

Deconstructing dative clitics

In this presentation, I investigate the properties of dative clitics in Catalan and other Romance languages. These clitics show a number of structural and behavioral irregularities that raise many questions on their internal structure. By investigating the particularities of their structure, we will be able to extract some generalizations on the structure of Romance dative clitics and on the nature of the dative itself.

Catalan third person dative clitics (*l*-clitics, a terminology I use for short in line with DÉCHAINED & WILTSCHKO 2002) show some irregularities that seem to reveal a missing element in the picture (BONET 1991, 1995). Unlike the rest of the dative clitics, *l*-clitics (1) present a special morpheme [i], (2) do not show syncretism with the corresponding accusative clitics, and (3) the plural form is irregular with respect to the singular:

- (1) *l*-clitics: [li] – [əlzi] vs. 1st person [m] – [ns] and 2nd person [t] – [ws]
- (2) 1ST PERSON ACC = 1ST PERSON DATIVE: [m] – [ns]
2ND PERSON ACC = 2ND PERSON DATIVE: [t] – [ws]
l-CLITICS ACC: [l(s)] – [lə(s)] ≠ *l*-CLITICS DAT: [li] – [əlzi]
- (3) singular: [li] plural: [əlzi] (expected [*lis])

These problems are even aggravated in written Catalan where, to add more confusion, the form [əlzi] is not used, but rather the form [ls], which is exactly like the masculine plural accusative *l*-clitic. The problem is then why spoken Catalan adds the [i] to the standard normative form.

A possible solution to these problems is suggested by the way Catalan speakers write the spoken form in informal settings, i.e. as *els hi*, using the standard normative dative plural *l*-clitic *els*, plus the locative clitic *hi*. That is to say, I take the form *els hi* of informal Catalan to be transparent with respect to the structure of the dative *l*-clitics. These facts lead us to two questions:

- (i) Why do these irregularities occur in the Catalan datives?, and
- (ii) Why does a deictic clitic appear with the dative *l*-clitics?

The answers to both questions are related. My proposal is that whereas other dative clitics can appear on their own, dative *l*-clitics require the presence of this extra element *hi*. This makes transparent the fact that dative *l*-clitics are actually linked to a deictic clitic, forming an underlying structure [DAT+LOC]. This is motivated by the special characteristics of these clitics: as datives they need deictic features, but as *l*-clitics they lack person features (BENVENISTE 1966), with person features indeed being deictic. This means that the deictic features are provided internally, by their person morphemes, for the 1st and 2nd person clitics, and externally for the *l*-clitics, by means of their association with deictic clitics, which motivates the structure [DAT+LOC]. The reason for this association being that the *l*-clitics actually lack person features, the *l*- being probably a definiteness morpheme, not a

person morpheme (BERNSTEIN, in press). In Catalan, this leads us to consider that dative clitics are actually *l'hi* and *els hi*, against the standard proposals of the Catalan academy, and this solves the complete set of problems that have traditionally plagued the dative *l*-clitics in this language. As I show in the presentation, my proposal not only solves the apparent irregularities of the Catalan dative *l*-clitics mentioned in (1) to (3), but will allow us to explain other phenomena related to this grammatical case in Catalan and other Romance languages, like the incompatibility in Catalan and French of dative and locative clitics, or the use of locative clitics to apparently express datives in languages like Catalan, or Paduan (KAYNE, to appear).

In this presentation, I present the basis for a new theory of datives, based on the fact that they require deictic clitics, and therefore, tries to bring back to a new more formal life the localist theory of case developed in ANDERSON 1971. Such a theory, may also help to understand that the great heterogeneity of the dative case may be due to be a cover term for a multiplicity of different grammatical phenomena.

References

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