

AN ANALYSIS OF ROMANCE 'ETHIC' DATIVES

In the so-called 'ethic' (or 'ethical') dative construction of Romance, a second-person dative clitic may appear with the function of apostrophizing or calling for the affective complicity of the addressee — compare the underlined forms in French *Il te prend un petit couteau de cuisine et il te le lui plante dans le dos* (Togoby 1982:401) and Galician *Perdécheseme o libro* (Álvarez, Regueira & Monteagudo 1986:174-175,204-205). For Authier & Reed (1992:296):

ethical datives [...], unlike affected datives, denote individuals who are not necessarily interested parties as far as the process denoted by the sentence is concerned, but rather, this type of non-lexical dative refers to individuals whose relation to the process denoted by the sentence is only that of potential witness.

Although 'non-lexical datives' in Romance have been a focus of research in recent years (see in particular Authier & Reed 1992, Branchadell 1992, Herschensohn 1996), ethic pronouns have been largely excluded from this work. Their semantic/pragmatic characterization is problematic; moreover, unlike other 'non-lexical datives', ethics violate constraints on the distribution of clitic pronouns which exist in many Romance languages — specifically, restrictions on ordering and co-occurrence and an upper limit on the number which may appear in a cluster — thereby posing significant additional problems for syntactic theory.

In this paper, I address these issues by arguing that ethic pronouns are 'illocutionary converters' of the type discussed by Dik (1997:245), and that they bring about the conversion of a declarative into an exclamative by metaphorically encoding the addressee as a bystander (on the notion of 'bystander deixis', see Rijkhoff 1998). As illocutionary elements, they must lie outside the VP, and I propose that their meaning and distribution, especially the fact that they are not found in subordinate clauses, point to a position in the CP. I further argue that these items constitute a *prima facie* example of subjectification, the process whereby, as noted by Traugott & Dasher (2002), meanings tend to become increasingly subjective, and possibly even intersubjective; meanings that were contentful at the outset tend to become increasingly procedural in nature; items that originally had scope within the proposition tend progressively to enlarge their scope, possibly even up to the discourse level; and meanings that originally made reference to the described event come to refer to the speech event itself. In conclusion, I suggest that one possible mechanism for subjectification is the 'raising' of an element from a lower level of structure (VP, predication) to a higher level of structure (CP, illocution).

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