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Reflexive clitic constructions with datives: syntax and semantics.

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Introduction. Slavic sentences with reflexive clitics and datives called ‘involuntary state’, ‘feel-like’, ‘dispositional’, ‘productive inversion’, or ‘quirky subject’ constructions display considerable syntactic and semantic variation and lack counterparts in Romance, which are two facts unnoticed in the past. By contrast, anticausative constructions with reflexive clitics and rather similar datives display no variation in Slavic, and have counterparts in Romance. In this talk, I propose an account combining syntax and semantics in order to capture this web of similarities and differences.

I. Slavic involuntary state constructions are illustrated in (1-4). They differ in syntax and semantics in two ways that are not well known and crisscross each other. On the one hand, syntax unifies Pol and Slo. Besides datives, (1-2) contain so-called ‘impersonal’ clitics with Acc NPs, default Vs, and no Nom NP. By contrast, the Cze and Bul equivalents of (1-2) are ungrammatical, and (3-4) contain so-called ‘passive’ clitics with Nom NPs, agreeing Vs, and no Acc NP. On the other hand, semantics unifies Pol and Cze, distinguishing them from Slo and Bul, which are representative of South Slavic. That is, (1) and (3) differ in truth conditions from (2) and (4); the Pol / Cze dative denotes a past reader, and the Slo / Bul dative denotes an individual with a past predisposition, who need not have eaten or read.

Following Rivero and Sheppard (2001), I account for syntactic variation as follows. Pol (1) and Slo (2) are active sentences, with a syntactic nominative indefinite pronoun that in semantics consist of an existential quantifier and a variable. Cze (3) and Bul (4) are passive sentences, with an existentially closed argument available in semantics but not syntax (=Argument Saturation). In all cases, the dative is not an argument of the verb, but a syntactic adjunct in an applicative phrase. Semantic variation is due to ‘dative disclosure’: existential quantifiers are eliminated in syntactic indefinites in (1-2) and in implicit arguments in (3-4), and depending on language type, disclosed variables are bound to datives in two different ways. In Pol / Cze, the variable functions like a resumptive pronoun, and in Slo / Bul like a pronoun controlled by the dative. Dative disclosure is absent in Romance, so datives in Spanish sentences similar to (4) are benefactives: A Juan se le leían libros ‘People read books to/for John’.

II. Anticausatives with datives are illustrated in (5a-c). In Slavic, they do not differ in syntax or semantics, (5a-b), and they also exist in Romance, (5c). Besides datives and reflexive clitics, such sentences contain Nom NPs, agreeing Vs, and no Acc NP. Under appropriate pragmatic conditions, datives in (5a-c) can be involuntary agents, possessors, close or remote causers, or somehow affected participants such as benefactives/malefactives. Bul (5b) does not have the ‘feel-like’ reading found in (4).

Following (Rivero 2001), I argue that the contrast between (3-4) and (5a-c) supports that anticausatives differ in formal structure from passives. Anticausatives such as Pol *Zlama ly siTM okulary* ‘The glasses broke’ involve Argument Suppression, and thus lack an agent in syntax or semantics. If anticausatives do not display an existential argument, they cannot involve ‘dative disclosure’ in the sense used for the passives in (3-4). The strategy shared by many languages to interpret datives in (5a-c) is inferential. It differs from dative disclosure in (1-4) because it cannot manipulate a formally present argument, and, as I will show, has a ‘disjoint reference’ effect.

Reflexive clitic constructions with datives.

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Examples:

- (1) Jankowi czytało się te książki z przyjemnością. Polish
 John_{DAT} read_{NEU} Refl this book_{ACC} with pleasure
 ‘John read this book with pleasure’
- (2) Janezu se je jedlo jagode. Slovenian
 John_{DAT} Refl be_{3S} eat_{NEU} strawberries_{ACC}
 ‘John felt like eating strawberries’
- (3) Ta kniha se Janovi cetla dobre. Czech
 this book_{NOM.FEM} Refl John_{DAT} read_{PAST.FEM} well
 ‘John read this book with ease’
- (4) Na Ivan mu se cetjaxa knigi. Bulgarian
 John_{DAT} he_{DAT} Refl read_{IMPf.3P} books
 ‘John felt like reading books’
- (5) a. Jankowi zlamaly sie okulary. Polish
 John_{DAT} broken_{FEM.PL} Refl glasses_{FEM.PL}
- b. Na Ivan mu se scupixa ocilata. Bulgarian
 John_{DAT} he_{DAT} Refl broke_{3PL} glasses.the
- c. A Juan se le rompieron las gafas.
 Spanish
 John_{DAT} Refl he_{DAT} broke_{3PL} the glasses
 ‘John’s glasses broke’ ‘John broke the glasses involuntarily’ ‘John was the reason for the glasses breaking’ ‘John was somehow affected by the glasses breaking’

References.

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