

FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH COMPLEX PREDICATES

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English (1) and Spanish (2) complex predicate structures, and in particular, dative alternation (DA) constructions have been formally accounted for in different ways. In English, the debate focuses on whether *to/for*-datives (1a) are the source structure from which double object constructions (DOCs) (1b) derive (Larson 1988), or whether DOCs are the original structure instead (Aoun and Li 1989; Haspelmath 2006). Proposals like that of Snyder and Stromswold (1997) and Snyder (2001) establish a common underlying configuration as complex predicates, although they also argue how *to*-datives require an additional syntactic requirement DOCs do not.

- (1) a. John sends a letter to Mary [to-dative]
b. John sends Mary a letter [DOC]
[Larson 1988: 343-353]

In Spanish, Larson's (1988) view has been adopted and so *a/para*-datives (2a) are analyzed as the source construction of the Dative-Clitic-Doubled ones (DCLDs) (2b) in which an *a*-DP doubles a clitic (Cuervo 2007, 2003a, 2003b; Demonte 1995, 1994).

- (2) a. Entregué las llaves al conserje [a-dative]
give.1sg.past the keys to+the janitor
'I gave the keys to the janitor'
- b. Le entregué las llaves al conserje [DCLD]
cl.dat. give.1sg.past the keys to+the janitor
'I gave the keys to the janitor'
[Demonte 1995: 6]

We analyze the emergence and the use of English and Spanish DA complex predicate structures in child L1 data to shed light on their syntactic status. Data come from 14 longitudinal corpora in CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000) and both the input and the spontaneous production of 13 English (0;06-8;00) and 9 Spanish (0;11-4;08) children are analyzed. Results show that double object and prepositional DA constructions emerge at a similar age ($p=.067$ in English; $p=.863$ in Spanish), as per Snyder's proposal that DA structures are not derivationally related, and this is possibly so for the two languages. Developmentally, double objects show a higher use than prepositional constructions ($p=.001$ in English; $p=.043$ in Spanish). This difference could be explained by the additional syntactic requirement of prepositional DA structures and by the adult input.

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