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## Nominalizations of Possessive Dative Constructions in contemporary Romanian

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on Romanian data and tries to give a general picture of possessor Dative constructions in contemporary Romanian.

The purpose of this paper is twofold, in the sense that it tries to offer a short introduction to the applicative theoretical framework and it also tries to look into some Romanian Dative constructions which are different from the point of view of their nominalizations, i.e. DOCs and PDCs (possessor Dative constructions)

Theoretically, we start with some initial proposals on applicative configurations under their high and low typology (see Pykkänen (2002), Cuervo (2003), a.o.); next, we move on and we get to Georgala's (2012) recent proposals on the nature of the applicative head.

Section 2 focuses on possessor Dative constructions in contemporary Romanian and we adopt these recent applicative configurations in order to try to account for the syntax and semantics of such constructions. By the end of the paper, we will have introduced Georgala's (2012) and Deal's (2010) proposals and we will have adopted a raising analysis to PDCs. Syntactically, PDCs and DOCs are Dative constructions where the Dative is assigned in different positions (see Georgala's (2012) recent syntactic analysis of these constructions). Semantically, possession has also been argued to be different in these two different types of Dative constructions.

The literature on DOCs is richer than the literature on PDCs, this is why we basically focus on PDCS, but the reason why these Dative constructions yield un/grammatical nominalizations in contemporary Romanian still needs further investigation.

**Keywords:** Dative, applicative, raising, Possessor, nominalization

**Rezumat: (Nominalizările dativului posesiv în româna contemporană)** Româna este o limbă romanică care are atât morfologie de dativ (spre deosebire de spaniolă, italiană, franceză, Româna contemporană are morfologie de Dativ ca și latina) cât și un Dativ analitic cu prepoziția *la* (Iorga:2013) investighează diacronia dativului cu prepoziția *la*, din secolul al XVI-lea până în secolul al XIX-lea, cât și folosirea acestui dativ analitic în româna dialectală). Domeniul dativului în româna contemporană este destul de extins (vezi Coteanu:1982, Avram:1986 pentru centri care selectează grupuri nominale în dativ), însă obiectivul acestei lucrări este să se ocupe de faptul că un număr mare de verbe din româna contemporană pot apărea în construcții cu dativul posesiv. Nominalizările acestor construcții cu dativul posesiv sunt un test care să arate atribuirea structurală a dativului în astfel de construcții posesive. Săvescu:2011 arată că ApplP, centrul care introduce dativul este doar o proiecție de Caz, nu este un centru care introduce argumente. Analiza dativului posesiv propusă de Deal:2011 susține aceeași idee – analiza exemplelor sale din germană arată că posesorii în dativ se ridică din poziția lor din interiorul grupului nominal într-o poziție a-tematică în interiorul vP, unde nu le este atribuit alt rol tematic, ci le este atribuit doar cazul (dativ) în specificatorul ApplP (i.e. atribuirea dativului este structurală). Aceste analize arată că atribuirea dativului este structurală, ca și în cazul a ceea ce s-a spus despre construcțiile cu dublu obiect. De vreme ce construcțiile cu dublu obiect permit nominalizări, de ce nominalizările nu sunt gramaticale în cazul construcțiilor cu dativul posesiv în limba română? Astfel, lucrarea de față consideră exemple precum următoarele: *Îmi plânge inima* – \*plângerea de inimă mie. Faptul că în limba română construcțiile cu dativul posesiv nu permit nominalizări (spre deosebire de construcțiile cu dublu obiect) trebuie, în continuare, cercetat.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** dativ, posesor, aplicativ, caz structural, nominalizare

### Introduction

Romanian is a Romance language which displays both Dative DPs which bear Dative morphology (unlike Spanish, Italian, French, contemporary Romanian still has

Dative morphology, just like Latin, its ancestor) and Dative DPs with the preposition „la“ (Iorga (2013) examines the diachrony of the Dative with the preposition „la“ from the XVIth to the XIXth century, but also its use in dialectal Romanian).

The domain of the Dative in contemporary Romanian is fairly extended (see Coteanu, 1982, Avram, 1986, a.o. for heads which select Dative DPs), but the only aim of this paper is to take a closer look at the fact that a large number of verbs in contemporary Romanian can occur in possessive Dative constructions.

Such possessive Dative constructions will be analyzed under their nominalizations, as a test which tries to look into the syntax of such possessive Dative constructions.

Săvescu (2011) argues that the Dative introducing head, i.e. ApplP, is just a Kase projection, it does not introduce arguments – such a proposal seems to support the raising analysis of possessor Datives, i.e. they get the Possessor theta-role lower than the applicative projection and then they raise to a higher position. Certainly, the analysis of Dative Possessor DPs is intricate enough to deserve closer attention both syntactically and semantically.

Deal’s (2010) analysis of possessive Datives is in the same line – her analysis of Nez Perce and German examples shows that Dative Possessors raise from their positions inside the nominal phrase to a a-thematic position within vP where they are not assigned a new theta-role, but they are only assigned case in specApplP (i.e. the assignment of the Dative is structural).

The analyses above show that the assignment of the Dative is structural just like it has been argued to be in DOCs. Since DOCs allow grammatical nominalizations, why do possessive Dative constructions yield ungrammatical nominalizations in Romanian? Thus, this paper focuses on examples such as the following: *Îmi plânge inima* (My heart is crying) - *\*plângerea de inimă mie* (\*crying of heart to me.Dat) / *\*plângerea de inimă de către mine* (\*crying of heart by me)<sup>1</sup>

The fact that possessive Dative constructions in contemporary Romanian yield ungrammatical nominalizations (unlike DOCs whose assignment has also been argued to be structural) needs further investigation.

At this point, it is important to emphasize the fact that this paper does not particularly focus on the syntax of nominalizations of Romanian possessive Dative constructions, but, in fact, it focuses on the approach to assignment of the Dative in such configurations (for instance, as in Pykkänen’s (2002) high applicative configuration) – the reason why these ungrammatical nominalizations are brought up is only meant to contrast with the grammatical nominalizations of DOCs in contemporary Romanian. The only point we try to make is that possessive Dative constructions do not behave like DOCs when it comes to the grammaticality of their nominalizations (DOCs have widely been given as typical examples of structural assignment of the Dative), as in the following grammatical nominalization: *închirierea de jucării copiilor* (rental of toys.Acc to children.Dat); but, we should also keep in mind the following ungrammatical nominalization in Romanian: *\*închirierea copiilor de jucării* (rental to children.Dat of toys.Nom).

Thus, the first section is concerned with a broad theoretical background on the assignment of the Dative in possessor Dative constructions – Deal’s (2010, 2013) recent

<sup>1</sup> Examples of supine nominalizations are not given here.

raising approach to the assignment of the Dative in possessive constructions will be fully employed.

Section 2 is particularly concerned with Romanian PDCs; the ungrammaticality of their nominalizations will be compared and contrasted to the grammaticality of other Dative constructions, i.e. double object constructions; as already mentioned, the only purpose of this paper is to show that possessor Dative constructions behave differently from other constructions (i.e. DOCs) at least in point of view of their nominalizations in contemporary Romanian; semantically, possession is different in these two different Dative constructions.

The last section will draw the final conclusions.

**Section 1** Basic considerations on Deal’s (2010) raising approach to Possessors; introduction to Romanian possessive Dative constructions

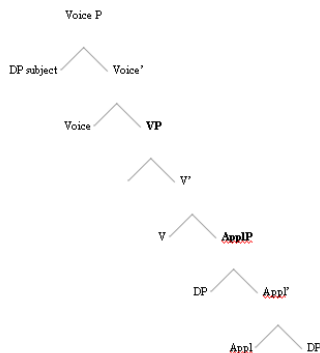
Deal (2011) argues for the possessor raising analysis of possessive Dative constructions. She proposes there is a head X above the VP whose specifier is the position where the Possessor DP raises in such configurations.

If we were to put together the applicative analysis of the Dative and the possessor raising analysis of possessor Dative constructions, we can only assume that this X head is the Applicative head.

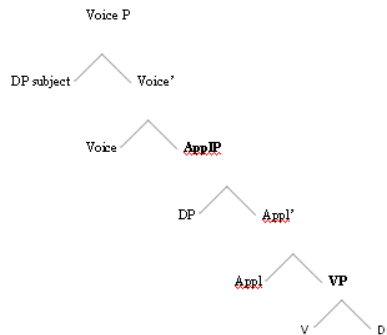
Pylkkänen (2002) deals with the topic of argument introducing heads and brings arguments in favor of the existence of a functional head which introduces „non-core“ arguments of the verb, i.e. the Applicative head. She also makes the distinction between low and high applicative configurations function of the position of the Applicative head with respect to the position of the VP itself.

Pylkkänen (2002, 14) illustrates low and high applicative configurations as in (1) and (2) below:

(1) Low Applicatives



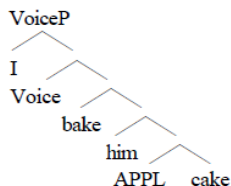
(2) High Applicatives



Low applicative configurations are illustrated by English DOCs as in (3) below:

(3) I baked him a cake.

LOW APPLICATIVE (ENGLISH)



(Pylkkänen 2002, 11)

Moreover, Pylkkänen (2002) proposes that English DOCs are representative of only one type of low applicatives, i.e. Low Recipient Applicatives. The other type of low applicatives is what she calls Low Source Applicatives and she uses Hebrew possessor Dative constructions to illustrate this latter type of low applicatives<sup>2</sup>. In fact, a brief investigation of Romanian possessor Dative constructions as Low source applicatives could be picked up in section 2 if we were to try to deal with a general look on different analyses that have been proposed for PDCs.

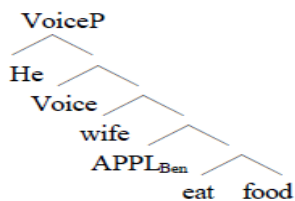
Low applied arguments bear a transfer of possession relation between two individuals; in the case of Low Recipient applicatives, this relation asserts that the direct object is *to* the possession of the indirect object<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, high applied arguments introduce arguments which express a relation between these arguments and the event described by the verb. This relation gets established between arguments like Benefactives, Malefactive, Experiencers, a.o. and the event itself (see Pylkkänen (2002) for relevant examples)

Pylkkänen (2002, 14) uses Chaga Benefactives to illustrate high applicatives as in (4) below:

- (4) N-½a-½ý-lyi-i-à m- kà k-élyá  
 FOC-1SG-PRES-eat-APPL-FV 1-wife 7-food  
 „He is eating food **for his wife** “

HIGH APPLICATIVE (CHAGA)



Later on, Georgala (2012) proposes that there is just one position for the Applicative head, i.e. the ApplP is above the VP. Moreover, she proposes that there are two types of applicative configurations: thematic applicatives and raising applicatives. Thematic applicatives introduce an extra argument in [Spec ApplP] while raising applicatives do not

<sup>2</sup> See Landau (1999) for a more detailed approach to this construction in Hebrew.

<sup>3</sup> Low Source Applicatives refer to a transfer of possession relation of the direct object *from* the indirect object; for relevant examples, see Pylkkänen (2002).

introduce an applied argument, the argument they introduce being licensed in [Spec VP], a position which is lower than [Spec ApplP]. This DP raises to [Spec ApplP] because of an EPP feature on the Applicative head<sup>4, 5</sup>.

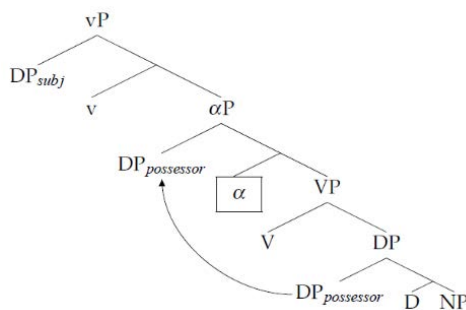
At this point, we only try to briefly sketch the applicative theoretical framework, a configuration which argues for the structural assignment of the Dative; the Dative is structurally assigned not only in DOCs, but in other Dative constructions, as well. If we adopt Deal’s (2010) raising approach to possessive Dative constructions, they can be treated as instances of structural configurations<sup>6</sup>, the problem being that Romanian DOCs yield grammatical nominalizations while possessive Dative constructions yield ungrammatical nominalizations in contemporary Romanian.

Deal (2010, 1) proposes that when possession is external (i.e. possessive encoding without a possessive structure in DP), there is raising: <<The possessor phrase moves from a possessum-DP-internal position to an a-thematic A-position within vP. Like raising to subject, this movement is obligatory and does not result in the assignment of a new theta-role to the moving element>>.

This kind of analysis shows that case assignment has got nothing to do with theta-role assignment which means that case is structurally assigned – if we focus on possessor Dative constructions as instances of possessive raising, it turns out that the Dative is structural in such configurations since the Possessor raises from a possessum DP-internal position to a position where it is not assigned a new theta-role (also see Georgala, 2012).

In fact, Deal (2010, 32) proposes the following raising configuration which accounts for possession such as in possessor Dative constructions:

(5)



<sup>4</sup> See Georgala (2012), Chapter 2, for further explanations on case assignment under Agree in such configurations. Also see Georgala (2012) for illustrations of both thematic and raising configurations. This paper is not where we should introduce further crosslinguistic considerations on thematic and raising applicatives. Romanian data will not be considered here from the point of view of Georgala’s (2012) approach to applicative configurations.

<sup>5</sup> See Georgala (2012), section 3.2.3.2.2. for an account to possessor raising from [Spec DP<sub>Acc</sub>] to [Spec ApplP]. Her section also contains a quick review of previous proposals on the syntax and semantics of Dative possessors.

<sup>6</sup> At this point, we consider it necessary to remind the reader the distinction between structural and non-structural cases. Chomsky (1981) introduces the structural/inherent case distinction and Chomsky (1995, 113) rewrites it as in: -structural cases (Accusative, Nominative) – “which are assigned solely in terms of S-Structure configuration” -inherent cases (Genitive) – “which are associated with  $\theta$ -marking; i.e. it is assigned by  $\alpha$  to NP only if  $\alpha$   $\theta$ -marks NP” (see Cornilescu, (1992), (1995), Giurgea, (2010) for relevant studies of the Romanian Genitive). Structural cases are not associated with a particular  $\theta$ -role; the relation between Cases and  $\theta$ -roles makes the distinction between cases which are always associated with one particular  $\theta$ -role (these are the so-called semantic cases) and cases which are not associated with  $\theta$ -roles (these are the structural cases; for instance, the Nominative case).

Deal (2010, 17) uses examples from Nez Perce, but she also pays special attention to some German examples.

At the beginning of Section 1, we assumed that the head  $X/\alpha$  above the VP was the Applicative head. Deal (2010, 31) makes the same assumption about German, but she proposes that things are different with Nez Perce: <<In both cases, possessor phrases undergo A-movement to a position just below the base position of the external argument. In both cases, the head hosting possessor movement is a familiar one. The German-style possessor dative construction is built on a light verb/applicative head which obtains its argument via movement. Nez Perce-style possessor raising is built on the machinery of object shift. So far as external possession is concerned, the structures differ only in the content of the head to whose specifier the possessor moves>>.

The German example that Deal (2001) takes from Lee-Schoenfeld (2006) is given in (6) below:

- (6) Er ruinierte mir die Wohnung.  
 he ruined me.DAT the place  
 He ruined my place.

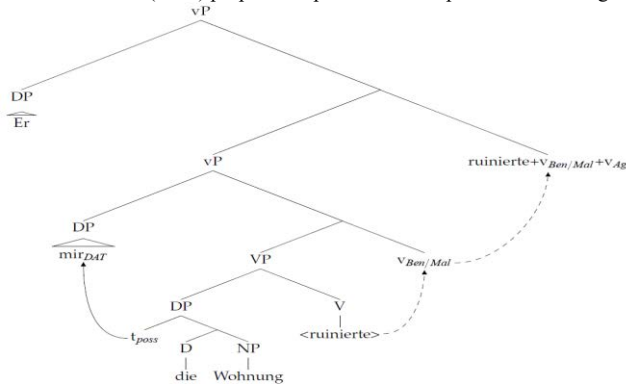
Deal (2011, 31) adopts Lee-Schoenfeld's (2006) parsing of this German example<sup>7</sup> and proposes that the head which takes the Possessor argument in its specifier position is the applicative head: <<the projection hosting the moved possessor phrase is a light verb or applicative projection headed by  $v_{Ben}/=Mal$ , responsible for assigning an affectee theta-role to the phrase in its specifier position>>.

What we need to see in the next section is if Romanian patterns like German form this point of view and see if that head is indeed the Applicative head in Romanian.

Next, if this structural assignment of the Dative in possessive constructions is on the right track, we come back to the central question of this paper: if the Dative is structural in DOCs (see Pykkänen (2002)) and the Dative also seems to be structural in possessive constructions, why do DOCs allow grammatical nominalizations in contemporary Romanian while possessive Dative constructions yield ungrammatical nominalizations?

As already mentioned, this paper mostly focuses on the question itself rather than on the answer; we only try to show that recent analyses of the Dative give rise to questions which need further investigation.

<sup>7</sup> Lee-Schoenfeld (2006) proposes to parse this example as in the configuration below:



## Section 2 Further considerations on possessor Dative constructions in contemporary Romanian

As it turns out, the domain of the Dative is fairly extended in contemporary Romanian (for basic studies on the domain of the Dative in Romanian, see Coteanu, 1982, Avram, 1986, Cornilescu, 1987, a.o.).

This section does not introduce extended considerations on the domain of the Dative, but it merely focuses on PDCs.

First, it needs to be pointed out that possessive Dative constructions in contemporary Romanian are very productive; this observation is based on my recent research on Romanian verbs which take Dative DPs. The verbs I looked up in DLRM (1958) and DLR (2010) show that almost any verb in Romanian can be used in a possessive Dative constructions; it is even easier to build up possessive Dative constructions with somatic expressions, as in some relevant examples below:

- (7) *Îmi plânge inima.*  
To me.Dat cries the heart.Nom  
„My heart is crying“ (intended meaning: I am very sad)
- (8) *Îmi arde fața.*  
To me.Dat burns the face.Nom  
„My face is burning up“
- (9) *Îmi cade părul.*  
To me.Dat falls the hair.Nom  
„My hair is falling off“
- (10) *Îmi tremură mâinile.*  
To me. Dat shake the hands.Nom  
„My hands are shaking“.

Before giving any further Romanian examples, we can start our brief syntactic and semantic analysis with the basic assumption that possessive Dative constructions pattern like their German counterparts (see example (6) above).

Let us take the following Romanian example:

- (11) *El mi-a distrus cartea.*  
He me.DAT destroyed the book.Nom  
He destroyed my book.

The syntax of this Romanian example patterns like its German counterpart, but we cannot propose exactly the same configuration that Lee-Schoenfeld (2006) proposed for German (see footnote 7 above) and Deal (2010) adopted in order to propose her raising configuration.

Romanian shows raising of the possessor as it is illustrated in (13) below, but unlike German, in Romanian, the verb in the VP does not raise above the possessor Dative; Romanian possessor Dative constructions do not result in examples like (12) below:

- (12) \**El distrus mi-a cartea.*  
He.Nom destroyed me.Dat the book  
„He destroyed my book“.

We only tentatively propose that in Romanian there is raising of the Possessor Dative DP, but the scope of this paper is beyond an extensive comparison between German

and Romanian possessive Dative constructions. Next, we only try to zoom into the raising of the Possessor Dative DP in Romanian and illustrate its configuration under a raising approach (see (13) below).

Georgala (2012, 130) proposes that this Possessor DP raises from [SpecDP] to a higher position, i.e. [SpecAppP]. She follows Lee-Schoenfeld (2006) <<in base-generating possessor datives in the specifier of the possessee DO and then raising them to [Spec, ApplP]. As in German, D, the head of the possessee DO is a non-Case-licensing (defective) head. Raising of the possessor to [Spec, ApplP] results in assignment of a second theta-role, namely bene-/malefactive, and licensing of inherent genitive Case by Appl>><sup>8,9</sup>

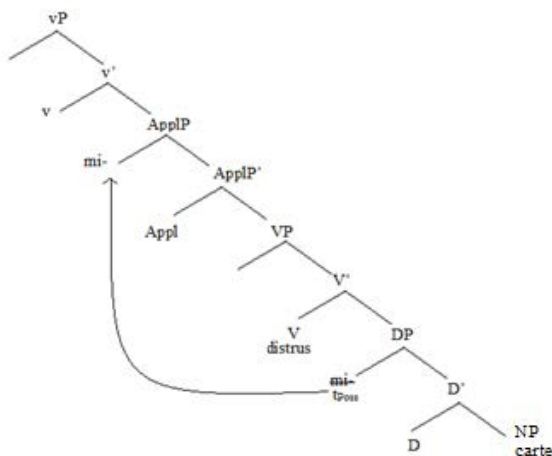
Deal (2010, 31) proposes that „the projection hosting the moved possessor phrase is a light verb or applicative projection headed by  $v_{Ben/Mal}$ , responsible for assigning an affectee theta-role to the phrase in its specifier position”.

If XP is the applicative projection, it follows that this configuration is a high applicative configuration since XP is higher than the VP, if we adopt Pykkänen’s (2002) theoretical framework which makes the distinction between high and low Applicative heads. Remember that high applied arguments introduce arguments which express a relation between such arguments and the event described by the verb. This relation gets established between arguments like Benefactives, Malefactive, Experiencers, a.o. and the event itself.

On the other hand, Georgala (2012) proposes that the Applicative head is always licensed above the VP, but there are two types of applicative configurations, i.e. thematic applicatives and raising applicatives. Georgala (2012) proposes that possessor raising is an instance of raising from [SpecDP<sub>Acc</sub>] to [Spec ApplP].

It is under Georgala’s (2012) more recent theoretical approach to applicative configurations and Deal’s (2010) raising approach to Possessor Dative constructions that we tentatively propose the configuration in (13) below for the Romanian example in (11) above:

(13)



<sup>8</sup> Georgala (2012) discusses Greek examples; in Greek, the inherent case of such possessors is the Genitive; in languages like German and Romanian, the Dative is licensed in such positions.

<sup>9</sup> This is the specifier of Pykkänen’s (2002) high applicative head in Lee-Schoenfeld’s (2006) account.



Georgala (2012) proposes that there are distinct reasons why there is raising in such different applicative configurations. She discusses another instance of raising, i.e. raising of I.O. from [SpecVP] to [SpecAppIP] and proposes that, in such cases, raising is triggered by an EPP feature on the applicative head<sup>10</sup>.

On the other hand, raising from [SpecDP<sub>Acc</sub>] to [Spec AppIP] is triggered by the fact that D, the head of the possessee DO is a non-Case-licensing head; it follows that the possessor DP raises to a higher position where it assigned inherent case – this inherent case is the Dative in Romanian.

We need to notice that unlike Pylkkänen's (2002) proposal that the Dative is assigned in high or low applicative positions which are not associated with  $\theta$ -marking, raising proposals such as Georgala's (2012) associate  $\theta$ -marking with case assignment in possessive Dative configurations.

The possessor DP raises from [Spec DP] to [Spec AppIP] in order to get inherent Dative case. Also, raising of the possessor to [Spec, AppIP] results in assignment of a second theta-role, i.e. bene-/malefactive (c.f. Georgala 2012, 130)<sup>11</sup>.

Some relevant syntactic and semantic aspects of possessor Dative constructions are briefly sketched in this section. As far as nominalizations of such constructions are concerned, they are ungrammatical in contemporary Romanian, as it is shown in (14) below:

(14) \*distrugerea de carte mie

Destruction.the of book to **me.Dat**

The nominalization in (14) differs from the nominalization in (15) which illustrates the grammatical nominalization of a Romanian DOC:

(15) Închirierea de cărți elevilor

Rental.the of books to **students.Dat**

At this point, we cannot propose syntactic or semantic reasons why these nominalizations are grammatically different. Based on the theoretical frameworks we sketched above, these structures are analyzed under Pylkkänen's (2002) syntax of high and low applicative configurations; again, according to Pylkkänen (2002), the possession relation is different in such configurations.

On the other hand, a more recent proposal (i.e. Georgala, 2012) takes the applicative head to be licensed above the VP; the syntactic difference between such structures ends up in different raising configuration, i.e. raising from [Spec VP] to [SpecAppP] and raising from [SpecDP] to [Spec AppIP]. The Dative is inherently assigned in the latter type of raising configurations. Semantically, raising of the Dative possessor results in their assignment of the benefactive/malefactive  $\theta$ -role.

The aspects above still need further investigation; this is the reason why, at this point, we cannot come up with a clear explanation for the different grammaticality of nominalizations of different Dative structures in Romanian, i.e. DOCs and possessor Dative constructions.

<sup>10</sup> Georgala (2012) discusses German and Greek examples of DOCs and prepositional constructions and proposes that there is raising of the (dative) I.O. because of the EPP feature of Appl. Remember that her proposal is that there is only one position for the Appl head, i.e., this head is always above the VP.

<sup>11</sup> See Georgala (2012) for an explanation why these facts can escape the  $\theta$ -criterion. Remember that according to the  $\theta$ -criterion, each argument is assigned a theta role (Chomsky, 1981).

### Conclusion

As already mentioned, this paper only tries to point to the fact that different Dative structures behave differently in contemporary Romanian. One such difference concerns their nominalizations. We focus on possessor Dative constructions and try to show that they are different from DOCs, as far as their nominalizations are concerned.

Thus, section 1 tries to sketch recent theoretical proposals on the assignment of the Dative; Pylkkänen (2002) proposes the structural assignment of the Dative in different high and low applicative configurations.

Deal's (2010) raising proposal to possessor Dative constructions is, also, briefly exposed in Section 1.

Section 2 is a little bit more empirical, in the sense that it introduces some relevant Romanian data. Its only theoretical aspect focuses on Georgala's (2012) proposals; these theoretical considerations are only introduced in order to support the raising approach to possessor Dative constructions. Georgala (2012) proposes there is only one position for the Applicative head, i.e. above the VP, and she proposes that, function of this position, there are two types of applicative configurations, raising and thematic.

The basic point this paper tries to make is that Romanian Dative constructions are still very intricate, which means that a lot of work on such constructions is still needed. We mostly focus on the syntax and semantics of PDCs, but subsequent work needs to carefully look into the un/grammatical nominalizations of these different Dative constructions (i.e. DOCs and PDs, respectively). Passivization can also be considered with DOCs and PDCs in contemporary Romanian.

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