

## ETHICAL DATIVE IN FORMING THE *GET*-PASSIVE

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## OUTLINE

- Ethical dative
  - Indo-European languages
  - History of English
- Ethical dative and adversative/benefactive passive
- Get-passive and ethical dative
- Contact with Old Norse

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## ETHICAL DATIVE

- The use of dative to denote adversity or beneficiary. This also known as sympathetic dative; *datif étendu* 'extended dative'; external possessor constructions.

Serbian

- a. *Beba plače noći*  
baby cry.3SG at.night  
'The baby cries at night.' (neutral version)

- b. *Beba nam plače noći*  
baby we.DAT cry.3PL at night  
'The baby cries at night on us.' (object version, i.e. 'for our detriment')

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Czech

- a. *Šel pro cigarety*  
go.PST for cigarettes.ACC  
'He went to get some cigarettes.' (neutral version)

- b. *Šel bratrovi pro cigarety*  
go.PST brother.DAT for cigarettes.ACC  
'He went to get some cigarettes for his brother.' (object version, i.e. 'for the benefit of his brother')

Dutch

- Men heft hem zijn arm gebroken*  
one have.3SG 3SG.OBL his arm break.PST.PRT  
'They broke his arm (to his detriment).'

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## ETHICAL DATIVE IN ENGLISH

- There were sporadic examples, but they were not productive. After the ME period, the occurrence became extremely rare, and some dialectal forms may employ prepositional phrases to denote the adversity.

Middle English

*Envye ... bynymeth hym the love of alle goodnesse.*

'Envy takes away the love of all goodness from him to his detriment. (c1386 Chaucer, *C.T.* I 676)

Hiberno English

*She took the biggest piece on me.*

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## ORIGIN OF *GET*-PASSIVE

- Two hypotheses
  - Adjectival-VP, e.g. *The soup got cold.*
  - Causative-reflexive, e.g. *He got himself shot.*
- The adjectival-VP origin does not account for various semantic and functional peculiarities of the *get*-passive in relation to the *be*-passive, e.g.
  - a. The lack of the dynamic counterpart of an auxiliary after *weorðan* 'become.'
  - b. The subject's control over events and generic characteristics (facilitative).
  - c. The lack of an agent phrase.
  - d. The animacy of the subject.

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ORIGIN OF *GET*-PASSIVE

- Etymology of get: a loan from Old Norse *geta* 'obtain, reach' (13<sup>th</sup> C).
- Old Norse also had ethical dative, which was almost missing in English at the time of contact.

Old Norse

*Geirr fann af skynsemi sinni at honum eyddusk skot-in*  
 Geirr felt of reason his that him.DAT eroded shots.NOM-DEF  
 'Geir sensed that his shots were being wasted (to his detriment).' (EB 222)

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## ANALOGY

- Analogy and ethical dative in the English grammar.

Old English

*Ay was he bone, to gete [Cott. Fete] his fadir venison*  
 always was he ready to get his father.DAT venison  
 'He was always ready to get his father venison.' (a1300 Cursor M. 3502 (Cott.))

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## SUMMARY

- Beneficiary/adversative reading is not possible in the adjectival origin.
- Ethical dative through replication is a key to decode a developmental path of the *get*-passive.

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