Impossible Accusatives
The loss of the Middle morphology in Late Latin and its consequences on case marking

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1. Introduction

<u>1.1 Defining the set of verbs under analysis</u>

In this presentation, I analyze the diachronic evolution from Classical Latin to Medieval Latin of a subclass of the Latin deponent verbs: transitive deponents (Pinkster 2015; 282-285) (see (1)):

(1)   *Machinam   ordiris   novam.* (Pacuv. *trag*. 379)
         machinery.ACC weave.2NDSG.PRS.MID new.ACC.SG
         "You plan a new machinery."

A transitive deponent has a set of definite characteristics in Classical Latin:

- It is always inflected in the Middle form (the Voice morphology which, in Latin, appears with anticausatives, passives, reflexives, benefactives and impersonals).
- It has two arguments, one marked by Nominative case and one marked by Accusative case.
- The Nominative argument is semantically affected by the event (i.e., it starts the derivation from an internal thematic position).

<u>1.2 The unexpected diachronic behavior of transitive deponents</u>

The Middle morphology, in Classical Latin, is an argument structure modifier. It is used to derive anticausatives (see (2)), passives, reflexives, benefactives and impersonals.

The loss of the Middle Voice in Late and Medieval Latin corresponds to the rise of two competing ways of modifying the argument structures of verbs, the SE-marking (see (3)) and the unaccusative structure (see (4)) (Cennamo 2009; Gianollo 2014):

(2)   *Rumpitur   illa   sutura.* (Cels. 7, 4)
         break.3RDSG.PRS.MID that.F.SG suture.F
         "That suture breaks."
(3)   *La   sedia si rompe.* (It.)
         The chair SE breaks
         "The chair breaks."
(4)   *La   barca affonda.* (It.)
         The boat   sinks
         "The boat sinks."

- Since we foresee that the Middle is substituted by two alternative strategies (SE/unaccusativity), we expect to find Late or Medieval occurrences in which the transitive deponents present one of these two structures.

However, we observe a different diachronic behavior (Databases: LLT-A, LLT-B, ALIM; from III c. BCE to IX c. CE):

- No occurrences with SE pronouns or in unaccusative structures[1].
- Occurrences with Active morphology:

(5) *Hanc   telam   ordisse   perhibent* (Isid. *Etym*. 19, 20, 1)
     this.ACC.SG web.ACC weave.INF.PRF.ACT tell.3RDPL.PRS.ACT
     'They tell that he weaved this web.'

Research question:
- What is the reason behind the fact that these verbs do not follow the other classes and do not adopt a SE-marked or unaccusative structure?

Proposed analysis

I argue that their diachronic evolution can be explained taking into consideration the differences between the Voice system of Classical Latin and the Voice system of Late and Medieval Latin.

- Classical Latin: <u>morphological</u> Voice modification (Middle morphology).
- Late and Medieval Latin: <u>phrasal</u> Voice modification (SE/unaccusativity).

These systems interact in a different way with the assignment of structural Case, that is obtained by a "default/dependent" case mechanism (see (10) below):

- only phrasal elements count for the assignment of structural Case.

Transitive deponents are bieventive reflexive predicates in Classical Latin (6). The Middle morphology (signaled as $^{\emptyset}$) allows for the identification of the DP merged as the subject of the state (v-beP), with the ROLE provided by the higher dynamic event (v-doP): reflexivity. This DP gets default Nominative case. The second DP in the vP, the complement of the state (in bold), gets dependent Accusative case.

(6) $[_{\text{v-doP}}$ v-do$^{\circ\emptyset}$ $[_{\text{v-beP}}$ $[DP_1 \rightarrow {}_{\text{Nom}}]$ v-be$^{\circ+D}$ **$[DP_2 \rightarrow {}_{\textbf{Acc}}]$**$]]$

With phrasal Voice modifiers, this state of affairs is impossible. Both in the SE-marked and in the unaccusative structure, the DP in the complement of the state is the third DP in the vP and cannot get dependent Accusative case.

(7) $[_{\text{v-doP}}$ $[DP_1 \rightarrow {}_{\text{Nom}}]$ v-do$^{\circ+D}$ $[_{\text{v-beP}}$ $[DP_{SE} \rightarrow {}_{\text{Acc}}]$ v-be$^{\circ+D}$ **$[DP_3 \rightarrow {}_{\textbf{*Acc}}]$**$]]$
(8) $[_{\text{v-doP}}$ $[DP_1 \rightarrow {}_{\text{Nom}}]$ v-do$^{\circ+D}$ $[_{\text{v-beP}}$ $[\text{D̶P̶}_1 \rightarrow {}_{\text{Acc}}]$ v-be$^{\circ+D}$ **$[DP_3 \rightarrow {}_{\textbf{*Acc}}]$**$]]$

In order to save the Accusative marking of the second overt DP, the structure is reanalyzed as monoeventive and loses the lower stative phrase:

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[1] I take the presence of an argument marked by Accusative Case as a signal of non-unaccusativity.

(9)　　　$[_{\text{v-doP}}\ [DP_{1\ \rightarrow\ \text{Nom}}]\ \text{v-do}^{\circ+D}\ [DP_{2\ \rightarrow\ \text{Acc}}\ ]]$

2. Background concepts

<u>2.1 The framework:</u>

The analysis is framed in a Distributed Morphology (DM) constructivist approach to argument structure (see, i.a., Borer 2005; Marantz 2005, 2013; Schäfer 2017; Harley, 2014; Acedo Matellán & Mateu 2013; Cuervo 2014, 2015).

- Argument structure is not projected by the verbal/lexical element, it is built by means of the sequential merge of functional syntactic heads → the event semantics is not derived from the meaning of the lexical verb.
- The verbal roots (√s) are directly conflated into the syntactic eventive heads (see Acedo-Matellán & Mateu 2013) and add their encyclopedic meaning to the autonomous eventive meaning of the head → √s do not project √Ps.
- Morphology is the post-syntactic out-put of the syntactic derivation (Halle & Marantz 1993).

In this presentation, I will use the set of eventive heads proposed by Cuervo (2013, 2014) (see Wood (2015) for a different proposal based on the contextual interpretation of the entire vP):

- v-be°: stativity, identification between the complement and a HOLDER argument.
- v-go°: dynamic uncontrolled event, related to the introduction of an UNDERGOER.
- v-do°: dynamic controlled event, related to the introduction of a DOER.

So that:
- [v-doP] → activity (e.g., *to dance*)
- [v-doP [v-beP]] → causative (e.g., *to break*)
- [v-goP [v-beP]] → change of state (e.g., *to die*)

<u>2.2 The introduction of arguments:</u>

Each argument is syntactically and semantically introduced by an argument-introducing head, i*° (Wood & Marantz 2017). This head:

- has no categorial feature: it picks up the categorial feature of the XP it merges with.
- closes off the extended projection of the XP it merges with. This is what the * notation means: there can be only one argument for each head.
- is endowed with a +D selectional feature: <u>it syntactically selects for an XP of category D</u>.
- has a contextual driven semantic denotation: <u>it introduces a contextually-determined semantic ROLE</u>.

It follows that i*° merged in top of a v-doP introduces a DOER, merged on top of a v-goP introduces an UNDERGOER and merged on top of a v-beP introduces a HOLDER.

- $[[i^*]] \leftrightarrow [[\lambda x\lambda e.\ \text{DOER}\ (x, e)]]\ /\ \_\_\text{v-doP}$

- $[[i*]] \leftrightarrow [[\lambda x \lambda e.\ \text{UNDERGOER}\ (x, e)]] /\ \_\_v\text{-goP}$
- $[[i*]] \leftrightarrow [[\lambda x \lambda s.\ \text{HOLDER}\ (x, s)]] /\ \_\_v\text{-beP}$

<u>2.3 The assignment of structural Case:</u>
Structural Case (Nominative/Accusative in the languages under analysis) is a morphological marker of a purely syntactic relation. It is assigned by a "default/dependent" Case mechanism (Schäfer 2017):

- Each argument-introducing head has a set of unvalued φ-features that gets valued by the first adequate DP it finds in its m-command domain.

(10)   i) A DP is realized at PF with *dependent* Case (Accusative) if a different DP has valued the accessible phase head (the last argument-introducing head) via AGREE.
ii) A DP that is not realized with dependent Case appears with *default* Case (Nominative).
iii) Inherent/lexical Case takes precedence over default and dependent Case.

3. The Middle morphology and the structure of transitive deponents in Classical Latin
<u>3.1 The Latin Middle morphology</u>
The Latin Middle morphology is a modifier of argument structure.

- The Middle morphology is the marker of an argument-introducing head in which the syntactic +D feature is not active (Ø). It signals the syntactic absence of an argument (see (11)).

The semantic part of the argument-introducing head, anyway, remains there and introduces an existential ROLE (∃ROLE):

- $\{[[\lambda e \exists x.\ \text{ROLE}\ (e, x)]];\ \varnothing\} \rightarrow$ Middle morphology

The existential ROLE can be identified with a lower referential argument: this is how anticausatives, reflexives and benefactives are derived in Latin (but also in Modern Greek, see Spathas et al. 2015).

(11)

Causative   Middle-marked Reflexive
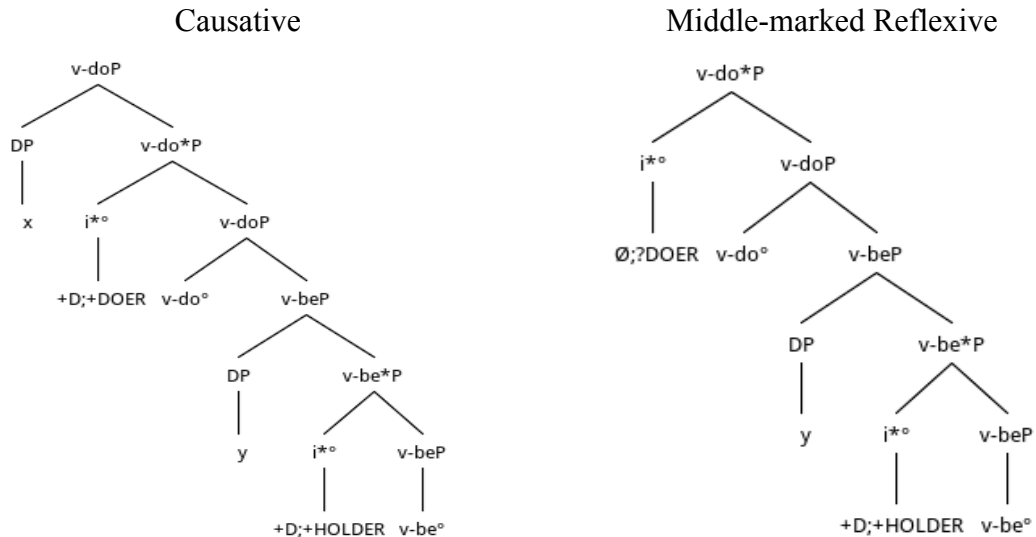
<u>3.2 Transitive deponents in Classical Latin</u>

Transitive deponents present the Middle morphology because the Nominative argument is not only a DOER but also the HOLDER of a lower state (see structure in (13)).

This is shown by the fact that these verbs respond well to unaccusativity tests: e.g., they show participial structures in which the Nominative argument agrees with the past participle:

(12) *Sic   orsus,*   *Apollo [...]* (Verg. *Aen*. 9, 656)
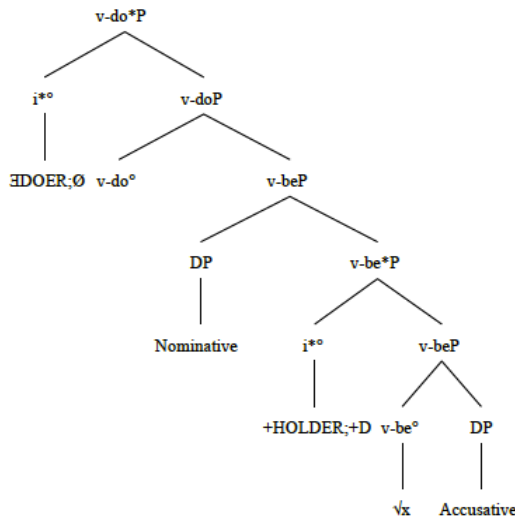
      this.way weave.PST.PTCP.NOM. SG Apollo.NOM

      'Apollo, having started this way, [...].'

The Accusative argument is the complement of the state of which the Nominative argument is the HOLDER.

The assignment of Nominative and Accusative case to the two DPs in the structure follows from (10).

(13)

Abstracting away from the argument-introducing head, the structure can be simplified as follows:

(14) $[_{\text{v-doP}} \text{ v-do}^{\circ\varnothing} [_{\text{v-beP}} [DP_1 \rightarrow \text{Nom}] \text{ v-be}^{\circ+D} \mathbf{[DP_2 \rightarrow Acc]}]]$

The Middle morphology, not being a phrasal element, does not interact with Case assignment, allowing for the Accusative marking of the DP in the complement of the state (in bold).

4. Impossible Case marking and the reanalysis of transitive deponents

The two structures that usually substitute for the Middle morphology in Late and Medieval Latin (SE-marked/unaccusative, see (3) and (4)) operate at a phrasal level and not at a morphological level. For this reason, they interact with Case assignment and block the assignment of Accusative Case to the position of the complement of the state.

4.1 The SE-marking

In a SE-marked structure, the SE pronoun occupies an argumental position and absorbs Accusative Case. This means that it would be impossible, in such a structure, to mark the complement of the state with Accusative Case.

(15)
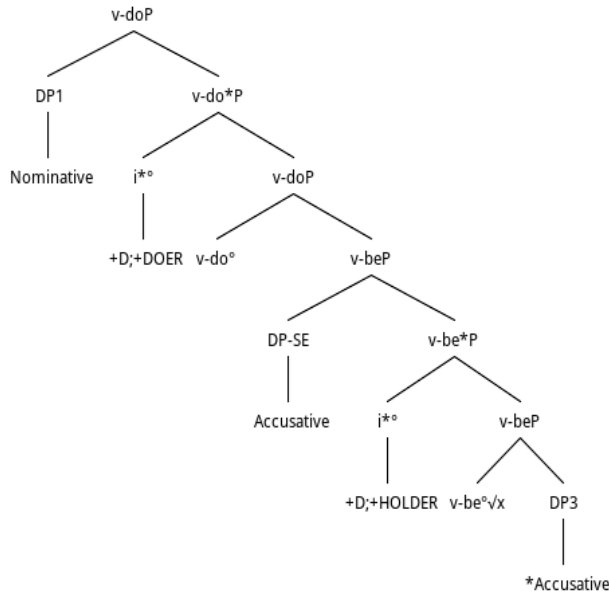
Abstracting away from the argument-introducing heads, the structure would be as follows:

(16) $[_{\text{v-doP}} [DP_1 \rightarrow \text{Nom}]\ \text{v-do}^{\circ+D} [_{\text{v-beP}} [DP_{SE} \rightarrow \text{Acc}]\ \text{v-be}^{\circ+D} [\mathbf{DP_3} \rightarrow \mathbf{{}_{*\mathbf{Acc}}}]]]$

The issue of the relative position of the SE pronoun with respect to its binder (unaccusative hypothesis (Kayne 1991) vs. reflexive hypothesis (Sportiche 2014)) is not relevant for the argumentation, in both cases the SE pronoun would absorb Accusative case.
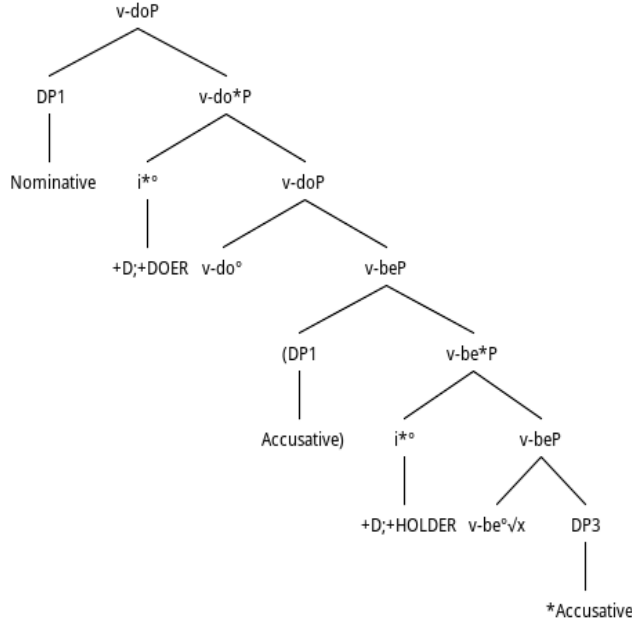
4.2 The unaccusative structure

In an unaccusative structure, the identification between two argumental position is obtained by means of movement. The argument in the low position (HOLDER of the state) moves to the higher position (DOER).

In this case, it is the trace of the moved argument that absorbs Accusative Case, with the consequent impossibility of assigning Accusative Case to the position of the complement of the state.[2]

(17)

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[2] The assumption that a trace absorbs a different Case from its antecedent is not standard, but stems directly from the assumption that structural Case is computed after the vP-phase is completed and that it is a pure morphological marker (it has no semantic denotation and does not contribute to the final semantics of the entire clause).
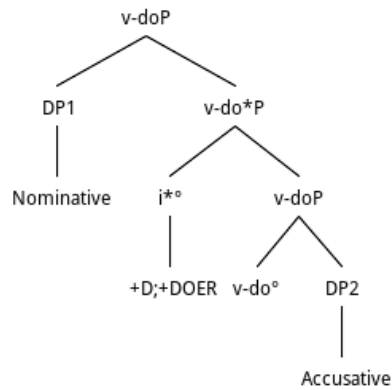
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                        v-doP
                       /     \
                    DP1     v-do*P
                     |      /    \
                Nominative i*°   v-doP
                           |    /    \
                     +D;+DOER v-do°  v-beP
                               /        \
                           (DP1        v-be*P
                             |         /    \
                        Accusative)  i*°   v-beP
                                      |     /  \
                               +D;+HOLDER v-be°√x  DP3
                                                    |
                                               *Accusative
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Abstracting away from the argument introducing heads, the structure would be as follows:

(18) $[_{\text{v-doP}} [DP_1 \rightarrow \text{Nom}]$ v-do$^{°+D}$ $[_{\text{v-beP}} [\text{D̶P̶}_\text{1̶} \rightarrow \text{Acc}]$ v-be$^{°+D}$ **[DP$_3$ → *Acc]]]**

4.3 Saving the Accusative marking

Without the Middle morphology, a way to save the Accusative marking on the second referential argument of a transitive deponent is to delete the stative part of the event (and reflexivity with it). This is precisely what happens in Late and Medieval Latin, the Nominative argument is reanalyzed as a pure DOER and the Accusative argument becomes the complement of the v-doP:

(19)

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                    v-doP
                   /     \
                DP1     v-do*P
                 |      /    \
            Nominative i*°   v-doP
                       |    /    \
                 +D;+DOER v-do°  DP2
                                  |
                              Accusative
```

Abstracting away from the argument-introducing head, we have this simplified structure:

(20) $[_{\text{v-doP}} [DP_1 \rightarrow \text{Nom}]$ v-do$^{°+D}$ $[DP_2 \rightarrow \text{Acc}]]$

As a further consequence, these verbs show a change in their semantics:
E.g., *commentor*: in Classical Latin, this verb means 'I remember' (the Nominative argument is affected by the event). In Medieval Latin, its meaning shifts to 'I commentate'.

Conclusions

The morphosyntactic element that encode Voice modification change between Classical Latin and Medieval Latin (and, subsequently, Romance languages).

- Classical Latin: morphological Voice modification (Middle morphology)
- Medieval Latin: phrasal Voice modification (SE/unaccusativity)

This change leads to the syntactic and semantic reanalysis of the class of verbs labeled transitive deponents, in which the Accusative argument is marked by Accusative case in the complement-of-the-state position:

Given (10):
the complement-of-the-state position can be marked by Accusative case only in a Middle-marked structure (see (14)). The same position cannot be marked by Accusative case in a SE-marked (see (16)) or "movement" structure (see (18)).
In order to save the Accusative marking of the second argument, the structure is reanalyzed as in (20).

This is a small piece of evidence going into the direction of Borer (2005) and much similar work: linguistic variation has to be sought in the changes in the morphosyntactic inventory of the different languages. While the functional heads remain stable, the morphosyntactic elements interacting with them change, causing the observable variation.

References

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