Scope Freezing in PP Dative Constructions?

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Bruening (2010) suggests that constructions like (1a), involving “DOC idioms”, are not “true PP datives” but rather underlyingly DOCs (1b), disguised by an “anti-dative shift” operation (1c).

(1) a. This lighting would give a headache to anyone with a normal constitution.
   b. This lighting would give [anyone with a normal constitution] [a headache].
   c. This lighting gives [a headache] to [anyone with a normal constitution].

In support, Bruening claims that “scope freezing” in DOCs (first noted by Lebeaux) also holds in “disguised PP datives”. The DOC (2a) is scope frozen in the surface IO>DO word order; but the “PP dative” (2b) prefers scope in the (non-typical) contra-surface IO>DO order (cf. 2c). Bruening proposes that the IO in (2b) has moved to a high right Spec, preserving the c-command relations in DOCs that create scope freezing (2a) under his Superiority-based account:

(2) a. This lighting gives [a different person] [every kind of headache].
   b. This lighting gives [every kind of headache] to [a different (type of) person].
   c. The instructor gave [every headache pill] to [a different person].

This paper argues that (1a)/(2b) are true PP datives, the apparent scope preference in (2b) representing intrusion of focus: scope preferences in (2a) vs. (2b) thus have different sources.

Russian exhibits ditransitives wherein one order of arguments is scopally ambiguous and the other is frozen, similar to PP-DOC alternations (Antonyuk 2015). Some Russian predicates are ambiguous in ACC-OBL order, but frozen in the reverse order (3a,b). Some are ambiguous in OBL-ACC order, and frozen in the reverse (4a,b). And some predicates are ambiguous in both (5a,b).

(3) a. Maša potrebovala [dp kakije-to dokumenty] [pp s každgo posetiljka]
   Masha demanded some documents.ACC from every visitor
   ‘Masha demanded some documents from every visitor’
   (∃>∀, ∀>∃)

   b. Maša potrebovala [pp s kakogo-to posetiljka] [dp každyi dokument]
   Masha demanded from some visitor every document.ACC
   ‘Masha demanded every document from some visitor’
   (∃> ∀, * ∀>∃)

(4) a. Maša obozvala [dp kakim-to prozviščem] [dp každogo malčika]
   Masha called some nickname.INSTR every boy.ACC
   ‘Masha called every boy by some nickname’
   (∃> ∀, ∀>∃)

   b. Maša obozvala [dp kakogo-to malčika] [dp každym prozviščem]
   Masha called some boy.ACC every nickname.INSTR
   ‘Masha called some boy by every nickname’
   (∃> ∀, ∀>∃)

(5) a. Maša napisala [dp kakov-to slogan] [pp na každjo stene]
   Masha wrote some slogan.ACC on every wall.DAT
   ‘Masha wrote some slogan on every wall’
   (∃> ∀, ∀>∃)

   b. Maša napisala [pp na kakoi-to stene] [dp každyj slogan]
   Masha wrote on some wall.DAT every slogan.ACC
   ‘Masha wrote every slogan on some wall’
   (∃> ∀, ∀>∃)

Interestingly, introduction of focus (marked by accent) alters this picture in certain cases.

Focusing the outer object in an ambiguous order induces wide scope on the focused QP (6a-d):

(6) a. Maša potrebovala [dp kakije-to dokumenty] [pp s KAždogo posetiljka]
   Masha demanded some documents.ACC from every VISITOR.FOC
   ‘Masha demanded some documents from every visitor’
   (∀>∃, *∃>∀) (cf. 3a)

   b. Maša obozvala [dp kakim-to prozviščem] [dp KAždogo malčika]
   Masha called some nickname.INSTR every BOY.ACC.FOC
   ‘Masha called every boy by some nickname’
   (∀>∃, *∃>∀) (cf. 4a)

   c. Maša napisala [dp kakov-to slogan] [pp na KAždjoj stene]
   Masha wrote some slogan.ACC on EVERY WALL.GEN
   ‘Masha wrote some slogan on every wall’
   (∀>∃, *∃>∀) (cf. 5a)
d. Maša napisala [PP na kakoi-to stene] [DP KАždyj slogan]
   Masha wrote on some wall.GEN EVERY SLOGAN.ACC
   ‘Masha wrote every slogan on some wall’

By contrast, focusing the outer object in a frozen order yields no change in interpretation (7a,b):

(7)  a. Maša potrebovala [PP s kakogo-to posetiteljja] [DP KАždyj document]
   Masha demanded from some visitor EVERY DOCUMENT.ACC
   ‘Masha demanded every document from some visitor’

b. Maša obozvala [DP kakogo-to mal'čika] [DP KАždym prozviščem]
   Masha called some boy.ACC EVERY NICKNAME.INST
   ‘Masha called some boy by every nickname’

Thus whereas focus can disambiguate a scope ambiguous structure (6a-d), focus apparently cannot “ambiguate” a frozen structure (7a,b). These facts strongly suggest that argument permutation and focus represent two independent sources of scope determination. These points undercut Bruening’s central argument for a derivational, anti-dative relation between (1a,b) and (2a,b). Suppose, following Bresnan (2007), Bresnan & Nikitina (2009), Larson (2014) i.a. PP datives and DCS are neither thematically nor truth conditionally distinct and that speaker choice among them is determined by pragmatic factors. Specifically, suppose contrasts like (8a,b), cited by Bruening (2010), reflect the fact that IO position in DCS and applicative structures favor old information/topics (e.g., pronouns), whereas final position favors new information and foci (Gerdts and Kiyosawa 2005a,b). Evidence for this view, familiar since Green (1974), is that definiteness on the DO (8c) and/or heaviness/contrastive stress on the to-object significantly improve such PP structures (8d,e):

(8)  a. The lighting here gives me a headache.
   b. The lighting here gives a headache to me.
   c. The lighting here would give a headache to anyone who stayed in it longer than an hour.
   d. The headache that that lighting gave to John was like none he had ever experienced.
   e. A: The lighting gave Jim a headache? B: No, the lighting gave a headache to ME, you idiot!

Assume now that the to-object quantifier in final position is focused in constructions like (1b)/(2b). The scope facts in (2b) then fall under the Russian pattern observed above. In the ambiguous dative PP structure, focus on a final quantifier is expected to induce wide scope (cf. 6a-d). However, as the Russian facts show, wide scope for the to-object quantifier is independent of the scope freezing induced by DOC argument permutation. Hence there is no reason to assume the scope limitations in (1a,b) and (2a,b) reflect a common derivation, contra Bruening. Supporting evidence for the claim that the to-PP in (2b) is indeed focused comes from cases where we apply focus-marked-with-stress to this to-PP. When the PP is focused by virtue of being "heavy", the focus spreads, that is, an entire phrase "(to) anyone with a normal constitution" in (1c) is focused. However, when we apply focus-marked-with-stress to the rightmost element in this phrase ("constitution"), the interpretation is that of CONTRASTIVE focus now ("constitution" as opposed to "health", etc). Given "constitution" is the rightmost element, focus should be able to spread, as per Selkirk (2006, 2007 i.a.); it doesn't, however, thus it must be contrastive, as would be expected if the whole phrase were already focused. Finally, we consider the mechanism by which focus induces scope disambiguation in (2b) and (6a-d).

Selected References