# REMARKS ON A CLASS OF UNACCUSATIVE DATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

OBSERVATII ASUPRA UNEI CLASE DE CONSTRUCTII INACUZATIVE CU DATIV

*(Abstract)*

O serie de verbe inacuzative de mișcare (*ajunge*, *veni* etc.) suportă alternanţa a două sensuri: un sens de deplasare fizică (*Ion a venit la mine*) și un sens psihologic (*Mi-a venit un gând*). Sensul psihologic se construieste obligatoriu cu un dativ interpretat ca Experimentator. Această alternanţă nu a mai fost discutată sistematic. Lucrarea își propune să ofere o descriere sintactică și semantică a sensului psihologic, insistând asupra relaţiei dintre Ţintă/Locaţie, un rol tematic obligatoriu pentru verbele de miscare, și Experimentator, un rol caracteristic verbelor psihologice.

**Keywords**: unacusative verb, Dative, Experiencer, applicative construction.

## 1. Aim of the paper

Romanian possesses an extended class of *psych constructions based on light unaccusative verbs*, illustrated in (1). These unaccusative light verbs get a psych/somatic interpretation if they co-occur with a *psych or somatic noun/ adjective* and a Dative, interpreted as an Experiencer.

*Psych/Somatic Unaccusative Constructions*

(1) a. *Mi-* *este* *dor* *de* *cireşe.*
me(Dat)- is longing of cherries.
'I long for cherries.'

b. *Îmi* *vine* *dor* *de* *cireşe.*
me(Dat)- comes longing of cherries.
'I come to be longing for cherries.'

c. *Mi* *se* *face* *dor de cireşe*.
Me(Dat) se.Refl.Acc - makes longing of cherries.
'I become/grow desirous of cherries.'

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The light verbs in these constructions fall into the regular unaccusatives classes (Dragomirescu 2010, Irwin 2011): a) the verb *fi* 'be'; b) change of location verbs, (e.g. *veni*, 'come', *cădea* 'fall'), anticausative reflexive verbs (*a se face* 'become'). The present paper is devoted to the *psych/somatic uses of change of location verbs* (=COL), focusing on the variety of syntactic patterns that realize the psych interpretation.

**2. The data**

COL verbs show a characteristic alternation between *a sense of physical displacement* of a Theme to a Goal, illustrated in sentence a) of each pair below, and a psych/somatic meaning expressing mental or bodily change in an Experiencer. The syntax of the two readings is vastly different. The movement sense has a Nom+ Prep. Acc structure, the psych/somatic reading exhibits a Nom + doubled Dative structure. This alternation is systematic and is found at least with the following COL verbs: *ajunge* (arrive), *cădea* (fall), *merge* (go), *sta* (stay), *ședea* (sit), *rămâne* (remain), *veni* (come).

(2) a. *Ion a ajuns la mine*.
Ion has arrived at me.
'Ion has come to me.'

b. *Îmi ajung banii până la leafă*.
me(Dat)-suffice money until at salary.
The money will suffice me until payday.

(3) a. *El cade/pică pe scări*.
he is-falling on stairs.
'He fell down on the stairs.'

b. *Vorbele tale i-au căzut/picat bine*.
words.the your him(Dat)-have fallen well
'Your words did him good'.

(4) a. *Tom merge la şcoală*.
'Tom goes to school.'

b. *Cum îi merge?/ Îi merge din plin*.
how him(Dat)-goes / him(Fat)-goes in full
'How is he doing?' 'He is doing very well.'

(5) a. *Ion stă în fotoliu*.
Ion sits in armchair.
'Ion is sitting in the armchair.'

b. *Îi stă rău purtarea asta*.
him(Dat) sits badly behavior.the this
'This behavior suits him ill.'

(6) a. Ion şade în fotoliu.
Ion sits in armchair.
'Ion is sitting in the armchair.'

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b. *Culoarea asta* *nu-ţi* *şade (bine).*
Color.the this not-you(Dat) sits (well).
'This color does not fit you.'

(7) a. *Maria rămâne la mine*.
Maria remains at me.
'Mary stays with me.'

b. *I-a rămas această obsesie.*
him(Dat) remains this obsession.
'He remains with this obsession.'

To the best of my knowledge this alternation has not been described in the literature and it is of interest at least in as much as it gives uncontroversial evidence for the connection between the Goal/Location interpretation of the Dative and its Experiencer interpretation. The connection between the Goal/Location role and the Experiencer role was first noticed by Fillmore (1968), where the Dative (i.e. Experiencer) is defined as the *locus of a psychological process*. The idea was also developed in Bouchard (1992) and Jackendoff (1990), a recent syntactic implementation of it is available in Landau (2010).

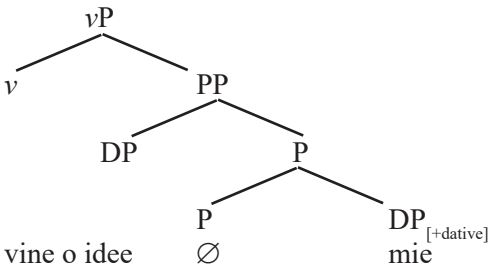
**2.1** *The variety of psych/somatic patterns*. The psych/somatic interpretation of COL verbs is well represented, and it is realized in several slightly different patterns, which are tentatively described below.

**2.1.1** *The basic prepositional pattern*. Since these verbs are COL unaccusatives, their basic configuration only includes the verb and a Goal/Location small clause (Irwin 2011). The Theme is projected as the small clause subject and becomes the subject of the COL verb by raising. The P heading the small clause is null when Goal/Location is realized as a Dative and an Experiencer interpretation is intended. The underlying configuration is (10) and examples are given in (8). Not all the verbs may realize this simple structure.

(8) a. *Mi-a* *venit* *un gând/ dor de plimbare.*
me(Dat)-has come a thought/ longing of walk
'I've got a thought/a longing for a walk.'

b. *Imi-rămâne* *o singură soluţie*.
me(Dat) -remains one only solution.
'Only one solution is left to me.'

(9)




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When the Dative may still be understood as a Goal/Location, it alternates with a PP realization as in (10a–b). If only an Experiencer interpretation of the Dative is acceptable, there is no prepositional alternative, as in (10c–d). What is characteristic for this structure is the *terminal coincidence interpretation of the Dative/PP*. In all of the examples in (8) and (10), the Theme is *at the Goal* at the end of the event, but the Goal/Location is [+personal]

(10) a. *Banii nu **mi-** au ajuns încă.*
money.the not mi(Dat)- have arrived yet.
*b. Banii n-au ajuns **la mine.***
money.the not-have arrived at me(Acc).
'The money hasn't reached me.'
c. ***Mi** -a rămas un singur gând.*
me (Dat)- has remained an only thought.
d. **Un singur gând a rămas **la mine**.*
an only thought has remained at me.
'Only one thought is left to me.'

**2.1.2.** *The Path-Degree structure*. In a more complex interpretation, psych readings of COL verbs express *evaluation*. In this case, the Path component of the Goal phrase is reinterpreted as a *degree-scale*, resulting in a *Path-Degree structure*. The Experiencer Dative is *the reference point* with respect to which the evaluation is conducted, i.e. things look good/bad, depending on how they are experienced by the Dative. The Path is foregrounded and the *v*P suggests how much of it has been covered by the (moving) Theme with respect to an expected standard of normativity (11a–b), supplied by the Dative, or to what degree the Goal/Location has been reached properly or at all (11c–d).

The degree structure is overtly expressed by *vP modification*. The verb combines with any (modal) degree construction, (overtly or covertly). The degree phrase variously comes out as an AdvP (*bine* (well), *rău* (ill), *prost* (badly), *aşa şi aşa* (so and so), *groaznic* (terribly), *excepţional* (exceptionally), etc.), a PP (*ca naiba* (like hell), *de minune* (wonderfully), *într-o părere* (after a fashion), etc.), a free relative clause (*cum trebuie* (as it should), *cât se poate de bine* (as well as is possible), *cum nu se poate mai bine* (as well as is possible) etc.). The PP/AP/CP interprets the spatial Path structure as an abstract degree structure. Syntactically, this constituent occupies *a manner adverb position* (left adjunct to the *v*P) and takes scope over the entire *v*+PP structure imposing the degree interpretation of the path (see (16)).

(11) a. *Vorbele lui îmi pică/ cad bine/ca naiba/cum nu se poate mai bine.*
words.the his me(Dat) fall well/ like hell/ as well as can be.
'His words suit me well/ like hell/ as well as can be.'

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b. *Dan i-a căzut cu tronc Mariei*.
Dan her(Dat)- has fallen with crash to Maria (Dat).
'Dan has fallen smitten by Mary.'
c. *Pantofii nu-mi mai vin (bine/de loc).*
shoes.the not-me (Day) anymore/come (well/ at all)/
'These shoes don't fit me well/at all any more.'
d. *Îmi ajunge (până peste cap) atâta scandal*.
me(Dat) arrives (overhead) so much scandal.
'So much scandal is enough for me.'

Notice the ambiguity of sentences (12), with the verb *ajunge* (arrive), between a terminal coincidence (Goal) interpretation (*reach*) and an evaluative degree reading (*be enough*).

(12) *Nu mi-au ajuns banii (dar sper sa-i primesc săptămâna viitoare/și a trebuit se împrumut.)*
'The money hasn't reached me yet, but I hope to get it next week.'
'The money wasn't sufficient (so I had to borrow some)'

One variant of this pattern has a CP in subject position. The subject of the subject clause may be different from the Dative (13b) or controlled by the Dative (13a). The subject clause may take the subjunctive for all the verbs and the indicative for some of them. When the verb accepts both moods, the usual *realis/irrealis* distinction holds (see (13)). The choice of the subjunctive is related to the evaluative normative meaning of the sentence. Since an abstract interpretation is already suggested by the clausal Theme, the degree phrase may be overt (15), as well as covert (see (13), (14)):

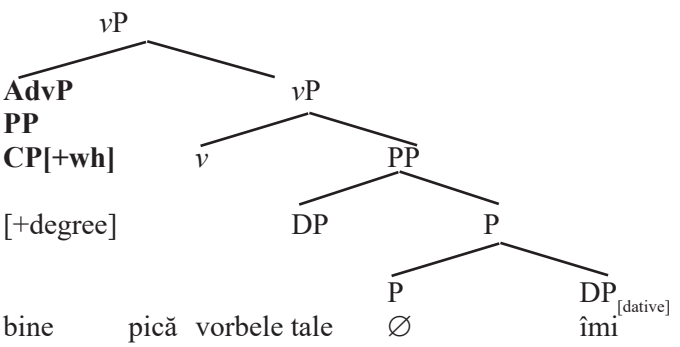
(13) a. *Îmi ajunge să merg la operă pentru a fi fericită*.
me arrives SĂ (subj) go1st P at opera to be happy
'It suffices me to go to the opera to be happy.'
b. *Îmi ajunge că mănâncă amândoi pe cheltuiala mea*.
me(Dat) arrives that eat (Ind) both on expense.the. my
'It suffices me that both eat at my expense.'
(14) a. *Nu-mi vine să muncesc mult pe bani atât de puțini*.
not-me(Dat) comes [SĂ (subj) work.1stP much on money so little
'I don't feel like working a lot on so little money.'
b. *Nu-i mai merge să se plimbe pe cheltuiala statului*.
not-him any more goes [SĂ(subj)SE(Acc.refl)travel.3rdP on expense.the of the state
'He cannot afford to travel on the expenses of the state any more.'

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(15) a. *Îți șade/ stă rău să te porti așa.*
you(Dat) sits ill [SĂsubj you (acc) behave so
'It suits you will to behave like this.'
b. *Îți vine de minune să câștigi la loterie.*
you(Dat) comes of wonder [SĂ (subj) win.2ndP win the lottery]
'It suits you wonderfully to be winning the lottery.'

Importantly, with many of the relevant verbs *a degree phrase has become obligatory*, at least in some interpretations (e.g. *sta bine* (approx. 'to suit well'), *cădea rău* (approx. 'to suit ill'). This raises the problem of *idiom formation*, recently discussed from a syntactic perspective in Bruening (2010). He argues that *heads s-select their modifier*s and that idiom formation is based on c- and s- selection, with s-selection possibly turning into *collocation*. If his theory is correct, the verb s-selects the modifier, which has in its c-domain the *v*+ small clause configuration, as in (16), a configuration which allows the idiomatic selection of modifier. In idioms, the modifier may be obligatory, as in (17).

(16)




(17) a. *Vorbele tale îmi pică bine.*
words.the your me(Dat) fall well.
'Your words do me good.'
b. **Vorbele tale îmi pică.*
words.the your me(Dat) fall

The "path-degree pattern" differs from the basic locative PP pattern only in the supplementary presence of the s-selected degree phrase modifier, bolded in (16), a component which signals the normative evaluative interpretation.

**2.1.3.** *The copulative construction*. The verbs of movement under analysis become *link verbs*, selecting the most characteristic type of predicative, namely, a psych/somatic *adjectival phrase*, in the class *drag* (dear), *preţios* (precious), *nesuferit* (insufferable, hateful) , *indiferent* (indifferent). The subject (the Theme) of the adjectival small clause agrees with the predicative adjective in gender and number. The Dative may be viewed as *a subcategorized*

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*complement* of the adjective, and as such it alternates with a Prepositional Complement (see derivational details in Cornilescu (2015)).Verbs which enter the construction are *cădea*, *pica* (fall), *a rămâne* (remain).

(18) a. *Fata le căzuse/ le picase dragă tuturor / la toţi.*
girl.the them-had-fallen dear all(Dat)/ to all.
'The girl had fallen dear to all of them.'
b. *Familia le rămânea preţioasă la toţi/tuturor.*
family.the them(Dar) remained precious at all/ all(Dat)
'Family remained dear to all of them.'

Given the structures discussed so far, one understands the difference between sentence (19a), where *bine* 'well' is an adverb in a path-scale structure, and (19b) where *bună* 'good, well-suited' is an adjective agreeing in gender and number with the noun and the Dative is a Beneficiary (i.e. good for you) subcategorized by the adjective.

(19) a. *Pălăria (îţi) vine bine*.
'The hat suits you well.'
b. Pălăria (îţi) rămâne bună.
'The hat remains well suited.'

**2.1.4.** *Apparent impersonal constructions*. In some cases it looks as if there is no Nominative subject and as if the Dative merely co-occurs with a PP. In a variant of the construction, illustrated in (21) and (22) there is also a degree adverb (*uşor* (easy), *greu* (difficult), *bine* (well), etc.); the role of the AdvP is to express the path-degree interpretation, as already explained above.

(20) a. *Îmi ajunge cu atâţia musafiri pe cap*.
me(Dat) arrives with so-many guests on head
'I've had enough of having so many guests on my hands.'
b. *Îmi ajunge fără nici un ajutor*.
me(Dat) arrives without not a help
'I've had enough of not getting any help.'
(21) a. *Îmi vine uşor cu un profesor ca el*.
Me (Dat) comes easily with a teacher like him.
'I find it easy with a teacher like him.'
b. *Îi vine bine fără pălărie*.
him (Dat) comes well without hat
'It suits him well without a hat.'
(22) a. *Îi şade bine cu pălărie.*
him (Dat) sits well with hat
'It suits him well with his hat on'

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b. *Îi stă* *rău* *fără pălărie*.
him (Dat) sits ill without hat
'It suits him ill without his hat on.'

In all of these examples the Dative is interpreted as an Experiencer. No Nominative subject is required, a fact which might be taken to suggest that these are *impersonal constructions*. It may be shown, however, that these are *not* Nominative-less structures, but rather constructions which have become idiomatic in an elliptical form. Immediate support for this hypothesis is provided by the existence of alternative constructions with finite subject clauses. Consider the examples below: the subject clause is interpreted as a Theme, i.e. an event which "moves" along the path structure and reaches the Experiencer and is evaluated as easy (23a) or sufficiently unpleasant from the Experiencer's point of view (23b).

(23) a. *Îmi vine* *ușor* *să lucrez* *cu un profesor ca el.*
me(Dat) comes easily SĂ(subj) work.1P with a teacher like him
'It is easy for me to work with a teacher like him.'
b. *Îmi ajunge* *să lucrez* *pe așa de puțini bani*.
me(Dat) arrives SĂ(subj) work.1P on so little money
'I've had enough of working on such little money.'

The finite subject clause examples are useful not only because they reveal the Theme – Goal/ Experiencer argument structure of the *v*P, but also because they show that the PP is *an adjunct modifying* the *predicate of the subject clause* (e.g. an instrumental adjunct in the examples above), and it is not a modifier of the COL verb. Note also that the Dative is interpreted as a controller of the subordinate clause subject, i.e. a participant in the subordinate clause eventuality, an experience which the Dative finds easy, sufficient etc. The same analysis suggests itself for the examples we started with ((20)–(22)), which contain no apparent subject clause. Still, in these examples too, the PPs are modifiers in an implicit subject clause and are not related to the COL verb, either. These modifiers are actually sufficient to infer the (rest of the) subject clause. Importantly, from a strictly syntactic point of view, a Nominative DP is possible, and any DP which may express an event (e.g. a verbal noun, like *statul* (staying) etc.) may function as a subject, as in the examples below.

(24) a. Îmi ajunge *statul* cu atâția musafiri pe cap.
me(Dat) arrives staying.the with so-many guests on head
'I've had enough of having so many guests on my hands.'
b. Îmi vine ușor *orice* (activitate) cu un prof ca el.
me(Dat) comes easily anything/any activity with a teacher like him
'I find it easy to do anything with a teacher like him'

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On the strength of this evidence, two conclusions immediately follow: Firstly, these pseudo impersonal structures instantiate the path-scale structure already discussed in 2.1.2 above. Secondly, these constructions exhibit the same Nominative-Dative pattern that is common to all the sentences based on COL verbs, which have psych readings.

**3. General Properties of Unaccusative Dative constructions**

As used in the Experiencer Dative construction, COL verbs have two distinctive properties. The first is that the Dative *must be doubled by the clitic*, while in many other cases Dative clitics are optional (see *The Grammar of Romanian*, 2013: 154–156). The second property is the absence of nominalizations in the *psych* reading: **venirea chefului de plimbare Mariei* (coming.the wish(Gen) of walking Mary(Dat)). Both properties are typical of Dative *unaccusative* configurations. A possible analysis of unaccusative Dative constructions has been proposed in Cornilescu (2015).

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