

“I love me some him”:
The landscape of non-argument datives
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One syntactic feature of dialectal (Southern and Appalachian) U.S. English is the optional occurrence of a nonsubcategorized “personal dative” pronominal in transitive clauses that obligatorily coindexes the subject (cf. Christian 1991, Webelhuth & Dannenberg 2006 and references therein) and whose semantic contribution is somewhat nebulous. Examples are given in (1).

- (1) I love me some him. [title of hit Toni Braxton pop song]
Ø_i Get you_i a copper kettle. [first line of "Copper Kettle", traditional mountain ballad]
She_j needs her_j a new pickup truck.
[My husband]_k used to love him_k some Jack Daniels. [from "Monster's Ball", 2001 film]

This “personal dative” bears instructive if complex relations to analogous constructions in such languages as French, German, Walbiri, Hebrew, and Old English that have been variously termed “ethical”, “free”, “non-lexical” and “affected” datives (cf. Sweet 1900, Leclère 1976, Berman 1982, Authier & Reed 1992, Keenan 2003, among others). Some of these datives are coreferential with the subject (e.g. *Je me prends un petit café*) while others are non-coreferential (e.g. *Ils lui ont tué son oiseau*); they typically license benefactive and malefactive (adversative) readings respectively.

One theoretically significant property of the English cases is the distributional contrast between the personal datives in (1) and the more familiar (and less dialectally restricted) “bound pronouns” (and bound R-expressions) in contrastive focus contexts exemplified in (2) that present a well-known challenge to Principle B of the binding theory.

- (2) New York didn't destroy me. [**I**]_F destroyed me.
TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF. YOU BELONG TO [**YOU**]_F.
Jeff doesn't run for glory. He runs for [**Jeff**]_F.

These cases involve two coreferring coarguments of which the second must be referentially independent (Evans 1980), hence a first- or second-person pronominal or proper name, while all and only object pronominals, with no person restriction, can show up as personal datives. The occurrence of pronominals as opposed to anaphors in the personal dative construction stems from the non-argument (and hence non-**co**-argument) status of the “object” pronoun, which motivates the availability of third person pronominals. No binding effects are observed with personal datives because there is no argument to be bound.

If the personal datives of (1) do not constitute arguments of the predicate, what is their semantic contribution, if any, to the sentences in which they appear? I argue that the personal dative contributes a Gricean conventional implicature or Fregean *Andeutung* (Horn 2007) of subject affect that does not alter the truth conditions of the relevant sentence but does impose an appropriateness constraint on its felicitous assertion.