THE FRENCH ETHICAL DATIVE
13 SYNTACTIC TESTS

Mélanie Jouitteau and Milan Rezac

Abstract: We discuss the properties of ethical datives in French, assembling diagnostics to differentiate them from other datives and to establish their properties. Ethical datives are introduced above the thematic and Case/A-movement domains, and do not participate in these systems, unlike both core and extended (benefactive, possessor) datives. They are also independent of the C-system properties of Force, Finiteness and Tense. However, they are nevertheless integrated into the morphosyntax of the clause.

1. Introduction

The literature on French dative clitics differentiates subcategorised or *lexical* datives, (1), from *extended* datives. Among extended datives one distinguishes datives of inalienable possession (2), benefactive/adversative datives (3), affected/experiential datives (4), and "P-stranding" dative (5) (we set aside the causee and epistemic datives of multipredicate structures).[1]

(1) Je **lui** ai parlé (, à elle). *Lexical/argumental dative*
I 3S.DAT have talked (, to her)
'I talked to her.'

inalienable possession

(2) Le ciel ***(t'**) est tombé sur la tête. = Le ciel est tombé sur **ta** tête
the sky 2S.DAT is fallen on the head The sky is fallen on your head
'The sky is fallen on your head.'

benefactive/adversative

(3) Paul **lui** a sali cette nappe.
Paul 3S.DAT has dirtied this tablecloth
'Paul has dirtied this tablecloth on her/Marie.'

affected/experiential

(4) Elle (**lui**) a attrapé trois rhumes (*à sa gouvernante) cet hiver (, à sa gouvernante).
she 3S.DAT has caught three colds to her governess this winter to her governess
'She caught three colds this winter on her/on her governess.'

P-stranding dative

(5) On **lui** a tiré dessus __.
we 3S.DAT has shot at
'He was shot at (We shot at him).'

ethical dative

(6) Et un sourire que Moller te vous **lui** aurait bien refilé une baffe (,*à toi /*à nous).
And a smile that Moller 2S 2P 3S.DAT would good given a smack to you to us

[1] We wish to thank Johan Rooryck, Yves D'hulst and the audience of the Bucharest 2007 conference for useful discussions and feedback. The used abbreviations are: ED: ethical dative; S: singular, P: plural, ACC: accusative, DAT: dative; EXPL = expletive. 1st/2nd person clitics syncretic for dative-accusative; they are glossed for case only if traditional diagnostics like right dislocation via a DP vs. *à* PP identify them as such. Argumental clitics are in bold, ethical dative clitics are underlined. French judgements of those of Mélanie Jouitteau, native speaker of Nantais French, are marked [MJ], including the data taken from the internet conformant to her judgments. There is undoubtedly variation among speakers; some speakers seem to lack EDs entirely.

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

'And a smile such that M would have really given him a smack in the face.'
[Aragon, *la semaine sainte* cited in Baylon and Fabre 1995, translation and '*' our]

Many diagnostics separate lexical from extended datives, and differentiate among the latter.

(7) Some properties of extended datives
A. Form: Extended datives resist assuming certain forms like non-clitic, contrastively focussed strong pronoun, complex reflexive, with great variability among contexts where this property holds and among speakers (Kayne 1975, Rouveret and Vergnaud 1980, Rooryck 1988, Postal 1990).
B. Transitivity: Many extended datives are restricted to transitive-like VPs, with variation on passives (Rooryck 1988, Authier and Reed 1991).
C. Idioms: Affected and ethical datives may be added to idioms without affecting their meaning, possessive datives may not (Borer and Grodzinsky 1986: 206-7, Authier and Reed 1991: 31).

Among extended datives, French ethical datives have received little attention since Leclère's (1976) seminal study. Ethical dative clusters as in (8) have only been mentioned and multiple clusters of the type in (9) seem to have gone unnoticed.

Ethical datives [MJ]

(8) Je (te (me (nous))) **lui**$_i$ **en**$_j$ **y**$_k$ ai mis deux (,de clefs$_j$, à Myriam$_i$, dans la poche$_k$)
I 2S 1S 1P 3S.DAT GEN LOC have put two of keys, to Myriam, into the pocket
'I put two of them there for her.' + ED.

(9) Je te me vais te me vous **lui** faire passer un sale quart d'heure…
I 2S 1S go 2S 1S 2P 3S.DAT make pass a dirty quarter-hour ...
'I'm gonna make him spend a lousy quarter-hour…' + ED

EDs are not arguments, in contrast to lexical, possessor, and P-stranding datives. They do not affect the truth conditional meaning of the sentence and often as here are not easily translatable: they invoke the speaker or addressee as witness or vaguely affected party. However, meaning is not a sure criterion of ethical datives; the meaning of extended datives, particularly benefactive and affected, shades into that of the ethical dative, particularly 1st person. The goal of this article is to provide formal criteria to single out ethical datives and draw some conclusions about their syntactic properties from the contrasts they reveal.

2. Ethical datives are generated above the thematic domain

Work on applicativity puts different kinds of lexical and extended datives, such as possessive and affected, into the thematic domain (Cuervo 2003). Our results suggest that ethical datives are different. The tests developed in this section show that ethical datives originate outside the thematic and Case / A-movement domains.

2.1 Restriction to first and second person and compatibility with other datives

Dative clitics that are clearly argumental (selected) cannot co-occur with each other, but they can coocur with EDs (8). Similarly, extended datives such as the benefactive cannot occur with argumental datives or with each other, but they are fine with EDs. EDs are

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

compatible with another dative, lexical, non-lexical, or ethical (Leclère 1976, Strotzer 1978). In (10) and (11), ED readings are licit, but the possessive, benefactive or P-stranding readings are banned.

(10) Elle (me) **lui** a mis un bébé dans les bras.
she 1S 3S.DAT has put a baby in the arms.
* 'She has put a child in my arms for him' * *possessive* + DAT
* 'She has put a child in his arms for me' * *benefactive* + DAT
'She has put a child in his arms.' ED + DAT

(11) Elle (me) **lui** a tiré dessus __ .
she 1S 3S.DAT has shot at
* 'She has shot at me for him.' * *P-stranding* + DAT
'She has shot at him.' ED + DAT

This same test reveals that EDs can only be 1st/2nd person. A sequence of two 3rd person clitics is impossible even if it is attempted to interpret one as an ED, and in a sequence of a 1st/2nd dative + 3rd person dative clitic, the 3rd person one must be interpreted as argumental (cf. Martinon 1927, Grevisse-Goosse 1993: §647e, Rooryck 1988:385n1). Thus, the presence of a third person dative automatically designs the others as EDs. The third person dative may be any dative, such as the affected dative in (12), but the others can be only ethical datives and thus 1st/2nd person. In what follows, we make sure that we are investigating EDs by systematically adding a third person dative (in bold along with all non-ED clitics).

(12) Elle (te / te me / te me nous / *leur) **lui** a attrapé trois rhumes cet hiver.
she 2S / 2S 1S / 2S 1S 1P / 3P.DAT 3S.DAT has caught three colds this winter
'She caught three colds this winter on her, you know.'

The restriction on EDs to 1st/2nd person is formal, not semantic, because an addressee treated as third person does not satisfy the 1st/2nd person restriction (13). [2]

(13) Elle va (te me nous / *lui / *se) **leur** prendre un pain de seigle, comme d' habitude ?
She will 2S 1S 1S /3S.DAT/ SE 3P.DAT take a bread of rye like of usual
'Will you take a rye bread for them (e.g. your family) as usual?'

2.2 No auxiliary switch

In French, an accusative or dative clitic coreferent with the subject (reflexive) requires that the perfect auxiliary of transitive be *être* 'be', rather than *avoir* 'have' found otherwise. This holds of lexical, possessive, benefactive, affected, or advancement datives. However, EDs do not trigger this auxiliary switch.

(14) Je$_i$ **me**$_i$ SUIS cassé(e) la figure *possessive*
I 1S.DAT have broken the face
'I broke my face.'

[2] The reflexive *se* is not banned by a Condition B effect, since, as we discuss below, Condition B does not affect EDs. However, and contrary to other EDs, *se* is also excluded by the French ban on two co-occurring third person datives. This *[3 DAT- 3 DAT] constraint makes *se* a particularly hard case of ED, since the co-occurrence of an argumental dative clitic cannot be used as an ED detection test.

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

(15) Je$_i$ **me**$_i$ SUIS tiré dessus ___. *P-stranding*
I 1S.DAT have shot at
'I shot at myself.'

(16) Je$_i$ **me**$_i$ SUIS mis de côté un morceau de gâteau. *benefactive*
I 1S.DAT have put aside a piece of cake
'I put aside a piece of cake for myself.'

(17) Elle **s**' est attrapé trois rhumes cet hiver. *experiential*
she SE.DAT is caught three colds this winter
'She caught three colds this winter.'
'She caught her(self) three colds this winter' [*dialectal English*]

(18) Je$_i$ (me$_i$) **lui** AI cassé la figure. *ethical dative*
I 1S 3S.DAT have broken the face
'I broke his face (for/on me).'

(19) Je (me nous) AI cuisiné un poulet pour ses amies. *ethical dative*
I 1S 1P have cooked a chicken for her friends
'I cooked a chicken for her friends.'

In most approaches, auxiliary switch is a property of the thematic or Case, A-movement systems (e.g. Pesetsky 1995). The ethical dative is therefore outside of the relevant system.

2.3 Invisibility to the 'Person Case Constraint'

The Person case Constraint (PCC), also called '**me-lui*' constraint, is the generalization that a 1st/2nd person accusative clitic is blocked in the presence of a dative clitic. The PCC holds true of most datives: lexical (20), benefactive (21), possessive (22), causes, etc. (Kayne 1975, Bonet 1991, Postal 1990).

(20) *Elle **vous m**' a présenté. *lexical dative*
she 2P 1S has introduced
'She has introduced you to me / me to you.'

(21) *Elle **vous m**' a trouvé. *benefactive dative*
she 2P 1S has found
'She has found you for me / me for you.'

(22) *Elle **vous m'** a mis dans les bras. *possessive dative*
she 2P 3S has put in the arms
'She has placed you in my arms / me in your arms.'

The ethical dative is alone among datives in being invisible to the constraint (Perlmutter 1971, Morin 1981, Postal 1990, Albizu 1997) as shown in (23).

(23) Demain je (me) **vous** (me) emmène en vacances [ACC ½] DAT.$_{ED}$
tomorrow I 1S 2P.ACC 1S take in vacations
'Tomorrow I will take you on vacation.'

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

On one approach, the PCC derives from the syntax of the Case system or related mechanisms (Albizu 1997, Ormazabal and Romero 1998, Anagnostopoulou 2003). The invisibility of the ED to it follows if it is base-generated outside this system, above T for example, as proposed by Albizu (1997).

2.4 Clitic only

The meaning corresponding to lexical and extended datives can be expressed by *à* PPs, under certain conditions: generally, at least by clitic + right-dislocated *à* PP, as for possessive datives, often also by right-dislocated *à* PP alone, as for affected datives (Leclère 1976), sometimes by an integrated *à* PP alone, as for some benefactives and direct object possessors. By contrast, there is no independent realization by a DP or *à* PP for an ethical dative (25).

(24) Elle (**lui**) a attrapé trois rhumes (*à sa gouvernante) cet hiver (, à sa gouvernante).
she 3SF.DAT has caught three colds to her governess this winter to her governess
'Her$_i$ governess had her$_j$ catch three colds this winter on her$_i$.'

(25) Je vais te me **vous** faire bosser aussi (,* te me) (, vous)!
I go 2S 1S 2P.ACC make work also 2S 1S 2P
'I'm gonna make you work hard too!'

If ED is base-generated outside the thematic and Case domains, then as a DP it could not satisfy its Case requirement via structural Case or via selection by a preposition and inherent Case. Apparently, being a clitic does let it survive without getting Case.

2.5 The ethical dative is not subject to Condition B.

Two ethical datives referring to the same speaker can be realized in a single binding domain (26). Similarly, an upstairs ethical dative does not block a downstairs argumental dative also referring to the speaker (in (27) the second *te* could not be a bound anaphora because they are restricted to subjects in French).

(26) Elle$_i$ (te) va (te) **la**$_{*i}$ **lui**$_{*i}$ trouver vite fait. [MJ]
she 2S AUX 2S 3SF.ACC 3S.DAT find fast done
'She will find her for her quickly.'

(27) Il te (me) va **te** donner une de ces leçon!
he 2S 1S is.going 2S.DAT give one of these lessons
'He's going to give you a lesson, you'll see.'

If EDs are not in and do not come from A-positions, i.e. they are base-generated outside the A-system domain, Condition B is not necessarily expected. Indeed, we find it absent in other cases of elements base-generated in such positions, like resumptives on local objects in some languages, and in French, resumption in "complex inversion":

(28) Peut-être [$_{CP}$ *Camelia*$_i$ va-t- [$_{TP}$ *elle*$_i$ arriver plus tard]]?
perhaps Camelia is.going she arrive later
'Perhaps Camelia will come later?'

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

2.6 EDs appear where other clitics cannot

EDs generally occur in all environments where other clitics are licit. They appear in infinitival clauses, provided they can host other clitics as in (29), (30) and (31). In causative infinitives (32), where clitic climbing is obligatory, EDs show the same restriction.

(29) [$_{FinP}$ pour [$_{X}$ (te me) **le** [$_{IP}$ rentrer dans le crâne une bonne fois pour toutes]]].
for 2S 1S 3S.ACC put in the head a good time for all
'To put it in my head once for all.'

(30) Là aussi il est sans doute nécessaire de **se** te me vous faire une petite piqûre de rappel.
here also it is without doubt necessary to SE 2S 1S 2P make a little injection of reminder
'Here it is also no doubt necessary to give you a little injection to remind you.'
<http://eric.cabrol.free.fr/CalculEF/calcul_structure.html>

(31) Mais ça ne se passera pas comme ça ! Didier, Eden,
Je vais te me **vous** faire bosser aussi !
I am.going 2S 1S 2P.ACC make work too
'But that's not gonna happen like that! D., E., I'm gonna make you work too!'
<http://utopie.viabloga.com/news/693.shtml>

(32) Il (te me) (**la**) fera [(*te me) (*** la**) manger], et puis c' est tout.
He 2S 1S 3S.ACC will.do 2S 1S 3S.ACC eat and then that is all
'He will make her eat, and that's all.'

However EDs are found where no other clitics occur. French clitic climbing is limited to causatives and mpossible e.g. with progressive auxiliary 'go' with an infinitive (33). EDs are found above *aller*. The infinitive may contain another ED, which if present may be identical, partially identical (36), or disjoint (35):

(33) Myriam (*y) va (y) faire une soirée.
Myriam LOC AUX LOC make a party
'Myriam will make a party there.'

(34) Je te me nous vais **lui** chanter la sérénade qu'elle en fondra sur place. [MJ]
I 2S 1S 1P am.going 3S.DAT sing the serenade …
'I'm gonna sing her such a serenade that she will melt from it on the spot.'

(35) Les moulins à vent d'aujourd'hui sont dignes de ma bravoure, cria-t-il, et pour la gloire de ma Dulcinée du Toboso, je te vais me **les** exterminer.
… I 2S am.going 1S 3PL.ACC exterminate
'The windmills of today are worthy of my bravery, cried he, and for the glory of my fiancée of Toboso, I am going to exterminate them.'
<http://archives.arte-tv.com/hebdo/archimed/19990914/ftext/sujet4.html>

(36) Je te me vais te vous pondre un petit site simple consacré à un championnat.
I 2S 1S am.going 2S 2P lay.egg a little site simple consecrated to a championship
'I'm going to create (lay, as an egg) a simple little site consecrated to the championship.'
<http://www.jeuxvideo.com/forums/1-10457-3146481-2-0-1-0-0.htm>

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

Like the causative *faire*, aspectual semi-auxiliaries like *aller* provide a matrix cliticization site. The opacity of the infinitive to clitic climbing prevents its clitics from moving there, and *aller* itself has no arguments to land there. EDs however can occur in this matrix position. We propose that EDs are base-generated here, rather than moving from the opaque infinitive. The infinitives has its own independent cliticization site and as can be seen, EDs can be separately base-generated here. The possibility of the two sets of EDs co-occurring confirms that EDs in the matrix clause are not moving from the embedded clause, since it is a general property of clitic climbing that a given infinitive cannot be at the same time opaque and transparent for climbing for the same type of clitic (e.g. Aissen and Perlmutter 1983). Since the matrix EDs are base-generated above the cliticization domain of the infinitive, and the domain of cliticization and clitic climbing seems to be at least as large as the domain of Case and A-movement, the matrix EDs are base-generated above this domain.

2.7 Ethical datives cannot control PRO

Jaeggli (1986:31) observes that ethical datives unlike possessors / benefactives cannot control PRO in Spanish. This is also the case in French. In (38), the possessive dative but not the ED can control PRO. In (39), only the arbitrary reading is available, since coreference with *la* in the infinitive prevents the possessive dative from controlling.

Spanish

(37) [PRO$_{*i/ARB}$ cuidarla tanto] me$_i$ le arruino la vida a mi hija.
Look.after.her so.much 1S 3S.DAT ruined the life to my daughter
'The fact that one (PRO-ARB) took so much care of her ruined my daughter's life.'
* 'I taking so much care of her ruined my daughter's life.'

French

(38) [PRO$_{*ARB/*i/*j/*k/*l}$ trop se protéger] te$_i$ me$_j$ nous$_k$ **lui**$_l$ a ruiné le caractère.
too much 3SE protect 2S 1S 2P 3S.DAT has ruined the nature
'Protecting herself too much ruined her character.'

(39) [PRO$_{ARB/*i/*j/*k/*l}$ trop la protéger] te$_i$ me$_j$ nous$_k$ **lui**$_l$ a ruiné le caractère.
too much 3SF.ACC protect 2S 1S 2P 3S.DAT has ruined the nature
'The fact that one (PRO-ARB) protected her so much has ruined her nature.'
* 'You/ I / Us protecting her so much ruined her nature.'

2.8 Ethical datives are not related to the CP/Mood system

Contrary to what is reported for ethical dative elsewhere (German *mir*, see Abraham 1972), French EDs can appear in embedded clauses, including infinitives ((29) and followings). They are also compatible with questions (40) and imperatives (41), (42).

(40) Je me demande qui va (te me nous) **lui** dire ses 4 vérités!
I 1S.ACC ask who will 2S 1S 1P 3.DAT tell his 4 truths
'I wonder who's gonna give it to him straight.'

(41) Regarde te me nous donc ça!
Look 2S 1S 1P com'on that
'Com'on, look at that!'

(42) Prends te moi donc ce panier, ça **me** débarrassera toujours.
take 2S 1S.DAT com'on this basket it 1S.ACC relieve (of it) anyway
'Com'on, take this basket for me, that will at least lighten my load.'

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

EDs are thus independent of the properties of the C-system, like Force, Mood, Finiteness, suggesting a lower position. This draws a contrast for example with Basque allocutive agreement, which adds a morpheme coding the addressee to the verb; it is restricted to main clause indicatives, leading Oyharçabal (1993) and Albizu (1997) to link it to the C-system.

2.9 The EDs's placement in the clitic cluster is variable but not free

The traditional ordering of clitics in French is represented in the template below.[3] Ethical datives are typically set apart, since they do not obey the template. Bonami and Boyé (2007, note 21), for example, note that "[…] ethical datives can co-occur with a clitic belonging to block E; thus they should be treated by adding a further block E' between [E] and [F]". However, our investigation points to a higher site, delineated by the bold lines, within which rather complex (and perhaps variable) ordering facts hold.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
[*1s,nom*] **je**	*Negation* **ne**	[*1s,acc/dat*] **me**	[*3ms,acc,nonrefl*] **le**	[*3s,dat,nonrefl*] **lui**	[*loc*] **y**	[*de*] **en**
[*2s,nom*] **tu**		[*2s,acc/dat*] **te**	[*predicative*] **le**	[*3p,dat,nonrefl*] **leur**		
[*3ms,nom*] **il**		[*3,acc/dat,refl*] **se**	[*3fs,acc,nonrefl*] **la**			
[*3fs,nom*] **elle**		[*1p,acc/dat*] **nous**	[*3p,acc,nonrefl*]: **les**			
…		[*2p,acc/dat*] **vous**				

EDs consistently appear with 3rd person arguments on the right, which points toward a site on the left of block D (6). However, placement with respect to 1st/2nd person clitics is more complex. When EDs cooccur with a 1st/2nd person *singular* dative, only the rightmost can be interpreted as a lexical dative, as shown by the contrast between (43) and (44), and the placement of the ED in (45) right after the negation particle *ne*. On the other hand, EDs are satellites around 1st/2nd person *plural* datives and the reflexive *se*: they may precede or follow argumental *se*, as in (46) and (47), and the argumental 2P dative clitic in (48) and (23).

(43) Michel **te** (*<u>me</u>) fera montrer son passeport, et puis c'est tout! *DAT-ED
Michel 2S.DAT 1S will.make show his passport and then it is all
'Michel will make you show his passport, and that's all!'

(44) Michel (<u>te</u>) **me** fera montrer son passeport, et puis c'est tout! √ED-DAT
Michel 2S 1S.DAT will.make show his passport and then it is all
'Michel will make me show his passport, and that's all!'

(45) Il ne <u>te</u> **me** serrerait pas la main, la crapule!
I NEG 2S 1S.DAT would.shake not the hand the scoundrel

[3] As is well known, the template represents only a first approximation, as it cannot account for all orderings of argumental DAT anyway in clitic climbing examples like (i).

(i) Il %**me lui** / %%**me te** / ***lui leur** parait attaché
he 1S.DAT 3S.DAT 1S.DAT 2S.DAT 3S.DAT 3P.DAT seems attached
%He seems to me attached to him, %%…to me attached to you, *…to him attached to them.

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

'He would not shake hand with me, the scoundrel.' + 2S ED √ED-DAT
*'He would not shake hand with you, the scoundrel.' + 1S ED *DAT-ED

(46) alors on va **se** te me débrouiller comme on peut.
so we are.going SE.DAT 2S 1S manage as we can
'So we're gonna manage as best we can.'
<http://linux.logs.botstats.com/2006/aou/02.html>

(47) Et il y en a encore une autre à Libé
qui va te me **se** **le**$_i$ payer[,] [le Toscan du planté]$_i$.
who is.going 2S 1S SE.DAT 3S.ACC pay the T. of p.
'And there's still another one at *Liberation* that's gonna attack him and make him pay, the Toscan du planté.'
<http://velen.chez-alice.fr/bertin/malin/tesson.htm> (weekly *Politis*)

(48) Nous (te me) **vous** (te me) **le** jurons. 2P.DAT - ED
we 2S 1S 2P.DAT 2S 1S 3S.ACC swear.2P
'We swear it to you.'

These restrictions demonstrate that ethical datives are integrated into the morphosyntax of the clitic cluster and thus of the clause. Their placement is variable but not free, as would be expected if they somehow occurred outside the system. Moreover, there seems to be dialectal variations as to the ordering of clitics inside the 'accordeon' of ethical dative clitics. The ordering *te me* as in (46) or (47) consistently appears as *me te* in Québécois French (49). The data provided by Leclère 1976 shows a rather free ordering of co-occurring ethical datives ((50) *vs*. (51)), whereas for MJ it is restricted to [singular – plural] orderings (52).

(49) Hier, Jose Canseco, un ancien joueur de balle qui a pris des astéroïdes ignobilisants
afin de **se** me te vous biseauter de la mosselle …
in order to SE.DAT 1S 2S 2P sculpt some muscles
Yesterday, Jose Canseco, a former ball-player who took ignoble steroids in order to sculpt himself muscles …
<http://www.ledevoir.com/2005/02/15/74897.html>(*Le Devoir*, Quebec daily)

(50) Paul vous te **lui** a donné une de ces gifles !
Paul 2P 2S 2S.DAT has given one of these smacks
'Paul gave him such a smack!'
Leclère (1976:93)

(51) Au Mont St Michel, la mer te vous monte à une de ces vitesses !
at-the mount St Michel, the sea 2S 2P rises at one of these speeds
'At the mount St Michel, the tide comes in at such a speed!'
Leclère (1976:93)

(52) Paul te vous (* vous te) **lui** a donné une de ces gifles ! [MJ]
Paul 2S 2P 2P 2S 3S.DAT has given one of these smacks
Paul give him such a smack!

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

3. Other puzzling formal properties

The properties we have discussed so far follow from taking EDs to be base-generated at a position in the clause above the thematic and A-movement / Case systems, but within the domain accessible to cliticization. There remain various mysterious factors restricting EDs, like incompatibility with the existential construction in (53). We conclude with a brief list.

(53) Il (*te m') y a un de ces monde! *EDs - *existentials*
there 2S 1S LOC have one of these crowd
'It is so crowded!'

3.1 The 'tail effect'

Affected datives are illicit or degraded with VPs lacking internal arguments, be it direct objects or PPs, and variable with passives, (54) (Rooryck 1988, Authier and Reed 1991). EDs partly share this restriction, (55), (56) (cf. Lamiroy and Delbecque 1998: 64 for incompatibility with passives). However, in contrast to affected datives, EDs are licit with any adjunct (57), (58), (59).

(54) *Alfred **lui** a roté pour choquer ses invités. *affected dative*
Alfred 3S.DAT has burped for to-shock his guests
'Alfred burped to shock his guests on him.'

(55) Paul te m' a bu *(trois pastis).
Paul 2S 1S has drunk 3 pastis
'Paul has drunk three pastis.'

(56) A Prague, on te me vous éternue *(au visage)
In Praha we 2S 1S 2P sneeze at the face
'In Praha, people sneeze at your face.'

(57) Alfred te me nous a roté *(pour choquer ses invités).
Alfred 2S 1S 1P has burped for to-shock his guests
'Alfred burped to shock his guests on him.'

(58) A Prague, on te me vous éternue *(sans s'excuser) / *(toute la journée)
In Praha we 2S 1S 2P sneeze without apologizing all the day
'In Praha, people sneeze without apologizing/all day long.'

(59) Kaca te me nous a glissé *(parce qu'elle le voulait bien).
Kaca 2S 1S 1P has slipped because she it wanted well
'Kaca has slipped because she wanted to.'

3.2 EDs are not restricted to a "shocking effect"

Ethical datives are ordinarily most felicitous with some "shocking effect". Leclère (1976:92) notes however that in the imperative form, it is not necessary that the process be spectacular for an ED to sound natural. Moreover, there is a construction that is completely

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

immune to this effect: the "*et que je*..." construction. This construction, that remains to be analyzed, seems to list events and report them using the syntax of direct discourse reports[4].

(60) Nina$_i$ prend son temps, *et que* je te me nous fais quelques risettes à Henri,
Nina takes her time, and that I 2S 1S 1P do some smiles to Henri
et que je$_i$ te nous finisse les miettes de chocolat,
and that I 2S 1P finish the crumbs of chocolate
et que je$_i$ te nous plie sa serviette…
and that I 2S 1P bend her napkin
'Nina takes her times, she smiles to Henri, finishes the chocolate crumbs, bends her napkin…'

3.3 Incompatibility with [2] dative generic reading

Ethical datives are licit with a second person genitive (61), nominative (62) or accusative (63) with a generic reading. They can receive a generic reading themselves (64). However, they cannot co-occur with another dative that has generic reading (65).

(61) Un téléphone comme ça, il (te me nous) parle à **ta** $_{GEN}$ place, même, si tu veux !
a telephone like this it 2S 1S 1P talk at your place even if you want
'A telephone like this, it talks to you at your place, even, if you want!'

(62) C'est dommage que tu n' y ailles pas, car du haut de la tour Eiffel,
It is pity that you NEG LOC go not, because from top of the tour Eiffel
tu$_i$ (te me nous) vois vraiment tout Paris.
you 2S 1S 1P see really all Paris
'It is such a pity that you are not going there, because from top of the Eiffel tour, one really can see all Paris.'

(63) Un type comme ça, il (te me nous) **vous$_i$** regarde même pas.
A guy like that, he 2S 1S 1P you see even not
'A guy like that, he doesn't even look at you.'

(64) Paul te fabrique une table en vingt minutes Leclère (1976)
Paul 2S.GEN makes a table in 20 minuts
'Paul can make a table in 20 min *for anyone*.'

(65) Une grippe comme ça, ça (*me) te$_{GEN}$ (*me) mets par terre comme de rien, tu sais.
A flu like this, it 1S you$_{GEN}$ 1S puts on ground like of nothing you know
'A flu like this, it floors anyone like that.'

---

[4] See also :
(x) La presse prend le relais. *Et que je* me te **vous** ponde des éditoriaux et des analyses et des thèses.
<www.vigile.net/ds-actu/docs4a/7-17.html>
(y) **Et** que je te me vous mets les ado[s] dans des centres spécialisés (comme des malfaiteurs) pour qu'ils se sentent encore plus écartés et différents des autres (surtout bien les culpabiliser!), **et que** je te me vous **les** force à maigrir à vitesse grand V, **et que** je me te vous **les** remets dans la nature sans aucun suivi ni soutien psychologique pour qu'ils regrossissent bien vite et recommencent!
<http://www.rondeetjolie.com/forum_mon_corps_et_moi_15973.html>

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)

Mélanie Jouitteau
CNRS, Laboratoire de Linguistique Formelle
melanie.jouitteau@linguist.jussieu.fr

Milan Rezac
Laboratoire de Linguistique de Nantes
milan_rezac@yahoo.ca

References

Abraham, W. (1972). The ethic dative in German. In F. Kiefer and N. Ruwet (eds.), *Generative Grammar in Europe*, 1-20. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Aissen, J, and Perlmutter, D. (1983). Clause reduction in Spanish. In D. Perlmutter (ed.) *Studies in Relational Grammar*, 360-403. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Albizu, P. (1997). Generalized Person-Case Constraint: A case for a syntax-driven inflectional morphology. In M. Uribe-Etxebarria and A. Mendikoetxea (eds.), *Theoretical Issues on the Morphology-Syntax Interface*, 1-33. Donostia: Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia/EHU.

Anagnostopoulou, E. (2003). *The Syntax of Ditransitives: Evidence from Clitics*. The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter.

Authier, J-M., and Reed, L. (1991). Case theory, theta theory, and the distribution of French affected clitics. *Proceedings of the West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics* (*WCCFL*) 10: 27-39.

Baylon, C. and Fabre, P. (1995). *Grammaire systématique de la langue française*, third edition. Paris : Nathan.

Bonami, O. and Boyé, G. (2007). French pronominal clitics and the design of paradigm function morphology. In G. Booij, B. Fradin, A. Ralli et S. Scalise (eds.), *Online Proceedings of the Fifth Mediterranean Morphology Meeting*.

Bonet, E. (1991). Morphology after Syntax: Pronominal Clitics in Romance. PhD dissertation, MIT.

Borer, H. and Grodzinsky, Y. (1986). Syntactic cliticization and lexical cliticization: the case of Hebrew dative clitics. In H. Borer (ed.), *The Syntax of Pronominal Clitics*, *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 19, 175-217. New York: Academic Press.

Cuervo, C. (2003). Datives at Large. PhD dissertation, MIT.

Grevisse, M. and Goosse, A. (1993). *Le Bon Usage*. Bruxelles : De Boeckx.

Jaeggli, O. (1986). Three issues in the theory of clitics: Case, doubled NPs, and extraction. In H. Borer (ed.), *The Syntax of Pronominal Clitics*, *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 19, 15-42. New York: Academic Press.

Kayne, R. (1975). *French Syntax*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press.

Lamiroy, B. and Delbecque, N. (1998). The possessive dative in Romance and Germanic languages. In W. van Langendonck and W. van Belle (eds.), *The Dative*, Vol. 2, 29-74. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Leclère, C. (1976). Datifs syntaxiques et datifs éthiques. In J.-C. Chevalier and M. Gross (eds.), *Méthodes en grammaire française*, 73-96. Paris: Klincksieck.

Martinon, P. (1927). *Comment on parle français*. Paris: Larousse.

Morin, Y-C. (1981). Some myths about pronominal clitics in French. *Linguistic Analysis* 8 (1): 95-109.

Ormazabal, J. and Romero, J. (1998). On the syntactic nature of the *me-lui* and the Person-Case Constraint. *Anuario del Seminario Julio de Urquijo* 32: 415-434.

Oyharçabal, B. (1993). Verb agreement with non-arguments: On allocutive agreement. In J. I. Hualde and J. Ortiz de Urbina (eds.), *Generative Studies in Basque Linguistics*, 89-114. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Perlmutter, D. (1971). *Deep and Surface Structure Constraints in Syntax*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Pesetsky, D. (1995). *Zero Syntax: Experiencers and Cascades*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Postal, P. M. (1990). French indirect object demotion. In P. M. Postal and B. D. Joseph (eds.), *Studies in Relational Grammar 3*, 104-200. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rooryck, J. (1988). Formal aspects of French nonlexical datives. *Folia Linguistica* 22(3/4): 373-386.

Rouveret, A. and Vergnaud, J.-R. (1980). Specifying reference to the subject. *Linguistic Inquiry* 11(1): 97-202.

Strotzer, J. (1978). On the so-called "dative of interest". *Hispania* 61: 117-123.

BDD-A9765 © 2007 Universitatea din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:50:11 UTC)