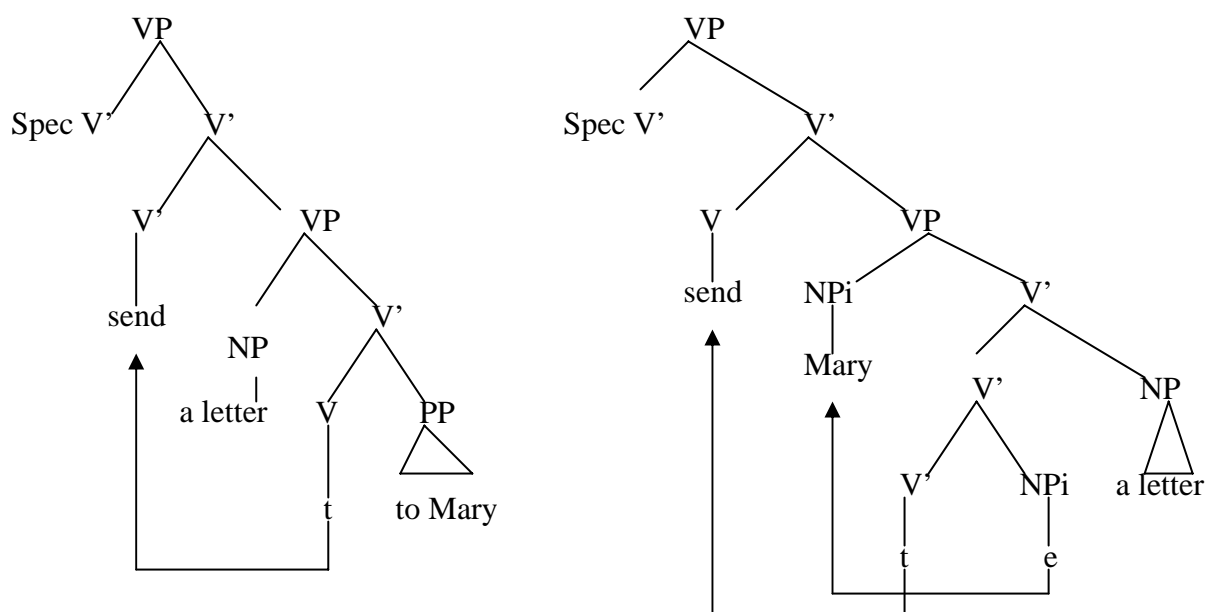
Ditransitive construction and the complex relationship between its objects have been the focus of attention of a great deal of literature in various languages. One of the controversial issues about ditransitive constructions is its structures and meanings. Arguments concerning whether the DOC and *to*-dative are two of the same structure or distinct structure are countless. This chapter begins by discussing some previous literature regarding the issue of ditransitive constructions from various languages including English, Greek, Japanese, and Mandarin, and ends with a brief grammar sketch of Yami and the reasons for the necessity of a closer examination of the interaction between transitivity and focus system, as well as the interaction between thematic role and syntactic structure and case marking of core and peripheral/oblique arguments.

English

Ditransitive construction or dative alternation is a topic that has been broadly studied in English for the past few decades. In 1986, Barss and Lasnik discussed the asymmetrical relation between the direct object (DO) and indirect object (IO) of English double object construction (V NP₁/IO NP₂/DO) and pointed out that NP₂ is in the domain of NP₁, but not vice-versa. In other words, the goal argument (NP₁) asymmetrically c-commands the theme argument (NP₂). These asymmetries include

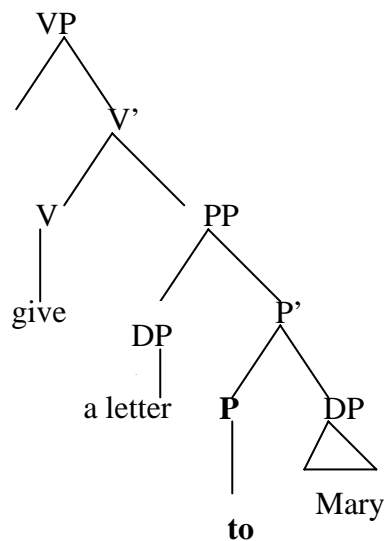
anaphor binding, quantifier-pronoun binding, weak crossover, superiority and polarity. They suggest that a modification of the definition of binding domain is required to account for these asymmetries, specifically, to include the notion of linear order with c-command to the definition of binding. Larson (1998) takes an opposite view of Barss and Lasnik, and proposes a hierarchical structure for the VP which involves two VP-shells. In his treatment, a ditransitive sentence such as *John sent a book to Mary* (referred to as *to*-dative construction thereafter) is the basic structure and its Theme argument is generated as the specifier of the lower VP while the Goal argument takes its complement position as illustrated in (1). A sentence such as *John sent Mary a book* (referred to as DOC thereafter) is derived from the basic structure (the *to*-dative construction), and the derivation involves an operation similar to the passive formation; the Goal argument has to move to the specifier position and the Theme argument has to be generated as an adjunct of V', as illustrated in (2). He also suggests that these two constructions share the same meaning.

(1) John sent a letter to Mary. (Basic) (2) John sent Mary a letter. (Derived)

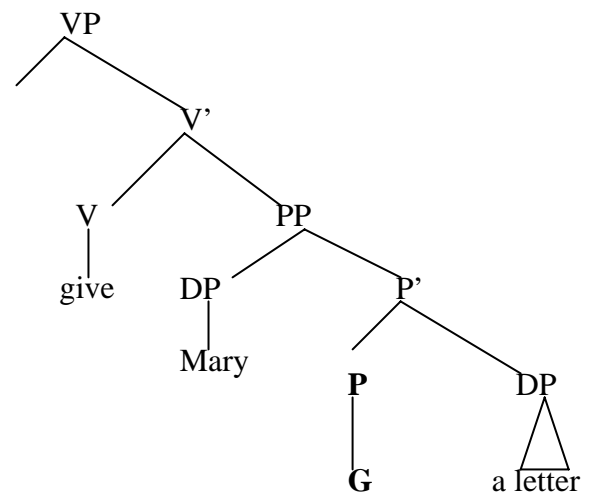


Jackendoff (1990) opposes Larson's treatment of DOC and proposes that DOC and *to*-dative construction are two distinct structures, having different interpretations, and that inclusion of the notion of linear order to the binding definition is necessary. Later on, Pesetsky (1995) retains the hierarchical structural view of Larson's analysis and introduces the null Case-assigning element G – a null preposition, as a case assigner for DP (DO) of DOC, suggesting that DOC and *to*-dative construction differ only in the selection of different complements by the ditransitive verbs. The DOC and *to*-dative construction are illustrated in (3) and (4).

(3)



(4)

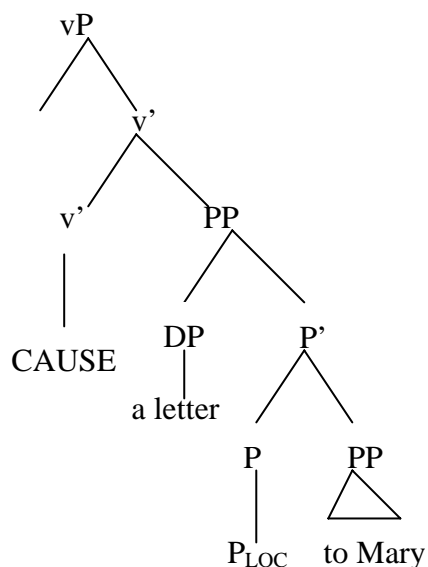


Harley (2002) proposes that the null preposition G of DOC suggested by Pesetsky is a P_{HAVE} encoding possession while the preposition of the dative construction carries a locative interpretation, and argues for decomposing of a verb such as *give* into CAUSE and HAVE, as illustrated in (5). This analysis captures the meaning of a DOC such as *Mary gave John a book* is *Mary had done something (gave*

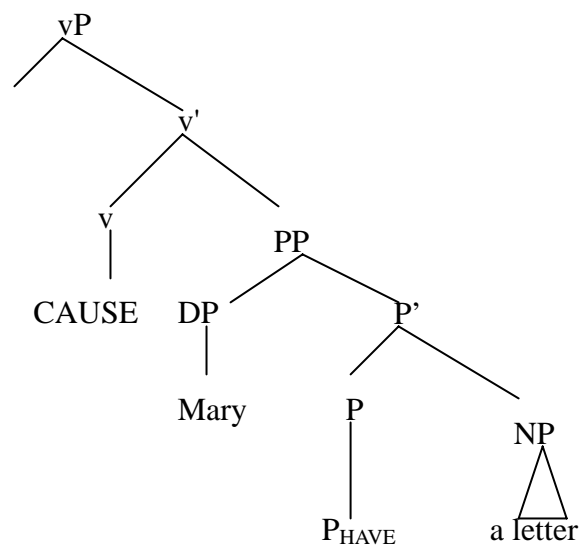
a book) that cause John to be in possession of something (a book). Moreover, Harley claims that there is a typological distribution – languages with P_{HAVE} which allow possessors to c-command possesses, goal to c-command theme, show existence of DOC, languages like English, Japanese, Hiaki, ... etc belong to this category; languages without P_{HAVE} which do not allow possessors to c-command possesses, goal to theme, show non-existence of DOC, languages such as Irish and Diné are of this type. However, only a limited number of languages have been examined following Harley's analysis, and this typological distribution has not been confirmed across many other languages of the world.

(5) Harley CAUSE and HAVE

a. dative construction



b. DOC



Ditransitive verbs such as *give* have two distinct structures – DOC and *to*-dative construction - and different meanings in English have been widely accepted. In the following subsections, languages with diverse typology supporting the view that DOC and *to*-dative have two distinct structures with two different interpretations are

discussed. Greek, a language with rich case marking system is discussed, followed by some researches done in Japanese, and the study of Mandarin ditransitive constructions ends the discussion of this subsection.

Greek

Anagnostopoulous (2003) suggests that various ditransitive constructions exist in Greek – indirect object/goal DP marked with genitive case, as in (6) or accusative case, as in (7), and indirect object/goal PP marked with accusative case, as in (8).

- (6) (DP) GEN_{Goal} – (DP) ACC_{Theme}
 O Gianis estile tis Marias to grama
 The Gianis-NOM sent-3sg the Marias-GEN the letter-ACC
 ‘John sent Mary the letter.’
- (7) (DP) ACC_{Goal} – (DP) ACC_{Theme}
 Dhidhaksa ta pedhia ghramatiki
 Taught-1sg the children-ACC grammar-AA
 ‘I taught the children grammar.’
- (8) (DP) ACC_{Theme} – (PP) ACC_{Goal}
 O Gianis estile to grama s-tin Maria
 The Gianis-NOM sent-3sg the letter-ACC to-the Maria-ACC
 ‘John sent the letter to Mary.’ (Anagnostopoulous 2003: 15)

She argues that the genitive case, marked PP in Greek, corresponds to dative construction in English, and the genitive case, marked DP, corresponds to DOC through animacy effect, predicate restriction, passivization, and nominalization. She points out that some properties of the genitive case marked DP possessors (they must be animate, allow fewer predications, and cannot be passivized and nominalized) are similar to the Goal DP in DOC of English. The ungrammaticality of (9) is an example

of the unacceptability of the inanimate genitive, marked DP, and this ungrammaticality is also observed in English as indicated in the English translation of this sentence.

- (9) *I Ilektra estile tis **Falias** ena ðema
 The Ilektra-NOM sent-3sg the **France-GEN** a parcel-ACC
 ‘*Ilektra sent **France** a parcel.’ (Anagnostopoulous 2003: 12)

For the property of predication, she stresses a similarity between English and Greek: both have classes of verbs that allow dative alternation and certain classes of verbs that do not. In addition, passivization – promotion of the theme argument to the subject position – is prohibited in both Greek and English as illustrated in (10). Similarly, nominalizations are found to be impossible with DOC as inputs as illustrated in (11). Notice that (11a) and (11b) differ only in the presence of the preposition *s-*. By comparing the English examples in (11c-d) with those of Greek in (11a-b), the likeness becomes even more apparent.

- (10) ?*To yrama taçiðromiθice tu Petru apo tin Ilektra
 The letter-NOM mailed-Nact-3sg the Petros-GEN from the Ilektra
 ‘?*The letter was mailed Peter by Ilektra’

- (11) a. *I anaθesi mias ðiskolis sonatas **tis** Marias apo
 The assignment a difficult-GEN sonata-GEN the Mary by
 tin ðaskala
 the teacher
 ‘The assignment of a difficult sonata of Mary by the teacher.’

- b. I anaθesi mias ðiskolis sonatas **stis** Marias
 The assignment a difficult-GEN sonata-GEN to-the Mary
 apo tin ðaskala
 by the teacher
 ‘The assignment of a difficult sonata to Mary by the teacher.’

c. John' assignment of Mary (of) a hard sonata.

d. John's assignment of a hard sonata to Mary.

(Anagnostopoulous 2003: 6)

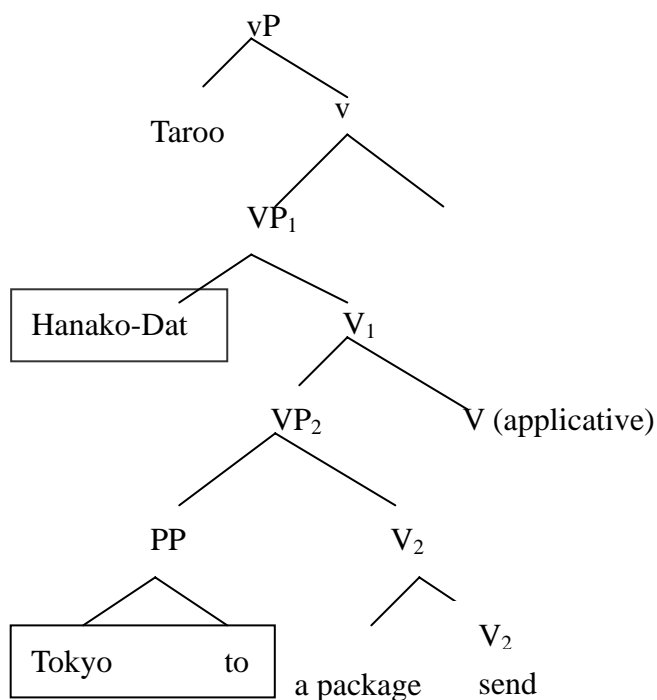
Anagnostopoulous (2003) claims the existence of DOC in Greek through establishing the similarity between the ditransitive construction with genitive marked DP goal in Greek and DOC in English. Greek is not the only language with a rich case system to have established the existence of a ditransitive construction corresponding to the DOC in English. In the next subsection, Japanese (also a language with rich case marking system) is claimed to have two distinct ditransitive constructions parallel to *to*-dative construction and DOC in English.

Japanese

Unlike English, Japanese, a language that could undergo scrambling, appears to have only one structure; in fact, it is reported to have two argument structures parallel to DOC and dative construction in English (Miyagawa & Tsujioka, 2004). Through quantifier scope and animacy constraint on the goal argument, Miyagawa and Tsujioka propose that there are two different types of goals in Japanese: one is referred to as the 'high goal' and the other is referred to as the 'low goal'. These two goals look alike – both are marked with the dative case marker *ni*-. However, this *ni*- appears to be a true case marker only while it is attached to the high goal (goal of DOC) and is a preposition while it is attached to the low goal (goal of *to*-dative construction). The distinction between the high and low goals becomes even more obvious considering their structural positions. The high goal takes the specifier position of the applicative head while the low goal occupies the position within PP in the lower VP shell as illustrated in (12). This structural difference explains why the

scope ambiguity occurs only with the construction containing low goal, as exemplified in (13). Miyagawa and Tsujioka further note the floating numeral quantifier in Japanese “may float off its host only if the host is a DP” as only allowed in a construction which contains the high goal in order to provide a stronger foundation for the proposal of considering the low goal as a preposition which does not permit the numeral quantifier to float off its host, as exemplified in (14).

(12) Structural position of low and high goals in Japanese



(13) a. Taroo-ga dareka-ni dono-nimotu-mo okutta.
 Taro-NOM someone-DAT every-package sent
 ‘Taro sent someone every package.’ some > every, *every > some

b. Taroo-ga dono-nimotu-moi dareka-ni ti okutta
 Taro-NOM every-packagei someone-DAT ti sent
 some > every, every > some (Miyagawa & Tsujioka 2004: 5)

c. John sent some student every article. *every > some

d. John sent some article to every student. every > some

(Miyagawa & Tsujioka 2004: 6)

- (14) a. Taroo-ga gakusei-**ni** futa-ri nimotu-o okutta
 Taro-NOM students-**DAT** 2-CL package-ACC sent
 ‘Taro sent two students a package.’
- b. *Daitooryoo-ga kokkyoo-**ni** futa-tu heitai-o okutta.
 President-NOM borders-**to** 2-CL soldiers-ACC sent
 ‘The President sent two borders soldiers.’ (Miyagawa & Tsujioka, 2004)

Through various tests – quantifier scope, animacy effect, and floating quantifier, Miyagawa and Tsujioka (2004) argue that Japanese, like English, has two distinct argument structures for ditransitive verbs. The one containing the high goal corresponds to the DOC of English, and the one containing the low goal corresponds to the *to*-dative construction. The next subsection considers literature regarding ditransitive constructions of Mandarin, a language claimed to have no overt case markers.

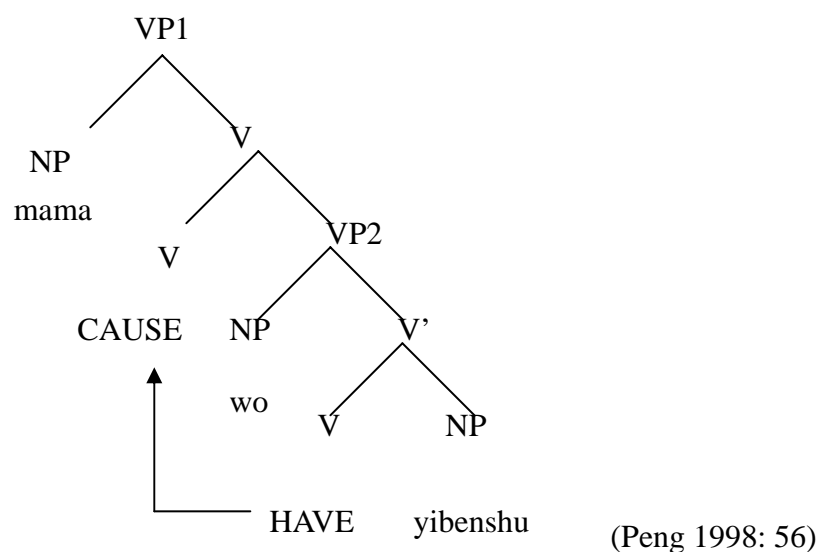
Mandarin

Li and Thompson (1981) point out that the indirect object in Mandarin ditransitive construction usually denotes an animate entity or an institution, while the direct object usually denotes an inanimate entity. They further suggest that the function of ‘*gei*’ in (15) is similar to that of the preposition ‘*to*’ in English. Mandarin, a language that shows no evidence of case markers, is claimed to have similar animacy restrictions on the two objects of ditransitive verbs and shares some similar properties in constructing ditransitive constructions. In 1998, Peng examined ditransitive constructions with different types of verbs in Mandarin and argued that Mandarin double object construction, similar to English DOC, is related to causatives, and has a special type of causative construction in decomposing the verbs into

CAUSE and HAVE. Peng's structure and derivation of ditransitive construction is illustrated in (16).

- (15) a. 我扔了那塊肉給他。
 b. I tossed that piece of meat **to** him.

- (16) 媽媽給我一本書 mama gei wo yibenshu
 'My mother gave me a book.'



Languages that differ in respect to argument representation are reported to have dative alternation. Observations of co-existence of verbal *HAVE* and DOC and co-existence of causative interpretation and DOC are justified in various languages, which provide some grounds for making generalizations while investigating other languages. Yami is claimed to be an ergative language (Ho, 1990; Deng 2005) which differs from English, Japanese, and Mandarin which are classified as accusative. This raises the question of whether dative alternation also exists in Yami, a language which also has the same rich case system as Greek and Japanese, but differs in its exhibition of subject and object. A brief understanding of the basic sentence patterns and argument coding of the language is necessary before further discussion of more structures involving more than two complements/arguments can be attempted.

Therefore, a brief sketch of Yami grammar is outlined in the next subsection, and the necessity for considering the syntactic representation of verbs with different degrees of transitivity as well as the interaction between thematic roles and syntactic structures are investigated in the following chapter.

A sketch of of Yami grammar

Yami belongs to the Austronesian language family which has a very unique focus system. The focused element is always the subject and has an agreement affix encoded on the verb. The subject does not always have to be agent; it can be patient, instrument, location, etc. The word order is considerably flexible. The most frequently observed word order is claimed to be VSO (Chang, 2000). The focused element is always nominative case marked. The unfocused elements are also case marked depending on the predicate and its thematic structure. Table 1 includes two sets of case markers in Yami; one is for common nouns and the other one is for proper nouns. Table 2 illustrates verbal affixes which are used to signal the focused element within a sentence. Both Table 1 and 2 are taken from Deng (2005) with the addition of the most frequent grammatical functions of the case marked elements. The nominative case marked element is the subject of the sentence, the genitive case marked element is usually the object of the sentence, locative case marked element always denotes location, and the oblique case marked element is claimed to be the adjunct or complement which provides additional information.

Table 1. Case marking system of Yami

	subject	object	location	oblique
Case	Nom	Gen	Loc	Obl
Common noun	o	no	do	so
Proper noun	si	ni	ji	X

Table 2. Focus/Voice affixes

Focus/Voice	AF	PF	LF	IF
Verb affix	-om-/man-	-en/Ø	-an	i-

In an AF sentence, the subject is nominative case marked bearing the agent role as exemplified in (17). A PF sentence has (as its name suggests) a nominative case marked subject bearing the patient role as illustrated in (18). An LF sentence has a subject bearing locative theta role and is nominative marked as illustrated in (19). Finally, the subject of an IF sentence bears the instrument role and is invariably nominative case marked as shown in (20). The focus element is always nominative case marked as can be observed in various focus constructions. Examples are taken from Rau (2003)¹.

(17) koman so wakay si Salang
 AF-eat Obl sweet potato Nom PN
 ‘Salang wants to eat a sweet potato.’
 ‘Salang is the one who eats a sweet potato.’

(18) kanen ni Salang o wakay
 eat-PF 3.S.Gen PN Nom sweet potato
 ‘Salang ate the sweet potato.’
 ‘This is the the sweet potato that Salang eats.’

(19) niakanan na o mogis ori ni Salang
 eat-LF 3.S.Gen Nom rice this Gen PN
 ‘Salang ate some rice from there.’
 ‘The rice is here where Salang had eaten it.’

(20) yakan na ni Salang o among ya
 IF-eat 3.S.Gen Gen PN Nom fish this
 ‘Salang took this fish and ate it.’
 ‘This is the fish that Salang eats.’ (Rau 2003: 7-8)

¹ The first translation of each example is directly taken from Rau (2003) which is more likely to be the literal translation. The second translation is the English translation provided for reference. The focus NP is placed in the subject position in its English translation.

The focus element is always nominative case marked, and the agent seems to be consistently marked with genitive case – *ni*. All the examples given above only involve two elements, one is the agent – 'Salang' - and the other is the theme or patient – food (sweet potato, rice, and fish). When a sentence involves more than two elements, the focus element is marked with a nominative case marker which is consistent with sentences containing two elements. However, the syntactic representations and case marking becomes complicated when a sentence involves more than two elements. Verbs with different thematic structure sometimes have different syntactic representations which complicate the picture even further. Focus and transitivity are factors that might influence their morphosyntactic manifestations. Therefore, the interaction of focus system, transitivity, case marking system, and thematic structure must be thoroughly examined before proceeding with the possible existence of dative alternation in this language.

Summary

This chapter begins with a discussion of the existence of dative alternation reported in various languages, including English, Japanese, Greek, and Mandarin. Dative alternation is found across languages with diverse typology. This raises the question of whether this dative alternation also exists in Yami, which is claimed to be an ergative language and possesses a unique focus system with a rich case marking system. According to Harley's hypothesis, Yami has verbal *HAVE* and hence, should have dative alternation as English, Japanese, Hiaki, ...,etc. In the following chapters, the Yami focus system and its trivalent verbs are investigated from various perspectives to search for dative alternation corresponding to English dative alternation. Further justifications are sought to support the view that dative

alternations are two distinct structures whose interpretations are different and Harley's hypothesis of predicting the co-occurrence of P_{HAVE} and DOC within a language.