A further argument for a syncretic analysis of DOM and dative in Spanish[*]

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EARLY DRAFT – May 2019

Abstract

This paper presents an argument to analyse the Spanish form /a/ as a syncretic case marker for accusative DOM and dative. The literature on free relative clauses has established that syncretism allows to repair feature mismatches arising from contradictory selectional requirements between the matrix and the embedded predicates. By employing CLLD constructions, it is shown here that DOM and dative grant the same repairing effect in Spanish, so it is concluded that they are syncretic categories. The same configuration distinguishes the directional preposition *a* and the dative case marker, which is taken to indicate that these elements are mere homophones in the language. An account of the repairing effect of syncretism in these contexts is also offered.

Keywords— free relatives, clitic left dislocation, differential object marking, syncretism, Spanish.

1 Introduction

The Spanish form /a/ appears in several syntactic contexts. It may introduce animate direct objects as in (1a), indirect objects as in (1b), and locative arguments as in (1c).

(1) a. Cosmo saludó [DO *a* Jeremías].
Cosmo saluted   A Jeremías
'Cosmo saluted Jeremías.'

b. Jorge le   compró una ensalada [IO *a* Eliana].
Jorge DAT.3SG bought a   salad   A Eliana
'Jorge bought a salad to Eliana.'

c. Jorge fue   [LOC *a* la playa].
Jorge went   A the beach
'Jorge went to the beach.'

The *a*-form heading the locative argument in (1c) is widely accepted to be a directional preposition with equivalent forms in many languages, e.g., English 'to', Japanese 'ni', Polish 'do'. Under the intuition that all *a*-forms in (1) pertain to a single natural class, the ones in (1a) and (1b) have also been traditionally analyzed as prepositions. Thus, for instance, Alarcos Llorach (1994) takes indirect objects in Spanish to be headed by the preposition *a*. In a similar way, Alcina Franch & Blecua (1975) describe the *a*-form in (1a) as a semantically empty preposition; in fact, the type of direct object in (1a) is usually referred to as *complemento directo preposicional* 'prepositional direct complement' (e.g., Pensado 1995, Torrego 1999).

However, there is now a long-standing consensus that the *a*-forms appearing in (1a) and (1b) are actually case markers. The *a*-form heading the direct object in (1a) is taken to be an accusative differential object marker (DOM), e.g., Brugè & Brugger (1996), López (2012), while the *a*-form in (1b) is assumed to be a dative case marker, e.g., Demonte (1995), Cuervo (2003), Pujalte (2012). This approach implies a categorial distinction between (1a) and (1b) on one side, and (1c) on the other: the former sentences contain nominal phrases (NPs), while the latter has a prepositional phrase (PP).

The fact that both DOM and dative are expressed by using the same exponent does not say anything about the reason why a single form manifests two distinct case values. A fairly standard implicit assumption involves considering the accusative and dative *a*-forms as mere diachronically related homophones.[1] This is to say that there is no synchronic principle enforcing phonological identity between DOM and dative, i.e., it is a "synchronic coincidence" just as the homophony between *banco* 'bench' and *banco* 'bank': they are distinct vocabulary items that happen to be pronounced in the same way.

Assuming that the three *a*-forms in (1) illustrate a case of *accidental homophony* implies treating these elements as distinct grammatical objects. Therefore, separate spell-out rules need to be proposed for them.[2]

(2)   a.   {ACC} $\longrightarrow$ /a/
      b.   {DAT} $\longrightarrow$ /a/
      c.   {P$_{\text{DIR}}$} $\longrightarrow$ /a/

However, authors like Zdrojewski (2013) and Bárány (2018) defend the hypothesis that homophony between DOM and dative is not coincidental but motivated by synchronic principles, i.e., it is an instance of *systematic syncretism*. The basic intuition is that there are some syntactic contexts in which the accusative-dative distinction is irrelevant for the purposes of exponent selection, so both cases are spelled-out by employing the same rule.

(3)   a.   {ACC/DAT} $\longrightarrow$ /a/
      b.   {P$_{\text{DIR}}$} $\longrightarrow$ /a/

Bárány (2018) presents a number of reasons to support this approach at a general level. This paper aims to introduce a further argument for the syncretic treatment of DOM and dative in Spanish. The idea goes as follows. It has been observed that systematic syncretism allows to repair feature-mismatches in free relatives in many languages (e.g., van Riemsdijk 2006). In Spanish, the same repairing effect can be attested with DOM and dative, so it must be the case that these categories are syncretic.

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[1] All Spanish *a*-forms in (1) seem to have their origin in the Latin directional construction *ad+accusative*. See discussion in Torrego (1999) for references.

[2] See López (2012) for a particular proposal of spell-out rules for DOM and dative along these lines.

The structure of the article is as follows. Section 2 introduces the phenomenon of mismatch repair in free relatives via syncretism. Section 3 presents the syntactic context in which an analogous effect can be attested in Spanish. Section 4 discusses an analysis for the phenomenon. Finally, section 5 contains some conclusions.

2   Case mismatching repair via syncretism

Headed relative clauses typically modify a nominal constituent, namely the *head* of the relative.

(4)   I saw the person$_{head}$ [$_{REL}$ who you like].

On the contrary, free relative clauses are those lacking a head.

(5)   I saw [$_{REL}$ who you like].

A key distinction between these constructions is the number of functions performed by the wh-phrase in each case. In headed relative clauses as (4), the head of the relative is selected by the matrix predicate, while the wh-phrase is interpreted within the embedded clause. In free relatives, however, there is no head, so the wh-phrase must satisfy by itself the selectional requirements of both verbs.[3] In (5), the two verbs subcategorize for the same type of argument (i.e., an NP), so a relative pronoun like *who* is able to serve as the object of both.

The scenario in which the selectional requirements of the verbs coincide is sketchily illustrated in (6). The two verbs in the construction require a constituent of type α. Since the wh-phrase satisfies this condition for both predicates, the resulting sentence is grammatical.

(6)   ... V$_{\langle\alpha\rangle}$ ... [$_{REL}$ wh-phrase$_\alpha$ ... V$_{\langle\alpha\rangle}$]

Hypothetically, there could be cases in which the matrix and the embedded verbs require constituents with contradicting properties, e.g., one verb requires a constituent of type α while the other requires a constituent of type β. In this type of scenario there is a *mismatch* between the needs of both predicates so that a single wh-phrase cannot satisfy them at the same time. The resulting sentence is usually unacceptable.

(7)   * ... V$_{\langle\alpha\rangle}$ ... [$_{REL}$ wh-phrase$_\alpha$ ... V$_{\langle\beta\rangle}$]

However, several scholars point out that this type of mismatch is resolved if the form of the wh-phrase is syncretic for the properties required by both predicates (e.g., van Riemsdijk 2006, Citko 2013, Himmelreich 2017). That is, in a configuration where the matrix verb requires a constituent of type α and the embedded verb requires a constituent of type β, the resulting sentence is acceptable if α and β are systematically expressed by the same exponent.

(8)   ... V$_{\langle\alpha\rangle}$ ... [$_{REL}$ wh-phrase$_{\alpha/\beta}$ ... V$_{\langle\beta\rangle}$]

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[3]Technically, the whole NP/DP containing the free relative is what is selected by the matrix verb. This constituent, however, can be analysed either as (i) a projection of the wh-phrase itself, i.e., the *Head Analysis* of free relative clauses (Hirschbühler 1976, Bresnan & Grimshaw 1978), or (ii) a projection of a null pronominal that matches the features of the wh-phrase, i.e., the *Comp Analysis* of free relative clauses (Groos & van Riemsdijk 1979, Suñer 1984). Whatever analysis is preferred, it is clear that the formal properties that are selected by both verbs are those represented in the wh-phrase.

The three scenarios in (6), (7) and (8) have been extensively studied in languages in which relative pronouns manifest morphological case. Take as a first example the declination of personal and impersonal wh-pronouns in German. As the table in (9) shows, the forms in the impersonal paradigm are syncretic, so they are expected to repair case mismatches.

(9)

	Personal	Impersonal
NOM	*wer*	*was*
ACC	*wen*	*was*
DAT	*wem*	–
GEN	*wessen*	–

The German sentence in (10) illustrates the matching scenario that was previously sketched in (6).[4] The verbs *mag* 'likes' and *hasst* 'hates' need an accusative complement; this requirement is satisfied for both verbs by the accusative wh-pronoun *wen* 'whom' heading the free relative.

(10) Hans mag$_{\langle ACC \rangle}$ [*wen*$_{ACC}$ Maria hasst$_{\langle ACC \rangle}$].
      Hans likes   who   Maria hates
      'Hans likes whoever Maria hates.'

The sentence in (11) illustrates a case mismatch in line with the abstract representation in (7). The matrix verb *vertraut* 'trusts' needs a dative argument, while the embedded verb *mag* 'likes' needs an accusative one. In this configuration, neither a dative nor an accusative wh-pronoun can appear in the construction.[5]

(11) Hans vertraut$_{\langle DAT \rangle}$ [**wem*$_{DAT}$/**wen*$_{ACC}$ Maria mag$_{\langle ACC \rangle}$].
      Hans trusts   who   Maria likes
      'Hans trusts whoever Maria likes.'

Unacceptability is avoided if the wh-phase heading the free relative is syncretic for the case values required by the matrix and the embedded verb. Just as sketched in (8), the sentence in (12) has two verbs with conflicting needs: *mag* 'likes' requires an accusative phrase and *treibt* 'drives' requires a nominative phrase. Since an impersonal pronoun is employed, and impersonal pronouns are syncretic in nominative and accusative (9), the case mismatch is repaired.

(12) Hans mag$_{\langle ACC \rangle}$ [*was*$_{ACC/NOM}$ Maria zur Weißglut treibt$_{\langle NOM \rangle}$].
      Hans likes   what   Maria to rage   drives
      'Hans likes whatever infuriates Maria.'

An analogous observation can be made on the basis of Polish data, another language that manifests morphological case on wh-pronouns. The table in (13) illustrates the declination of the pronoun *ktokolwiek* 'who'; notice that there is syncretism between the accusative and genitive forms.

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[4]Examples (10), (11) and (12) are taken from Himmelreich (2017).

[5]I abstract away from certain mismatches that are tolerated in German: as Voguel (2001) points out, German allows case mismatches in free relatives as long as the case required by the embedded verb is lower in the case hierarchy (Blake 1994) than the case required by the matrix verb.

   i. Hans mag$_{\langle ACC \rangle}$ [*wem*$_{DAT}$/**wen*$_{ACC}$ Maria vertraut$_{\langle DAT \rangle}$].
       Hans likes   who   Maria trusts
       'Hans likes whoever Maria trusts.'

This exception does not affect in any way the generalization that is being exemplified in the main text, namely that systematic syncretism repairs mismatches. See Bergsma (2019) for a unified treatment of the full German pattern.

(13) NOM *ktokolwiek*
      ACC *kogokolwiek*
      DAT *komukolwiek*
      GEN *kogokolwiek*

Polish free relatives exhibit the same behaviour than their German counterparts: in case the requirements of both the matrix and the embedded verbs match the wh-phrase, the sentence is acceptable.[6]

(14) Jan pomaga$_{\langle \text{DAT} \rangle}$ [*komukolwiek*$_{\text{DAT}}$ ufa$_{\langle \text{DAT} \rangle}$].
      Jan help   whomever   trusts
      'Jan helps whomever he trusts.'

If the verbs require nominals with different case values, the free relative is deemed to be unacceptable, no matter the form of the wh-phrase heading it.

(15) Jan ufa$_{\langle \text{DAT} \rangle}$ [*komukolwiek$_{\text{DAT}}$/*kogokolwiek$_{\text{ACC}}$ wpuścił$_{\langle \text{ACC} \rangle}$ do domu].
      Jan trusts   whoever   let   to home
      'Jan trusts whoever he let into the house.'

This situation is solved, however, if a syncretic wh-pronoun is able to satisfy the selectional needs of both verbs.

(16) Jan unika$_{\langle \text{GEN} \rangle}$ [*kogokolwiek*$_{\text{GEN/ACC}}$ wczoraj   obrasił$_{\langle \text{ACC} \rangle}$].
      Jan avoids   whoever   yesterday offended
      'Jan avoids whoever yesterday offended.'

The German and Polish data unequivocally support the generalization that systematic case syncretism repairs case mismatches. This phenomenon can be further employed to diagnose other seemingly syncretic patterns in other languages. In particular, under the right conditions, it could be used to support a syncretic treatment of DOM and dative in Spanish.

3   CLLD and free relatives in Spanish

Relative pronouns do not exhibit inflectional case distinctions in Spanish. Free relatives in this language have been studied in terms of *categorial mismatches*, i.e., scenarios in which the matrix and embedded verbs require distinct type of constituents (e.g., Suñer 1984). For instance, two verbs that require PP complements headed by the same preposition can form a free relative construction, e.g., (17a). A mismatch emerges if the verbs require distinct types of phrases, e.g., an NP and a PP as in (17b), or in case the verbs need different prepositions heading their complements, e.g., (17c).

(17)   a.   ¿Te olvidaste$_{\langle de \rangle}$ [$_{\text{PP}}$ de quien] te   enamoraste$_{\langle de \rangle}$?
            you forgot   of who   you fall.in.love
            'Did you forget who you fell in love with?'

       b.   * Eliana conoció$_{\langle \text{NP} \rangle}$ (a) [$_{\text{PP}}$ de quien] se   enamoraría$_{\langle de \rangle}$.
            Eliana met   A   of who   SE fall.in.love
            'Eliana met who she would fall in love with.'

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[6]The Polish examples in (14), (15) and (16) are also taken from Himmelreich (2017).

c. * Jorge pensaba$_{\langle en\rangle}$ en [$_{PP}$ de quien] se olvidó$_{\langle de\rangle}$.
Jorge thought in of who SE forgot
'Jorge thought about who he forgot.'

In order to test the hypothesis that DOM and dative are syncretic, it is necessary to provide a configuration in which an element of the matrix clause unambiguously requires an accusative wh-phrase heading the relative, while an element in the embedded clause unambiguously requires a dative wh-phrase (or *vice versa*). It is contended here that *Clitic Left Dislocation* constructions (CLLD) provide such a configuration. As shown in (18), these constructions involve an NP argument in a dislocated position in the left periphery being doubled within the clause by a clitic.

(18) a. [$_{NP}$ A Cosmo], lo vi hoy.
A Cosmo ACC.3SG.MASC saw today
'Cosmo, I saw him today.'
b. [$_{NP}$ A Eliana], le di un regalo.
A Eliana DAT.3SG gave a present
'Eliana, I gave her a present'.

The CLLD construction has two properties that are relevant for the purposes of this paper. First, CLLD exhibits *connectivity effects* (Cinque 1977), i.e., the features of the clitic must match those of the dislocated constituent. For example, the sentences in (19) show that a dislocated direct object like *Cosmo* (masculine and singular) cannot be doubled by a clitic with plural (19b), feminine (19c), or dative features (19d).[7]

(19) a. [$_{DO}$ A Cosmo]$_{ACC}$, lo$_{\langle ACC\rangle}$ vi hoy.
A Cosmo ACC.3SG.MASC saw today
'Cosmo, I saw him today.'
b. * [$_{DO}$ A Cosmo]$_{SG}$, los$_{\langle PL\rangle}$ vi hoy.
A Cosmo ACC.3PL.MASC saw today
c. * [$_{DO}$ A Cosmo]$_{MASC}$, la$_{\langle FEM\rangle}$ vi hoy.
A Cosmo ACC.3PL.FEM saw today
d. * [$_{DO}$ A Cosmo]$_{ACC}$, le$_{\langle DAT\rangle}$ vi hoy.
A Cosmo DAT.3SG.MASC saw today

In the same way, an indirect object as *Eliana* (feminine and singular) in (20) cannot be doubled neither by a plural (20b) nor by an accusative clitic (20c).

(20) a. [$_{IO}$ A Eliana]$_{DAT}$, le$_{\langle DAT\rangle}$ di un regalo.
A Eliana DAT.3SG gave a present
'Eliana, I gave her a present'.
b. * [$_{IO}$ A Eliana]$_{SG}$, les$_{\langle PL\rangle}$ di un regalo.
A Eliana DAT.3PL gave a present
c. * [$_{IO}$ A Eliana]$_{DAT}$, la$_{\langle ACC\rangle}$ di un regalo.
A Eliana ACC.3SG gave a present

The second important property of CLLD is that wh-phrases (e.g., interrogative and relative pronouns) may participate in the construction and be doubled by a clitic. There is, however,

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[7]The unacceptability of (19d) does not consider *leísmo*, a dialectal phenomenon in which accusative arguments are spelled-out as datives.

an asymmetry: while doubling an interrogative indirect object is the norm in most Spanish varieties (22), CLLD with interrogative direct objects (21) is restricted to only a couple dialects: the phenomenon seems to be particularly productive in Limeño, and has been widely attested in Rioplatense, although there is significant variation in the latter dialect, as some speakers tend to judge as unacceptable the relevant examples.[8]

(21) ¿[DO A quién]ACC lo⟨ACC⟩   viste hoy?
            A who   ACC.3SG.MASC saw   today
      'Who did you see today?'

(22) ¿[IO A quién]DAT le⟨DAT⟩   diste un regalo?
            A who   DAT.3SG gave a   present
      'Who did you give a present to?'

This behaviour extends to free relatives: the wh-phrase heading a free relative may be doubled by a clitic within the embedded clause. As before, the doubling pattern with direct objects in (23) is restricted to Limeño and Rioplatense Spanish, while the one with indirect objects is the norm across all varieties.

(23) Conozco [REL [DO a quienes]ACC los⟨ACC⟩   premiaron].
      know   A who   ACC.3PL.MASC rewarded
      'I know whom they rewarded.'

(24) Saludé [REL [IO a quienes]DAT les⟨DAT⟩   dieron el   premio].
      greeted   A who   DAT.3PL gave   the prize
      'I greeted whom they gave the prize to'

At the same time, the whole relative clause might be dislocated and doubled by a clitic in the matrix clause. As the wh-phrase heads the free relative, the clitic in the matrix structure is expected to match its features. Thus, (25) exhibits a free relative clause functioning as the direct object of the matrix verb *saludé* 'greeted' in the left periphery of the sentence while being doubled by the matrix accusative clitic *lo*. Once again, this pattern is restricted to those varieties allowing clitic doubling with accusative wh-phrases.

(25) [REL [DO A quien]ACC lo⟨ACC⟩   vi], lo⟨ACC⟩   saludé.
            A who   ACC.3SG.MASC saw ACC.3SG.MASC greeted
      'Whoever I saw, I greeted.'

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[8]Instances of this pattern are easy to find in corpora, as the following example shows (source: http://www.unmetroadelantado.com.ar/2014/10/descassetteando-n-60.html)

  i. ¿A quién lo   putean durante diez años en su casa?
      A who ACC.3SG.MASC insult during ten years in his house
      'Who is insulted during ten years in his house?'

As observed by Di Tullio & Zdrojewski (2006), the phenomenon requires a partitive-like interpretation over the wh-phrase, i.e., the doubling pattern triggers a contrastive reading with respect to a set of salient alternatives.

  ii. ¿A quién lo   viste finalmente? ¿A Cosmo o a Jorge?
      A who ACC.3SG.MASC saw   finally   A Cosmo or A Jorge
      'Who did you see in the end? Cosmo or Jorge?'

I am thankful to Pablo Zdrojewski for discussion on this issue.

Most Spanish speakers are able to replicate this syntactic configuration with a free relative functioning as an indirect object, as in (26). In this sentence, the free relative appearing at the left of the sentence is doubled in the matrix clause by the dative clitic *se*.[9]

(26) [$_{\text{REL}}$ [$_{\text{IO}}$ A quien]$_{\text{DAT}}$ le$_{\langle\text{DAT}\rangle}$ ofrecí el dinero], se$_{\langle\text{DAT}\rangle}$ lo   di.
      A who   DAT.3SG offered the money   DAT.3SG ACC.3SG.MASC gave
      'Whoever I offered the money to, I gave it to.'

Importantly, doubling the dislocated free relative in these scenarios is not only possible, but mandatory, e.g., (27) and (28).[10] This shows that there is a grammatical dependency between the dislocated clause and the matrix clitic that must be respected in order to obtain an acceptable sentence.

(27) * [$_{\text{REL}}$ [$_{\text{DO}}$ A quien]$_{\text{ACC}}$ lo$_{\langle\text{ACC}\rangle}$ vi], saludé.
      A who   ACC.3SG.MASC saw greeted
      'Whoever I saw, I greeted.'

(28) * [$_{\text{REL}}$ [$_{\text{IO}}$ A quien]$_{\text{DAT}}$ le$_{\langle\text{DAT}\rangle}$ ofrecí dinero], lo   di.
      A who   DAT.3SG offered money   ACC.3SG.MASC gave
      'Whoever I offered money, I gave it.'

The syntactic configuration in (25) and (26) allows for a case mismatch between accusative and dative clitics. That is, the wh-phrase heading the free relative may be linked at the same time with an accusative clitic within the embedded clause and with a dative clitic at the matrix level, e.g., (29). As already mentioned, clitic doubling of an accusative wh-phrase (e.g., *a quien lo insulté*) is available only in certain dialects, so this pattern is not common to al Spanish varieties.

(29) [$_{\text{REL}}$ [$_{\text{DO}}$ A quien]$_{\text{ACC/DAT}}$ lo$_{\langle\text{ACC}\rangle}$ insulté], le$_{\langle\text{DAT}\rangle}$ pido una disculpa.
      A who   ACC.3SG.MASC insulted DAT.3SG asked a   apology
      'Whoever I insulted, I asked them for forgiveness.'

The accusative-dative mismatch can also be detected without appealing to data from dialects that allow doubling of accusative wh-phrases. In a sentence like (30), it could be argued that a verb like *insulté* 'insulted' selects an accusative complement *a quien* 'whom' which is supposed to match the matrix dative clitic.

(30) [$_{\text{REL}}$ [$_{\text{DO}}$ A quien]$_{\text{ACC/DAT}}$ insulté$_{\langle\text{ACC}\rangle}$], le$_{\langle\text{DAT}\rangle}$ pido una disculpa.
      A who   insulted   DAT.3SG asked a   apology
      'Whoever I insulted, I asked them for forgiveness.'

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[9]There is no need to dislocate a dative constituent in order to obtain clitic doubling; the clitics *le* and *les* must always co-appear with dative phrases.

  i. Jorge *(le)   compró una ensalada a Eliana.
      Jorge DAT.3SG bought a   salad   A Eliana
      'Jorge bought Eliana a salad.'

However, since wh-phrases are dislocated within free relatives, CLLD constructions are used in all relevant examples in order to homogenize the doubling patterns.

[10]The sentence in (27) is acceptable only with a focal interpretation on the free relative. Such a reading suggests a reanalysis in terms of focus fronting, which is not the aimed structure in this example.

The inverse pattern, i.e., the one involving dative clitic doubling within the free relative, is acceptable for speakers of all Spanish varieties. In a sentence like (31), for instance, the wh-phrase *a quienes* 'whom' is linked with both a dative clitic in the embedded clause and an accusative clitic in the matrix structure.

(31)   [$_{\text{REL}}$ [$_{\text{IO}}$ A quienes]$_{\text{ACC/DAT}}$ no les$_{\langle\text{DAT}\rangle}$ diste entradas], los$_{\langle\text{ACC}\rangle}$ invité yo.
             A who not DAT.3SG gave tickets ACC.3PL.MASC invited I
             'Whoever you did't give tickets to, I invited.'

There are two aspects of these examples that are worth noticing. First, CLLD constructions allow to create case mismatch scenarios in Spanish, a language that does not exhibit inflectional case. Second, this mismatch leads to acceptable sentences, despite the fact CLLD is subject to a rather strict connectivity requirement, e.g., (19) and (20).

In principle, there are two ways in which this violation of connectivity could be handled. The first one is just accepting that connectivity requirements on CLLD can be lifted in particular contexts; under this approach, the sentences in (29), (30) and (31) should be considered exceptions that need to be accounted for by a proper analysis of CLLD. The second option involves following Zdrojewski (2013), Bárány (2018), and others in assuming that the *a*-forms heading the wh-phrases of (29), (30) and (31) are syncretic and, therefore, allow to repair the accusative-dative mismatch just as seen in the German and Polish examples in (12) and (16), respectively. The advantages of this latter alternative are straightforward: (i) it offers an account of the mismatch in terms of a well-known generalization on syncretism, and (ii) it allows to preserve the rigidness of the connectivity requirements on CLLD.

Moreover, the configuration introduced in (29), (30) and (31) allows to discriminate between accidental homophony and systematic syncretism. As mentioned in the introduction, the *a*-form in sentences like (32) is considered a directional preposition that is merely an homophone of the DOM and dative markers, i.e., the preposition and the case markers are objects of the Spanish grammar whose exponence is not related through synchronic principles.

(32)   Cosmo fue [$_{\text{PP}}$ a la ciudad de Nueva York].
             Cosmo went A the city of New York
             'Cosmo went to the city of New York.'

This distinction makes a clear prediction with respect to selectional mismatches in free relatives: as only true systematic syncretism grants the repairing effect, a mismatch between a dative marker and a preposition should invariably lead to unacceptability. To construct the relevant example, consider the functioning of transfer predicates like *enviar* 'send' in (33). At least since Masullo (1992), it is widely accepted that there is a correlation between clitic doubling and the category of the argument interpreted as the recipient: if there is no doubling, the constituent is a PP, e.g., (33a); if there is doubling, the constituent is an NP marked as dative, e.g., (33b).

(33)   a. El estado francés envió una estatua [$_{\text{PP}}$ a la ciudad de Nueva York].
           The state French sent a statue A the city of New York
           'The French State sent a statue to the city of New York.'
        b. El estado francés le$_{\langle\text{DAT}\rangle}$ envió una estatua [$_{\text{NP}}$ a la ciudad de Nueva
           The state French DAT.3SG sent a statue A the city of New
           York]$_{\text{DAT}}$.
           York
           'The French State sent a statue to the City of New York.'

If the sentences in (32) and (33a) are combined into one by using a free relative structure headed by an *a*-form, the result is acceptable: as the representation in (34) shows, both the matrix and the embedded verbs require a PP.

(34)   [REL [PP A donde] fue⟨PP⟩ Cosmo], el   estado francés envió⟨PP⟩ una estatua.
              A where   went   Cosmo the state French sent   a   statue
              'The French State sent a statue where(ever) Cosmo went.'

However, the sentences in (32) and (33b) cannot be combined in the same way, as (35) shows. This is because the matrix clitic *le* requires a dative NP, while the embedded verb *fue* 'went' requires a PP. There is, therefore, a categorial mismatch. Crucially, since the preposition *a* and the case marker *a* are not syncretic, the mismatch cannot be repaired.[11]

(35)   *[REL [PP A donde] fue⟨PP⟩ Cosmo], el   estado francés le⟨DAT⟩   envió una estatua.
               A where went   Cosmo the state French DAT.3SG sent a   statue
               'The French State sent a statue where(ever) Cosmo went.'

In sum, the examples discussed throughout this section show that (i) the Spanish grammar recognizes that the preposition *a* and the case-marking *a*-forms are underlyingly distinct syntactic objects, no matter their exponents coincide, while (ii) the *a*-forms corresponding to DOM and dative are equivalent for the purposes of clitic doubling in contexts of free relatives. The next section sketches an analysis of the latter phenomenon.

4   Dealing with syncretism

The sketchy analysis in this section follows Zdrojewski's (2013) and Bárány's (2018) treatments of DOM-dative syncretism. The key idea that will be exploited to explain its repairing effect in sentences like (29), (30) and (31) is that case values are not linguistic primitives, but can be decomposed on minimal features (e.g., Halle 1997, McFadden 2004). The featural composition that will be assumed for accusative and dative is taken from McFadden (2004).[12]

(36)   a. *Accusative* = {[CASE], [INFERIOR]}
        b. *Dative* = {[CASE], [INFERIOR], [OBLIQUE]}

If the featural content of accusative and dative case-marking goes according to (36), the connectivity requirements on CLLD must make reference to these primitives and not to their convenient "abbreviations" *accusative* and *dative*. Under this assumption, the case mismatches in the examples in (29), (30) and (31) simply disappear, as accusative and dative are no longer absolutely distinct values, but are composed by some overlapping features.

Take the sentence in (29). As shown in (37a), both the matrix and embedded clitics find features matching their own in the wh-phrase, i.e., the dative clitic *le* manages to match its [CASE], [INFERIOR] and [OBLIQUE] features with those in the wh-phrase, while the accusative clitic *lo* matches its [CASE] and [INFERIOR] features. Basically the same happens with respect to the sentence in (30), as sketched in (37b); there is only one difference: in this case, it is the embedded verb *insulté* 'insulted' that requires an accusative complement, i.e., an element

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[11]Notice that the sentence in (35) is acceptable under the interpretation that the recipient of the statue is Cosmo himself, and not the place where he is at.

[12]According to McFadden (2004), the feature [CASE] allows to signal that an element is case-marked. Therefore, it is part of every single case value.

carrying [CASE] and [INFERIOR] features, a need that can be satisfied by the wh-phrase. Finally, the sentence in (31), as sketched in (37c), replicates the same matching pattern with the clitics in inverted positions, i.e., the dative appears within the embedded clause while the accusative is at the matrix level.[13]

(37)   a. $[_{\text{REL}}$ wh-phrase$_{\{[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}], [\text{OBL.}]\}}$ ⋯ lo$_{\langle[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}]\rangle}$] ⋯ le$_{\langle[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}], [\text{OBL.}]\rangle}$ cf. (29)

        b. $[_{\text{REL}}$ wh-phrase$_{\{[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}], [\text{OBL.}]\}}$ ⋯ V$_{\langle[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}]\rangle}$] ⋯ le$_{\langle[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}], [\text{OBL.}]\rangle}$ cf. (30)

        c. $[_{\text{REL}}$ wh-phrase$_{\{[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}], [\text{OBL.}]\}}$ ⋯ le$_{\langle[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}], [\text{OBL.}]\rangle}$] ⋯ lo$_{\langle[\text{CASE}], [\text{INF.}]\rangle}$ cf. (31)

By adopting the feature composition of accusative and dative in (36), the syncretism phenomenon can be captured by employing a single spell-out rule. The intuition is that the exponent /a/ realizes the combination of the features [CASE] and [INFERIOR], so it corresponds to both accusative and dative cases.

(38)   Spell-out rule
      $\{[\text{CASE}], [\text{INFERIOR}]\} \longrightarrow$ /a/

If /a/ is the exponent corresponding to accusative case in Spanish, it remains to explain why direct objects do not receive this mark, e.g., (39).

(39)   Cosmo vio $[_{\text{DO}}$ la   película].
      Cosmo saw   the movie
      'Cosmo saw the movie.'

Following López (2012), it is assumed that direct objects without DOM are incorporated into the verb, while only those direct objects headed by an *a*-form truly receive accusative case.

5 Concluding remarks

In Spanish, the form /a/ can be taken to function as a DOM marker, a dative marker, or a directional preposition. While it could be possible that this homophony is (synchronically) accidental, this could also be a case of systematic syncretism, i.e., principles of the Spanish grammar enforce employing the same form for different grammatical values.

This paper has suggested that the repairing effect that syncretism exhibits with respect to feature mismatches in free relatives can be used as a diagnosis to settle the issue. Indeed, by combining CLLD and free relative constructions, it is attested that the mismatch between DOM and dative still produces grammatical sentences. This shows that DOM and dative are syncretic categories in Spanish. On the contrary, the preposition *a* does not repair mismatches, so it must be considered a mere homophone of the *a*-forms that mark case.

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[13]A potential drawback of this analysis is that it seemingly predicts the grammaticality of cases as (20c), i.e., since the features of the accusative clitic *la* ([CASE] and [INFERIOR]) match those in the dislocated indirect object *a Eliana* ([CASE], [INFERIOR], and [OBLIQUE]), this sentence would be wrongly expected to be acceptable. However, this problem can be elegantly avoided by noticing that the features of the clitic must also satisfy the selectional requirements of its verb (i.e., the verb needs to match the features of both its NP argument and the clitic). Concretely, the verb *di* 'gave' in (20c) requires a dative clitic with [CASE], [INFERIOR], and [OBLIQUE] features.

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