

**HOW TO CODIFY SYNTACTIC VARIATION:  
DATIVE PASSIVIZATION IN THE SYNTACTIC ATLAS OF SPANISH (ASINES)**

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**1. GOAL:** This paper introduces the online atlas for Spanish syntactic variation (ASinEs) as a tool for gathering and understanding syntactic phenomena of Spanish dialects. To this end, we focus on a particular dialectal phenomenon: “dative passivization” in Peruvian Spanish (Montalbetti 1999). We show how this phenomenon is described in the Atlas database, which combines data and theoretical information from the reference grammars of Spanish, coupled with on-going social network based research.

**2. BACKGROUND & DATA:** The literature shows that both accusatives and datives can undergo passivization in English. Thus, an IO (John, in the examples below) can become the subject, just like it can become the DO (in so called DOCs; cf. Ormazabal & Romero 2012 and references therein):

(1) a. Mary gave a book to **John**      b. **John** was given a book      c. Mary gave **John** a book.

On the contrary, datives in Spanish cannot be passivized regardless of the fact that it be structural or inherent, as in (2) (cf. Bosque & Gutiérrez-Rexach 2009, López 2007):

(2) a. María le dio un regalo a **Juan**.  
María CL<sub>DAT.3SG</sub> gave a present to Juan  
'Mary gave Juan a present'

b. \***Juan** fue dado un regalo.  
Juan was given a present  
'Juan was given a present'

However, it is possible to passivize dative arguments in Peruvian Spanish, as (3) shows:

(3) a. Juan le prohibió [ leer el libro ] [ a María] (Peruvian Spanish)  
Juan CL<sub>DAT.3SG</sub> forbade read the book to María  
'Juan didn't allow María to read the book'

b. María fue prohibida de [ leer el libro ] <María> (Peruvian Spanish)  
María was forbidden of read the book María  
'María was not allowed to read the book' [from Montalbetti 1999:133-134]

Interesting as it is, dative passivization in this dialect is quite constrained, nonetheless. Firstly, it only can occur with certain set of verbs like {*prohibir* 'forbid', *permitir* 'allow', *impedir* 'prevent', *ordenar* 'order', etc.}. Namely, ditransitive verbs that take as DO a infinitive clause. When it is a DP, the passive is not allowed for the dative argument, as we see in (4), from Peruvian Spanish:

(4) a. Juan le dio a María un regalo.  
Juan CL<sub>DAT.3SG</sub> gave to María a present  
'Juan gave Mary a present'

b. \*María fue dada un regalo.  
María was given a present

'María was given a present'

Secondly, the PRO of the infinitive embedded clause must be controlled by the IO, not by the subject, see (5):

- (5) a. Juan le prometió a María leer el libro.  
Juan CL<sub>DAT.3SG</sub> promised to María read the book  
'Juan promised María to read the book'
- b. \*María fue prometida (de) leer el libro.  
María was promised of read the book  
'María was promised to read the book'

Thirdly, the passivized dative must move to SPEC,IP, although Spanish is not an EPP language. Finally, the embedded clause must be introduced by the preposition *de* for dative to be passivized. When *de* is not introduced, the only constituent that can be raised to subject position is the DO.

- (6) a. Juan le prohibió leer el libro a María.  
Juan CL<sub>DAT.3SG</sub> forbid read the book to María  
'Juan didn't allow María to read the book'
- b. María fue prohibida \*(de) leer el libro.  
María was forbidden of read the book  
'María was not allowed to read the book'

**3. PROPOSAL:** We explain how this phenomenon is encoded in the ASinEs platform. The data in the online Atlas is organized in files combining data with theoretical explanation also offering the geolocated distribution. This information includes: examples (with glosses and translations), the dialectal distribution according to geography (with a map) but also including sociolinguistic factors, diachrony and other relevant properties, a grammatical description (a plain descriptive one and a deeper analysis) and some other additional information. This file-based organization already raises questions about how to classify variation, what we consider a specific dialectal phenomenon or how to show the relevant empirical (a)symmetries. From this perspective, dative passivization presents some challenges for its implementation in the atlas.

- (7) a. A María le prohibieron cantar (general Spanish)  
To Mary her<sub>DAT3SG</sub> forbid<sub>3PL</sub> sing  
'They didn't allow Mary to sing'
- b. María fue prohibida de cantar (Peruvian Spanish)  
Mary was forbidden of sing  
'Mary wasn't allowed to sing'

The pair in (7) raises an obvious question: Are we dealing with data that clearly tease apart two dialects of Spanish or data that simply count as 'alternatives' within the same dialect? In fact, in Peruvian Spanish both (7a) and (7b) are possible, while in the rest of

varieties only (7a) is acceptable and it also raises the question of whether an atlas should depart from the “marked” structures or the so-called “standard” and how to draw the line between them. Though largely socio-political, these matters have a non-trivial theoretical impact. To tackle this issue, ASinEs gathers both versions of the structures in (7) in different files, showing their distribution in maps. So, even if the file for (7a) seems to be vacuous (since its distribution would be general to all Spanish speaking areas), it becomes relevant when the connection with the file for (7b) is established, also allowing us to connect more files if research shows other “branches” of the phenomenon.

**4. SOCIAL NETWORK DATA:** To back up the basic characterization from grammars, ASinEs further incorporates a Twitter database. Interestingly, this database confirms that dative passivization is possible in Peru, but also in other areas, as (8) below show (see Ruiz Tinoco 2013, De Benito & Estrada 2016, i.a. for Twitter as a data-mining source in Spanish syntax):

(8) a. [...] esto se nos **fue prohibido** de ver en TV [...] (Chile)

This SE CL<sub>1PL</sub>.DAT was forbidden of watch in TV

‘We were not allowed to watch this on TV’

b. Avión de Evo Morales **fue prohibido de** aterrizar en Portugal y Francia [...]

(Ecuador)

Plane of Evo Morales was forbidden of land in Portugal and France

‘Evo Morales’ plane was not allowed to land in Portugal and France’

c. la periodista [...] nunca **fue obligada de** brindar las identidades de sus fuentes

(Paraguay)

The journalist never was forced of provide the identities of her sources

‘The journalist was never forced to share the identity of her sources’

**5. CONCLUSIONS:** This paper has shown the advantages of the Syntactic Atlas of Spanish (ASinES) as a tool to study syntactic variation within Spanish – in the case at hand, by focusing on a particular phenomenon, dative passivization (cf. Montalbetti 1999). This phenomenon allows us to question fundamental aspects regarding the information that must be included in an online atlas and how to encode it correctly. This paper also shows that data from social networks (ASinEs’ Twitter database) provide a useful source to complete and double-check the information that traditional grammars offer.

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