

Navajo Dative: Two *bi-* or not two *bi-*?

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1. The basic system of clause argument marking in Navajo

Position #	Accusative	Non-interlocutor Nominative	Qualifier	Mode	Interlocutor Nominative	Transitivity indicator	Root
	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
(1) a. 'I am cooling him ₄ down'	ho- 4			ni-	sh- 1Sg	[ɬ-]	k'eʔ cool
b. 'he ₄ is cooling me down'	shi- 1Sg	zh- 4		ni-		ɬ-	k'eʔ cool
c. 'I am cooling him down'	[ø-] 3			ni-	sh- 1Sg	[ɬ-]	k'eʔ cool
d. 'he is cooling her down'	yi- 33	[ø-] 3		ni-		ɬ-	k'eʔ cool

Major facts

- Navajo has accusative alignment
- Role marking is accomplished by the combination of two formal techniques: (i) positioning of pronominal elements in certain linear positions and (ii) choosing the appropriate variant of the pronominal element
- Actor (Principal) is coded in position #2/5 on the verb
- Patientive is coded in position #6 on the verb
- Shape of pronouns also participates in the coding of roles, cf. 4 person forms *zh-* and *ho-* (1b, a)
- There are no clause-internal or inter-clausal processes that would change the basic mapping between roles and formal positions
- Therefore there is no reasons for postulating syntactic relations in Navajo (subject, direct object, etc.)
- I extend case terminology to refer to the technique of head-marking of semantic roles: Nominative and Accusative pronouns
- 3 person Accusative pronoun is *yi-* iff the Nominative is 3 person as well (1d); otherwise 3 person Accusative pronoun is *ø-* (1c)

2. Preverbs (“postpositions”) and oblique pronouns

(2) a. [ʔashkii ʔat'ééd kʰiʔ] y- á- y- ø- oo- lóós
 boy girl horse 33.Obl- for- 3.Acc- [3.Nom-] Prog-lead
 ‘[the boy, the girl, the horse] he is leading it for her’

b. b- á- ø- dz- oo- lóós
 3.Obl- for- 3.Acc4.Nom- Prog-lead
 ‘he₄ is leading it for her’

- 3 person Oblique pronoun is *yi-* iff the Nominative is 3 person as well (2a); otherwise 3 person Oblique pronoun is *bi-* (2b)
- All other personal pronouns coincide in the Accusative and the Oblique forms

NB: I am not talking about the famous *yi-/bi-* controversy at this point, this is a different usage of *bi-*

3. Proposed Dative: Recipient and similar roles

Morpho-logical position	Oblique	Preverb	Various derivational	Reflexive accusative	Iterative/repetitive	Distributive	Accusative	Non-interlocutor Nominative	Qualifier	Mode	Interlocutor Nominative	Transitivity indicator	Root
Position #	11B	11A	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Table 1: Basic morphological positions in the Navajo verb

- There are arguments that are neither Accusative nor Oblique

(3) 8
 béésh bi-náá-ø-di-ni-tsi (p.c. Bernice Casaus, as well as most further examples)
 knife 3.Dat-Rep-3.Acc-Pref-2Sg.Nom-point
 ‘you gently pointed a knife **at him** again’

(4) géeso ʎaʔ bée-ø-dí-sh-gish (bi-ná- > bée-)
 cheese some 3.Dat.Iter-3.Acc-Pref-1Sg.Nom-cut.usually
 ‘I customarily cut pieces **from the** cheese’

(5) bi-ho-di-d-í-ʎt'ih (YM87g: 196)
 3.Dat-Ar.Acc-Inc-Pref-Prog.2Sg.Nom-connect
 ‘you will get **him** into trouble’, lit. ‘you will connect space (=sorrow) to him’

Facts about presumed Dative pronouns

- anomalous on two counts: position and shape
- like Accusative pronouns, they appear without an explicit preverb (role marker)
- distinguishable in shape from Accusative pronouns only in the 3 person: *bi-* instead of *ø-*
- like Oblique pronouns, they are *bi-* in the 3 person when the Nominative is not 3 person
- like Oblique pronouns, *bi-* in (3) appears to the left of the iterative/repetitive *ná(á)-* (#8)

For these or similar reasons, Young, Morgan, and Midgette 1992 (henceforth: YMM92), following Kari 1976, use the term “null postpositions”. Besides “indirect object without postposition”, as in (3—5), they also mention (YMM92: 846, 915) “subjects of intransitive inchoative verbs” (6) and “direct objects of transitive inchoative verbs” (7):

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| (6) | a. nini- sh- gan
1Sg.Nom
'I am becoming skinny' | b. shi- 'nii- gan
1Sg.Dat- Inch
'I start to become skinny' (YMM92: 198)
lit. 'to me smth. (=becoming skinny) starts to happen' |
| (7) | a. ø- yishbizh
3.Acc
'I braid it' | b. bi- 'nii-shbíish
3.Dat- Inch
'I start to braid it' (YMM 92: 67)
lit. 'to it I start causing smth (=braiding) to happen' |

Generalizations about the Dative:

- formally: something between Accusative and Oblique
- semantically: recipient/goal (3), source (4), bene-/malefactive (5), experiencer (6-7); henceforth, provisionally, “Recipient”
- cross-linguistically, this is what is conventionally termed Dative
NB: Recipient pronouns may refer to both animate and inanimate referents

Less clear-cut tendencies:

- Dative pronouns can appear both in position #11B/9 (to the left from iterative #8 and distributive plural #7) and in position #6 (to the right of those)
- it is generally hard to identify whether these pronouns appear in position #11B (where oblique pronouns occur) or perhaps in position #9 (reflexive Accusative) [NB: according to Helmbrecht 2001/Lipkind 1945, in Winnebago there is a Dative/Reflexive morphological position.]
 - the reason is that when a pronominal element is followed by what could be a position #10 derivational prefix, in Young and Morgan’s (henceforth: YM) descriptive tradition, usually (though somewhat implicitly) such pairs of morphemes are interpreted as a pronoun-preverb (“postposition”) combination; need for a research differentiating between position #10 and #11A prefixes
 - however in some rare cases it is more clear; cf. example (8) which, at least according to YM87’s analysis, is a clear case of the Dative pronoun in position #11B, since *ná-* belongs to position #10 and is not a “postposition” (*ná-* in this function is not on the list of postpositions in YM87g: 32)
- the choice between position #6 (Accusative) vs. position #11B/9 is not quite straightforward; among the 38 verbs with Recipient Dative on pp. 178–185 of YM87d I found the following tendencies:
 - in transitive verbs (Accusative position #6 is occupied), Datives always take position #11B/9, cf. (3)
 - in intransitive verbs (Accusative position #6 is free), Datives tend to take position #6; illustration: (9); exception: (10)
- so there is some uncertainty about the positioning of the Dative pronouns
- however, note that even in occasions like (9) Dative pronouns remain an identifiable category because they take a different shape in the 3 person than Accusatives

- (8) a. ná-s-dzid b. **bi**-ná-s-dzid c. **bi**-ní-ná-s-dzíih (YM87d: 228, 568)
 Pref-1Sg.Nom-fear **3.Dat**-Pref-1Sg.Nom-fear **3.Dat**-Pref-Iter-1Sg.Nom-fear
 ‘I become fearful’ ‘I become afraid of it’ ‘I become afraid of it customarily’
- (9) k’é-ná-**bi**-di-sh-n’iih (YM87d: 502)
 friendly-Iter-**3.Dat**-Pref-1Sg.Nom-talk.usually
 ‘I customarily talk to him in a friendly way’
- (10) **bi**-da-zh-dii-lkaal (YM87d: 184)
3.Dat-Distr-4.Nom-Pref-press
 ‘they₄ stick to it [e.g. their work]’

4. Mobile Causee

- formal marking very similar to Recipient Dative is employed to code the Causee in causatives

Causatives from intransitives: the most productive type of Navajo causatives are “causatives of keeping” (causatives from existence/location/position verbs). [*NB: TI↑ ≈ mark of causative*]

- Human Causee

- (11) a. ʔawééʔ ø-si-dá b. ʔawééʔ **bi**-s-é-ł-dá
 baby 3.Nom-Pf-sit baby **3.Dat**-Pf-1Sg.Nom-TI↑-sit
 ‘the baby is sitting up’ ‘I am keeping the baby sitting up’

- Animal Causee

- (12) ʔííʔ **bi**-s-é-sí (ł + z > s) ‘I am keeping the horse’
 horse **3.Dat**-Pf-1Sg.Nom- TI↑.stand

- Normal inanimates

- (13) shi-beeʔ eldʔoh báhástł’ah-jí ø-s-é-ł-tá ‘I keep my gun in the corner’
 1Sg.Poss-gun corner-in **3.Acc**-Pf-1Sg.Nom-TI↑-stay

- Mobile inanimates

- (14) a. tsinaaʔ eeł dah-na-**bi**-sh-[ł-]ʔ eeł ‘I keep the boat floating’
 boat up-Pref-**3.Dat**-1Sg.Nom-[TI↑-]float

- cf. b. tsinaaʔ eeł ø-s-é-ł-ʔá ‘I keep the boat standing’
 boat **3.Acc**-Pf-1Sg.Nom-[TI↑-]stay

Causatives from transitives: very few examples

- (15) a. ʔawééʔ ʔa-ø-yá ‘the baby is eating (something)’
 baby Indf.Acc-3.Nom-eat
- b. ʔawééʔ **bi**-ʔ-ii-y-í-sá (ł + y > s) ‘you feed the baby (lit. you feed smth. to the baby)’
 baby **3.Dat**-Indf.Acc-Pref-Pf-2Sg.Nom- TI↑.eat

NB: Accusative pronoun choice (\emptyset - vs. $yí$ -) can be done in accordance with the person of either the Nominative or the Dative (16). That's one more proof of the non-relational character of Navajo

- (16) $\text{?awéé? ?atsi? bi-y-ii-y-í-sá} \quad \sim \quad \text{bi-}\emptyset\text{-y-í-sá}$
 baby meat 3.Dat-33.Acc-Pref-Pf-2Sg.Nom-TI↑.eat 3.Dat-3.Acc-Pf-2Sg.Nom-TI↑.eat
 'you feed meat to the baby'

Position of the Causee pronoun:

- Causative from intransitives (–Accusative): position #6

- (17) $\text{?awéé? n-ná-bi-j-ii-łaaah}$
 baby around-Iter-3.Dat-4.Nom-Pref-TI↑.walk.usually
 'he₄ is usually walking the baby'

- Causative from transitive (+Accusative): position #11B/9 or #6

- (18) a. $\text{niha-?álchíní bi-náá-da-?i-y-iil-záá?} \quad (-iid-ł- > -iil-)$ (Young 1995)
 12Pl.Poss-children 3.Dat-Rep-Distr-Indef.Acc-Pf-1Pl.Nom.TI↑-ate
 'we fed our children again' (lit. 'fed something to them')

- b. $\text{?álchíní náá-da-bi-? -y-iil-záá?}$
 children Rep-Distr-3.Dat-Indef.Acc-Pf-1Pl.Nom.TI↑-ate
 'We fed children again' (lit. 'fed something to them')

5. Other occurrences of *bi-*

Possessive pronouns – more or less like obliques

Independent 3 person pronoun: human referents only

- (19) $\text{bí t'éiyá shi-ł} \quad \emptyset\text{-deez-}^{\text{'áázh}}$.
 he only 1Sg.Obl-with 3.Nom-Inc:Pf-two.go
 'only him I will take with me [e.g. gesturally pointing at a person]'

- (20) $\text{?eii t'éiyá shi-kéé} \quad \text{ni-}\emptyset\text{-hee-ldloozh}$
 that only 1Sg.Obl-behind Pref-3.Nom-Pref:Pf-go.on.all.four
 'only it I will take with me' [gesturally pointing at a dog]

Inverse: highly animate and/or highly topical non-Nominative referent

- (21) a. $\text{?a-má} \quad \text{?ashkii táné-í-}\emptyset\text{-z-giz}$
 Indf.Poss-mother boy Pref-33.Acc-3.Nom-Pf-wring
 'the mother washed the boy'

- b. $\text{?ashkii bi-má} \quad \text{tána-bi-}\emptyset\text{-zgiz}$
 boy 3.Poss-mother Pref-3.Dat?-3.Nom-Pf-wring
 'the boy was washed by his mother'

Semipassive: exclusively animate, topical referent

(22) a. \emptyset -s-é-ł-hí

3.Acc-Pf-1Sg.Nom-TI↑-kill

‘I killed him’

b. bi-ʔ-dii-s-yí

3.Dat?-Indf.Nom-TD:Pref-Pf-TI↑↓:kill

‘he was killed’

6. How many bi-s? Summary of formal and semantic properties

	Semantic role:	Patientive	Causee			Recipient		Oblique
			immobile	mobile		Accusative absent	Accusative present	
				Accusative absent	Accusative present			
Position #:		6	6	6	11B/9 or 6	6 or 11B/9	mostly 11B/9	11B
<i>Nominative is not 3 person:</i>		\emptyset -	\emptyset -	bi-	bi-	bi-	bi-	bi-
<i>Nominative is 3 person:</i>	<i>Referent is non-topical and low in animacy</i>	yi-	yi-	yi-	yi-	yi-	yi-	yi- ~ bi-
	<i>Referent is topical and/or high in animacy</i>	bi-	bi-	bi-	bi-	bi-	bi-	bi-

Table 2: Distribution of 3 person non-Nominative pronouns

Legend: Degree of semantic scrupulosity of bi-

Unscrupulous

Moderately scrupulous

Highly scrupulous

	Position	Restrictions on animacy	Restrictions on topicality	Prohibition of coreference to explicit indefinites	Prohibition of coreference to interrogatives
\emptyset -	[6]	—	—	—	—
yi-	variable	—	—	—	—
Oblique bi-	11B	—	—	—	—
Recipient bi-	11B/9 or 6	—	—	—	—
mobile Causee bi-	6 or 11B/9	mobile	—	—	—
inverse bi-	variable	animate	high	Willie 1991: prohibited	prohibited
semipassive bi-	6	animate	Thompson 1989: high	—	—

Table 3. Formal and semantic properties of different 3 person non-Nominative pronouns

7. Proposed account

It is useful and even necessary to identify the formal category of “Dative” in Navajo

- in the 3 person, Dative pronouns consistently take a form different from Accusative pronouns
- the positioning of Dative pronouns does not fully align with either Accusative or Oblique pronouns
- the semantic core of the most basic usages of the Dative has direct analogies in many languages

What's Navajo Dative like

- third person Dative pronoun is *bi-*
- if there is no Accusative pronoun in the verb, the Dative pronoun gravitates toward position #6
- if there is an Accusative pronoun in the verb, the Dative pronoun gravitates toward position #11B/9
- the choice between positions #6 and #11B/9 is complex and possibly depends on additional subtle factors
- mobile Causee Dative more favors position #6 while Recipient Dative more favors position #11B/9

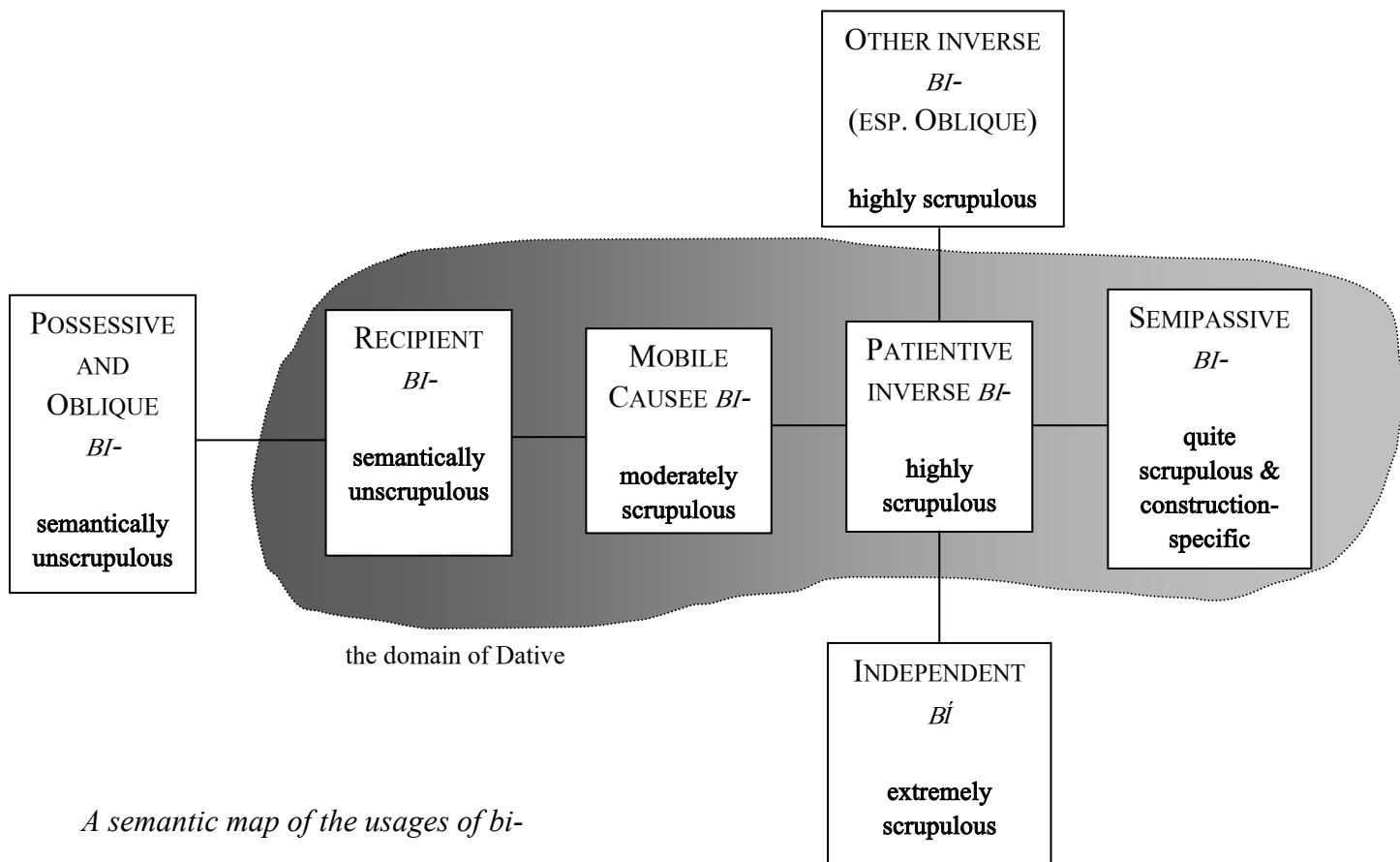
Dative is an “underdefined” (perhaps emerging?) formal category, because it is formally weak and shares both of its foundational formal properties with other categories:

- it differs from the Accusative only in the 3 person
- when Nominative is 3 person, *bi-* is replaced by *yi-* (and becomes indistinguishable from Accusative)
- *bi-* is found also in Oblique and Possessive pronouns
- there is no specialized Dative linear position, unlike specialized Accusative and Oblique positions

What is coded with the Dative

- | | | |
|--|--|------|
| i. Recipient and other similar roles | | CORE |
| ii. Mobile Causee | | |
| iii. Patientive in the inverse construction | | |
| iv. Patientive in the semipassive construction | | |

There is no full semantic consistency between [i-iv], but one should not necessarily expect it to be there



8. Cross-linguistically common properties of “datives”

- coding recipients, sources, benefactives, experiencers is their prototypical function (all over)
- code Causees (many Altaic and Caucasian languages)
- replace accusative if the referent is animate (e.g. Spanish)
- may share coding properties with the accusative (e.g. English, Kartvelian)

NON-OBVIOUS ABBREVIATIONS IN GLOSSES

Pf – perfective
 Prog -- progressive
 Iter -- iterative
 Rep -- repetitive
 Inc -- inceptive

Inch -- inchoative
 Distr – distributive plural
 TI – transitivity indicator
 Indf – indefinite
 Ar – areal

Nom – nominative
 Acc – accusative
 Dat – dative
 Poss -- possessor
 Pref – prefix of irrelevant function