Larson 1988: On the Double Object Construction

1. Double Object (DO) and Dative (Dat.) Constructions

(1) a. John sent Mary a letter
    b. [Diagram]

(2) a. John sent a letter to Mary.
    b. [Diagram]

2. The Asymmetry Problem

- DOs: In (1)b., NP2 c-commands NP1, but not the other way around. This causes problems for traditional constructions of DOs, which have been explained by c-command.
- Oblique dative structures have asymmetries too, but they are justified by PP, like in (2)b.

C-command: Node A c-commands node B iff every node dominating A also dominates B, and neither A nor B dominates the other.

Binding: For any two NPs A, B: A binds B iff A c-commands B and A and B are coindexed.

Barss & Lasnik 1986:

- Anaphor binding asymmetry
  (3) I presented Mary, to herself,.
  (4) *I presented herself, to Maryi.
  (5) I showed Mary herself.
  (6) *I showed herself Mary.

- Quantifier binding asymmetry
  (7) I sent every check, to its owneri
  (8) ??I sent his, paycheck to every workeri
  (9) I gave every worker, his, paycheck.
  (10) *I gave its, owner every paychecki.

- Negative Polarity Items
  (11) I sent no presents to any of the children.
  (12) *I sent any of the packages to none of the children.
  (13) I showed no one anything.
  (14) *I showed anyone nothing.
3. V Raising in the Dative Structure

**V Raising** (Baker 1985; Chomsky 1986b): To derive the S-structure, there is a movement of V ‘send’ into the initial empty V position (head-to-head movement)

(15)

- V is now governed by T, so it can receive tense and agreement and the direct object *a letter* is now governed by the verb so it can receive case.

- The direct object will still asymmetrically c-command the indirect object independently of the structure introduced by PP:

(16)

- Asymmetry in datives is not a matter of PP structure, it is instead about the relation between hierarchical and thematic structure.
4. The Structure of Double Object Constructions

Problems of asymmetry are resolved by deriving DOs from Oblique Datives.

But why should we accept this?

Uniformity of $\theta$-assignment Hypothesis (UTAH) (Baker, 1985)
Identical thematic relationships are represented by identical structural relations between those items at the level of D-structure (representation of thematic relations).

- Application of UTAH posits that in both D-structures, *John sent a Mary letter* and *John sent a letter to Mary*, *Mary* is the recipient of the letter and *letter* is the theme.

  (17) a. John sent Mary a letter.
  b.

- In Larson’s proposal of DO constructions,
  - Case *to* is absorbed from the indirect object *to Mary*
  - NP Movement: the indirect object NP *Mary* is promoted to VP subject position
  - V Raising: *Send* raises to V-head position and assigns Case to inner VP subject.
  - Argument demotion: the direct object *a letter* is demoted to V’ adjunct, reducing its position to nonthematic status

5. A Comparison Between the Dative Shift and Passive Construction

- In passives,
  - Case is withdrawn from an object position
  - The object NP moves to subject position
  - The suppressed subject $\theta$-role is realized in an adjunct by-phrase.
(18) A snowball hit Mary.
(19) a. Mary was hit by a snowball.
b.

![Tree diagram]

• In *John sent a letter to Mary*, NPs *a letter* and *Mary* stand (roughly) in the relation of subject and object.
• The inner VP in the DO construction in (17)b is like the passive in (19)b in that an object has been moved to a subject position, and the former subject becomes an adjunct.

6. Heavy NP Shift

• Heavy NP Shift moves “phonologically heavy” objects to the right:
  
  (20) I gave *t* to John [everything that he demanded]
  (21) *I gave *t* to John [socks].

• The dative shift turns Heavy NP Shift $\rightarrow$ Light Predicate Raising:
  
  (22) I [gave to John] everything that he demanded *t*.

7. Support from Idioms

• Marantz (1984): the semantic role assigned to the direct object depends on the nature of the recipient in the goal phrase, e.g. *throw a baseball, throw support behind a candidate, throw a boxing match*. A similar phenomenon can be observed with datives:
  
  (23) Beethoven gave the Fifth Symphony to his patron.
  (24) Beethoven gave the Fifth Symphony to the world.

8. Summary

• The double object construction is syntactically derived from the oblique dative construction; this is what is now called the dative shift.
• Evidence from highly inflected languages and the UTAH justify NP movement of the indirect object, in addition to V raising.
• This representation of the S-structure solves problems of c-command asymmetry.