Dativus Ethicus in the Balkan Languages

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Abstract

The paper presents a contrastive study of the ethic dative case of the personal pronouns in the languages of the Balkan *Sprachbund* outlining the similarities between them, but also discussing peculiarities of each language. It aims at analyzing the functioning and the meaning of different pronominal forms in dativus ethicus (1st person singular or plural, 2nd person, 1st + 2nd person of the personal pronouns, reflexive pronoun) found in authentic examples in order to indicate that dativus ethicus is one of the common features of the pronominal systems of the Balkan languages.

1. Introduction

The common features of the languages of the Balkan *Sprachbund* (Bulgarian, Greek, Albanian and Romanian) have been widely discussed in the linguistic literature. Since the first generalizing work on Balkan linguistics of the danish linguist Kristian Sandfeld (1930) was published, a number of authors have analyzed linguistic phenomena at all the language levels shared by the Balkan languages, such as unification processes of the phonological systems, development of analytic noun systems, syncretism of genitive and dative, future tense formation, lack of infinitive, postposition of the definite article, clitic doubling, etc. Despite some critics that Balkan linguistics has already exhausted its research field or that there is a danger to “break the structural-typological matrix” of a language if it’s only seen as being a part of a *Sprachbund* (as in Reiter 1994), the interest toward Balkan linguistic peculiarities doesn’t seem to have decreased. Furthermore, a number of monographs on Balkan linguistics appeared only in the last 20 years, analyzing and systematizing the common features of the Balkan languages (Steinke & Vraciu 1999, Asenova 2002, Demiraj 2004, Feuillet 2012, among others).

Traditionally the focal point of research in Balkan linguistics are the common morpho-syntactic phenomena of the Balkan languages. Pronominal systems

haven't been a center of interest, although they show multiple similarities. This paper presents a synchronic contrastive study of a function of the pronouns' dative case called *dativus ethicus* in the modern Balkan languages. It aims at studying the usage of the ethic dative in all the forms found in the Balkan languages on the basis of authentic examples extracted from fiction and internet. The paper will show that *dativus ethicus* is not only preserved in those languages, but also has a high frequency and identical usages in colloquial speech.

2. Dativus Ethicus in Indo-European Languages

Dativus ethicus is a function of the personal pronouns in dative with an ancient origin in the Indo-European languages. Forms of the ethic dative are encountered in Old Greek and Latin, indicating that the person in dative has a special interest towards the person or the thing spoken (Schwyzer 1950). It is alive in many of the present-day Indo-European languages: in French – *Prends-moi le bon parti*. 'You should do the right thing'; *Regarde-moi ça!* 'Look at this!'; in English the construction with the preposition *on* + a personal pronoun in any person and number is encountered – *They've gone and bought that bike on us/ on you/ on me/ on him/ on them.*; in Dutch – *Wat doe je me daar nou?* 'What's going on with you now?'; *Waar kom je me nou mee aanzelten?* 'What are you going to do now?'; in German – *Comm du mir bloss nachhause*. 'Just come into my house.' (DuFeu 1998). The ethic dative is also found in some of the Slavic languages (mainly West and South Slavic) – Czech, Polish, Slovak, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian, and in the languages of the Balkan *Sprachbund* – Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian and Albanian. It occurs with different frequency and distribution in different languages, for instance in French, although quite current, it is restricted to the 1st person only, especially after a verb in imperative. Fischer (1997:79) mentions that the ethic dative causes some particular problems in German-to-English translation, not having a direct counterpart in English. In this inhomogeneous situation, the Balkan languages manifest impressive similarities which can be considered to be due to the convergence processes in their development.

3. Dativus Ethicus in the Balkan Folklore

A thorough analysis of the origin and functions of *dativus ethicus* in light of the Balkan model of the world is made by Tsivyan (Tsivyan 1999:91-103). The author sees *dativus ethicus* as a result of the fusion of the genitive and the dative case and the capacity of the pronominal clitics to express both a direction of an action and possession. Therefore, *dativus ethicus* in the Balkan languages is bound up

with the category of possessivity. However, this is a possession of a special kind – the speaker is situated inside the statement declaring his presence in the text. Tsivyan calls this act of appropriation “a linguistic gesture in a self-direction”. Her research is based exclusively on folklore texts. The author underlines that in the folklore, *dativus ethicus* does not have so much an emotional value, but it emphasizes the presence of the speaker in the world of the text by presenting it in the context of the verbal category of evidentiality.

4. Dativus Ethicus in the Modern Balkan Languages

Besides the Balkan folklore, *dativus ethicus* is also widely spread in the modern languages of the Balkan *Schprachbund*. However, in contemporary speech, in contrast to folklore texts, it is a means of the speaker to express his subjective evaluation of the situation. In Bulgarian, Romanian and Albanian, the forms of 1st person singular and 1st person plural are mostly used, while the 2nd person plural is rarely used in Bulgarian and Romanian. A frequent usage in modern Bulgarian has the short form of the reflexive pronoun. In Greek, the *ethic dative* has a restricted usage as compared with the other Balkan languages, which is compensated by the frequent usage of the possessive pronominal clitics, as shown by Tsivyan (Tsivyan 1999:96-98).

4.1. 1st Person of Dativus Ethicus

The 1st person expresses most distinctly “the intervention” of the speaker in the utterance by giving emotional nuances of the speech and by expressing the subjective evaluation of the speaker. In all the Balkan languages it is made by the 1st person singular, in Albanian in addition the 1st person plural is used by which the speaker presents himself as a representative of a multitude.

- (1a) Bulg. *Какъв си ми хубав!*
 What are me:DE beautiful
 ‘You are so beautiful to me!’
- (1b) Bulg. *Марче, вземи се в ръце, бе момиче. Я какво си ми младо и слабичко, а аз какво да кажа с моите 85 килограма.*
 Marche take yourself in hands part. girl part. what are me:DE young and thin and I what to say with my 85 kilograms
 ‘Marche, take it easy, girl. Look how young and thin you are, what should I say with my 85 kilos.’

- (1c) Gr. *Μήπως η καρδούλα σου δεν μου είναι ευτυχισμένη.*
 Maybe the heart your not me:DE is pleased
 'Maybe your heart is not pleased?'
- (1d) Gr. *Θέλω να μου είσαι καλά και να περνάς όσο πιο καλά γίνεται.*
 Want-I to me:DE be-you well and to spend-you as more well happens
 'I want you to be well and to spend your time as well as possible.'
- (1e) Rom. *Aici m-ai fost?* (I. Creangă, GLR: 150)
 Here me:DE have-you been
 'So, there you are.'
- (1f) Alb. *Lulushen, të ma keni kujdes.* (D. Agolli)
 Lulusha:Acc to me:DE take care
 'Take care of Lulusha.'
- (1g) Alb. *O bo bo, kush më qenka në këtë forum, moreee...*
 Well, well who me:DE is in this forum part.
 'Well, well, look who was in this forum.'

In the examples above the speaker expresses his positive attitude towards the object of the speech by using *dativus ethicus*. In such cases it can be easily transformed in a possessive pronoun – *my, my dear*. *Take care of Lulusha.* > *Take care of my (dear) Lulusha*. This is a typical way of expression of a positive evaluation by appropriation or by affiliation, a means of the speaker to admit the object in his own world.

Dativus ethicus can also express a negative attitude – neglect, irony or mockery:

- (2a) Bulg. *Ооо, тя ще ми се труди...*
 Oh she will me:DE work
 'So, she will work.'
- (2b) Bulg. *Какво си ми се разциврила!*
 What me:DE are crying
 'What are you crying!'
- (2c) Rom. *Ăsta îmi ești tu!*
 This me:DE are you
 'So, you are that kind of man!'
- (2d) Alb. *Na nxjerrka ai libra për bujqit!* (D. Agoll)
 Us:DE takes out he books for the farmers
 'So, he quotes books for farmers!'

In (2a, b, c, d) a false gesture of appropriation takes place in order to express the speaker's negative attitude towards the situation or the object spoken. This is a transpositive usage of *dativus ethicus* which transforms the speaker's evaluation from positive into negative thus increasing the expressiveness of the utterance.

In Bulgarian and Albanian, where the verb category of evidentiality is grammaticalized, often a parallel usage of *dativus ethicus* and admirative verb forms is encountered. The admirative in Bulgarian and Albanian is defined as a sudden ascertainment of facts which is unexpected and surprising for the speaker and provokes a particular emotional condition (Gerdzhikov 1984:101). The expressiveness of the verbs in admirative provides a possibility for the speaker to give voice to his subjective evaluation of the situation ascertained. This is a secondary and contextually dependent function of the admirative, but quite frequent in both languages (see Tarpomanova 2010). Adding a pronoun in ethic dative the speaker gives emphasis on the subjectivity of his own appraisal.

- (3a) Bulg. *И това ми било мъж!*
 And this me:DE is:adm. man
 'So, that would be a real man!'
- (3b) Bulg. *Изтъпанчил ми се на онзи големия баир в Минск и гради първото иглу за сезона.*
 Stands:adm. me:DE on that big hill in Minsk and builds the first igloo for the season
 'He stands on the big hill in Minsk and builds the first igloo for the season.'
- (3c) Alb. *E, domethënë Sherif Abeceja na qenka edhe besimtar!* (D. Agolli)
 Eh so Sherif Abeceja us:DE is:adm. also believer
 'So, Sherif Abeceja is also a believer!'

In (3a, b, c) the pronominal and the verbal form mutually intensify their meanings, expressing the emotional attitude of the speaker and his pragmatic evaluation – positive or negative, of the object of the utterance.

4.2. 2nd Person of *Dativus Ethicus*

The 2nd person of *dativus ethicus* aims to integrate the collocutor into the situation described by the utterance, as if he was an eyewitness of the events. The opposition *mine/not mine* takes place between the 1st and the 2nd person, on one hand, and the 3rd person, on the other. A translocation occurs in the internal correlation *me/you* – the speaker gives the possibility of the collocutor to express the emotional attitude of the utterance. According to Bokshi, the pronominal clitics in 2nd person should not be considered as *dativus ethicus*, being a neutral form for expressing the person, or an “all-personal” form. He claims that the emotional value of ethic dative can only be expressed by the 1st person, because the speaker is a concrete person, while the neutral *you* may be either *me*, *you* or *him/her* (Bokshi 2004:79-81). Bokshi's opinion is not sustained here and a distinction is made between the 2nd person of the personal pronouns expressing impersonality (all-personality, according to Bokshi) and the 2nd person of the

pronominal clitics in *dativus ethicus*. The differences between the two meanings can be observed in the examples below. In (4a) the neutral function of the 2nd person pronoun is notable. The elimination of the pronoun would damage the sentence structure and meaning. In (4b) the pronoun expresses the speaker's surprise and admiration and if it's removed the speaker's attitude will be lost, but the sentence grammaticality and meaning will be preserved.

- (4a) Alb. *Ti i bën mirë, ai ta kthen me të keq.*
 You him do good he you returns bad
 'You do him good, he returns you evil.'
- (4b) Alb. *Pa t'u bë ai fiku sa një shtëpi.*
 And you:DE became this fig-tree like a house
 'And the fig-tree became as big as a house.'

4.3. Parallel Usage of 1st and 2nd Person

In Bulgarian, Romanian and Albanian a parallel usage of the 1st and 2nd person pronouns in *dativus ethicus* is possible. In Bulgarian this usage is restricted – the two pronouns can be in enclitic position only after demonstrative (5a), interrogative (5b) and indefinite (5c) pronouns, the latter expressing pragmatic evaluation, positive or negative, intensified by the dative pronominal clitics.

- (5a) Bulg. *Надолу очи да метнеи, кипнала оная ми ти земя, напрацели ония младоци, надули се ония ми ти пъпки по фиданките...* (Chudomir)
 Down eyes to throw-you boiled that me:DE you:DE land burst those young people grew those me:DE you:DE buds on the trees
 'If you look down, you will see this land boiling, these young people bursting, these buds growing.'
- (5b) Bulg. *Каква Европа, какви ми ти там хелзинкски комитети и други подобни плутократски организации.*
 What Europe what me:DE you:DE there Helsinki Committees and other similar plutocratic organizations
 'What Europe, what Helsinki Committees and similar plutocratic organizations.'
- (5c) Bulg. *Тъкмо се настаних удобно, като се накачиха във влака едни ми ти цигани, пардон, роми.*
 Just sat-I down comfortably when got on the trains some me:DE you:DE gypsies pardon roma
 'I just sat down comfortably when some gypsies, ops... Roma people, got on the train.'

In Romanian and Albanian the parallel usage of the 1st and the 2nd person of the pronouns in *dativus ethicus* is not submitted to usage restrictions as in Bulgarian.

- (5d) Rom. *Mi-au lunecat ciubotele și am căzut în Ozana, cât mi ți-i băietul!*
 To me slipped the boots and fell-I on Ozana what me:DE you:DE man
 'My boots slipped and I fell on Ozana, what a man!'
- (5e) Rom. *Ce credeți că mi ți văzu?* (GLR:150)
 What think-you that me:DE you:DE saw-I
 'And what do you think I saw?'
- (5f) Alb. *E të na u bë baltë e madhe, e të na u bënë, or të keqen këmbët gjak.* (Bokshi 2004:80)
 And you:DE us:DE became mud big and you:DE us:DE became badly blood
 'And everything became mud and our feet became all in blood.'

As shown in the examples (5a, b, c, d, e, f), the parallel usage of the 1st and the 2nd person of the pronouns acts as intensifier of the semantic property of the word modified which can be explicit, as in (5f) "really big mud", or implicit, as in (5a) "really (beautiful) land", in (5c) "really (awful) gypsies", and in (5d) "what a (handsome) man". Besides, the combination of the pronouns can modify the whole meaning of the utterance by increasing its emotional value, as in (5e) "And what do you think I saw? (It's really incredible!)"

4.4. Combination of *Dativus Ethicus* with Deictic Particles

For Bulgarian Nitsolova mentions the usage of pronouns in *dativus ethicus* with deictic particles with predicative function (Nitsolova 1986:57). The case in point is the combination of the 2nd person of the pronominal clitics with the particles *here*, *there*. This usage is characteristic also of Greek and Romanian and may be considered as an abstract gesture of giving on the part of the speaker. The meaning of the whole construction is a negative issue of some situation that is previewed from the speaker.

- (6a) Bulg. *Ha ti сега социализъм, на ti митинг!*
 There you:DE now socialism there you:DE demonstration
 'There you have your socialism, there you have your demonstration!'
- (6b) Gr. *Δεν είχαν περάσει ούτε 3 μήνες από τη μέρα που είχε βάλει την υπογραφή του στο παχυλό συμβόλαιό του και να σου τώρα καμάρωνε εμπρός από το νέο δημιούργημα του.*
 Not had passed even 3 months from the day that had-he put the signature his on the pompous council and there you:DE now boasted- he in front of the new creation his
 'Less than 3 months have passed since he put his signature under the pompous council and there you go, he's boasting with his creation.'

- (6c) Rom. *lată-ți gloria de veacuri!*
There you:DE glory for centuries
'There you have your century-old glory!'

4.5. The Reflexive Pronoun in Dativus Ethicus

In Bulgarian a frequent usage in dativus ethicus has the dative reflexive pronoun *si*, which is a Slavic characteristic in this language. Among the other Balkan languages only in Romanian a dative reflexive pronoun exists, but its usage in dativus ethicus is marginal and it is encountered only in the folklore (Câmpeanu 1997):

- (7) Rom. *Toți de Corbea că mi vorbea și din gură mi-și zicea.*
All from Corbea that to me spoke and from mouth to me refl.pron.:DE told
'All the people from Corbea spoke to me and with their mouths told me.'

In Bulgarian the reflexive pronoun in dativus ethicus means that the action is performed for pleasure or for whim or expresses intimacy (Nitsolova 1986:68):

- (8a) Bulg. *Гледам си в тавана, по който мухите пълзят, и хоп, ето ти тема: „Защо мухите не падат, когато са с главата надолу?“*
Look-I refl.pron.:DE at the ceiling on which flies creep and up there is theme why the flies don't fall when are upside-down
'I was looking at the ceiling, where the flies were creeping, and suddenly a theme submerged: "Why the flies don't fall down being upside-down?"
- (8b) Bulg. *Кучетата си лаят, керванът си върви.*
The dogs refl.pron.:DE bark the caravan refl.pron.:DE goes
'The dogs bark but the caravan goes on.'

5. Conclusion

Dativus ethicus is a common feature of the Balkan languages, an Indo-European inheritance preserved and developed in the modern languages, which contributes to the expressiveness of speech and is one of the means to articulate a pragmatic evaluation of a given situation, event or the object of the utterance. Its usage, as shown in the examples in this paper, is characteristic of colloquial speech, making it bright and vivid.

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