Ethical Datives, Clitic Doubling and the Theory of *pro*

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1. Introduction

Ethical datives pose a dual problem for syntactic categorization, that is, (i) their occurrence abides by different rules to those governing their morphological peers, object clitics, and (ii) they do not show a homogeneous behavior as a group, but fall under different types, which are characterized by a diverse morpho-syntactic distribution.

The purpose of this paper is three-fold. First, it determines the distribution and nature of ethical datives in Spanish.[1] Second, it posits three classes of Spanish ethical datives drawn from their different syntactic, semantic and morphological behavior. Third, it discusses the implications that clitic doubling and two specific occurrences of ethical datives have for a theory of *pro*.

This study shows that the "innocuous" deletion of the ethical dative clitic turns out to be the main property that all these ethical datives have in common. That is, all the examples with ethical dative clitics can be uttered without these clitics and the sentence will still be grammatical and preserve the same meaning. This fact supports the idea that ethical datives are adjuncts, especially if one bears in mind that, unlike what happens with optional dative arguments, the aspectual interpretation of the sentence does not vary upon the presence of absence of the ethical dative clitic. Relevantly, optionality of the clitic in argumental dative clitic doubling constructions also plays a role in the discussion put forward in this research with respect to the conceptual necessity of having a theory of *pro*. Contra Ackema (2001), Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998), Holmberg (2000) and Panagiotidis (2002) among others, this article contends that *pro* is still necessary for a uniform theory of feature checking under operation Agree (cf. Chomsky 2002). Furthermore, the positing of *pro* in canonical object positions ensures the well-formedness of the derivation by endowing argumental clitic chains with a desirable visibility for the checking of uninterpretable features and by preventing co-occurring ethical dative clitics from interfering in the probe-goal relation.

2. Toward a taxonomy of Spanish ethical dative clitics

Spanish ethical datives are rendered in the form of pronominal clitics. However, these clitics are far from exhibiting a uniform behavior, as shown in this paper. We contend that their diverse behavior stems from their non-argument status, that is, ethical datives are adjuncts and not arguments, thus, they never take part in the make up of the subcategorization frame of the verb. Still, a working three-way taxonomy of Spanish ethical dative clitics based on some properties that each of the three groups have in common will be proposed in the present research, as discussed next.

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[1] The Spanish data for this research has been drawn from the Spanish spoken in the Basque Country (Basque Spanish). Intuitions may vary for some examples in other dialects, for instance, Peruvian Spanish, as pointed out by Liliana Sanchez in the discussion period of the HLS 2007. Also, the authors have noticed that the use of ethical datives is not as frequent in Castilian Spanish as in Basque Spanish.

2.1 CLASS I

MacDonald (2004) and Nishida (1994) identify a type of clitic, generally referred to as *aspectual clitics* or *reflexive non-argumental clitics* (see example (1)). The aspectual properties of these clitics are geared on the fact that they must take a non-bare direct object. This is illustrated in the contrast between examples (1) and (2) below:

(1)   a. *Yo **me**   he   comido   toda   la sopa   para cenar*
            I   CL.DAT-me   have   eaten   all   the soup to   dine
            'I ate all the soup for dinner'

    b. ***Te***   *has   tragado   las pastillas para la   tensión*.
            CL.DAT-you have   swallowed   the pills   for   the   tension
            'You have swallowed the high blood pressure pills'

(2)   ****Me***   *he   comido   patatas*
        CL.DAT-me   have   eaten   potatoes

The examples in (3) further show that it is the ethical dative clitic in (2) that is responsible for the ban against bare objects in this construction. Spanish allows bare direct objects in other regular transitive contexts, as exemplified in (3a), or even in ditransitive structures with typical dative clitics, as in (3b):

(3)   a. H*e   comido   patatas*
           have-I   eaten   potatoes
            'I have eaten potatoes'
    b. *Le   mandé   patatas   a   un amigo*
            CL-DAT.3 sent   potatoes   to a friend
            'I sent potatoes to a friend'

Notice that in regard to the examples back in (1), although their reflexive status is given by their being correferential with the subject, they also differ from regular reflexive clitics in their inability to undergo clitic-doubling, as illustrated in the contrastive minimal pair in (4a) and (4b).

(4)   a. **Juan **se***   *ha comido   las patatas   **a sí mismo**.*
            John   CL.REFL/ASP   has eaten   the potatoes   to himself
            'Juan ate the potatoes for himself'
    b. *Juan se   ha   cortado   a sí mismo*
            John   CL.REFL   has   cut   to himself
            'John cut himself'

Crosslinguistically, the ethical dative clitic construction in (1) somehow resembles the so-called personal dative in Appalachian English, Hoosier English and other varieties of Vernacular American English (see Christian 1991), as the comparison in examples in (5) illustrate:

(5)   a. *I drank **me** a German beer*
    b. ***Me***   *bebí   una   cerveza   alemana*
            CL.REFL   drank-1ˢᵗ a   beer   german
            'I drank me a German beer'

Relevantly, in these varieties of American English, the clitic also has to be coreferential with the subject, there must be a direct object and the clitic cannot be doubled by a coreferential phrase.[2]

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[2] Far be it for us to claim that Spanish ethical dative clitics from Class I and the personal dative in Vernacular English are identical elements. There are some distributional differences between these two weak pronouns. For

2.2 CLASS II

The clitic constructions in (6) below constitute CLASS II in our taxonomy. They are characterized by the occurrence of the non-volitional *se* + **Dative clitic** amalgam (see Maldonado 1994).

(6) a. *Las   gafas   **se   me**   rompieron   esquiando*
      The   glasses   CL   CL.DAT-me   broke   skiing
      'The glasses broke on me while I was skiing'

   b. *El   coche   **se   me**   caló   en la   cuesta   de Zabalbide*[3]
      The   car   CL   CL.DAT-me   stalled   on the slope   of Zabalbide
      'The car stalled on me on the Zabalbide slope'

This class II is justified on the basis that their distribution is immune to the conditions that apply to the constructions in the data in (1). That is, they do not need a direct object, the ethical dative clitic cannot be coreferential with the nominative subject and clitic doubling is allowed, as in (7):

(7) a. *El coche   se   **me**$_i$ caló   **a mí**$_i$ en la cuesta de Zabalbide*.
      The   car   CL.REFL   CL.DAT   stalled   to me   on the slope of Zabalbide
      'The car stalled on me on the Zabalbide slope'

Although it is worth noting that the doubled NP *a mí* needs some contrastive stress, this is directly derived from the fact that *mí* is a strong pronoun, which in Spanish is always stressed. In any event, the relevant contrast still holds since clitic doubling is not allowed in the constructions in (4) (or (9) below) even if focal stress were assigned to the clitic doubled element. Moreover, if clitic doubling takes place with a nominal the stress on the doubled element is not prominent at all, as in (7b):

(7) b. *El coche   se   **le**$_i$ caló   **a Juan**$_i$ en la cuesta de Zabalbide*.
      The   car   CL.REFL   CL.DAT-me   stalled to Juan   on the slope of Zabalbide
      'The car stalled on Juan on the Zabalbide slope'

2.3 CLASS III

There is a third group of ethical dative clitics that do not fall under the distribution of the two classes posited so far. Thus, the ethical clitics in the constructions in (8) contrast with those of Class I in that they do not need to be coreferential with the subject nor require the presence of a **non-bare** object, as in (8a) and (8b) below:

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instance, the Spanish counterpart of the Vernacular English sentence '*I wrote me a letter to the president*' would be ungrammatical. However, certain crosslinguistic difference is somehow expected. It is usually the case that the semantic flavor of certain elements (causative morphemes, passive morphemes, ethical dative clitics, etc.) remains across languages, whereas their syntactic behavior differs.

[3] For the non-native speakers of the Spanish variety used in this study, the verb *calarse* 'stall' cannot have any human agent and the cause of the action is attributed to a clutch that is faded out or an idle speed that needs adjustment. It could be the case that this type of construction is related to Burzio's (1986) ergartive *se*, according to which if there is no external agentive subject, there cannot be an Accusative object, as one of the reviewers points out. However, the possibility of having this construction with a direct object such as *Juan se me olvido las llaves en el despacho* 'Juan forgot the keys for me in the office' prevents us from making any commitment in this regard. For the time being, we follow Maldonando's (1994) terminology, among others, and we refer to the whole combination of *se*+ethical dative clitic as the non-volitional dative construction.

(8) a. *A mi primo* ***me*** *lo* *llevaron* *preso* *ayer*
To mi cousin CL.DAT-me CL.ACC-it took prisoner yesterday
'My cousin was taken prisoner'

b. *Los amigos* ***me*** *hicieron* *entrevistas* *a tres* *sujetos* *para*
the friends CL.DAT-me did interviews to three subjects to
ahorrarme *tiempo*.
save CL.DAT-me time
'My friends interviewed three subjects for me so that I could save time'

These ethical dative clitics also differ from Class II in their inability to undergo doubling, as the contrast between (7a) and (9) below illustrates:

(9) **A mi primo* ***me***$_i$ *lo* *llevaron preso* ***a mí***$_i$ *ayer*
To mi cousin CL.DAT-me CL.ACC-it took prisoner for me yesterday
'My cousin was taken prisioner yesterday'

Moreover, one of the properties that make Class III stand by itself is that this type of ethical dative clitic can co-occur with an argumental dative clitic, as in (10).[4]

(10) *A mi primo* ***me*** *le* *pegaron* *una paliza* *en una fiesta*
to my cousin CL.DAT-me CL.DAT-him hit a beating at the party
'They beat my cousin up at the party'

3. On the syntactic status of ethical dative clitics

This paper claims that ethical dative clitics are adjunct particles that are not part of the composition of the subcategorization frame of the verb and are not linked to any A-position in syntax either. In this section we are going to discuss a number of arguments that indicate that this claim is in the right direction. Along the lines of Strozer (1976), Jaeggli (1986), Suñer (1988), Franco (1993, 2000) and much subsequent work, we assume that the possibility of having a DP in a case position doubled by a clitic is an indicator of the argumental status of that clitic. Thus, in accordance with this criterion, in the two realizations of ethical dative clitics in the examples (1) and (8) from Class I and Class III respectively, the clitic *me* would be a non-argumental clitic, whereas the object clitics in (11) correspond to the verb internal arguments:

(11) a. *El guarda* ***me*** *vió* ***a mí***
The guard CL.ACC-me saw to me
'The guard saw me'

b. *Ellos* ***me*** *hablaron* ***a mí***
They CL.DAT-me talked to me
'They talked to me'

c. *Los chicos* ***le*** *preguntaron* *a **Juan***
The boys CL.DAT-3SG. asked to Juan
'The boys asked Juan'

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[4] One question that was raised in the presentation of this paper at the 6th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium and also came up in the reviewers' reports is whether we can have third person ethical dative clitics co-occurring with other clitics. The main problem for these sequences would be geared on morphological constraints on feature combinations that regulate which clitics can go together (see Bonet 1991 and related work in regard to the *me lui* constraint), but not on syntactic or semantic constraints. In fact, there are some contexts in which a third person ethical dative clitic can combine with another clitic, for instance:

(i) *¿Conoces a mi vecina? Pues, a su hijo se lo tuve que llevar al hospital con un ataque al corazón.*
know my neighbor well, to her son Ethc.Dat.CL Acc.CL had-I to take to hospital with a heart attack
'Do you know my neighbor? Well, I had to take her son (for her) to the hospital with a heart attack'

The rationale behind this claim is that Spanish clitic doubling holds a syntactic correferential relation between the clitic and a doubled NP object in an argument position that results from the syntactic mapping of the lexicon onto the phrase marker. This relation between the clitic and its double can be licensed as an agreement phenomenon, that is, the clitic is directly merged into a functional projection above VP, or via movement of the clitic from the argument position to a position that ultimately attaches to the verb. The former approach is known as the in-situ approach to clitics (cf. Rivas 1977, Jaeggli (1982) Saltarelli (1987), Suñer (1988), Franco (1993), among many others), whereas the latter is called the movement approach (see Kayne (1975), Rizzi (1986a), Uriagereka (1995) and related work).

However, the ethical dative clitics belonging to Class II seem to survive the clitic doubling test, as in (7) above, and stand as good candidates for argumenthood. In fact, one characterisitic that sets Class II apart from the other two is that these clitics participate in inversion predicate structures in which the dative is the logical subject whereas the verb agrees with a nominative theme.[5] Furthermore, prototypical inversion predicates with deontic existential and psychological verbs do not only allow clitic doubling, but make the presence of the clitic obligatory (versus optional) when the dative XP is overt, as in (12):

(12) a. *A Juan *(le)   falta dinero*
          to Juan CL.DAT-3SG.   lack money
          'Juan is missing some money'
    b. *A Juan   *(le)   gustan   los libros*
          to Juan   CL.DAT-3SG. likes   the books
          'Juan likes the books'

Thus, if our categorization of the ethical dative structure from Class II as an inversion predicate is on the right track we should expect the same deviant effects in the absence of a clitic. Indeed this is the case, as shown in example (13):

(13) *El coche se   *(le)   caló   **a Juan** en la cuesta de Zabalbide*.
     The car   CL.REFL CL.DAT-3   stalled to Juan   on the slope of Zabalbide
     'The car stalled on Juan on the Zabalbide slope'

Given the distributional facts ethical dative clitics have with respect to clitic doubling, it seems that at first sight, those clitics that belong to class II are arguments, whilst those that belong to Class I and III are adjuncts. This would be an unfortunate counter-intuitive conclusion since on the one hand, we are gaining insights on ethical dative clitics by discriminating their different behavior and establishing a typology, but on the other hand, we are also missing a generalization that could group ethical dative clitics under one property or a set of properties in common. In this respect, it is a standard assumption that ethical datives are always optional and the truth conditions of the sentence do not change upon

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[5] Thus, the minimal pair between ethical datives from Class II and inversion predicate contructions is exemplified in (i) and (ii) where *A Juan* is the logical dative subject, whereas *las llaves* is the nominative theme agreeing with the verb.

(i) *A Juan$_i$ se   le$_i$ perdieron las llaves*
    To Juan   Refl.CL. Dat.CL   lost-3pl   the keys
    'The keys got lost on Juan'
(ii) *A Juan$_i$ le$_i$ faltan   las llaves*
    To Juan   Dat.CL   lack   the keys
    'Juan is missing the keys'
The example in (i) sharply contrasts with *Juan perdió las llaves* 'Juan lost the keys', in which Juan is responsible (Causer) for the loss.

their presence or absence.[6] In fact, ethical datives only contribute to the meaning of the sentence by adding point of view in terms of malefactive or benefactive semantic roles.[7] In short, all the sentences with ethical dative clitics from any of the three classes posited above can be uttered without this type of clitic, as in (14):[8]

(14) a. *Juan   ha comido   toda   la sopa*
          Juan   has eaten   all   the soup
          'Juan ate all the soup'
      b. *El coche   se   caló   en la cuesta de Zabalbide*
          The car   CL.REFL   stalled   on the slope of Zabalbide
          'The car stalled on the Zabalbide slope'
      c. A mi primo   le   pegaron una paliza.
          to my cousin   CL.DAT-him   hit a beating
          'They beat my cousin up'

At first sight, their optionality of occurrence should endow ethical dative clitics with an adjunct status. However, optional verb arguments are also possible. The key distinction between an argument and an adjunct is not given by whether an element is obligatory or optional, but by how the sentence changes when the element in question is not present.

Usually, the deletion of a true dative argument of a verb yields a generic or middle reading, as in (15):[9]

(15) a. *Los   libros   gustan*
         the   books   like
         'Books are well liked
      b. *Los   chicos   preguntaron*
         the   boys   asked
         'The boys asked'

On the other hand the deletion of an adjunct does not affect the punctual reading of the sentence, as in example (16):

(16) *Tejí   una alfombra   (para María)*
       wove-1   a rug   (for Maria)
       'I wove a rug for Maria'

The deletion of the adjunct *para Maria* 'for María' in (16) does not have any bearing on the actual making of the rug and the sentence is well-formed, however the deletion of the object *una alfombra* 'a rug', leaving *tejí* 'I wove' by itself, would be detrimental for the grammatical status of the sentence. Going back to the structures in (14), in which the ethical dative clitics have been supressed, we can see that their interpretation responds to adjunct deletion and not argument deletion since no difference in the reading is obtained. Incidentally, we also find the same asymmetry in inversion predicates between psychological verbs and deontic existential verbs. That is, the deletion of the dative clitic yields a

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[6] One of the reviewers points out that for Class I, in example (1), the presence of the ethical dative clitic enforces the telic reading, thus, it cannot co-occur with *during*-type adverbials, whereas its absence makes the telic reading "defeasable (sic)". However, the authors of this paper get a compulsory telic reading with and without the ethical dative clitic. This could be an indication of some bleaching of ethical dative clitics in their variety, which incidentally shows a higher usage of these clitics.

[7] A simple but straightforward argument in favor of the non-argument status of ethical dative clitics is that they can occur with both intransitive and transitive verbs

[8] This observation goes back to Bello's (1847) grammar in which ethical datives were called 'superfluous', given their lack of ability to affect the sentence grammar.

[9] For the sake of clarification, we are contrasting here the effects of argument deletion versus the grammatically innocuous deletion of ethical datives, which seems to pattern with adjunct deletion.

generic reading with psych-verbs whereas it stays the same with deontic existential verbs, as exemplified in (17):

(17)   a.   *Ese libro   me   encanta*
               that book   CL.DAT-1st   enchants
               'I love that book'
       b.   *Ese libro   encanta*   Generic interpretation
               that book   enchants
               'That book sells well'
       c.   *Le   falta   la sal*
               CL.DAT-3SG. lack   the salt
               'The salt is missing on it'
       d.   *Falta   la sal*   here and now interpretation
               lack   the salt
               'The salt is missing'

    Now we have a solution to the puzzle, ethical dative clitics belonging to class II behave like dative clitics do in deontic existential inversion predicates, which require obligatory clitic doubling if the dative NP is present. Furthermore, these predicates can similarly dispense with the whole dative clitic chain and still keep the active reading of the sentence since both, dative clitics in existential deontic constructions as well as ethical dative clitics, are adjuncts.

4. Ethical Dative clitics and the Theory of *pro*

    Jaeggli (1986) first proposed that Spanish object clitics license the empty category *pro* in the canonical position of the object argument. This assumption has been maintained mostly through the 90s regardless of whether there was a movement approach to clitics (cf. Uriagereka 1995) or the in-situ approach (cf. Franco 1993, 2000). Going back to the complex examples of ethical dative clitics in Class III, repeated here in (18) for convenience, the occurrence of two dative clitics would not pose a problem for the Theta Criterion or any contemporary version of that principle. Thus, according to the categorization of ethical dative clitics put forward in this study, the clitic *le* is the only clitic in (18) that can form a chain with an XP element in an argument position. Operation Agree proposed in Chomsky (2002) mediates between the clitic probe and the XP goal and makes this chain visible for the syntactic mapping of Theta roles (see Chomsky 1982), as illustrated by the coindexing relation in (18):

(18)   *Me   le$_i$ pegaron   una paliza   al   primo$_i$ en una fiesta*
           CL.DAT-me   CL.DAT-him hit   a beating   to-the cousin at the party
           'They beat my cousin up at the party'

Moreover, in the event that there is no XP in argument position, that position would be occupied by *pro*, which will also be coindexed with the clitic forming a syntactic chain, as in (19):

(19)   *Me   le$_i$ pegaron   una paliza   pro$_i$ en una fiesta*
           CL.DAT-me   CL.DAT-him hit   a beating   at the party
           'They beat him up at the party'

Thus, regardless of whether we have an overt nominal realization of the object in agreement with the clitic, as in (18), or just an affixal occurrence of the object via a clitic coindexed with a silent category *pro*, as in (19), the original syntactic mapping is structurally preserved.

    On the contrary, some recent work in syntactic theory has put forward the idea that formal features including the EPP are satisfied by pronominal verbal affixes, consequently, the projection of *pro* in traditional standard argument positions is not necessary anymore (see Ackema 2001, Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998, Holmberg 2000, Panagiotidis 2002, among others). However, if verbal affixes

were the elements that satisfy the Projection Principle and the matching of features, the computational system (henceforth CS) would have to confront a dilemma when it comes to select one of the two dative clitics for the licensing of features in the example (19) above. In principle, both clitics are inflectional verbal affixes and under these terms, none of them looks more or less qualified to serve as the target to match the features against. Incidentally, speakers do not make mistakes with respect to the interpretation of the sentence and seem to know at first hand which clitic corresponds to the indirect object. Bearing this in mind, this paper subscribes to the existence of *pro,* on the grounds that if neither of the two dative clitics in (19) is associated with an argumental silent pronominal *pro* in an A-position the CS will not be able to pick the right dative clitic for the syntactic sanctioning of the sentence.

Furthermore, the elimination of *pro* theory introduces an undesirable duality in the feature checking system of the language. There is a three way distribution in the occurrence of indirect objects, namely, a clitic by itself, a clitic doubled XP and the XP indirect object by itself, since clitic doubling is optional with argument objects. The latter is illustrated in example (20):

(20) **(Les$_i$)**   *dije*   *la verdad*   **a los estudiantes$_i$**
      CL.DAT-them   said   the truth   to the students
      'I told the students the truth'

In the sentence in (20), the argumental dative DP *a los estudiantes* can occur without having any affix correlate, therefore the CS would need to have a switching device that allows it to resort to the nominal DP for feature checking when the affix is missing. To put it differently, under this affix-only-feature satisfaction theory, the canonical object position, independently of whether it hosts a DP or nothing, is inert for feature checking and uninterpretable features are licensed via the clitic if there is one. However, if the clitic is absent, as in (20) above, then the XP element in object position would have to get activated out of the blue for feature checking.

To make things more complicated, in example (8b), repeated here as (21), there is in fact a dative affix, but it turns out to be an ethical dative clitic which cannot form a syntactic chain with the IO dative for feature checking:

(21) *Los amigos* **me**   *hicieron*   *entrevistas*   *a tres* *sujetos*   *para*
      the friends CL.DAT-me did   interviews   to three subjects   to
      ahorrarme   *tiempo*.
      save CL.DAT-me   time
      'My friends interviewed three subjects for me so that I could save time'

Again in (21), if the CS satisfied the checking of features by pronominal verbal affixes it would wrongly predict that the dative indirect object of the sentence is the ethical dative clitic *me*. In sum, the optionality of occurrence of object agreement clitics when doubling nominal expressions, as in (20) and (21), shows that clitic particles cannot solely be responsible for the probe-goal checking relation, unless the CS could afford the unwarranted complexity of having a switching mechanism that would select one or another object goal depending on the overt or covert occurrence of the clitic.

This problem of optionality takes us to the issue of the status of null objects without clitics in Romance languages and how the checking is done when there is a null object which is subcategorized for by a transitive verb. Referential null objects have been considered in the syntactic literature of Romance languages to be *pro* (cf. Raposo 1986, Maia 1991, Landa 1995, Rizzi 1986). On many occasions these elements are discourse bound as in (22a), but they can also be inferred from the pragmatic context, as in (22b):

(22) a. *No*   *he*   *mirado*   **las listas$_i$**. *A ver si mañana*   *tengo tiempo y miro*   **pro$_i$**
         NEG. have-I checked   the lists.   To see if tomorrow   have-I time   and look
         'I haven't checked the lists. Let's see if tomorrow I have the time and look at Ø'

b. Es mejor   que pongas   ***pro***   aquí.
   is better   that put-2   here
   'It's better that you put Ø here'

Franco and Landa (1991) and Landa (1995) put forward a battery of tests that show that null objects in Basque Spanish are discourse topic related null pronominals that are free within their governing domain, that is, *pro*s. These *pro*s act as a position holder for the DO, which in turn allows the sentence to be interpreted as transitive. Similar conclusions are reached in Maia (1991) for Brazilian Portuguese and Sanchez (1999ab) for Andean Spanish. In short, it would be hard to correctly interpret null object constructions as true transitive sentences and not as middles or pseudo passives, which they are not, if we got rid of the theory of *pro*.

5. Summary and final remarks

Given the impossibility to group them under one single homogenous class, this study establishes three types of ethical dative clitics in accordance with a number of properties that are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1

ETHICAL DATIVE CL.	NON-BARE OBJECT	CO-REFERENCE WITH SUBJECT	CLITIC DOUBLING	CO-OCCURRENCE WITH DATIVE ARGUMENT CLITIC
CLASS I	√	√		
CLASS II			√	
CLASS III				√

Ethical Dative clitics do not take part in argument chains like object clitics do. Thus, the grammaticality and internal interpretation of the sentence is insensitive to the occurrence or non-occurrence of the Ethical Dative clitic.[10]

Subsequently, this article contends that the distribution of clitics in ethical dative clitic constructions together with the alternation in the occurrence of the Dative DP with the argumental dative clitic itself in ditransitive sentences constitute evidence for the need of the existence of *pro* for the syntactic mapping of arguments. The most uniform and simplest way to maintain the well-formedness mechanism of the sentence in regard to the licensing of uninterpretable features is born out if an inflectional head, T or v (AGRo in early Minimalism) acts as a probe and, by operation Agree, checks its features with a goal *pro*. The same operation takes place when, instead of an empty category, there is an overt DP in argument position coindexed with the inflectional head. Relevantly, the probe head can have an overt affix, for instance, a clitic, or just covert abstract features, as shown throughout this paper. Thus, there is one single general operation Agree that mediates between the probe and the goal feature checking, regardless of whether they have overt or covert phonetic realizations. As for the probe-goal checking with pronominal null objects, it should be the case that the probe is an instance of anaphoric agreement, which is discourse or pragmatically bound.

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[10] As a working hypothesis, in the presentation of this paper at the HLS2006 conference, we proposed that Ethical Dative clitics are heads of a maximal functional projection called Perspective Phrase, whose sanctioning is geared on the interface between the syntax in the periphery of the sentence level and inflectional morphology. It goes without saying that this is material for further research.

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