

The grammaticalization 'chains' of the subject coreferential dative in Semitic and elsewhere

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A construction traditionally referred to as 'ethical dative' (*dativus ethicus* - ED) arose, apparently independently, in Biblical and Modern Hebrew (Muraoka 1978; Ullendorff 1985, 1992; Jenni 2000; Halevy 2007), Aramaic (Classical Syriac) (Joosten 1989), Spoken Arabic (Piamenta 1981; Ullendorff 1992), African languages (e.g. Chadic; Frajzynger 1977), Spanish (Maldonado 1999), Polish (Frajzyngier & Munkaila 2004) and some other languages. The construction that we'll deal with differs from the Romance 'genuine' ED (e.g. in French). While the ED prototypically refers to someone other than the subject in the construction under discussion it must be coreferential with the subject. I'll use the term "Subject Coreferential Dative" (hereafter: SCD), though I shall argue that this pronoun is best analyzed as a "Caseless Affix". In Semitic it is *l-* (lit. "to", "for", "of") while in Spanish *se* (the old *dative*>*benefactive* pronoun *le*->*ge*->*se* - this diachronic source differs from the one of the 'true' reflexive).

Biblical Hebrew:

- (1) *ve-qum brax lexa 'el Lavan* (Gen. 27:43)
 and-stand-up run-away to-you-SCD to Laban
 "[now, my son, listen to me] go away[for your own sake] and take refuge with my brother Laban"
 "Lève-toi, enfuis-toi vers Laban"

Modern Hebrew:

- (2) *&anaq 'exad mexo&ar, [...] haya mitnapel &al kfarim, mišpaxot*
 giant one ugly, was attacking villages, families
xotef lo (E. Sidon, *Monster*)
 kidnapping to-him-SCD
 "One ugly giant, [...] used to attack villages, kidnapping families [for his own pleasure]"

Modern Spoken Arabic:

- (3) **q&adu lahum šwoye**
 they-sat to-them-SCD a-little
 "They were sitting [about] for a short while"

Spanish:

- (4) *El joven se bebió el vino*
 The boy to-him-SCD drank the wine
 "The boy [just] drank up the wine"

The grammaticalization ‘chain’ of this construction that appears to hold in all the languages where this phenomenon has been described is expected to be *allative* > *dative* > *benefactive* > *reflexive-benefactive* > *SCD* (‘*ethical dative*’). It is likely that in both Semitic (mainly Hebrew) and Spanish the benefactive-reflexive construction is the diachronic bridge through which the benefactive transformed into the SCD.

However, a close examination of this phenomenon in some unrelated languages reveals that this grammaticalization ‘chain’ is not universal. In some languages, the chain-like connection to the dative is completely absent (e.g. in Chadic it is connected to the possessive pronoun). In light of this, we may conclude that grammaticalization proceeds in strictly local steps, each in principle independent of its immediate counterparts elsewhere.

I suggest that the SCD just like the genuine Romance ED has developed via a process of subjectification. That is, they are both instances of a propositional element which evolved into a non-propositional element in the sentence structure. Like the ED, the SCD is used to express the speaker’s attitude towards the subject-entity, and towards the entire situation described in the sentence. Thus, I suggest that the SCD in question is an instance of the dynamic, unidirectional process of grammaticalization whereby lexical items that originally function on the lower level of structure (viz. predication) acquire a new status in the synchronic system, that is, encode meanings and relations on the higher level of structure (viz. illocution).

In fact, it can be seen as illustrating the three main stages of grammaticalization suggested by Traugott (1982), namely *propositional* (> *textual*) > *expressive*.