Personal datives at the syntax–phonology interface

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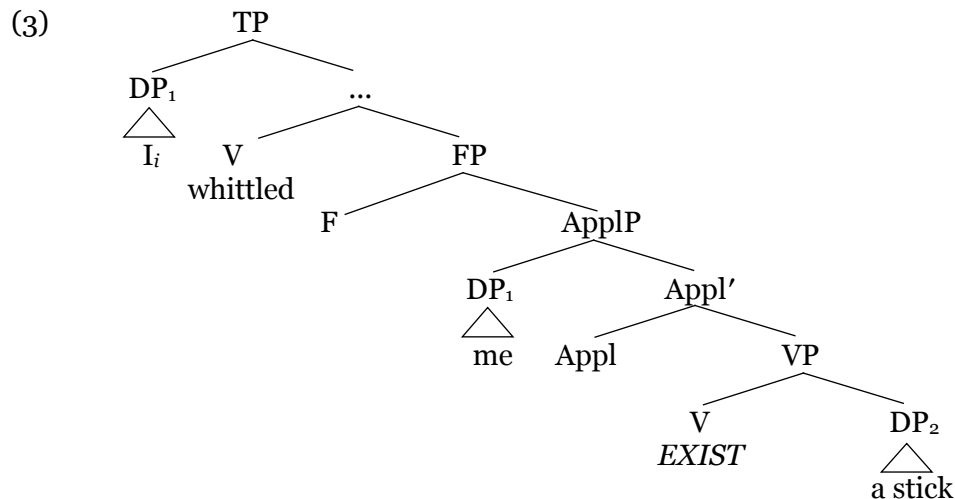University of Calgary

1. Personal datives as small clauses

Personal dative (PD) constructions like (1) are found in some non-standard varieties of English in North America, such as the third author's dialect from Glace Bay in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.[1]

(1)   a.   *I whittled me a stick.*

          b.   *I like me some chowder.*

Storoshenko (2012, 2016) observes that dative-less counterparts to (1) do not always work out, even in "standard" English:

(2)   a.   *I whittled a stick.*

          b.   *# I like sŏme chowder.*

Setting aside the details of Storoshenko's analysis, he proposes that "the PD pronoun is introduced by a high applicative which … modifies a secondary predicate in a small clause here shown as a generic FP" (Storoshenko 2016: 7–9).

(3)

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2. Personal datives as double object constructions

PDs have repeatedly been claimed to share the structure of double object constructions (Christian 1991: 17; Hutchinson & Armstrong 2014; Wood & Zanuttini 2018). On this view, example (1b) involves two objects: *me* and *some chowder*.

In practice, however, these "objects" seem to be housed in a clause-like structure—like Storoshenko's FP in (3)—that has no homologue in the low-applicative analysis of double object constructions that Hutchinson & Armstrong (2014) and Wood & Zanuttin (2018) assume, adapting Pylkkänen (2008). Nor does Storoshenko's generic FP have an analogue in other analyses of double object constructions in Larson's (2017) recent survey; see also Bruening (2010, 2018) and Ormazabal & Romero (2012).

Notably, these "objects" resist *wh*-extraction (Bosse et al. 2012: 1222–1223; Storoshenko 2016: 10–11; Bruening 2018: 145–146), as shown in (4).

(4) a. * *Who did I like some chowder?*   (Storoshenko 2016: 10)
     b. * *What did I like me?*

These "objects" also resist *self*-binding (Bosse et al. 2012: 1222; Storoshenko 2012; 2016: 1, 4–5; Bruening 2018: 145–146).

(5) *#I like myself some chowder.*   (Storoshenko 2012)

Note, finally, that sentence pairs like (6) are only superficially similar.

(6) a. *I whittled myself a stick.*   "As discussed in Conroy (2007), the anaphor in ([6]a) signals that the speaker is also the owner of the stick, while the PD pronoun
     b. *I whittled me a stick.*   in ([6]b) is compatible with a continuation in which the resulting whittled stick is given away as a gift." (Storoshenko 2016:4)

3. Personal datives at the syntax–phonology interface

Prosodically, a goal-dative tends to be phrased with a preceding head, which results in a mismatch between prosodic and syntactic structure in English (Anttila et al. 2010; Elfner 2014). Perhaps to avoid this mismatch, dative pronouns often encliticize with the verb. Such enclisis normally results in recursive ωs, as shown in (7), or as single fused ωs in some high-frequency cases, as shown in (8) (Inkelas 1989; McCarthy 1993; Sherer 1994; Selkirk 1996; Raffelsiefen 2005; Bermúdez-Otero 2011).

(7)   ω
         /\
       ω   \
      see ya
      see me
      saw 'm
      saw 'r
      draw it
   subpoena us

(8)   ω
      gimme
      lemme (do it)
      lea'me (alone)
      need'm
      got'm
      got'r
      shut it
      gotcha

Crucially, such ω-encliticization appears to be blocked in PD constructions, as if a major syntactic boundary like Storoshenko's (2012; 2016) generic FP (3) intervenes above pronouns in PD constructions, which is matched by a φ boundary immediately above pronouns in PD constructions (Selkirk 2011). We find that only strong (non-clitic) forms of pronouns are possible in dative constructions, as shown in (9). That is, PD constructions are quite different from double object constructions which allow weak object pronouns like those in (7) and (8).

(9)   *We had us a cabin.*   [ˈʌs]/*[əs]

      He has him a new car.   [ˈhɪm]/*[əm]

      She loves her some chowder   [ˈhəɹ]/*[əɹ]

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