

Possessor datives revisited

Category: oral or poster

It has been hypothesized (König&Haspelmath 1998, Haspelmath 1999) that external possessor (EP) datives, as exemplified in (1), are an areal property of Central and Southern Europe and do not occur elsewhere. The present study argues that this generalization is a side effect of a more basic typological parameter predominant in that region: dependent-marking on the clause level. Dependent-marking is most common in Eurasia (Nichols&Bickel 2008) and the predominant argument-marking strategy in European languages. Furthermore, dependent-marking with morphological case strongly correlates with direct/indirect object (DO/IO) alignment in ditransitive clauses (Haspelmath 2008), while head-marking with DO/IO alignment is rare. In line with this correlation, the languages in Haspelmath's (1999) study show both case-marking and DO/IO alignment. However, if dative is defined as IO case, the notion of EP dative is restricted to such languages and not cross-linguistically applicable.

This study approaches EP constructions from a slightly different angle. First, it is shown that the extension of indirect-object (IO) marking to EPs is not areally restricted: once all languages which express ditransitive recipients as IOs are considered (see Dryer 1986, Haspelmath 2008) (regardless of whether these IOs are head-marked, dependent-marked, or configurationally identified) rather than merely languages with dative case as a particular IO marker, non-European head-marking, DO/IO languages are found which encode EPs with the same verbal marker that cross-references the IO on a 'give' verb ((2)–(3)). The fact that these data are rare does not necessarily indicate a special status of the European languages with respect to EP constructions, but, rather, results from the typological preference for primary/secondary object alignment, rather than DO/IO, of head-marking languages (Haspelmath 2008).

Even true EP datives exist in non-European case languages (4). The question remains why they are less frequent than in Europe. In this context, secondly, I examine the notion of affectedness, which is a necessary component of European-type EP datives (Haspelmath 1999:111). These tend to be restricted to animate referents in dynamic (non-state) events and portray the EP as personally/emotionally affected. This restriction does not hold for non-European languages: non-European EPs can occur with state verbs (3b) and inanimate referents (4). More importantly, though, for the European EP dative, affectedness seems to be a stronger condition than possession itself. For the construction to be feasible, a temporary, situation-dependent relation between the dative referent and a theme is often sufficient (5) when the dative referent can be construed as affected, and the boundaries between 'true' EP datives and other affectedness datives are blurred.

I thus propose a slight revision to Haspelmath's (1999) hypothesis: the dative as an affectedness construction (Smith 2005) is indeed a European areal feature. An affectedness construction is a straightforward way to express EPs, since possessors are naturally affected by events involving their possessum. Under this assumption, the European EP dative, as a subtype of the affectedness dative, remains special, although IO constructions in general are also available for EP marking in other regions of the world.

Data

- (1) German:
Sie kämm-te dem Kind die Haare.
she.NOM comb-PAST the.NEUT.DAT child the.PL.ACC hairs
'She combed the child's hair.'
- (2) Hdi (Chadic, Cameroon; Frajzyngier & Shay 2002: 210, 193):
a. *vl-ú-ú-vlá tá kóbù.* b. *blá-ghà-p-blá tá ùdzú.*
give-SOURCE-1DU-give OBJ money break-2SG-OUT-break OBJ stick
'He gave (the two of) us money.' 'He broke your stick (lit.: He broke the stick to you).'
- (3) Southern Tiwa (Tanoan, New Mexico; Allen et al. 1990: 325, Rosen 1990: 698):
a. *ka-khwian-wia-ban.* b. *ka-khwian-mu-ban.*
1SG:A:2SG-dog-give-PAST 1SG:A:2SG-dog-see-PAST
'I gave you (sg.) the dog.' 'I saw your (sg.) dog.'
c. *i-mu-ban.*
1SG:2SG-see-PAST
'I saw you.' [monotransitive construction; shows that (a) and (b) are ditransitive despite incorporation]
- (4) Sidaama (Cushitic; Kawachi 2007: 552):
ise hakkó t'arap'eesí-ra lekká mur-t-u.
3SG.F.NOM that table-DAT leg.ACC cut-3SG.F-S.PRF.3SG.F
'She cut the leg of that table (lit.: to that table).'
- (5) German:
Mir ist die Wäsche schmutzig geworden.
me.DAT is the.FEM.NOM laundry dirty become.PARTICIPLE
(i) 'My laundry got dirty (on me).'
- (ii) 'The laundry (someone else's) got dirty on me.'
(e.g., if the speaker works in a laundromat and is handling someone else's laundry)

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