

Feeding relations and their breakdowns: a theory of dative intervention

Omer Preminger

This talk is about dative intervention – a.k.a. "defective" intervention – the phenomenon of dative nominals disrupting what would otherwise be a successful relation between a probe (e.g. a finite verb) and its goal (e.g. a nominative noun phrase).

I begin with an analytical argument that dative intervention involves the outright failure of probing – as opposed to agreement with an "inactive" goal, agreement with a functional layer of structure, or other similar alternatives. As noted in earlier work (Preminger 2011, 2014), this should then result in the characteristic morphological footprint of non-valuation, what we call "3sg agreement morphology."

However, such default morphology is only one half of the empirical pattern concerning dative intervention; in other cases, the result is outright ungrammaticality. I present a typological argument that this results from a *feeding* relation between probing/agreement and movement to subject position. Ungrammaticality arises when such feeding relations hold, and we are presented with a string that can only be parsed as having involved movement, but which instantiates a configuration where probing/agreement could not have culminated successfully.