Suzana Fong, MIT

Distinguishing between explanatory accounts of the A/Ā-distinction: the view from Argentinian Spanish Clitic Doubling

1 Overview. The A/Ā-distinction underpins case, agreement, and binding properties of moving DPs and it determines possible movement paths (cf. Ban on Improper Movement; BIM). This distinction has resisted an explanatory account, with the exception of the theories advanced by Van Urk:2015 and Safir:2019. In both, syntactic positions are not inherently A or Ā. Rather, independent and more general properties of the grammar determine, as a byproduct, the nature of the movement that passes through these positions. Both approaches are able to explain the properties that the distinction is based on and they allow for a flexible definition of syntactic positions. I will argue that we can adjudicate between these two theories: Di Tullio et al.'s 2019 analysis of CD in Arg. Spanish will be shown to be compatible only with Van Urk:2015.

2 Clitic Doubling. Di Tullio et al.:2019 investigate CD, which is optional in Arg. Spanish (1).

(1)   Santos (la)   miró   a   Rosa.
         Santos (CL.3SG.FEM.ACC) look.at.PST.3SG DOM Rosa
         'Santos looked at Rosa.'   [Di Tullio et al.:2019; (2a), adapted]

They observe that the presence or absence of the clitic is correlated with A- and Ā-properties, respectively, of the CD-ed DP. If it moves across a subject containing a pronoun coindexed with it, no WCO effect is induced (2a). In the absence of CD, a WCO violation arises (2b).

(2)   a.   A   MARÍA$_k$ la$_k$ criticó   su$_k$ padre.
           DOM María   CL.3SG.FEM.ACC criticize.PST.3.SG POSS.3SG father
           'Her father criticized MARÍA.'   [Di Tullio et al.:2019; (31/51), adapted]
    b. *?A   MARÍA$_k$ criticó   su$_k$ padre.
           DOM María   criticize.PST.3.SG POSS.3SG father

A CD-ed DP does not reconstruct (3a). Without CD, reconstruction is possible (3b).

(3)   a. *A   su   HIJO$_k$ lo   castigó   cada padre$_k$.
           DOM POSS.3SG son   CL.3SG.MASC.ACC punish.PST.3SG each father
    b.   A   su   HIJO$_k$ castigó   cada padre$_k$.
           DOM POSS.3SG son   punish.PST.3SG each father
           'Each father punished his (own) SON.'   [Di Tullio et al.:2019; (58), adapted]

Di Tullio et al. propose that CD is Arg. Spanish is triggered by a [PERSON] feature in *v*. The authors assume that φ-features trigger A-movement (4). Given the properties of A-movement, the absence of WCO effects (2a) and of reconstruction (3a) displayed by CD-ed DPs can thus be modeled as consequences of the fact that this nominal is undergoing A-movement. Di Tullio et al. assume further that [PERSON] may be optional in 3rd person DPs in Arg. Spanish. A [PERSON]-less DP must then Ā-move to Spec-*v*P (5). Consequently, this DP is expected to induce WCO effects (2b) and be able to reconstruct (3b). Di Tullio et al. assume that the clitic in Arg. Spanish CD is a morpheme introduced post-syntactically that expones the [PERSON] feature of an A-moved DP (4). In the absence of this feature, a clitic does not occur (5).

(4)   [$_{vP}$ DO$_{[PERSON]}$ [$_{v'}$ SUBJ [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ V t_{DO}]]]]   (5)   [$_{vP}$ DO [$_{v'}$ SUBJ [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ V t_{DO}]]]]
                       A   *Ā*

It is commonly assumed that a phase edge like Spec-*v*P is inherently an Ā-position. The proposal in (4), supported by the A-behavior of CD-ed DPs in Arg. Spanish *wrt* WCO and reconstruction, challenges this assumption. Which view of the A/Ā-distinction could explain it?

3.1 Featural view. According to Van Urk:2015, syntactic positions are defined in terms of the features that create them: A-positions are created by φ-features, while Ā-positions are created by features like *Wh*, Foc, etc. As such, a syntactic position commonly assumed to be intrinsically of the Ā-type can be an A-position if it is created by φ-features. That Spec-CP is an Ā-position, combined with the BIM, would be why a sentence like (6) is ungrammatical: the *Wh*-phrase moves through a Spec-CP (Ā) before it moves a Spec-TP (A).

(6) *[$_{CP}$ Which students are [$_{TP}$ $\boxed{t_{Wh}}$ [$_{VP}$ believed [$_{CP}$ $\boxed{t_{Wh}}$ Terry will give a prize to t_{Wh}]]]]?
However, if Spec-CP can be created by φ-features, it can also be an A-position. Fong:2019 shows that a similar movement to that in (6) has the properties of A-movement in Mongolian and yields a grammatical result. This type of flexibility is afforded by Van Urk's theory.

3.2 Free Merge view. The main ingredient in Safir:2019 is the proposal that a countercyclic Merge operation is freely available which combines a moving DP with a null preposition. The newly formed PP shields the DP from Agree and case operations. The PP layer also alters the DP's binding capabilities. This operation is dubbed '**Insulation**'. If Insulation does not apply, the DP can indeed participate in these operations and its binding capabilities remain unchanged. In Safir's framework, Insulation is a free, costless operation with its effects regulated by independent requirements. In the derivation of a sentence like *Who did Mary praise?*, Insulation may (7a) or may not (7b) apply to the moving *Wh*-phrase. If it does, T can Agree with the subject, allowing for the valuation of φ-features and case. If it does not, the moved *Wh*-phrase intervenes between T and the subject, preventing the aforementioned Agree and case operations. The derivation in (7b) crashes not because Ā-movement is postulated to be necessarily Insulated (or A-movement, un-Insulated), but because of independent case and Agree restrictions.

(7) a. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ **[$_{PP}$ P** [$_{DP}$ who]] [$_{v'}$ Mary [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ praise t_{DP}]]]]] ✓*T–Mary Agree*
     b. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ [$_{DP}$ who] [$_{v'}$ Mary [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ praise t_{DP}]]]]] **T–Mary *Agree*

Spec-CP can also flexibly behave as an A-position in Safir's theory: it is possible for Insulation, a free operation, not to apply to a DP moving through this position, as long as Agree and case issues do not arise. The author shows that this indeed the case in passivized *wager* constructions. The derivation of a sentence like *The witch was said to be responsible for the recent influx of mosquitoes* can proceed with (8a) or without (8b) Insulation of *the witch*.

(8) a. [$_{TP}$ T was [$_{vP}$ v [$_{VP}$ said [$_{CP}$ **[$_{PP}$ P** [$_{DP}$ the witch]] [$_{C'}$ C [$_{TP}$ t_{DP} [$_{T'}$ to be responsible . . .]]]]]]]]
     b. [$_{TP}$ T was [$_{vP}$ v [$_{VP}$ said [$_{CP}$ [$_{DP}$ the witch] [$_{C'}$ C [$_{TP}$ t_{DP} [$_{T'}$ to be responsible . . .]]]]]]]]

By assumption, the complement of a *wager* verb is a CP, which prevents ECM of the embedded subject. However, under passivization, this DP would have to escape the CP via its Spec, which is commonly considered to be Ā-movement. If *the witch* is Insulated (8a), the derivation would crash, since this DP would remain caseless throughout the derivation and the matrix T's φ-features could be not be valued. If Insulation does not apply (8b), these requirements can be satisfied. In Safir's theory, movement through a phase edge (e.g. *v*P) is not intrinsically Insulated. Rather, Insulation is free, but its consequences are evaluated by independent restrictions.

4 Comparing the two approaches. Di Tullio et al.'s analysis can be cast as a representative of Van Urk's featural view of syntactic positions, since Spec-*v*P is considered to be an A-position created by the valuation of a φ-feature. Safir's Free Merge theory is also flexible in not assuming that syntactic positions are inherently A or Ā. Could it account for Arg. Spanish CD? If Insulation applies to the moving CD-ed DP (9a), T can successfully Agree with the subject across it. However, because the CD-ed DP is Insulated, it is expected to exhibit Ā-properties, contrary to fact. If Insulation does not apply (9b), the CD-ed DP displays A-properties, as desired. However, this derivation crashes because T cannot Agree with the subject.

(9) a. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ **[$_{PP}$ P** [$_{DP}$ a María]] [$_{v'}$ su padre [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ criticó t_{DP}]]]]] ✓*T–su padre Agree*
     b. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ [$_{DP}$ a María] [$_{v'}$ su padre [$_{v'}$ v [$_{VP}$ criticó t_{DP}]]]]] **T–su padre *Agree*

Safir's Free Merge theory provides two possible derivations of the Arg. Spanish CD data in §2. Both of them, however, yield undesirable case, Agree, or binding results.

5 Conclusion. There have been some attempts to derive the otherwise elusive A/Ā-distinction. For the most part, they are equally able to account for the empirical basis of this distinction and to provide some flexibility in the definition of syntactic positions. However, a particular analysis of Arg. Spanish CD may help us empirically distinguish between these two theories.