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Spanish Emphatic Possessives and Reflexivity

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Abstract: This paper studies the interpretive properties of emphatic possessives in Spanish (e.g., *El apartamento tiene su cocina y todo* ‘The flat has its own kitchen and all’), focusing on a feature that distinguishes this type of possessives from canonical prenominal possessives: their reflexive status. It is first claimed that emphatic possessives are consistently used in order to confirm and reinforce a pre-existent possession relation. Certain cases that prima facie might cast doubts on the characterization of emphatic possessives as reflexives are further addressed, showing that possessives with an emphatic meaning always behave like anaphors. The role reflexivity plays in the expression of emphasis is finally discussed, arguing that emphatic possessives belong to a group of optional non-core reflexive pronouns with an emphatic import, which also includes emphatic pronouns and the aspectual dative.

Keywords: aspectual dative, clitic-doubled ditransitives, emphatic possessives, emphatic pronouns, existentials, reflexivity

1 Introduction

Like in other Romance languages,¹ prenominal possessives can be used in Spanish with an emphatic meaning, as in the examples in (1).

- (1) a. *La casita tenía su tejado.*
the house-DIM had its roof
‘The little house had its own roof and all.’

1 E.g., Fr. *Cette maison a sa petite cuisine, sa salle à manger et tout le reste* ‘This house has its little kitchen, its dining room and everything’, It. *Dopo mangiato, mi prendo il mio caffettino* ‘I have my little cup of coffee after lunch’, Cat. *Aquest cotxe deu costar els seus diners* ‘lit. This car must cost the its money’. Emphatic possessives are also used in English, its distribution apparently being more limited than in Romance. As far as I can see, the ideas on the interpretation of Spanish emphatic possessives in this paper also apply to emphatic possessives in other Romance languages (and in English as well).

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- b. *Se levantaba temprano, se preparaba su desayuno,*
 se woke.up-3sg early se made-3sg his/her breakfast
salía a dar su paseo y se compraba su
 went.out-3sg to give his/her walk and se bought-3sg his/her
periódico.
 newspaper
 ‘He/She woke up early, made his/her breakfast, went for his/her walk and
 bought his/her newspaper.’
 (RAE-ASALE 2009: 1367)

In this paper, I will study the semantic properties of so called “emphatic possessives” in Spanish, paying special attention to a particular interpretive feature that has been mentioned in the literature but has not been fully addressed: the fact that emphatic possessives, unlike canonical prenominal possessives, are reflexive pronouns that must take their reference from an antecedent in a local domain.

Departing from the shared view that emphatic possessives can have different unrelated values, I will first claim that emphatic possessives always ratify a previously established possession relation between two entities (or between an entity and a property that characterizes it), which is thus highlighted and reinforced. I will further analyze some syntactic constructions in which emphatic possessives appear not to be reflexives at first sight, showing that possessives with an emphatic meaning do behave like anaphors (in Binding Theory terms) across-the-board. And I will finally argue that emphatic possessives are an instance of the more general use of optional non-core reflexive pronouns as a means to express emphasis.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the properties of emphatic possessives in comparison to those of canonical prenominal possessives in Spanish. Section 3 deals with the interpretation of emphatic possessives. Section 4 discusses a number of apparent counterexamples to the idea that emphatic possessives are reflexives. Section 5 explores the relation between emphasis and reflexivity. Section 6 contains the conclusions of this work.

2 Canonical and Emphatic Prenominal Possessives

Prenominal possessives in Spanish canonically express possession (2a),² and play a double role in the DP they introduce. On the one hand, they are interpreted as

2 All through this work, I will be using the term “possession” in a broad sense, thus referring not only to possession relations in the strict sense (*mi casa* ‘my house’), but also to belonging, part-whole, kinship, and attribution relations (*mi grupo* ‘my group’, *mi pierna* ‘my leg’, *mi madre* ‘my mother’, *mi*

complements of the noun, on a par with postnominal possessives or possessive phrases headed by preposition *de* ‘of’ (2b). Like postnominal lexical and phrasal possessives, prenominal possessives are therefore discriminating items that restrict the noun’s extension and can have a contrastive interpretation (2c).

- (2) a. *María ha visto su foto.*
 María has seen his/her/their picture
- b. *María ha visto la foto suya/de ella/de Ana.*
 María has seen the picture hers/of she/of Ana
- c. *María ha visto su foto, no la mía.*
 María has seen his/her/their picture, not the mine

On the other hand, canonical prenominal possessives function in current Spanish as determiners, and license a nominal expression in an argument position, so that they cannot be omitted in those structural positions in which determiners must be present (3a). Spanish canonical prenominal possessives are, in particular, definite determiners, which, like the definite article or demonstratives, identify an individual that is accessible to the speaker in the context of use, and are thus ruled out in presentational sentences that introduce a new discursive referent (3b).

- (3) a. **María ha visto foto.*
 María has seen picture
- b. **Hay su foto encima de la mesa.*
 there.is his/her/their picture on.top of the table

As shown in RAE-ASALE (2009: §18.6d) and Eguren (2018), the properties of emphatic possessives, like the ones in (4), are quite different from those of canonical prenominal possessives.³

- (4) a. *Todos los días me compro mi periódico y me tomo mi café.*
 all the days me buy.1SG my newspaper and me have my coffee
 ‘I buy my newspaper and I have my cup of coffee every day.’
- b. *El apartamento tiene su cocina y su baño.*
 the flat has its kitchen and its bathroom
 ‘The flat has its corresponding kitchen and bathroom.’
- c. *Mi coche tiene sus años.*
 my car has its years
 ‘My car is quite old.’

peso ‘my weight’), as well as those holding between a deverbal noun and its arguments (*mi muerte* ‘my death’), among others.

3 On emphatic possessives in Spanish, see Fernández Ramírez (1987: 91), Picallo and Rigau (1999: 984, 2017: 272–273), RAE-ASALE (2009: §18.6b–d), and Eguren (2018).

Emphatic possessives first differ from canonical prenominal possessives in that they do not properly express possession: in (4a), it cannot be understood that I buy a newspaper that I own, and in (4b) and (4c) possession is already conveyed by means of the verb *tener* ‘to have’. Second, emphatic possessives are not interpreted as noun modifiers. This is shown by the fact that nominal expressions with an emphatic possessive do not correspond to DPs with a postnominal possessive: in (4a), for instance, *mi periódico* ‘my newspaper’, cannot be rephrased as *el periódico mío* ‘lit. the newspaper mine’. Therefore, unlike canonical prenominal possessives, possessives with an emphatic meaning are non-discriminating and non-contrastive: in (4b), to offer an example, *su cocina* does not identify a particular kitchen as opposed to other kitchens.⁴ Third, as illustrated in (5), emphatic possessives are used instead of an article, or can be omitted, without altering the descriptive content of the DP.

- (5) a. *Todos los días me compro el periódico y me tomo un café.*
 all the days me buy.1SG the newspaper and me have a coffee
 ‘I buy the newspaper and I have a cup of coffee every day.’
- b. *El apartamento tiene cocina y baño.*
 the flat has kitchen and bathroom
 ‘The flat has a kitchen and a bathroom.’
- c. *Mi coche tiene años.*
 my car has years
 ‘My car is quite old.’

And fourth, in most cases, emphatic possessives are not definite determiners: they can replace the indefinite article (*un café* > *mi café* in (4a)–(5a)), they combine with bare singular and plural nouns (5b,c), which are non-specific, and they occur with predicates, like the verb *tener* ‘to have’ (4b,c), that give rise to a definiteness effect (**El apartamento tiene la cocina* ‘The flat has the kitchen’).

As indicated in RAE-ASALE (2009: §18.6b–c) for Spanish and in Brucart (2002: 1509) for Catalan, another difference between emphatic possessives and canonical prenominal possessives is the fact that emphatic possessives are reflexive pronouns. This is illustrated in (6). In (6a), the emphatic possessive is referentially dependent on the sentential subject. In (6b), the possessive does not have an antecedent, and can only be interpreted as a canonical non-emphatic possessive.

⁴ A structural analysis of Spanish emphatic possessives can be found in Eguren (2018) that captures the fact that possessives of this type are not interpreted as complements of the noun. This author proposes that emphatic possessives are directly merged in the positions where they are pronounced, in contrast to canonical prenominal possessives, which originate in the positions where possessive nominal modifiers are generated within the NP domain and then move to the DP domain (Bernstein 2005; Brucart 1994; Cardinaletti 1998; Picallo 1994). See Eguren’s paper for details.

- (6) a. *Juan también tiene sus problemas.*
 Juan also has his problems
 ‘Juan has his own problems too.’
- b. *Sus problemas agobian a Juan.*
 his problems overwhelm to Juan
 ‘His problems overwhelm Juan.’

In Section 4, I will analyze some constructions with an emphatic possessive that apparently challenge the observation that emphatic possessives are (always) reflexive pronouns. But, before taking up this task, I will first deal with the semantic interpretation of emphatic possessives, which, as we know, do not have a true possessive meaning.

3 The Interpretation of Emphatic Possessives

Spanish emphatic possessives have been assigned three different main values in the literature (Eguren 2018; Picallo and Rigau 1999, 2017; RAE-ASALE 2009). It has first been said that possessives of this type are used in the description of customary or stereotypical situations that characterize an individual, as in the examples in (7).

- (7) a. *Todos los días me compro mi periódico.*
 all the days me buy.1SG my newspaper
- b. *Juan se toma sus cervezas antes de comer.*
 Juan se has-3SG his beers before of lunch
- c. *Todas las mañanas cojo mi autobús para ir a trabajar.*
 all the mornings take.1SG my bus for go to work

It has also been stated that speakers make use of emphatic possessives to indicate that the referent of the nominal expression they introduce is, in their view, an inherent or typical part of its antecedent, as in (8).

- (8) a. *El apartamento tiene su cocina y su baño.*
 the flat has its kitchen and its bathroom
- b. *Los invitados llevaban su traje y su corbata.*
 the guests were wearing their suit and their tie
- c. *La propuesta tiene sus problemas.*
 the proposal has its problems

And it has finally been argued that emphatic possessives can sometimes have a quantitative interpretation, as in the sentences with bare plurals in (9), replacing a proportional existential quantifier like *muchos* ‘many/a lot’ in this case (i.e., *Mi coche tiene sus años* = ‘Mi coche tiene muchos años’).

- (9) a. *Mi coche tiene sus años.*
 my car has its years
 b. *El piano pesa sus kilos.*
 the piano weighs its kilos
 c. *La película dura sus horas.*
 the film lasts its hours

Departing from this common approach, I would like to claim that emphatic possessives have a single core value: they always ratify a possession relation, which is thus highlighted and reinforced. In my view, this is clearly so in contexts like those illustrated in (7) and (8): in both cases, the possessive confirms (and intensifies) a possession relation between two entities, which is either entailed in sentences that describe habitual events, like those in (7),⁵ or lexically expressed by means of verbs like *tener* ‘to have’ or *llevar* ‘to wear’, as in (8).

The idea that emphatic possessives have a ratifying meaning also applies to the examples in (9) if these sentences are analyzed as in (10).

- (10) a. *Mi coche tiene sus ∅ años.*
 my car has its ∅ years
 b. *El piano pesa sus ∅ kilos.*
 the piano weighs its ∅ kilos

In (10), the bare plurals are taken to have a null weak quantifier denoting an amount that is above a standard of comparison (i.e., *Mi coche tiene años* = ‘Mi coche tiene muchos años’). The possessive in (9) does not thus stand in place of a proportional quantifier like *muchos*. This insight is corroborated by the fact that an emphatic possessive can precede an overtly quantified bare plural.

- (11) a. *Mi coche tiene sus muchos años.*
 my car has its many years
 b. *El piano pesa sus cien kilos.*
 the piano weighs its one hundred kilos

Under the analysis in (10), the emphatic possessives in (9) do not then have a quantitative interpretation, but rather ratify (and reinforce) an attributive possession relation between an entity and a quantified property that characterizes it.

⁵ The sentences in (7) can be used in past perfective tense: *Ayer me compré mi periódico y me tomé mis cervencitas* lit. Yesterday I dat bought my newspaper and took my beers-DIM (said in a context where it is known that the speaker buys a newspaper and takes a few beers every day). A reviewer points out that the fact that we see emphatic possessives with episodic sentences indicates that it is not the characterizing (generic/habitual) nature of the proposition that really licenses the emphatic possessive but rather the understood relation between a possessor and a possessee.

Together with their core ratifying value, emphatic possessives often evaluate a possession relation. The additional evaluative import of emphatic possessives, which has different nuances, becomes apparent when they co-occur with other evaluative items, as in the examples in (12).

- (12) a. *Todos los días me tomo mis cervecitas.*
 all the days me have.1SG my beers-DIM
- b. *El chalet tiene su piscina y todo.*
 the villa has its swimming pool and all
- c. *El edificio tiene sus buenos doscientos años.*
 the building has its good two hundred years

In (12a), the presence of diminutive morphology in the possessed noun in combination with an emphatic possessive indicates that there is, under the speaker's view, a close relation between the two members of the possession relation. In (12b), the speaker uses the emphatic possessive and the expression *y todo* 'and all' to express that the entity at hand does have something that she thinks it should have. And in (12c), the appreciative adjective *bueno* 'good', which is sensitive to the presence of the possessive (**El edificio tiene buenos doscientos años*), is optionally added to confirm that, by using the emphatic possessive, the speaker evaluates the attribution of a particular age to the subject, considering, for instance, that, in her opinion, the building is quite old (for a building).

In this section, I have tried to show that Spanish emphatic possessives always ratify a pre-existent possession relation.⁶ In the following section, I will address certain cases that *prima facie* challenge both this idea and the observation that emphatic possessives are reflexive pronouns.

4 Emphatic Possessives and Reflexivity

4.1 (Non)-Canonical Prenominal Possessives and Binding

As is well known, prenominal possessives canonically behave, in Binding Theory terms (14)–(17), like both anaphors (i.e., reflexives) and pronominals in Spanish. They can thus be bound locally and also non locally, as in (13): in this complex sentence, the

⁶ As mentioned by the two reviewers, the possessive that replaces the definite article in the external possession construction with subjects and datives in colloquial Spanish (*Pedro levanto la/su mano* lit. Pedro raised the/his hand, *A Pedro le duele la/su cabeza* lit. to Pedro dat hurts the/his head) has the properties of emphatic possessives: this prenominal possessive is also a reflexive pronoun that is optionally used to confirm a possession relation, indicating that there is a close relation between the possessor and the possessum (on this construction see López Inzunza 2017).

possessive can be referentially dependent on either Pedro or Juan (and it can refer to a contextually determined different person as well).

- (13) *Juan_i piensa que Pedro_j quiere a su_{i/j/k} perro.*
 ‘Juan thinks that Pedro loves his dog.’

- (14) *Canonical Binding Theory* (Chomsky 1981)

- a. *An anaphor is bound in its governing category.*
 b. *A pronominal is free in its governing category.*

- (15) *The governing category for an element is the domain of its nearest subject.*
 (Reuland 2018: 82)

- (16) *X binds Y (within domain D) iff X c-commands Y and Y is anaphorically related to X.*

- (17) *A c-commands B iff A does not dominate B and A’s mother dominates B.*

As mentioned in Section 2, in contrast to canonical pronominal possessives, emphatic possessives behave like anaphors: i.e., for the possessive to have an emphatic interpretation in the sentence in (18), it cannot refer directly to an individual in the external world, and it must take its reference from the subject of the embedded clause.

- (18) *Juan dice que Pedro_i tiene sus_i problemas.*
 Juan says that Pedro has his problems

As in (18), the emphatic possessives in all the examples in the previous sections appear in object position and have the subject of the sentence they are included in as their antecedent:

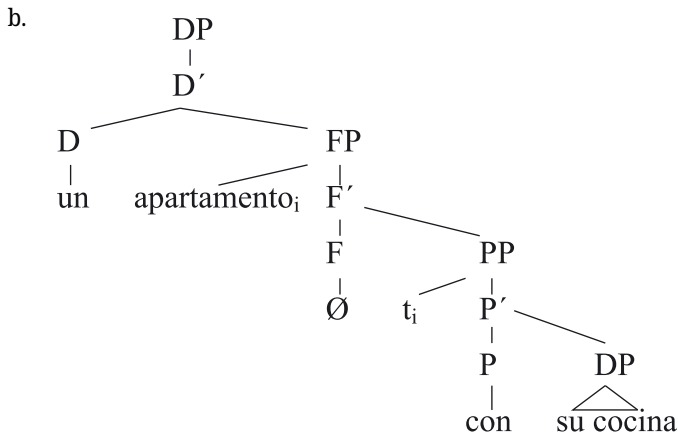
- (19) a. *Todos los días Juan_i se compra su_i periódico.*
 all the days Juan se buys his newspaper
 b. *El apartamento_i tiene su_i cocina.*
 the flat has its kitchen
 c. *Mi coche_i tiene sus_i años.*
 my car has its years

Emphatic possessives also occur, however, in the complement position of the possessive preposition *con* ‘with’, as in the CREA and CORPES examples in (20), and, in this case, they are not bound by the sentential subject.

- (20) a. *Vientian es una ciudad “campestre”, de casas bajas de una*
 Vientian is a city rural, of houses low of one
o dos plantas con su correspondiente huerto.
 or two floors with its corresponding orchard
- b. *Se le ocurrió construir para el pobre viejo una suerte de caseta*
 se him occurred to build for the poor old man a sort of hut
de contrachapado, con su techo y todo.
 of plywood with its roof and all

It can be easily shown that emphatic possessives are reflexive pronouns also in the construction in (20) if we adopt the analysis of *con*-PPs proposed in Roca (1996), which is represented in (21b).

- (21) a. *Me he comprado un apartamento con su cocina*
 me have.1sg bought a flat with its kitchen
y su baño.
 and its bathroom



The analysis in (21) combines Kayne (1994)'s idea that PPs do not enter into a head-complement relation with the noun they modify and the view in Hale and Keyser (1997) that the lexical category P selects both a specifier and a complement. Under these assumptions, the antecedent of the possessive pronoun is first merged in the specifier position of a PP headed by *con*, which is taken to be a possessive predicate.⁷ The emphatic possessive in (21) is thus bound by the subject in [Spec, PP] within the domain of its nearest subject (the PP headed by *con*). It therefore behaves once again

⁷ As in Kayne (1994)'s raising analysis of restrictive relatives ($[_{DP} \textit{the} [_{CP} [_{NP} \textit{picture}]_i [_{C'} \textit{that} [_{IP} \textit{Bill saw } t_i]]]]$), in (21b) the determiner establishes a selectional relation with the NP in [Spec, FP].

as a reflexive pronoun, ratifying (and reinforcing) a possession relation that is lexically expressed by means of the possessive preposition *con*.

As illustrated in (22), emphatic possessives can also be found in Spanish in two other syntactic constructions, which have not been discussed so far in this respect: clitic-doubled ditransitives (22a) and *haber*-existentials (22b).⁸

- (22) a. *Le echamos a la sopa su sal.*
 CL put.1PL.PAST to the soup its salt
 b. *En el aula hay sus pupitres y su pizarra.*
 in the classroom there is its desks and its blackboard

These cases are at first sight problematic for the characterization of emphatic possessives as ratifying reflexive pronouns: it is not evident, on the one hand, that the possessives in (22) confirm a possession relation; on the other hand, in (22a) the possessive takes its reference from an indirect object (and not from a subject) and, in (22b), it apparently lacks an antecedent.

I will next analyze the properties of emphatic possessives in clitic-doubled ditransitives and *haber*-existentials, showing that these forms are reflexive pronouns that ratify a possession relation also in these two cases.

4.2 Clitic-Doubled Ditransitives

As I have just pointed out, emphatic possessives can occur in clitic-doubled ditransitives in Spanish, as in the constructed examples in (23) and the COSER examples in (24), taken from de Benito Moreno (2018).

- (23) a. *Todos los años le regalo a mi padre su corbata y su pipa.*
 all the years CL buy.1SG to my father his tie and his pipe
 b. *Le puso a la muñeca su vestido y sus zapatos.*
 CL put.3SG.PAST to the doll its dress-DIM and its shoes-DIM
- (24) a. *Pa aliñarla ... se le echa hierbabuena, ajo y su sa.*
 for to dress.it se CL put mint garlic and its salt
 b. *[...] ese yo le preparaba por la mañana su tortillita.*
 that one I CL prepared in the morning his omelet-DIM

In this subsection, I will show that emphatic possessives are reflexive pronouns in the construction in (23)–(24), making use of the well-known and widely

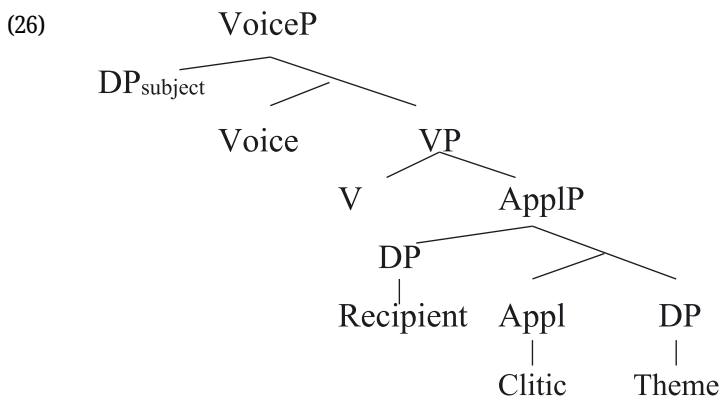
⁸ Note that the possessive in the construction in (22b) must be emphatic, given that canonical pronominal possessives, which are definite determiners, cannot occur in presentational sentences such as *haber*-existentials in Spanish: e.g., **En el aula hay mis alumnos* ‘There are my students in the classroom’ (see Section 2).

accepted analysis of Spanish clitic-doubled ditransitives proposed in Cuervo (2003).

Cuervo bases her proposal on the observation by Demonte (1995) that the Spanish clitic-doubled ditransitive construction shares the fundamental syntactic properties of the English double object construction (DOC) (e.g., *Peter gave Mary a book*), in particular the fact that, in both constructions, the recipient is structurally higher than the theme. Evidence for this fact comes from binding data: as can be seen in the examples of clitic-doubled ditransitives in (25) (taken from Demonte 1995), the clitic doubled dative can bind either an anaphor or a pronominal variable in the direct object.

- (25) a. *El tratamiento psicoanalítico le devolvió la estampa de sí misma a María.*
 the therapy psychoanalytic CL gave back the steam of herself to María
 b. *La profesora le pasó a limpio su dibujo a cada niño.*
 the teacher-FEM CL gave back-cleared his drawing to each child
 ‘The teacher gave each child back his/her cleared drawing.’

With this in mind, Cuervo (2003) assumes Pylkkänen (2002)’s analysis of the English DOC as a low applicative construction that is merged below the verb, and extends it to the Spanish clitic-doubled ditransitive construction. Under Cuervo’s analysis, which is depicted in (26), the dative argument is not an argument of the verb, but is introduced by an applicative head that licenses it in its specifier and relates it to the theme object in complement position. In the structure in (26), the recipient thus asymmetrically c-commands the theme DP.⁹



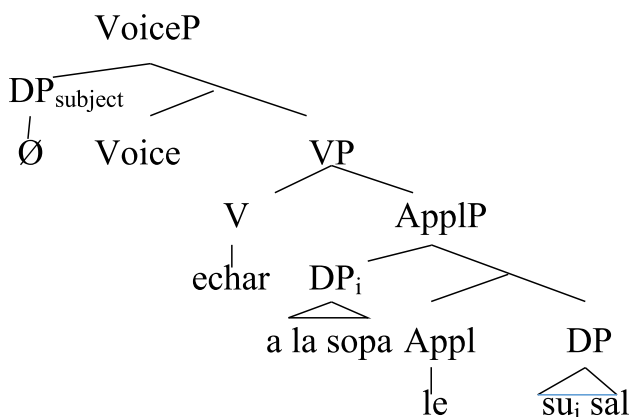
⁹ In (26), the dative DP can be null, the dative clitic adjoins to [V+Voice+T], and the neutral word order Accusative > Dative is derived by movement. For a different previous analysis of clitic-doubled ditransitives in Spanish, in which the indirect object also asymmetrically c-commands the direct object, see Demonte (1995).

As can also be observed in (26), Cuervo holds that, in Spanish, the dative clitic is merged as the head of the applicative phrase and spells out the person and number features of the argument it licenses in Spec position, to which it assigns inherent dative case. She further argues that the element *a* that precedes the dative argument is a Case marker, rather than a preposition, so that clitic doubled dative arguments are DPs, and not PPs.¹⁰

Adopting Cuervo's analysis, a clitic-doubled ditransitive with an emphatic possessive in direct object position like the one in (27a) would have the structure in (27b).¹¹

(27) a. *Le echamos a la sopa su sal.*
 CL put.1PL.PAST to the soup its salt

b.



In (27b), the possessive is referentially dependent on the dative DP, which c-commands it. The dative DP therefore binds the emphatic possessive, but it is not a subject: in Cuervo's (and Pylkkänen's) view, the applicative head in the English DOC and the Spanish clitic-doubled ditransitive construction is, as we know, an argument introducing head, and not a predicate that projects a predicative phrase.¹² The fact that the dative DP is not a subject does not prevent, however, the emphatic possessive from being a reflexive: as pointed out in Chomsky (1986: 166), "the antecedent of an anaphor need not be a subject, although it cannot be outside the domain of a subject." Chomsky illustrates his remark with the English examples in (28).

¹⁰ For arguments in favor of this claim see Cuervo (2003).

¹¹ Emphatic possessives can also appear with DO in the canonical position to the left of the dative IO as in *Le echamos su sal a la sopa*. This shows that linear order does not matter for purposes of establishing the binder-bindee relation between the IO and the DO.

¹² In the analysis of the English DOC in Larson (1988) and Bowers (1993), the indirect object is taken to be an inner or secondary subject.

- (28) a. *I told them_i about [each other]_i.*
 b. **I told them_i that Bill liked [each other]_i.*

As in the well-formed sentence in (28a), the antecedent of the emphatic possessive in (27) is not a subject, but the emphatic possessive is bound in the domain of its nearest c-commanding subject: the DP in [Spec, VoiceP]. It can thus be safely concluded that the emphatic possessive in the clitic-doubled ditransitive construction is a reflexive pronoun.

Additional evidence in favor of the reflexive nature of emphatic possessives comes from the fact that these items are excluded in the so-called “prepositional ditransitive construction,” in which the prepositional argument is not doubled by a clitic and the theme object asymmetrically c-commands the DP complement of the preposition (see Cuervo 2003; Demonte 1995):¹³ the example in (29a) is anomalous because the possessives in direct object position can only be interpreted as canonical possessives (and we do not usually give as a present something that the recipient already owns); and the only possible interpretation in (29b) is that in which the possessive is also a canonical possessive (i.e., ‘we put the soup’s salt in the soup’).

- (29) a. *#Todos los años regalo su corbata y su pipa a mi padre.*
 all the years buy.1SG his tie and his pipe to my father
 b. *Echamos su sal en la sopa.*
 put.1PL.PAST its salt in the soup

As for the ratifying value of the emphatic possessive in clitic-doubled ditransitives, Demonte (1995) claims that this construction obeys a possession restriction, whereby the dative is interpreted as affected, in the sense that it is taken to be the possessor of the theme object. This is shown in (30) (the examples and judgments are hers): the contrast in grammaticality in these two sentences is due, in Demonte’s view, to the fact that, for general knowledge reasons, a tablecloth appears to be a part of a table, whereas the dishes do not.

- (30) a. *Le puse el mantel a la mesa.*
 CL put.1SG.PAST the table cloth to the table
 ‘I put the table cloth on the table.’
 b. **Le puse los platos a la mesa.*
 CL put.1SG.PAST the dishes to the table
 ‘I put the dishes on the table.’

Cuervo (2003) argues, on her part, that, like the English DOC (see Pylkkänen 2002), the Spanish clitic-doubled ditransitive construction expresses a relation of transfer of

¹³ The ideas in Demonte (1995) and Cuervo (2003) are questioned in Pineda (2020), who claims that in Spanish ditransitives, at least for some speakers, c-command relations between the DO and the IO are always symmetrical, regardless of clitic doubling. My judgements on c-command data in Spanish ditransitives with and without a clitic match those of Demonte and Cuervo.

possession, by which the dative argument gets (or loses) something as a result of the event.¹⁴ For Cuervo (and Pylkkänen), transfer of possession is not structurally encoded, but entailed. Under the assumption that clitic-doubled ditransitives denote an entailed transfer-of-possession relation, the emphatic possessive does then confirm a previously established possession relation between two individuals in this construction as well.

4.3 Existentials

As illustrated in the CREA examples in (31), and in the COSER examples in (32) (from de Benito Moreno 2018), emphatic possessives can also appear in *haber*-existentials in Spanish.¹⁵

- (31) a. [...] *en esto, como en todas las cosas, había sus excepciones.*
 in this as in all the things there was its exceptions
 b. [...] *en la política también hay sus niveles de discreción [...]*
 in the politics also there is its levels of discretion
 c. [...] *en la provincia de Buenos Aires, como en todas partes,*
 in the province of Buenos Aires, as in all parts
 hay sus modismos muy especiales.
 there is its idioms very special
- (32) a. [...] *en la Semana Santa también había sus procesiones [...].*
 in the Holy Week also there was its processions
 b. *Normalmente [...] en todos los pueblos había sus médicos.*
 usually in all the villages there was their doctors
 c. *Había su carretero en el pueblo.*
 there was its carter in the village

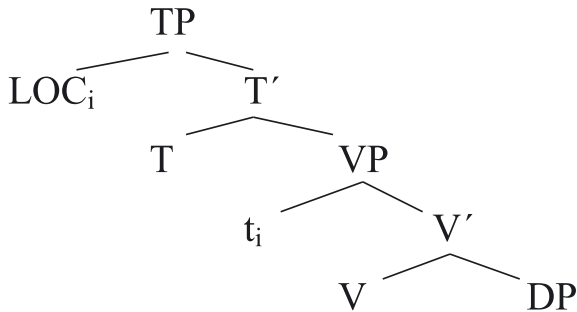
It is not obvious that the emphatic possessive is a reflexive in this construction. There are, however, analyses of impersonal sentences with *haber* in which the locative XP

14 Transfer of possession is not required with some verbs (e.g., *I sent/wrote Bill a letter but he never got it*). Nevertheless, as Cuervo (2003: 87) points out, “in cases when there is a possibility of alternation between the DOC and the PP variants, the DOC seems to favor a successful transfer of possession.” An idea in the same line can be found in Demonte (1995: 13): “The construction with the clitic has an interpretation in which the beneficiary seems to play a more important role in the transfer of what is created or obtained.”

15 As shown in (31)–(32), in this construction the locative XP usually appears in initial position, but it can also follow the theme DP, as in (32c). I assume that in this case there is right dislocation and the c-command relation between the locative and the theme (see below) is not disturbed.

locally c-commands the DP theme and thus can be a potential binder of an anaphor, like the one proposed by Fernández-Soriano (1999), which is depicted in (33).

(33)



As represented in (33), Fernández-Soriano proposes that a locative argument, which merges in [Spec, VP] (and can be null), is the subject of Spanish *haber*-existentials, so that, in this construction, a state is predicated of a place. In (33), the locative further moves to [Spec, TP] to satisfy the EPP feature in T (cf. Chomsky 1998).¹⁶ She also claims that the locative phrase in (33) is not a regular PP, but a (quirky) case-marked DP. Evidence for this view is, for instance, the fact that a quantifier in the locative can bind a variable in the theme DP, as in (34) (note that this fact also shows that the locative c-commands the theme).¹⁷

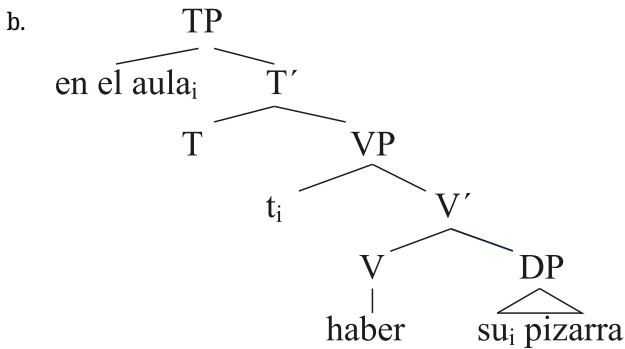
- (34) *En cada aula hay una pizarra.*
 in each classroom there is a blackboard

Let us now see what happens when an emphatic possessive is added to the nominal expression in theme position in the structure in (33), as in (35).

- (35) a. *En el aula hay su pizarra y todo.*
 in the classroom there is its blackboard and all

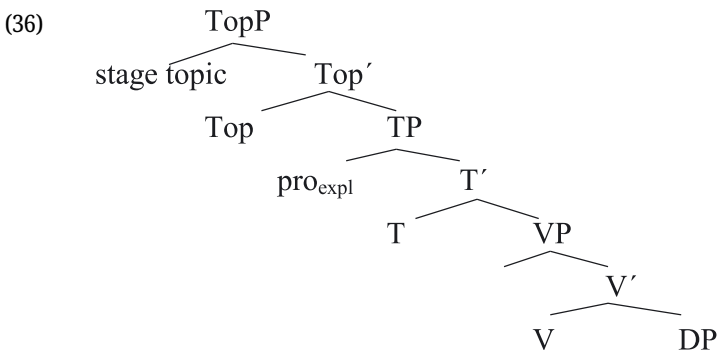
¹⁶ Fernández-Soriano (1999) analyzes impersonal sentence with eventive predicates in Spanish, like meteorological verbs, along the same lines, arguing that the locative is generated in the specifier of an Event Phrase (EvP) in this case (she leaves open the possibility that an EvP projects with stative impersonal verbs as well). This author bases her claim that a locative behaves as a subject in both eventive and stative impersonal sentences in Spanish on data regarding word order, idiom formation, raising, extraction from coordinate structures, and nominalization.

¹⁷ Together with binding data, Fernández-Soriano gives floating quantifiers data and the existence of restrictions on the choice for the preposition as evidence for the idea that the preposition in the locative in (33) is not the head of a PP, but a (quirky) Case marker.



In the configuration above, the emphatic possessive takes the DP in the locative in [Spec, VP], which c-commands-it, as its antecedent, thus behaving once again as an anaphor that is bound in its governing category (the VP).

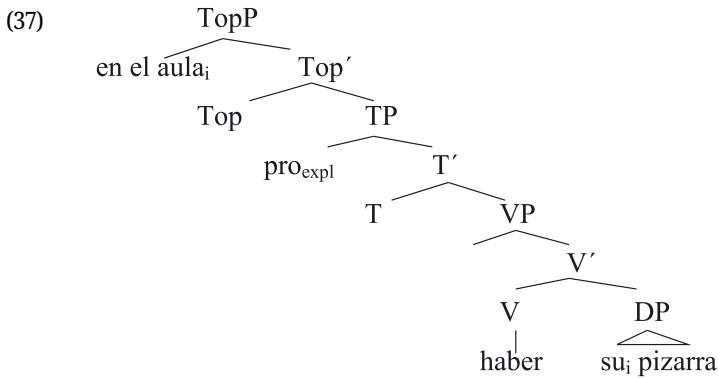
A different analysis of impersonal sentences with *haber* in Spanish is presented in Sheehan (2006), by which, in this construction, [Spec, TP] is occupied by a covert expletive pronoun (pro_{expl}), which is the null counterpart of expletive *there* in English, and satisfies the EPP feature of T (see also Bosque and Gutiérrez-Rexach 2009: 352–359). As shown in (36), Sheehan’s view on the nature of the syntactic subject in *haber*-existentials can be complemented with the idea in Erteschik-Shir (1997: 29, 224) that existential sentences take a stage topic that is generated in the specifier position of a Topic Phrase (TopP).



As indicated in Erteschik-Shir (1997, 2007), stage topics denote the spatio-temporal settings of the utterance, and they may be either overt locative or temporal adverbials and PPs or contextually implied (i.e., covert). Within this framework, Erteschik-Shir takes existential sentences to be focused events that are predicated of a stage

topic. A similar approach can be found in Francez (2007, 2009), who considers that the function of an existential sentence is to convey information about a “contextual domain.” For this author, contextual domains (or stage topics) are, in this sense, the semantic subjects of existentials.

If we adopt the conceivable analysis of Spanish existentials in (36), and apply it to existential sentences containing an emphatic possessive, as in (37), the DP in the locative phrase, which is now a stage topic in [Spec, TopP], also c-commands (and binds) the emphatic possessive in theme position (remember that, according to Fernández-Soriano (1999), the preposition in the locative is a quirky Case marker, and does not head a PP). Assuming that expletive *pro*, lacking a semantic interpretation, does not count as a subject for binding, it could thus be stated that, in the structure in (37), the possessive is an anaphor that is bound in the domain of its nearest (semantic) subject: the Topic Phrase.¹⁸



In addition to being a reflexive pronoun, it can also be argued that, just like in the constructions that have been previously addressed in this paper, the emphatic possessive ratifies a possession relation in *haber*-existentials as well. As pointed out in Francez (2007), existential sentences are closely related to possessive constructions, given that existentials can express part-whole or constitution relations, which can be considered as types of possession: putting it in his own words, there is “a close affinity between existentials and possessives, since the basic relation expressed in an existential is one of containment, which can naturally be construed as a possessive

¹⁸ Another analysis of *haber*-existentials can be further envisaged in which the locative merges as a subject in [Spec, VP], then moves to [Spec, TP] to satisfy the EPP feature in T, as in Fernández-Soriano (1999), and finally lands in [Spec, TopP], where it also functions as a stage topic. Under this analysis, which does not make use of a null expletive (a notion that is problematic within the Minimalist framework), the emphatic possessive is also a reflexive.

relation” (Francez 2007: 128).¹⁹ In his view, existential sentences thus entail a possessive relation, as shown by the fact that they can often be paraphrased using the verb *to have* in English, as in the examples in (38)–(39), taken from Francez (2007), in which wardens and residents are taken to be constituent parts of prisons and houses, respectively.

- (38) a. *There are no wardens in this prison.*
 b. *There are some residents in this house.*

- (39) a. *This prison has no wardens.*
 b. *This house has some residents.*

As can be checked, all the Spanish examples with *haber*-existentials containing an emphatic possessive presented in this subsection can be equally paraphrased using the verb *tener*. Take, for instance, the example in (35a), repeated in (40a), which can be reformulated as a possessive sentence with *tener*, as in (40b).

- (40) a. *En el aula hay su pizarra y todo.*
 in the classroom there is its blackboard and all
 b. *El aula tiene su pizarra y todo.*
 the classroom has its blackboard and all

The considerations above lead me to conclude that, as in clitic-doubled ditransitives, also in existential sentences the emphatic possessive ratifies an entailed possession relation between two entities.

4.4 Conclusion

In this section, I have examined two Spanish constructions that can include an emphatic possessive (clitic-doubled ditransitives and impersonal sentences with *haber*), which at first sight might be taken to be problematic for the idea that emphatic possessives are reflexive pronouns, and I have demonstrated that these lexical units behave like anaphors that have an antecedent within the domain of its nearest subject also in these two cases.²⁰ I have also shown that the emphatic possessive in clitic-doubled ditransitives and *haber*-existentials reinforces a pre-existent

¹⁹ The existence of a tight link between existentials and possessives has often been outlined and discussed in the literature (see the references in Francez 2007: 54).

²⁰ The reviewers mention another two constructions that can include an emphatic possessive in Spanish: sentences with quirky dative experiencer subjects (*A Juan siempre le apetece su cafetito* lit. to Juan always fancies his coffee-DIM) and unaccusative verbs with datives (*A esta planta ya le han crecido sus flores* lit. To this plant already dat have grown its flowers). In these constructions, the dative is also above the theme, and binds the emphatic possessive.

possession relation, thus confirming the view that emphatic possessives always have a ratifying value (see Section 3).

In the next section, I will discuss the role reflexivity plays in the expression of emphasis, by reviewing the semantic and syntactic properties of two types of non-argumental reflexive pronouns in Spanish (so-called “emphatic pronouns” and the aspectual dative), which, like emphatic possessives, have an emphatic interpretation. Comparing the properties of these two types of anaphoric expressions with those of emphatic possessives will allow me to entertain the idea that emphatic possessives are just a particular case of a more general syntactic device: the use of optional non-core reflexives as a means to express emphasis.

5 Emphasis and Reflexivity

5.1 Emphatic Pronouns

Spanish emphatic pronouns, illustrated in (41), are nominative pronouns that optionally occur in a non-thematic position, together with an overt DP in the canonical subject position on which they are referentially dependent.²¹

- (41) a. *Julia telefonó ella.*
 Julia phoned she
 ‘Julia phoned herself.’
 b. *Julia lo hizo ella.*
 Julia it did she
 ‘Julia did it herself.’

Emphatic pronouns were first studied in Spanish within the generative framework in Piera (1987), who analyzed them as VP-adjuncts, and showed that these forms are syntactic anaphors on the basis of paradigms like the one below: in (42a), the canonical nominative pronoun in the embedded clause can be bound by any DP that is located outside its governing category; the emphatic pronoun in the embedded clause in the control structures in (42b–c) must, however, take its reference from its corresponding null subject (PRO).

- (42) a. *Julia_i dijo a Marta_j [que ella_{i/j} se encargaría del asunto].*
 Julia told to Marta that she se would take care of.the problem
 ‘Julia told Marta that she would take care of the problem.’

²¹ The examples in (41)–(42) and (43)–(45) are taken from Piera (1987) and Sánchez López (1996), respectively. Emphatic pronouns can be optionally followed in Spanish by the emphatic adjective *mismo* (e.g., *María telefonó ella misma* ‘Mary phoned herself’).

- b. *Julia_i prometió a Marta_j [PRO_i encargarse ella_i del asunto].*
 Julia promised to Marta PRO take care she of.the problem
 ‘Julia promised Marta to take care of the problem herself.’
- c. *Julia_i animó a Marta_j a [PRO_j encargarse ella_j del asunto].*
 Julia encouraged to Marta to PRO take care she of.the problem
 ‘Julia encouraged Marta to take care of the problem herself.’

Sánchez López (1996) adheres to the view in Piera (1987) that emphatic pronouns are VP-adjuncts that behave as anaphors, and investigates their semantic properties. She first shows that their occurrence is constrained by the aspectual properties of the predicate: as illustrated in (43), emphatic pronouns combine, for instance, with predicates expressing an accomplishment, but cannot modify predicates denoting a state.

- (43) a. *María escribió ella la novela.*
 María wrote she the novel
 ‘Mary wrote the novel herself.’
- b. **Juan sabe él que aprobará.*
 Juan knows he that will.pass

As for their emphatic import, Sánchez López argues that emphatic pronouns must be distinguished from contrastively focused pronouns. She gives as evidence for this claim the fact that ungrammatical sentences like the one in (43b) are well formed if the pronoun is pronounced with a strong accent (i.e., if a contrastive pronoun is used instead of an emphatic one), as in (44a), whereas emphatic pronouns are licensed without bearing heavy stress (43a); moreover, a sentence with an emphatic pronoun cannot be continued with a corrective sequence that refers to the subject and indicates that an alternative has been chosen within a set, discarding other alternatives (44b).

- (44) a. *Juan sabe ÉL que aprobará.*
 Juan knows he that will.pass
- b. **Julia telefoneó ella, no María.*
 Julia phoned she not María

Having shown that they are not interpreted as contrastive focus, Sánchez López (1996: 157) holds that the role of emphatic pronouns is to underline the participation of the subject in the event it is involved in. As she points out, this characterization of the emphatic import of emphatic pronouns is supported by the facts illustrated in (45): a sentence with an emphatic pronoun can be followed by a sequence like the one in (45a), and the emphatic pronoun can combine with expressions like *en persona* ‘in person’ or *personalmente* ‘personally’ (45b).

- (45) a. *Julia telefonó ella, no consintió que lo hiciese María.*
 Julia phoned she not allowed that it did María
 ‘Julia phoned herself, she did not allow María to do it.’
- b. *Juan invitó a Pedro a la fiesta él en persona.*
 Juan invited to Pedro to the party he in person
 ‘Juan invited Pedro to the party personally.’

5.2 The Aspectual Dative

The Spanish aspectual dative is a verbal clitic that is optionally added in a transitive sentence and refers to the subject, agreeing with it in person and number, as in the examples in (46). This item is thus an unselected reflexive clitic, which also differs from argumental reflexives in that it cannot be doubled by a strong anaphoric expression (e.g., *Me regalé un libro a mí mismo* ‘lit. Me bought a book to myself’ vs. **Me lave los platos a mí mismo* ‘lit. Me washed the dishes to myself’).

- (46) a. *Me lavé los platos.*
 DAT.1SG wash.1SG.PAST the dishes
 ‘I washed the dishes.’
- b. *Se comió una manzana.*
 DAT.3SG eat.3SG.PAST an apple
 ‘He eat an apple.’

The aspectual dative is so called because its occurrence depends on the aspectual properties of the verbal predicate (Armstrong 2013; de Miguel y Fernández Lagunilla 2000; RAE-ASALE 2009: §35.7x; Sánchez López 2002; Sanz 2000; Zagona 1996): as claimed in Sanz (2000), the clitic signals, in particular, that the transitive sentence is an accomplishment (47a), marking the delimitedness of the event, and does not combine with states (47b), activities (47c) or achievements (47d) (the examples are taken from Sanz’s work).

- (47) a. *Juan se leyó un libro.*
 Juan se read a book.
 ‘Juan read a book (completely).’
- b. *Juan (*se) odia las acelgas.*
 Juan se hates the chard
 ‘Juan hates chard.’
- c. *Juan (*se) condujo el coche.*
 Juan se drove the car.
 ‘Juan drove the car.’

- d. *Juan (*se) cruzó la meta el primero.*
 Juan se crossed the finish line the first
 ‘Juan was the first to cross the finish line.’

It has often been pointed out in the literature that, together with its role as an aspectual marker, the aspectual dative also has an emphatic import, which may have different values (see the references in Sánchez López 2002 and Armstrong 2013). Comparing the two sentences in (48), the emphatic interpretation of the aspectual dative is described in RAE-ASALE (2009: 2703), for instance, in the following terms: an example with the dative adds to the variant without the dative “the greater implication of the subject in the action being mentioned. With the pronoun *nos*, the sentence suggests that the reading ... implied some effort, that it meant a certain merit on the part of those who did it, or that there was something special in doing it. It also sometimes suggests that the action goes beyond something that is considered normal ...” [the translation is mine].

- (48) a. *Leímos toda la prensa.*
 read.1PL.PAST all the press
 ‘We read all the press.’
 b. *Nos leímos toda la prensa.*
 DAT.1PL read.1PL.PAST all the press
 ‘We read all the press.’

Armstrong (2013) considers in this respect that the aspectual dative has a core emphatic value in what he calls “the agentive reflexive clitic (ARC) construction” in (49), which requires an agent and imposes an aspectual restriction on the VP (only accomplishments are allowed): in Armstrong’s view, in this construction, the aspectual dative adds a (non-cancelable) conventional implicature of willful intent to the agent.²²

- (49) a. *Juan se lavó los platos.*
 Juan DAT.3SG wash.3SG.PAST the dishes
 ‘Juan washed the dishes.’

²² Armstrong (2013) analyzes the reflexive clitic in (49) as a special kind of external argument-introducing head located in vP, which in addition to introducing an agent argument also adds a set of agent-oriented conventional implicatures (other structural analyses of the Spanish aspectual dative can be found in Sanz (2000) and de Miguel and Fernández Lagunilla (2000)).

Armstrong holds that the ARC construction in (49) has to be distinguished from what he dubs “the transitive *se* clitic (TSC) construction” (e.g., *Juan se encontró a María* ‘lit. Juan se found to María’, *Me dejé las llaves en casa* ‘lit. Me left the keys at home’), in which no particular role is assigned to the subject, there are no aspectual restrictions and an implication of willful intent is not obtained. He also points out that ingestion verbs, like those in (49c,d), can take part in both ARC and TSC constructions depending on the presence of willful intent (for an analysis of the TSC construction, see Armstrong (2013) and McDonald (2017)).

- b. *María se bailó un tango.*
 María DAT.3SG dance.3SG.PAST a tango
 ‘Mary danced a tango.’
- c. *Me he leído el Quijote.*
 DAT.1SG have.1SG read el Quijote
 ‘I have read el Quijote.’
- d. *Me he bebido tres cervezas.*
 DAT.1SG have.1SG drunk three beers
 ‘I have drunk three glasses of beer.’

The idea that the aspectual dative has the effect of making an implicature of willful intent non-cancelable is in accordance, so Armstrong argues, with the fact that continuations such as *de mala gana* ‘unwillingly’ or *sin mayor interés* ‘without any concern’ are anomalous when the clitic is present.

- (50) a. *Juan lavó todos los platos, pero lo hizo de mala gana.*
 Juan washed all the dishes but it did unwillingly
 ‘Juan washed all the dishes, but he did so unwillingly.’
- b. *Juan se lavó todos los platos ... #pero lo hizo de mala gana.*
 Juan se washed all the dishes but it did unwillingly

This author also indicates that an additional meaning component conveyed by the presence of the aspectual dative is that the subject must be an individual that executes the action on her own, as shown by the contrast in (51).

- (51) a. *Juan lavó todos los platos ... bueno hizo lavarlos.*
 Juan washed all the dishes well he.made wash them
 ‘Juan washed all the dishes ... well he had them washed.’
- b. *Juan se lavó todos los platos ... #bueno, hizo lavarlos.*
 Juan se washed all the dishes well he.made wash them

Note that the emphatic import of the aspectual dative overlaps with that of emphatic pronouns in this point (see the previous subsection). This explains why sentences like the ones in (52), in which an aspectual dative and an emphatic pronoun co-occur, are odd, a fact that, to my knowledge, had not been noticed before: in these sentences, the use of an aspectual dative and an emphatic pronoun is redundant, since both emphatic devices underline the personal involvement of the subject in the event.

- (52) a. *#Juan se lavó los platos él.*
 Juan se washed the dishes he
- b. *#La niña se leyó el cuento ella.*
 the girl se read the story she

The emphatic possessive has, on its part, a different semantic import: it indicates that there is a close relation between two entities (see Section 3). There is thus no redundancy in the use of an emphatic possessive and an aspectual dative or an emphatic pronoun, and sentences like the ones in (53) are perfectly acceptable.²³

- (53) a. *María se bailó su tango en la fiesta.*
 María se danced her tango in the party
 b. *La niña escribe ella sus tres poemas todos los días.*
 the girl writes she her three poems all the days

5.3 Conclusion

If we compare the properties of emphatic pronouns and aspectual datives described in this section with the properties of emphatic possessives, it can be observed that these three types of pronominal items have a number of central features in common: first, they all behave as anaphors (in Binding Theory terms); second, they are non-core elements (emphatic pronouns and aspectual datives are non-argumental, and emphatic possessives do not make any contribution to the descriptive content of the nominal expression they introduce); third, their use is optional (in the sense that they can be omitted without leading to ungrammaticality); and forth, they all denote emphasis (emphatic possessives indicate that there is a tight link between the two members in a possession relation, and emphatic pronouns and the aspectual dative underline the personal and/or volitional involvement of the subject in the event). It can thus be concluded that emphatic possessives can be grouped together with emphatic pronouns and the aspectual dative, forming a class of optional non-core reflexive pronouns with an emphatic meaning.

6 General Conclusions

In this paper, I have analyzed the interpretive properties of emphatic possessives in Spanish, centering on their reflexive nature. I have first argued that these forms always ratify a pre-existent possession relation, which is thus highlighted and reinforced. I have further shown that emphatic possessives are reflexive pronouns in all the constructions in which they occur, including apparently problematic cases

²³ The interpretation of the possessive in the sentences in (53) as a canonical possessive has been discarded, and these sentences must be understood as having the same basic meaning as the corresponding sentences without a possessive: *María se bailó un tango en la fiesta*, *La niña escribe ella tres poemas todos los días*.

like clitic-doubled ditransitives and *haber*-existentials. And I have finally put forward the idea that emphatic possessives are an instance, alongside emphatic pronouns and the aspectual dative, of the use of optional non-core reflexive pronouns as a syntactic mechanism to express emphasis.

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